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# ECONOMIC ANNALS

## OF THE

# NINETEENTH CENTURY

## 1801–1820

BY

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MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON
1910

GLASGOW: PRINTED AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS
BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD.

To M. Y.

# PREFACE

WHILE a member of the recent Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and the Relief of Distress, it fell to me to write several memoranda on the history of the Poor Laws and on the industrial and social developments of the past century. In the course of doing so, I realised how little can be said, to useful purpose, of any one historical movement if it be taken and studied by itself. The history of pauperism, for instance, is the history of social failure. But failure is the other side of success, and, in its very simplest aspect, pauperism is the reverse of growing wealth and growing freedom. At every stage in its history the question is suggested: "What is the connection between the progress of poverty and the progress of industry?" and, in the background, is always the more fundamental question, "Why should poverty continue?" I discovered, in short, that, to form any adequate judgment of the phenomena with which the Poor Laws directly deal, it was necessary first to know the history of the working world at the time. But the economic history of the nineteenth century has not yet been written.

This experience helped me to a decision. When a professional man reaches my age, he naturally asks himself what he can best do with the remainder of his years to help on the science in the pursuit of which he has found all that makes life worth living. Putting this question to myself, it seemed to me that what Political Economy most wants to-day is just this history. Few, perhaps, realise that the whole framework of modern life is economic—that the vast majority of us spend our days in making goods or rendering services which we sell for money—that the "income" which we draw is payment for some service rendered to society either by ourselves in person or by some factor of production which we possess. Fewer still, perhaps, know how new a thing this framework is—that it began with

machinery and steam, and has been built up within a century. In all ages, indeed, the masses have had to work from dawn to dark merely to supply themselves and their families with the living for the next day. But, in all centuries previous to the nineteenth, there were many classes who considered themselves entitled, by birth and tradition, to command the toil of others without making much return, while they lived what was regarded, with some reason perhaps, as a higher life. Since the emergence of the "factory system," however, the economic life has drawn all men into it, at the same time as it has opened up to the masses prospects or possibilities of the "fine life" which used to be thought the prerogative of the few. While the political *differentia* of to-day is that our rulers are our servants, not our masters, the economic *differentia* is that there have grown up, alongside of land the original source of wealth, immense accumulations of "capital"; that is, of instruments of production, the use of which has given to man generally the possibility of wealth, culture, and leisure never dreamed of by the old world, and the possession of which has given new classes the possibility of living without personally working.

But this capital is not a mass of goods growing by mere addition; it has itself to be kept in existence by constant repair and re-creation. The necessity of keeping it in existence, and, besides, of maintaining the organisation of industry as a "going concern," has enormously increased the amount of labour which is necessary if society would retain the new environment it has so hardly won, and much of that labour is still, unhappily, exhausting toil at a low level of wage. It is this increase in the amount of labour which gives the impression that all the inventions of machinery have never shortened the day's toil. What, however, is not so generally noticed is that the characteristic feature in the economic life of to-day, the making of everything for sale, has raised labour, on the whole, into the condition of a noble, dignified, realising life for everyone who shares it. This universal organisation of service, where man makes nothing for himself but everything for the market, has, in short, made it possible for trades to take themselves seriously as professions. It only needs the conscious realisation on the part of the worker that his economic end in life is, not his wages, but the contribution he makes to the well-being of his fellows, to turn the everyday life of the most ordinary labouring man into a moral discipline.

*Laborare est orare.* And it is because the beginnings of this system of divided and organised labour lie mostly in the nineteenth century that the history of that century is of surpassing interest to the economist.[1]

Hence, my decision to give what time is left me to make a beginning and fill up so much of this gap in the equipment of the economist as lies within my power.

I may say at once that I make no pretension to have written "history." All I have proposed to myself is mere spade-work—the collection and arrangement of materials which the heaven-born historian, when he appears, may find ready to his hand. For such a task, I have at least the qualification which every economist has—the knowledge that one of the two great determinants of history in all time has been the necessity of making a living.

In the records of the twenty years which form this first volume, I have given prominence to three subjects in which I became particularly interested. The one is the system of Protection as it presented itself to thinkers and statesmen in years when that system was universal, while, all the time, Adam Smith's doctrine of Free Trade was very generally accepted as theoretically sound. The lip-service paid to Free Trade, and the defence of Protection almost entirely on the ground of "vested interests," seem to me equally notable. The second is the phenomena of the "cyclical movement"—the alternating ebb and flow of economic activity—and the explanations sought for it in times when recurring depression was counted an abnormal thing. The third is the evolution of the theory of taxation out of its practice—what I might describe as the adoption and shaping of Adam Smith's theory in virtue of the gradual recognition by statesmen of the unequal burden of taxes imposed during an age when there was little consciousness that there was any theory at all. All these matters will, I imagine, give further food for thought in the history of the following decades.

The number of references to *Hansard* sufficiently indicates the source from which I have drawn by far the greater part of my material. How it may have been with historians of earlier periods I do not know—their task must have been incomparably more difficult—but, for the modern historian, I know of no other way of obtaining a unifying view of the development of the nation than by taking for vertebral column the debates at West-

[1] Cf. pp. 541, 606.

minster, where the entire kingdom was represented, and the economic and social as well as the political problems of the whole community found expression. I had another reason for using *Hansard* in this way. It was that when, in the course of preparatory collection, I had noted down anything from more general histories as having a place in economic history, I almost invariably found, either that the account of it had itself been taken from the parliamentary debates, or that it was dealt with much more adequately there. My study of *Hansard* was, of course, supplemented by that of innumerable reports of committees and commissions. As a Royal Commissioner, I had, practically, the run of the Stationery Office, and I have to express my gratitude to its officials for so readily furnishing me with copies of bluebooks which I could digest in the leisure of my own study.

It is matter for regret to find that the *Annual Register* of these years is of so little value to the economic historian. As a review of general European history, written at the end of each year, it is, I suppose, a valuable contemporary record—although Scott called it "barely tolerable." But its *Chronicle* of daily happenings is invariably disappointing. Instead of taking itself seriously and providing a compendium of the everyday events which future generations would like to know about, it devotes most of its space to murders, fires, horrible accidents, and things of that sort, of no possible interest except to the people of the time. It is only very occasionally that one finds, sandwiched in, something worth repeating.

In almost every case where I have condensed speeches, I have given, so far as possible, the *ipsissima verba*, even where the words are a little old-fashioned and the method of expression raises questions. I am aware that such a method does not make for elegance or consistency of style, and perhaps I have carried this too far, as the parliamentary records, it is to be apprehended, very often reflect as much of the reporter as of the speaker. But, to my mind, historical accuracy comes before everything, and where a reported speech is the only authority one has, I have preferred, except where error was obvious, to adhere to the report, and to let the reader take the responsibility of questioning it.

It may be objected that, in the *Annals* of the earlier years, more space has been given to the war than to strictly economic

events. This is true, but, all the same, I do not admit that the glamour of a world in arms, and the meteoric career of the great adventurer who made his relatives kings and princes in Europe, have seduced my attention from the more humdrum happenings at home. The explanation, of course, is that this war affected the economic life of England as no other war ever did—was, in fact, of more vital importance to the people than they at all realised at the time; for, as I have shown, to them the war meant little more than heavy taxes, high prices, curtailed markets. In a sense, the history of the war during these years is the history of England. But I did not begin writing with any such preconception. The gap I had to fill was indeed the gap left by the more general histories—the record of the working life of the country in the years when the factory system was coming into existence. But whenever I began to write, I found, for one thing, that the domestic annals were very scanty—nobody apparently thinking it worth while to record the humbler events at home when the destiny of Europe was being determined on the continent, and when every dispatch was worthy of leaded headlines in the newspapers—and, for another, that the domestic history during these years is inextricably mixed up with the operations abroad. While I am quite certain that the historian who ignores the economic life of the people must go wrong in his interpretation of history, I am not sure that economic history can ever profitably be separated from political. However that may be, in the period covered by this volume the two sides are more closely bound up than, perhaps, at any other period. Whether I have succeeded or not, my aim, in the annals of the first fifteen years, has been to keep together these two sides of the one national life—the England which was "saving Europe by her example," and the England which was quietly pursuing her everyday work at home.

Under the heading of *Miscellanea*, I have noted some interesting things which have little bearing on the history of the year, and have, perhaps, no very appropriate place in economic annals. My excuse is that, when a man has read so many volumes, difficult of access to the general reader, he is sure to have come across some things which he feels too suggestive or interesting to leave buried in probable oblivion.

It is, however, for a different reason that I have included a good many things which, some will think, are of too little

importance to deserve recording—abortive or fantastic schemes, Bills that came to nothing, short sighted opinions, and the like. Proposing to continue these *Annals* as far as my time or my years permit, and, not knowing what developments may follow, I have taken notice of everything which seemed, if I may say so, to have a future in it. On one point, indeed, I have felt rather strongly—that it was my duty to save my professional colleagues, as much as possible, from the labour which was necessary to me, of extracting everything which might have an economic bearing from these twenty years of double columned, closely printed, yellow paged *Hansards*. The future historian, at any rate, will have some better guide than a mere index.

My thanks are due to Mr. Edward J. E. Craven of H.M. Customs and Excise for many elucidations of difficult questions in the Finance Accounts, and, very particularly, to my colleague, Mr. J. H. Jones, for his faithful and laborious revision of my proof sheets.

WILLIAM SMART.

University of Glasgow,
*November*, 1910.

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# CHAPTER I

## AT THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY[1]

THE war with France, into which Pitt had been driven against his better judgment, had now been going on for seven years, and its popularity had long since waned. In 1797, almost every city, county, and town of note in England and Ireland had petitioned the King for the removal of his Ministers, and "the consequent return of peace." The question was being loudly asked, both within Parliament and outside, whether anything was to be gained by continuing a struggle in which England had no direct interest. Was the government of France really of such a character that it was "not safe to enter into negotiation with it?" Whatever it might have been at the outset, was this any longer a "just and necessary war"—a "war for security"—or was it a war for the restoration of the Bourbons? State of the war.

Every month seemed adding to the strength of France. Buonaparte, escaping from Egypt in the autumn of 1799, had overthrown the Directory, and become First Consul in 1800—already, it was noted, *il parle en roi*. In May, he crossed the Great St. Bernard, overthrew our allies, the Austrians, at Marengo in July, and became master of Italy. In December, Moreau, co-operating with him, crushed them in South Germany, and forced Austria

[1] "In France, as in England, there have been disputes about the commencement of the eighteenth century. The astronomer Lalande thus determines the question, which, he says, was equally agitated at the end of the last century; he having, in his library, a pamphlet published on the subject. 'Many persons,' says he, 'imagine that, because, after having counted 17, they commence 18, the century must be changed, but this is a mistake; for, when 100 years are to be counted, we must pass from 99, and we arrive at 100; we have changed the 10 before we have finished the 100. Whatever calculation is to be made, we commence by 1, and finish by 100; nobody has ever thought of commencing at 0, and finishing by 99.' Thus he concludes that the present year 1800 incontestably belongs to the eighteenth century." *Annual Register*, 1800, Chron. 6.

to sue for a separate peace. In the same month, the Emperor Paul, till then our ally, proclaimed an embargo on British ships in Russian ports, imprisoned British sailors, formed the second Armed Neutrality with Sweden and Denmark, and began plotting with Buonaparte for a French diversion on the coasts of England and a joint invasion (along with Austria) of India.[1] Prussia stood aloof—had, indeed, imposed an export duty of 10/- per quarter on corn for England. Spain and Holland were mere vassals of France. Portugal, our ancient friend, was compelled to close her ports against us. The foreign journals spoke of the approaching descent on England with as much certainty as the English newspapers did.[2]

In 1793, all the principal powers of Europe had been in arms against France; Austria, Russia, Prussia, Great Britain, Spain, Portugal, Naples, Rome, and Sardinia had severally declared war, and the Republic stood at bay alone. In 1800, England seemed on the eve of "a war with all the world without an ally."

Commercial argument for peace.

At home, the argument for peace was very evident. The rapid rise of manufactures demanded outlets in other countries, and this strengthened the resentment of the commercial and manufacturing classes at the war. The pleasant experience of the recent commercial treaty with France, and the hardship which followed its breakdown, were still fresh in people's memories. Since Colbert's time till 1786, France had been protectionist, aiming at self-sufficiency; the very notion of free intercourse between the two countries had almost died out. Thus there had been strong opposition in both countries to the treaty which Pitt negotiated in that year. France had coal, was making pig-iron, had got models of our new machines and tools, and was only waiting an opportunity to rival us in manufactures generally. France was the natural enemy of Great Britain, said Fox, and a commercial treaty would only prevent an alliance with other powers, our natural friends. At the same time, the French saw in the treaty a death-blow to their rising manufactures—and, as a fact, till the war, the cotton manufacture did not lift its head in France. Pitt, however, dwelt on the natural riches of France, and on the energy and labour of England safeguarded by the freedom of its constitution

[1] The "heads" of the plan proposed to the French Government for an expedition against the British power in India are given in the *European Magazine* of April, 1801.

[2] *Scots Magazine*, 1801, 579.

and the severity of its laws, as pointing to the immense advantages of a friendly connection between the two states—" to suppose that any nation could be unalterably the enemy of another was weak and childish, a libel on political societies and on the name of man "—and carried his treaty. Perfect freedom of intercourse between the people of the two kingdoms was allowed. The duties on French wines were assimilated to those on the wines of Portugal. Reciprocal duties from 10 to 15 per cent. were established on hardware and cutlery, furniture, cotton and woollen goods, gauzes, linen, saddlery, millinery, glass, earthenware, etc. Under this reciprocity scheme the exports of British manufactures to France rose, from an average of £87,000 for the six years ending 1774, to an average of £717,000 for the six years ending 1792.

But, with the war, the old hatred of the two nations for each other flared out again. The extremest measures of protection were resorted to.

Since 1793, then, merchandise produced in Great Britain or her colonies had been absolutely prohibited in France. Since 1796, any ship laden even in part with British goods might be seized in any French port. Indeed the compliment was paid Great Britain of defining cotton, woollen, and muslin stuffs, " English carpets," buttons, cutlery, hardware, saddlery, tanned leather, refined sugar, pottery, and some others, as " British goods," and as such, prohibited from sale in France.

Peace, it was fondly thought, would put an end to the worst features of this exclusion, and secure another commercial treaty.

Heavy taxation.

To the people the burden was coming home in the heavy taxation. Additions had been made to the taxes on tea, tobacco, newspapers, advertisements, glass, paper, hats, stage-coaches, and property sold by auction; the duties on wine and sugar had been raised twice, and the duty on spirits four times; an extra percentage had been imposed on the produce of the customs; the stamp duties were enormously increased; there were new taxes on agricultural horses, on property insured at sea, and on collateral successions. The last new grievance was " the great temporary exertion " of the Income Tax. So long as the war was carried on by the " funding system," which Sinclair called " the greatest of all political discoveries," the people did not feel the burden except in the gradual increase of interest and sinking fund. But

it was very different when a tenth of all incomes was directly taken by the government, and, though few could stand out against Pitt's logic, the many found in it a new argument for coming to terms with the enemy.

Famine. As the century drew to an end, the arguments for peace were strengthened by famine. Since 1795, indeed, there had been a series of poor harvests, but that of 1799 was universally deficient —"harvest not likely to be over before the New Year"— amounting to little more than half a crop; and in February, 1800, wheat, which in January, 1799, had been under 50/- per quarter, was 101/4.[1] In spite of a considerable importation from abroad, much alarm was entertained as to the future. A Committee of the House of Commons, on 10th February, strongly recommended that all families should use every means in their power to reduce the consumption of wheat and flour, and that charity and poor relief should be given in some other article, such as soup, rice, potatoes, or other substitute. A Bill was passed on 20th February prohibiting bakers from exposing for sale any bread which had not been baked twenty-four hours before, on the ground, not only that stale bread was more wholesome, but that statistics showed that the saving would be from one-eighth to one-third (it actually proved to be one-sixth). On the same day, the Archbishop of Canterbury proposed a set of resolutions, by which the signatories should pledge themselves not to consume more wheaten bread per week than in the proportion of one quartern loaf to each member of the family, and to discontinue all pastry, and this was very largely signed in both Houses. At the end of the month, a Proclamation was issued suspending all duties on grain till the end of September.

Wheat. In March, wheat had risen to 108/4, and the Corn and Bread Committee made further recommendations: a bounty on corn imported from the Mediterranean, America, and the Baltic, and on rice; a bounty to the fisheries, and the removal of the duty on Swedish herring; regulation of the price of grinding corn; stoppage of the distilleries and of the making of starch. These recommendations were at once passed into law.

Wheat, however, continued to rise, till, in July, it was no less

[1] Only eight times during the whole of the eighteenth century—in 1709, 1710, 1757, 1767, 1768, 1795, 1796, 1799—did the price reach 60/-; the highest annual average in the half century before the war was 64/6.

than 134/8; and, though it fell from that point, by December again it was 130/8, owing to a still deficient crop (one quarter under the average in wheat) and the threat of the Russian embargo. The hitherto unheard of importation of over a million and a quarter quarters of wheat and flour seemed to have no effect. The Committee on the High Price of Provisions issued report after report. Bread riots now began in many parts of England and Scotland; and, in response to petitions, the King convened Parliament in November—"out of a tender regard for the welfare of his subjects and a sense of the difficulties with which the poorer classes, particularly, had to struggle." In the debates on the Speech, the high prices were ascribed variously to the bad seasons, to the war, to the incompetency of the Ministers, to the heavy taxation, to over-issue of bank paper. Outside of Parliament, the blame was thrown very generally on the "middleman." The Earl of Warwick appealed to the Bishops "whether there was any passage in Holy Writ which sanctioned the business of a corn factor." The ascription of high prices to the speculation of merchants, indeed, still had a strong hold, even among educated people. Adam Smith, in his day, pointed out that the popular odium which attached to the corn merchant in years of scarcity was so great that the trade was abandoned to an inferior set of dealers, and that bakers, millers, mealmen, and meal factors, together with a number of wretched hucksters, were almost the only middle people that, in the home market, came between the grower and the consumer.[1] But this could not be said in 1800, when there was a Corn Exchange in London, and Lord Grenville stigmatised Warwick's proposal of a maximum—no wheat to be sold at a higher price than 10/—as "the most unfortunate expression ever uttered in the House." The magistrates, in many places, gave notice by public advertisement that all persons guilty of forestalling, regrating, or engrossing provisions, were punishable by indictment, and would be proceeded against with the utmost severity. The popular feeling found utterance in the trial of a partner of one of the principal corn houses in the city, for the old offence of regrating. The Act of Edward which forbade regrating, along with engrossing and forestalling, was, indeed, repealed in 1772, but, by a curious omission in the Act, it was found possible to prosecute on these charges. Thus we read in the *Annual Register*

Denunciation of the middleman.

Regrating.

[1] *Wealth of Nations*, book IV. chap. v.

of the year: "This day, one, Mr. Rusby, was tried in the court of King's Bench, on an indictment against him, as an eminent corn factor, for having purchased by sample, on the 8th of November last, in the corn market, Mark Lane, 90 qrs. of oats at 41/- per quarter and sold 30 of them again in the same market, on the same day, at 44/-. The most material testimony on the part of the Crown was given by Thomas Smith, a partner of the defendant's. After the evidence had been gone through, Lord Kenyon made an address to the jury, who almost instantly found the defendant guilty. Lord Kenyon then said: 'You have conferred, by your verdict, almost the greatest benefit on your country that ever was conferred by any jury.'"[1] But Lord Kenyon was Chief Justice of England, and the consequence of his judgment was that an excited mob broke into Rusby's house, pillaging and destroying, and that the Corn Exchange itself was threatened till the Riot Act was read in front of it.[2]

Short Commons.

In the end of the year, a Bill was passed prohibiting the exportation of rice and provisions, and a Royal Proclamation was issued exhorting the strictest economy in the use of every kind of grain, the abstaining from pastry, and the reducing of the consumption of bread by at least one-third—upon no account "to exceed one quartern loaf for each person in each week." The Brown Bread Act was also passed prohibiting the baking of bread solely from fine wheaten flour. This was one of the measures to which the Committee attached most importance, as it was thought that it would effect a great saving in the raw material. But the prejudices of the people were insurmountable, and, after a few weeks' trial in the beginning of the next year, the Act was hastily repealed.[3]

General high prices.

The high prices of grain due to the two bad harvests, it must be remembered, were accompanied by high prices of many other commodities, more or less necessaries of life, owing to the war taxation. Salt (now taxed at 15/- per bushel), soap, candles, leather, malt, beer, sugar, tea, tobacco, and fuel, had risen enormously from this cause. And all articles coming from the

[1] Chron. 23.

[2] Chron. 2. This seems to have been the last conviction under the common law for regrating; but, on January 28th, 1801, we read that "Mr. Waddington, for engrossing hops, was adjudged to pay a fine of £500, and to be imprisoned for one month and till such fine be paid."

[3] Massey, *History of England during the Reign of George the Third*, iv. 530.

Baltic, such as hemp, flax, timber, foreign iron, linseed, had risen on account of the Russian embargo and the hostility of Denmark. "The artizan found," says Harriet Martineau, "that, since he began life, the expense of living had become five-fold or more. Meat, which had been 4d. per lb. when he married, was now 9d. Butter had trebled in price, and sugar doubled, and malt quadrupled, and poor rate quintupled."[1]

Standard of comfort.

An interesting sidelight on the standard of comfort of the time is given in one of the discussions on the scarcity, pointing out the extra expenses incurred by withdrawing 300,000 or 400,000 soldiers and sailors from industry, and maintaining them on the necessary dietary: "The men under Sir Ralph Abercromby were fed on animal food and wheaten bread. In the cottages which they inhabited before the war their usual fare was, perhaps, neither animal food nor wheaten bread. If they were Irishmen, their food consisted of potatoes and buttermilk; if Scotsmen, they had lived probably on oatmeal, barley bread, and herrings."[2]

Rise in the cost of living.

The great rise in the cost of living is well illustrated by two contemporary calculations. One is from the *Annual Register*,[3] and is entitled "An estimate of the Expenses of Housekeeping, between 1773 and 1800, by an Inhabitant of Bury St. Edmunds."

| | 1773 | | | 1793 | | | 1799 | | | 1800 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | £ | s. | d. | £ | s. | d. | £ | s. | d. | £ | s. | d. |
| Comb of malt - | 0 | 12 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Chaldron of coals - | 1 | 11 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 11 | 0 |
| Comb of oats - - | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 16 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Load of hay - - | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 10 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Meat - - - | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| Butter - - - | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Sugar (loaf) - - | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Soap - - - | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 9½ | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| Window lights, 30 windows - | 3 | 10 | 0 | 7 | 10 | 0 | 12 | 12 | 0 | 12 | 12 | 0 |
| Candles - - - | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 9½ | 0 | 0 | 10½ |
| Poor rates per qr. - | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Income Tax on £200 | | — | | | — | | 20 | 0 | 0 | 20 | 0 | 0 |
| | 8 | 4 | 0 | 16 | 2 | 8 | 42 | 9 | 4 | 45 | 14 | 1½ |

[1] *History*, 1800-1815, 22. [2] *Annual Register*, 1801, 14.

[3] Chron. 94.

The other is given by Arthur Young. A person now living in the vicinity of Bury (Suffolk), when he laboured for 5/- a week, could purchase with that 5/-:

| | | while in 1801 the same articles cost | £ | s. | d. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A bushel of wheat | | - | 0 | 16 | 0 |
| A bushel of malt | | - | 0 | 9 | 0 |
| A pound of butter | 5/- | - | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| A pound of cheese | | - | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| One pennyworth of tobacco | | - | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| | | | 1 | 6 | 5 |
| Suppose in 1801 his wages produced him | 9/- | | 0 | 15 | 0 |
| Suppose as a pauper from the parish rates | 6/- | | | | |
| | | | 0 | 11 | 5 |

"So that to enable him to purchase the same quantities he procured when his week's wages were 5/-, would now require 11/5 more than his wages and the parish allowance together."[1]

The question which naturally arises is how the poorer classes managed to live during these two years. The answer is two-fold: by a rise of wages and by an increase in poor relief.

**Rise of wages**

When wages were very close to the margin of subsistence, as they generally were in agriculture, they had to rise as bread rose if the people were not to perish: during the war, too, the upward pressure of the competing services of army and navy was always being exerted. In 1795 and 1796, accordingly, in most branches of industry there was a rise of wages, and in 1800 still another.[2] The wages of agricultural labour are generally stated roughly, in parliamentary debates, as 9/- or 10/- a week. But a very large advance would have been necessary when wheat rose from its old average of 60/- to 114/-. And, when bread was the chief food of the people, the high price was scarcely more serious than the constant fluctuation of prices. The labourer had little chance of maintaining any standard of living when the quartern loaf one year was 9d. and another 18d.

**—in agriculture:**

[1] *Annals of Agriculture*, xxxvii. 265.

[2] Tooke, *History of Prices*, i. 225. Mr. Wilson Fox estimates that, in 1800, the rate of weekly wages in Essex was 10/-. On the other hand, I find in the *Farmer's Magazine* of 1800, in a statement showing "the immense increase which has taken place in the price of labour," the "wage and maintenance" of a ploughman working two horses given as £21 a year (p. 45).

Of the rise of wages in artizan and manufacturing labour, Tooke gives no figures, except that, among journeymen tailors, the utmost advance was from 21/9 to 25/- per week in 1795, and, among printers' compositors, from 24/- to 27/-, and that, by the Greenwich Hospital table, builders appeared to have experienced very little advance in 1800 as compared with the rates of the twenty years previous—carpenters, from 2/6 and 2/8 per day to 3/2; bricklayers, 2/4 to 3/-; masons, 2/8 to 2/10; plumbers, 3/- to 3/3. But these changes were not by any means proportionate to the rise in the prices of necessaries. —among artizans.

It must be remembered, however, that any accurate statistics of wages cannot be looked for. Where men and women spun or wove in their own homes, any reliable estimate of their wages per week is almost impossible—even where they worked for employers; to say nothing of the considerations that spinning and weaving were generally by-employments, that children were impressed to do their share of the work, and that the sum earned depended on the number of hours worked. It would be entirely misleading, in such circumstances, to make more than a general statement that wages were rising or falling. We have some figures of what was given for a certain amount of work—as, *e.g.* the piece of so many yards wide—and we know how the prices of this piece rose or fell. But as to the time it took to weave this, or the number of persons employed at it, we know nothing. Uncertainty of wage statistics

In agriculture, indeed, there is more certainty, as weekly wages were paid. But even here we should require more accurate knowledge than we have of what allowances were given in kind in addition to money,[1] and, in face of the differences in these allowances from county to county even in the present day, we should have the same hesitation in claiming accuracy for any average.

Only in one department can better statistics be looked for—in work where the product was sold in one large group, such as building. There we have occasionally, as above, figures of the rate per hour of wages of builders, carpenters, masons, bricklayers, etc.

But the rise of wages, unhappily, was checked by the introduction of a system of poor relief destined to have very far-reaching consequences. Alarmed by the increase in the poor Poor relief.

[1] In Scotland, for instance, the "salutary practice" largely prevailed of paying married farm servants partly in necessaries, instead of money; they received a certain quantity of oats, barley, and peas, had a cow kept, and a piece of ground for raising potatoes and flax. *Farmer's Magazine*, 1800, 203.

rate, Pitt in 1795 had advocated Schools of Industry for the destitute poor—the materials to be bought, the products sold, and the wages fixed by the local authorities. Land was to be bought or hired, and commons might be enclosed. Persons having more than two children were to be entitled to relief, and money for the purchase of a cow or some other animal might be advanced in deserving cases. The Bill was subjected to a ruthless analysis by Bentham, and was so heartily criticised in Parliament that it was withdrawn. The measures actually adopted, however, were no less crude.

**The opening of the flood-gates.**

Justices had at that time the power, on a pauper's statement of some matter which they should consider to be a reasonable cause or ground for relief, to summon the overseers to show cause why relief should not be given, and to order such relief as they thought fit. And against this order there was no appeal. But the great interference of the magistrates began at Speenhamland in 1795, during the time of the high prices. If they had left things alone, as was done in Scotland, wages would have risen to meet the reduced purchasing power of money. Unhappily, "no knowledge is so rare as the knowledge when to do nothing." Up till then, parochial relief appears to have been given chiefly through the workhouses, and to have been extended to few other than the impotent. But, in that year, the Berkshire magistrates, instead of advancing wages as they were empowered to do, began a scale system—under the sanction, it must be admitted, of public opinion—and issued a table of relief, "making up" wages to a certain income corresponding with the assumed necessities of each family, and varying with the price of the gallon loaf. In the next year, an Act was passed repealing the earlier Statute of 1722 which restricted out-relief. The flood-gates were opened, and the cost rose with frightful rapidity.[1]

Notwithstanding all these hardships at home, it was clear that the trade of the country had very greatly increased during the war.

[1] The reasons, and the far-reaching consequences, of this great and fatal deviation from previous poor law policy are fully and forcibly dealt with in the great *Report of the Poor Law Commission of* 1834, pp. 120-132, of which a full summary, so far as possible in *ipsissima verba*, is given in the Majority Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, 1909. The most obvious effect was the rise of the poor rate from two millions sterling in 1785 to about four millions in 1800.

The Official values of all imports into and exports from Great Britain during 1800 were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports | £28,257,000 |
| Exports | £34,381,000[1] |

This showed an increase in imports since 1792 of over eleven millions, and in exports of over twelve millions.

The detailed exports of British produce and manufacture for 1800 are as below:[2] Exports.

| | |
|---|---|
| Woollen goods | £6,918,000 |
| Cotton | £5,323,834 |
| Iron (wrought and cast) | £1,570,820 |
| Refined sugar | £1,105,548 |
| Linens | £807,572 |
| Coals | £530,508 |
| Cotton yarn | £528,014 |
| Wrought copper | £514,216 |
| Wrought brass | £419,507 |
| Silks | £296,826 |
| Fish | £251,167 |
| Tin | £249,842 |
| Beaver hats | £261,157 |
| Salt | £197,872 |
| Glass | £195,066 |
| Stockings, thread, cotton, and silk mixed | £180,834 |
| Lead | £139,996 |
| Felt hats | £137,113 |
| Haberdashery | £129,074 |
| Steel | £121,808 |
| Pewter | £113,330 |
| Train oil | £105,770 |
| Wrought leather | £98,370 |
| Soap | £95,665 |
| All other articles | £3,567,287 |

[1] The trade with Ireland is not included in this account. Like the prices of corn, the figures of import and export are given differently by different authorities, the cause being, no doubt, the inclusion or exclusion of the Irish foreign trade, of the coasting trade between Great Britain and Ireland, of re-exports, etc. For these reasons, even the figures of the Public Accounts, given in *Hansard* for each year, are ambiguous, and I have thought best to adhere throughout to those given in the financial blue-book, *Customs Tariffs of the United Kingdom from* 1800 *to* 1897 (c. 8706), the compiler of which must have had all these difficulties before him, and drawn up his tables on a uniform plan.

[2] The figures are taken from *Hansard*, i. (1803-4) Public Accounts, Append. Of the total exports, nearly £7,000,000 went to America—as against £3,500,000 in 1793.

Imports

The chief imports in the same year—exclusive of those from the East Indies and China—were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Sugar | £4,026,000 |
| Coffee | £3,946,000 |
| Corn | £2,675,000 |
| Linen | £1,742,000 |
| Cotton wool | £1,663,000 |
| Provisions | £1,229,000 |

Re-exports.

The chief articles of foreign merchandise exported were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Coffee | £8,679,886[1] |
| Indian piece goods | £2,664,964 |
| Sugar | £2,361,332 |
| Tobacco | £627,968 |
| Indigo | £510,075 |
| Linens | £508,826 |
| Tea | £456,482 |
| Rum | £431,599 |
| Pepper | £374,071 |
| Wines | £192,987 |
| Cotton wool | £177,144 |
| Cochineal | £165,337 |
| Cinnamon | £145,009 |
| Cloves | £133,142 |
| Total, | £13,815,837[2] |

It is never wise to take the figures of foreign trade as more than collateral evidence either of the activity or of the prosperity of a country, and this is particularly true in times when political, revenue, and protective considerations entered into the exporting and importing of goods. But the figures show, what we should otherwise infer, that England was fairly under way to be an industrial instead of an agricultural country.

Cotton.

Among the exports, Cotton was the most notable, as well by the phenomenal rapidity of its increase as by its prospects, although, as yet, it stood only second as regards value. England was the

[1] But there is a deduction, called "over-estimate on coffee," of £5,031,898.

[2] *Hansard*, i. 1147. The figures in these three tables are all "official" or "rated" values; that is, the quantities reduced to a scale fixed by the Custom House in 1697, and never altered till 1854, when a uniform method of arriving at the values of both imports and exports, according to the prices of the day, was instituted. The "real" values of exports, were not given till 1798, when the convoy duty was levied on the values as "declared" by the exporters. But the records of "real values" of exports are complete only from 1805.

last country in Europe to make cotton goods, but, once started, the rise and progress of the manufacture in Great Britain, as Porter has said, forms perhaps the most extraordinary page in the annals of human industry. In 1797, the imports of raw cotton were £734,000; in 1800, they were £1,663,000, representing some 56 millions of lbs., as against 31 millions in 1790 and 18 millions in 1785.[1]

The old system.

This extraordinary expansion was due to three great inventions within a dozen years. Up till 1760, the machines used in spinning and weaving—the one-thread wheel and the hand loom—were nearly as simple as those of India. "The cotton manufacture, though rapidly increasing, could never have received such an extension as to become of great national importance without the discovery of some method for producing a greater quantity and better quality of yarn with the same labour. . . . The weaver was continually pressing upon the spinner. The processes of spinning and weaving were generally performed in the same cottage, but the weaver's own family could not supply him with a sufficient quantity of weft, and he had much pains to collect it from neighbouring spinsters. Thus his time was wasted, and he was often subjected to high demands for an article, on which, as the demand exceeded the supply, the seller could put her own price." [2]

Spinning jenny.

Water twist.

Mule.

But, in 1767, Hargreaves invented the spinning jenny, making a yarn good enough for weft, but needing woollen or linen warps. In 1769, came Arkwright's roller spinning—the "water twist"—making a yarn hard and fine enough for warps also. In 1779, Crompton invented the mule, spinning up to a fineness of 350 hanks per lb.—before his invention it was thought impossible to spin 80 hanks to the lb.—and the water twist was made free to the public in that year. Crompton took out no patent, and his mules were running in a Lanark factory by 1790. There was an immediate rush of capital and labour into spinning, and the export of cotton yarn and manufactures rose from about £1½ millions in 1790 to nearly £5½ millions in 1800. The steam engine had

[1] Up till 1790, no cotton came from the United States, our supply being got mainly from the West Indies and South America. But, after Whitney's invention, the United States exports rose from 1,600,000 lbs. in 1794 to nearly 18,000,000 lbs in 1800. Simond, in 1810, said that he remembered the first samples of sea-island cotton shown as a curiosity at New York twenty years before. (*Journal*, i. 242.)

[2] Baines, *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, 115.

come, and with it the factory, and the factory was no longer erected on the banks of streams to secure water power, but wherever coal and iron and abundance of labour dictated.

The Factory System.

"Instead of carrying the people to the power, it was found possible to place the power among the people."[1] The manufacture was taken up in Ireland, where, said Peel in 1800, "it boasted an equal importation with the woollen manufactory of this country," and was considered a dangerous rival.[2]

Wages.

At first the enormous output of yarn led to handloom weavers being in the utmost request, and to their wages rising above those of any other class of workmen. Baines gives a table paid in Bolton for weaving a six-quarter 60 reed cambric, 120 picks in one inch, from which it appears that the wage in 1795 and 1796 was 33/3. But those high wages led to an increased supply of labour, and wages fell to 25/- in 1799-1801.[3] As yet, machine weaving was scarcely thought of. Cartwright, indeed, had taken

The power-loom.

out his patent for the power-loom in 1785, but he could not during his lifetime make the working remunerative. It was only in 1801, when Monteith fitted up a mill in Pollokshaws, near Glasgow, with two hundred power-looms, that the invention proved itself a commercial success.

Calico-printing.

An important part in the trade was played by calico-printing, the rise of which was associated with the Peel family (though carried on in London since the latter part of the seventeenth century). Since 1785, Bell's copper cylinder had superseded the old hand block-printing—the cylinder, worked by a man and a boy, printed as much calico as a hundred block-printers and a hundred tear boys together—and nearly 33,000,000 yards of British manufacture paid duty in 1800.

Bleaching.

By this time, too, the bleaching properties of chlorine had been discovered, and the process reduced from months to days.

Wool

The traditional staple of the country, Wool, still held the first place among manufactures. The exports of woollen fabrics had risen from £3 millions in 1700 to close on £7 millions in

[1] Harriet Martineau hazards a calculation that in 1801 the number of cotton spinners was 27,000. A Parliamentary Commission in 1832 said that, at the beginning of the century, spinners' wages were 32/6 for 74 hours' work.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxv. 123.

[3] Baines, *History of the Cotton Manufacture*, 489.

1800.[1] The capital sunk in mills and machinery, according to Pitt,[2] was about £6 millions, producing nearly £20 millions worth of produce. To Ireland, in spite of a protecting duty of 50 per cent., Great Britain was exporting woollen manufactures to the value of £600,000.[3] The woollen manufactures of Scotland, it was said, were of the cheaper and coarser sorts. Raw wool came in free of duty—the import in 1800 was 8,609,000 lbs.—and the export of raw wool was strictly prohibited from 1660 till 1825. The number of sheep in England and Wales was estimated at 19 millions.

—checked by protection

All this time, although the wearing of wool was universal, the trade does not seem to have been increasing. One cause was, of course, the competition of cotton, linen, and silk fabrics. Another was the jealous protection which came down as a heritage from centuries. From the time of Elizabeth, scarcely an improvement had been made in the process of manufacture. In France, great progress had resulted from the mixing of native and foreign wool; but, unstimulated by competition—for the import of foreign woollens was strictly prohibited—and secured in his monopoly of long-stapled wool by prohibition of its export and even by prohibition of the export of live sheep, the British manufacturer worked along contentedly in his old methods.

and by high prices.

But a more serious cause of wool only holding its own was the rising price of the raw material, notwithstanding the increasing import of Spanish wool. In 1785, the Norfolk pack had been 9/-; in 1795, it was 19/10, and, in 1798, it began to rise further. On the one hand, the demand was increased by the clothing necessities of the growing population. On the other, the supply was kept down by the increasing demand of the same growing population for the sheep as mutton, by the bad seasons, by the enclosures, and by the encroachment of tillage on grass. Hence the opposition on the part of the British manufacturers to the article in the Union Bill which allowed free export of wool to Ireland—where wool had been much dearer.

Not yet a machine industry.

In this trade machinery had not as yet played a prominent part. It is a striking fact that the great textile inventions were first applied to cotton, and did not extend to wool till much later

[1] We have, however, no details of the quantity of woollens exported earlier than 1815, and, as the price of wool had doubled in that period, it is probable that the number of yards and pieces was not much, if at all, greater. Porter, *Progress of the Nation*, 167.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxv. 139. [3] Wilberforce, in *Hansard*, xxxv. 130.

—the exceptions being Paul's carding cylinder (1748), which, however, did not become a success until applied to cotton, and Kay's fly-shuttle (1738), which enabled one man to do the work of two. The spinning jenny was not in general use in wool manufacture. In wool, as in cotton, the power-loom was in its infancy.

Wool-combing.

One great invention, indeed, destined to revolutionise the trade, had appeared. Cartwright had taken out his first patent for wool-combing in 1790, and, in 1792, patented the circular horizontal comb-table, claiming that a set of three machines would require the attendance of one overlooker and ten children, and would comb a pack, or 240 lbs., in 12 hours. But the invention had not yet been proved remunerative to work, although it created so much alarm among the fifty thousand hand-combers that a Bill backed by forty petitions was brought in to Parliament for its suppression. Even when introduced, however, it was not adapted to all classes of work; the hand-combers as yet had it all their own way, and the great struggle was postponed for a quarter of a century.

Linen

Linen—probably the oldest textile—was not to any extent a manufacture of England, its products being estimated at £2 millions only. Tradition has it that the Phoenicians carried it to Ireland, where the climate and the soil gave the flax plant a congenial home; anyhow, as early as the ninth century, the robes of the clergy were of Irish linen, and the dead were buried

—in Ireland

in it. The ancient policy had been to keep wool a monopoly for England alone, and, when the two countries came into close relations, it was recognised that Ireland had a right to a similar monopoly in some other manufacture. In 1[illegible] accordingly, the linen and woollen compact was made. Ireland was now prohibited, not indeed from making woollen goods, but from exporting them to any country but England, and this exception did not mean much, as they were prevented entry by very high duties. But the manufacture of linen in Ireland was directly encouraged, not only by free importation and exportation of flax, but by the payment of a bounty on all linen goods imported from there into the United Kingdom, as well as, it would seem, by a bounty on Irish linens exported from Great Britain. The industry, then, had become a very important one for Ireland. In 1800, over 38 millions of yards were exported to Great Britain, and over 2 millions to other countries

(829,000 to the British Colonies, and 1,290,000 to the United States).[1]

But, while the manufacture of wool was directly discouraged in Ireland, in the other parts of the empire the manufacture of linen was not. In 1727, a Board of Trustees was appointed for the improvement of the industry in Scotland, and there linen obtained a firm root. Up till the end of the century, the manufacture was a domestic one, carried on by the primitive spindle and distaff. The first patent for flax-spinning machinery was taken out in 1787; and it is only in 1800 that we find flax-spinning mills being erected in Scotland and in the north of England.[2]

in Scotland

If the manufacture of Silk was not of much importance in comparison with that of cotton and of wool—the value of silk products was under £3 millions—it was not for want of encouragement. It was introduced into England at least as early as into France—about the middle of the fifteenth century—and it was already a powerful trade when the French weavers took refuge at Spitalfields on the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. For a few years after that date, it made great advances, but then government began to protect it, first by prohibitory duties and then by prohibition. In the ordinary course of events came smuggling on a great scale, serious fluctuations, continual recourse to Parliament by the conflicting interests of spinning and weaving, and combination and outrages on the part of workmen. In 1783, came the Spitalfields Act, regulating the price of labour and preventing the employment of weavers outside the district. As cotton became an active competitor, the full effect of this was gradually seen in the deterioration of the product, and in the removal of the trade to Macclesfield and other places. In 1793, 4,000 looms were standing in Spitalfields. But by 1798, it is said, the trade was beginning slowly to revive,[3] although this is not shown by the exports, which, in 1800, were £296,000—almost the same as in 1797.

Silk checked by protection.

The effect of all these changes in textiles was nothing short of

[1] *Hansard*, i. 1115. The compact, in fact, was turning out a very costly one to the mother country. As Wilberforce pointed out in the Union debate, the annual bounty paid was about £30,000; "and, still more, we have been paying 33 per cent. more for all the Irish linens we have consumed than we should have paid for the same quantity of linen imported from Germany." *Hansard*, xxxv. 132.

[2] M'Culloch, *Commercial Dictionary*, *ad verb.*

[3] M'Culloch, *Commercial Dictionary*, *ad verb.*

The industrial revolution:

revolutionary. The quantity produced was enormously increased; the quality was greatly improved; and the prices fell. The factory system superseded domestic industry. The hours of work, if not more than before, were regulated by the running of the machinery, and labour became continuous and worked at high pressure. Children were now a very important wage-earning class. The old ties, which had rooted families in districts for generations, were broken, and the migration, already observed by Defoe in the earlier part of the eighteenth century, from villages to towns, and from the eastern and southern counties to the centre and north, rapidly grew.

its hardships.

The introduction of these great inventions was not unaccompanied by suffering. But the effect was very different in the two great textiles. Cotton practically never was worked by hand appliances, and the new system caused no displacement of labour. But in wool, an old domestic industry, carried on very often by the various members of a family as an auxiliary trade to agriculture, was gradually displaced by a machine industry requiring specialised labour, and the hardships of the displacement were very great. This will be abundantly illustrated in the records which follow.[1]

This great rise of manufacture would not have been possible without the aid of steam, and the general use of steam power needed increased supplies of coal and iron.

The steam engine.

In 1785, Watt erected the first engine which turned a cotton mill, in Papplewick, Nottinghamshire. The first engines for this purpose in Manchester and Glasgow were built in 1789 and 1792 respectively. By 1800, the number of steam engines

[1] Of the size of these first factories, one would like to know more. My own impression, based on the recollection of the first thread mill, erected in Glasgow in 1820 by my granduncle, was that they were little more than what we should now consider large houses. But in the *Wilberforce Correspondence* we read of the mills at New Lanark: "Dale's lofty cotton works . . . mill after mill arising, a cluster of these wonders of art adorning a most romantic situation," as enthusiastic tourists called them, where nearly 2,000 people were employed; of the first muslin mill in Lancashire, at Stockport, where in 1793 the owner had laid out £50,000 in buildings and machinery alone; of another firm in Stockport which had been paying weekly wages to about 15,000 hands—how many of these in factories, there is no means of determining; of Monteith's 200 power looms in his mill at Pollokshaws, etc. Certainly, they were bad places to spend the long working day in. When Arkwright's mill at Cromford, Derbyshire, was reconstructed after being partially destroyed by fire in 1890, every second floor was taken out. But probably the mills, bad as they were, compared favourably with the cottages in which work had been carried on before then.

in use in Manchester was 32, with an aggregate of 430 horse-power.[1]

The production of Coal had, for some years before this, been very much increased by a steam engine of sorts used for pumping out the water. But mining was still conducted on a very wasteful method, partly owing to the want of plans or maps of the workings, and partly owing to the necessity of leaving pillars of coal as supports to the roof—for the introduction of wood-props did not come till the beginning of the century, and it was not till 1810 that it was found possible to remove the intermediate pillars and reduce the pillars remaining—so that, at a depth of 100 fathoms, little more than 40 per cent. was abstracted. In 1801, about 2 million tons were being shipped coastwise and to foreign parts from the ports of Newcastle and Sunderland.[2] Before the introduction of the Davy lamp in 1815, however, dangerous mines could not be worked. Coal.

During the earlier part of the eighteenth century, the making of Iron had been falling off owing to the difficulty of obtaining fuel. The decline was checked by the opening up of the coal measures. Between 1750 and 1790, the output of coal increased from $4\frac{3}{4}$ millions of tons to over $7\frac{1}{2}$ millions, and, in 1795, it was over 10 million tons. About 1790, the steam engine was applied to work the blast furnaces; by 1792, the Carron Ironworks were employing a thousand workmen and consuming 136 tons of coal per day; and, by 1796, the production of pig-iron was nearly double that of eight years previously. Pitt's attempt to tax coal in that year produced figures which showed the growing importance of both coal and iron. A very careful enquiry was then made as to the ironworks which would be affected, and, according to this return, there were, in England and Wales 104 furnaces producing 108,000 tons of iron, and, in Scotland, 17 furnaces producing 16,000 tons. The South Wales ironworks were now reopened, and new centres of industry arose in Scotland and the north of England, while Sussex and the Forest of Dean were abandoned. By 1799, we were exporting about a million and a half sterling of wrought and cast iron, as compared with a million in the preceding year. Iron.

The traditional mining of Copper and Tin was still carried on chiefly in Cornwall. Of copper, the amount mined in 1800 was over 5,000 tons; of tin, about 2,500 tons. The value of the exports in Copper and tin.

[1] Porter, *Progress of the Nation*, 178.

[2] *Ibid.* 276 *seq.*

that year was over £514,000 of wrought copper, and about £250,000 of tin.[1]

Salt. Among the mineral productions of England, Salt had for long been an article of considerable importance. It was found in fossil or solid form in Cheshire, and in brine springs in Cheshire and Worcestershire. The former (rock salt) was exported principally to the north of Europe; the latter went mostly into consumption as "white salt." The export in 1800 was nearly £200,000. The total quantity of salt made (and taxed) in 1801 was 9½ millions of bushels.[2]

Where goods were mostly consumed at home, and were fortunate enough to escape taxation by excise, we have little means of estimating the relative importance of their manufacture. Among the more prominent home industries of the time, the following may be mentioned.

Leather. Leather goods came second among the manufactures of the country, their value being estimated at something like £10½ millions. The excellence of English leather was said to be due to the wealth and respectability of English tanners, which enabled them to give the hides sufficient time in the tanning process.[3]

Earthenware. Up till the middle of the century, England, although possessing all the necessary materials, had imported all the Earthenware of any artistic pretensions. But, within twenty years after that, Wedgwood's porcelain had taken the place of the china of Chelsea and Derby which Johnson had found as expensive as silver. In every inn from Paris to St. Petersburg, said Saint Fond, one was served upon English ware, and the manufacture of pewter was being affected by the universal introduction of earthenware utensils. The annual value of the output was put at something like £2 millions.

Cutlery. The making of Cutlery had been rooted at Sheffield since Elizabeth's time, because of the coal, stone, and iron which abounded in the district, and the five streams flowing into it from the valleys round about.

Gun making. Gun making, an important industry in these times of war, was almost a monopoly of Birmingham. Macpherson notes that, in 1787, between 4,000 and 5,000 persons were employed in that city in making guns for the African market. In 1793, when the Government brought in a Bill forbidding the export of arms,

[1] Porter, *Progress of the Nation*, 272. *Hansard*, i. 1147.
[2] *Ibid.* 286. [3] *Scots Magazine*, 1801, 83.

among other things, to France, Fox objected; "considering all wars of late years in Europe as contests of revenue rather than of arms, he questioned whether it would not be of advantage to this country to trade with its enemies, and perhaps to sell to them even articles of arms whilst we had prompt payment, at our own prices, for them."

Wrought Brass and Copper goods were made at Birmingham; Locks were the traditional manufacture of Wolverhampton; Plated goods, Buckles, and Buttons were made mostly at Sheffield and Birmingham.[1] Birmingham goods.

The fine English Glass was famous, and was now, it seems, preferred in France to the native manufacture, but the growth of glass-making had been much hampered by excessive duties and severe excise regulations. Its product was estimated at about £1½ millions. Glass.

In the manufacture of Paper, long an imported article, we were able to hold our own with France after 1792. The export of rags, it may be noted, was subject to very severe prohibitory laws in both countries. The annual value was under £1 million. Paper

Hempen manufactures were estimated at £1½ millions. In rope-making, it is noticed that machinery had been introduced in many departments. Hempen goods

Lastly, the manufacture of Clocks and Watches was an important industry, while Beaver Hats were among our chief exports. Clocks and Hats.

Of the rise and progress of another branch of industry which must have been making rapid strides, Machine-making, we know very little, for the reason that the exportation of its products was strictly prohibited. The laws which prevented not only the sending abroad of machinery, but the emigration of skilled artizans, remained on the statute book till 1835, and, even after that, there was a long list of machines or classes of machines which could not be exported except by permission of the Board of Trade. When a mint was erected in Russia in 1799, Matthew Boulton had to get a special Act of Parliament (39 Geo. III. c. xcvi.) passed to allow him to export the necessary machinery, and the same was done in the case of the American mint in 1816. Machine-making.

The jealousy with which the secrets of the new machinery were preserved was extreme. Saint Fond, who found carding Machinery a trade secret.

[1] Birmingham, "famous for its buttons and locks, its ignorance and barbarism," said Telford.

and spinning just being introduced in Perth in 1784, tells us that the machines were conveyed out of Manchester by night from fear of the manufacturers there, and he himself was refused admittance to the Manchester factories—"the vigilance of the manufacturers had been redoubled, since they were persuaded that a French colonel, who had come to the town some time before, had wanted to procure plans of these machines in order to have them constructed in France: since then no stranger, and not even a citizen of the town who might be intelligent and observant, could have access."[1] In 1800, a couple of Scots farmers, making a tour in England, wished to see some of the manufactures. Arrived at Sheffield, they produced a letter of introduction. "Pray, gentlemen, where do you come from?" "From Scotland." "Sorry for it, for I can neither show the manufactures to a Scotsman nor a Frenchman. You are come to carry off our inventions, I suppose." It was to no purpose he was assured that they were country farmers, investigating the husbandry of the kingdom, and that they only wished to gratify a little harmless curiosity. "It won't do, gentlemen. You are Scotsmen! sorry for it; can't show you the manufactures. Goodbye."[2]

Shipping.

In shipping, we were, of course, supreme. In 1801, the registered vessels belonging to the British dominions, and employed in trade, numbered 19,772, representing 2,037,000 tons.[3] At the Peace of Amiens, it was calculated that our mercantile marine had increased by nearly a third since the outbreak of the war in 1793. But the United States, as we shall see, were promising before long to rival us as ocean carriers.

Home consumption.

An estimate made by Sir Frederick Eden, then Chairman of the Globe Insurance Co., of the value of the principal goods manufactured and retained for home consumption in 1800, is given by Macpherson as under:[4]

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Woollen | goods | - | - | £11 | millions | (*plus* | £8 | millions | exported) | |
| Cotton | „ | - | - | 6 | „ | ( „ | 4 | „ | „ | ) |
| Flax | „ | - | - | 2 | „ | | | | | |
| Hempen | „ | - | - | 2 | „ | | | | | |
| Silk | „ | - | - | 3 | „ | | | | | |

[1] *A Journey through England and Scotland* (Geikie's translation), ii. 113, 267.

[2] *Farmer's Magazine*, 1800, 150.

[3] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 907.

[4] *Annals of Commerce*, iv. 548.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Leather goods | £12 millions | |
| Glass „ | 2 „ | |
| Porcelain and pottery | 2 „ | |
| Paper | 1½ „ | |
| Hardware | 6 „ | |
| Beer | 10 „ | (annual consumption, 200 million gallons) |
| Spirits | 4 „ | ( „ 10 „ ) |
| Soap | 1½ „ | |
| Salt | 1 „ | |
| Candles (wax and tallow) | 2 „ | |

He adds that the annual value of the principal agricultural crops was £52 millions; the value of the shipping of Great Britain and Ireland, £20 millions; the machinery, engines, and plant (in England alone), £40 millions; and the annual value of British manufactures for home consumption alone, £76 millions (*plus* £40 millions exported).

Labour.

There were, of course, no Trade Unions in these days. Concerted action among the journeymen of particular trades to secure their industrial interests had been common, indeed, for about a century, and the central and local authorities had been kept busy determining questions of work and wages according to the somewhat tangled mass of legislation dating from the time of Elizabeth. Strikes were familiar enough. For instance, we read that, on 26th January, 1801, the journeymen tailors, "who had stood out so long for an increase of their wages from 25/- to 30/- per week," were awarded by the Recorder of London and three aldermen, 27/-, and double that sum in the case of a general mourning.[1]

The Combination Act.

But the further progress towards Trade Unionism was suddenly checked in 1799 by the passing, within twenty-four hours, of the famous Act "to prevent unlawful combinations of workmen." It was re-affirmed and amended in the following year, and is usually called the Combination Act of 1800 (c. 69). It declared all existing and all future combinations, contracts, covenants, etc., among journeymen manufacturers, illegal and punishable, entering at great detail into the purposes of combination covered by the Act, such as to obtain advance of wages, restrict the hours and quantity of work, tempt workers to quit their employment, etc.

But the engrossing interest of the history of manufacture, and its phenomenal development, should not make one forget that, in 1800, the chief industry of the country was still

[1] *Annual Register*, Chron. 2.

Agriculture: agriculture. In it, indeed, there had been no such revolution as followed the great textile inventions and the application of steam. The introduction of the turnip and the artificial grasses in 1619, making possible both the rotation of crops and the keeping of stock alive over winter, had, indeed, made an immense change. But turnips and hay were not recognised as farming crops for a hundred years, and they came into general cultivation only towards the end of the eighteenth century. Science was first applied when the great landowners took up agriculture as a favourite occupation in the early part of the eighteenth century, and after Jethro Tull had written his *Horse Hoeing Husbandry* in 1733. It was the middle of the century before Bakewell began his experiments in stock raising, directed to the raising of mutton rather than of wool.

—reason of its slow progress.

The reason of the slow progress of agriculture, however, is not far to seek. It is that individual enterprise in farming was made all but impossible by the still prevailing system of common fields. Even as late as the Revolution of 1688, some three-fifths of the land of England was tilled in this traditional fashion, and, for a century afterwards, there was little change. It is difficult to see how a farmer could drain his holding when his neighbour's holding blocked the outfall, or could improve his cattle or sheep when they were fed and folded promiscuously, and were liable to the contagion of scab and rot which were rarely absent, or could work his farm economically when he had to walk perhaps miles from one part of it to another. Sir Archibald Grant's description of his paternal estate of Moneymusk, Aberdeenshire, in 1716, seems to have been fairly typical of farm property for many years afterwards:—

"There was not one acre enclosed, nor any timber upon it but a few elm, sycamore, and ash, about a small kitchen garden adjoining the house, and some struggling trees at some of the farm-yards, with a small copse wood, not enclosed, and dwarfish, and browsed by sheep and cattle. All the farms ill-disposed, and mixed, different persons having alternate ridges; not one wheel carriage on the estate, nor indeed any one road that would allow it. The whole land raised and uneven, and full of stones; many of them very large, of a hard iron quality; and all the ridges crooked in shape of an **S**, and very high and full of noxious weeds and poor, being worn out by culture, without proper manure or tillage. The people poor, ignorant, and slothful, and ingrained enemies to planting, enclosing, or any improvement or cleanness."

The awakening of agriculture came with the enclosing Acts which put an end to this wasteful system. From the time of Charles II. parliamentary sanction had been required for enclosing, and it was given only under consent of the landowner, the tithe owner, and four-fifths of those who owned common rights. Up till 1760, only 244 such bills were passed; but, from that year onwards, there was a rapid increase in the Acts necessary to allow full use of the lands which were cultivated and cultivation of the common wastes—650 in the next fourteen years, and 705 from 1773 to 1793. By 1797, 1,720 private bills had been passed, and a very large area was thus added to the cultivable land of Great Britain. Still, in that year, a Select Committee could say that there were yet 1,200,000 acres of common fields, and 7,800,000 acres of uncultivated waste. Enclosures.

Another stage was marked by the foundation of the Board of Agriculture in 1793, with Sir John Sinclair as chairman and Arthur Young as secretary. It at once called special attention to the need of bringing the waste into cultivation as the most effectual means of feeding the population and providing for future wants. Among other things, the Board began a survey of all the English counties on a uniform plan, with the object of making public any improvements that had been introduced; collected information and statistics; arranged experiments; and combined the agricultural societies. But its most useful achievement, perhaps, was that it made agriculture into an organised industry. Previous to its establishment, few people except the great corn dealers troubled themselves in the least about the state of prices and demand in other than their own immediate districts. Hence the great majority of farmers were altogether ignorant of the price of produce outside their nearest market, and could not regulate their production by reference to it. The Board of Agriculture brought them out of their isolation, broke down the limits of the local markets, and made the whole of Great Britain a market for the produce of its agriculturists. Board of Agriculture.

By 1792, we learn that the four-course system—turnips, barley, oats, and wheat—was being worked, and the exhausting of the soil by successive corn crops came to an end. But it is only in 1800 that we have the beginning of scientific manures, with a first experiment in the application of bone dust. Bone dust.

Scotland—which, for many generations, seems to have deserved the reproach that its farming was slovenly and its farmers lazy—

Progress of agriculture in Scotland

appears to have gone ahead in the later years of the century even more rapidly than England, thanks, it was said, to the long leases and to the confidence of farmers in their landlords. The "garden-like culture of East Lothian" and other shires was evidence of what could be done by "a spirited and independent tenantry."

*e.g.* Ayrshire.

A correspondent in the *Farmer's Magazine* in 1804 writes thus about Ayrshire: "Forty or forty-three years ago, there was little improvement in this county of any kind. The land, indeed, was ploughed in order to raise food for man and beast, but that was nearly all that was done. As far as the eye could reach, there was not an enclosure to be seen, except immediately round gentlemen's houses. The half-starved cattle were herded through the day, and enclosed in folds or houses at night, till the crop was lifted, when they were allowed to roam at large. The old barbarous custom of out-field and in-field was universal. The produce was scanty, the rent trifling, and the capital of agriculturists next to nothing. Land which now sets from £2 to £3 per acre was then thought ridiculously extravagant at 7/- and 7/6. And, to add to this state of misery, there was scarce a road in the whole county where one could strike a trot in the middle of June: of course few or no waggons could be used." He quotes the minister of Kilmarnock as follows: "At the end of harvest, when the crop was carried from the fields, the whole country had the appearance of a wild and dreary common, and nothing was to be seen but, here and there, a poor, bare, and homely hut, where the farmer and his family were lodged. The cattle, too, were then allowed to wander about at pleasure through all the neighbouring fields, till the grass began to rise in the spring, and miserably poached all the arable ground, now saturated with the water that lay on the surface. To such a degree was this mischief done, by the ranging of the cattle in search of food, when none was to be found, that, in many places, it destroyed all prospect of any crop worth the labour of the husbandman for the ensuing year, and, in some instances, for many years to come." But from that time, and particularly within the preceding ten or twelve years, he concludes, the progress had been very rapid; there was no county now better provided with good roads; the land was all enclosed, drained, and fenced, and the farmers, on long leases, were vying with one another in honour and profit.[1]

[1] P. 73.

Romilly, in 1793, drove from Edinburgh by way of Stirling to Loch Lomond, and thus writes: "I have been perfectly astonished at the richness and high cultivation of all the tract of this calumniated country through which I have passed. . . . It is true, however, that almost everything which one sees to admire in the way of cultivation is due to modern improvements; and, now and then, one observes a few acres of brown moss, contrasting admirably with the corn fields to which they are contiguous, and affording one a specimen of the dreariness and desolation which, half a century ago, overspread a country now cultivated and scattered over with comfortable habitations and become a most copious source of human happiness." [1]

The golden age of farming.

The early years of the war, then, were looked back on as the golden age of farming. We have a contemporary account of this prosperity in an ill-natured speech of the Earl of Warwick in November, 1800: "He wondered not at the extravagant style of living of some of the farmers who could afford to play guinea whist, and were not contented with drinking wine only, but even mixed brandy with it; on farms from which they derived so much profit they could afford to leave one-third of the lands they rented wholly uncultivated, the other two-thirds yielding them sufficient gain to support all their lavish expenditure. He knew no description of men who were acquiring fortunes more rapidly, and all at the expense of the public. . . . He should still contend that the gains of the farmer were enormous, and must repeat his wish that some measure might be adopted to compel him to bring his corn to market and to be contented with a moderate profit." [2]

Roads

The roads of Great Britain, speaking generally, are no older than this agricultural awakening. Middle-aged men in 1800 could remember the time when people in the outlying districts ran to see the novelty of a cart with wheels. Arthur Young's classical description of the turnpike between Preston and Wigan, with its ruts four feet deep, and floating with mud in summer time, gives some suggestion of what the lesser roads were like.

—in Scotland:

Scotland was worse off than England. In 1769, when Pennant made his first tour, it was almost as little known as Kamschatka. His account, says the *Annual Register* of 1804, proved that the northern parts of Great Britain might be visited with safety, and even with pleasure—a candid account of that country

[1] *Memoirs*, ii. 25. [2] *Hansard*, xxxv. 834.

was so great a novelty that the first impression was instantly bought up—and from that time Scotland had formed one of the most fashionable tours. But, till 1784, it was practically a country without roads, except those constructed for military purposes after 1715 and 1745, and these were comparatively little used. The first vehicle which ran between Glasgow and Edinburgh began in 1748, and covered the 42 miles in two days: ten years later, the "Flier" did the journey in a day and a half. A writer in the *Farmer's Magazine* of 1807 said that, twenty years before, the ways then in use in Perthshire "were merely hollow tracks, and every shower converted them into a pond or a puddle; in many places, they were the beds of perennial rivulets. In the deep clay districts, it was often impossible to transport the produce of the country, either in carriages or on horseback. Even in dry weather, travelling was extremely inconvenient, owing to the manner in which the mud was cut up and dried."

—in England.

But, between 1784 and 1792, 302 Acts were passed authorising the construction of new roads and bridges, and the turnpikes allowed of the mail coaches travelling at great speed. Saint Fond, in fact, who visited this country in 1784, speaks highly of the beauty and convenience of the main roads between London and Scotland, and frequently alludes to the heaps of black trap and volcanic lava laid at the side for their repair.[1] But the days of the great road-makers had not yet come. Telford was sent by the government to suggest measures for the improvement of the roads in Scotland only in 1802, and Macadam did not get to work till after Waterloo.

Canals.

Since 1755, a new method of communication was opening up the country for industrial purposes. The first canal was one of eleven miles long, running from the Mersey to St. Helens. In 1759, the Duke of Bridgewater obtained his first Act of Parliament, for a canal between Runcorn and Manchester, and Brindley began building for him the great water-ways associated with the

[1] Saint Fond's experiences, on his way through Scotland to visit Staffa, give some idea of the difficulties and even dangers of travel outside the agricultural shires. When he left Dunbarton, he said "here the traveller must bid farewell to English cleanliness," and his journey to Oban was adventurous in the extreme. There was hardly a human residence on Loch Lomond. Oban consisted of six or seven scattered houses. The Highlanders "had not the English," and conversation was carried on by signs. To add to his troubles a "cursed piper"—that is to say, "an excellent musician of the Highland school"—took a fancy to him, and insisted on playing below his window till midnight—"a kind of honour of which I in vain endeavoured to convince him I was unworthy."

names of both. The Grand Trunk Canal, connecting the Trent and the Mersey, was finished in 1777; the Grand Junction Canal was begun in 1792. Thirty canal and navigation acts were passed between 1789 and 1792. And, in 1793 and 1794, acts were obtained for 36 new schemes of canals, which, says Phillips, with other bills for extending and amending rivers, makes 47 acts in that period relative to the inland navigation of this country, involving an expenditure of £5,300,000. In Scotland, the Forth and Clyde Canal, begun in 1768 but long suspended for want of funds, was completed in 1790—the union of the two firths being celebrated by launching a hogshead of the water of the Forth into the Clyde. The Crinan Canal was constructed between 1793 and 1801. By the end of the century, there were some 2,600 miles of canals in England, 276 in Ireland, and 225 in Scotland.[1]

Bank Restriction

The currency system of England was regulated by the Bank Restriction Act of 1797. On Saturday, the 25th February of that year, in panic at the abortive French invasion of Ireland, and under pressure from the private banks, there was a dangerous run on the Bank of England, when the Bank got through the day only by paying in shillings and sixpences. The directors informed the Chancellor of the Exchequer that there were only £1,200,000 of cash and bullion in their coffers to meet all their liabilities, and that they would have to suspend payment on the Monday if nothing was done to assist them. The King held a cabinet at eight o'clock on the Sunday morning, and, next day, an Order in Council was issued restraining the Bank from paying gold on demand. The London merchants held a meeting at the Mansion House at noon, and passed a unanimous resolution declaring that they would not refuse to receive bank notes in payment of any sums of money to be paid to them, and would use their utmost endeavour to make all their own payments in the same manner. There was no disturbance. In fact, stocks immediately rose. Both Houses issued Reports to say that the solvency of the Bank was perfectly established. The notes were taken by the government departments for all revenue payments, but they were not declared legal tender, although a proffer of notes in payment of debt protected the person of the debtor from legal process. The only notable result for the moment was the issue of one pound

[1] See *passim*, Phillips, *General History of Inland Navigation* (1803), and Macpherson, *Annals of Commerce*.

notes, made necessary by the disappearance of the gold guineas, and an appalling increase in forgery. It should be remembered, however, that the Bank had begun to issue £5 notes only in 1793, the notes previous to that time having been in denominations of £10 and £15. It seems unlikely, then,—although I have never seen it noticed—that the people had yet got thoroughly accustomed to the use of notes in ordinary payments, and the forcing of paper on them as a substitute for gold must have been a much more serious innovation than it would be now. Beyond this, as the issue was not materially increased from the former average of about £10 millions, none of the evils of depreciation had shown themselves before the end of the century. In 1800, however, a very large issue was made, when £17 millions were put in circulation and the bank paper fell to 8 per cent. discount. But, when the peace came, the issue was slightly contracted; notes recovered their value; and "the subject escaped attention" in the meantime.

But the private banks—of which there were some four hundred—were all banks of issue as well as banks of deposit, and, as there were no limits on their issue, some ascribed the high prices to this cause.

—in Ireland.

The Restriction Act had been applied to Ireland also, but without any supervision of the note issue, with the result that there gold was hoarded, and the country flooded with notes of as low a denomination as five shillings, and with spurious notes.

France meantime on a specie basis.

It is instructive to note the corresponding course of things in France. From 1797 till 1821, England was under the Restriction; paper was the money of the country; and many statesmen did not hesitate to say that it was the Restriction alone which had carried us through the war. But, after the sharp lesson of the assignats from 1790 to 1796, France passed through much greater vicissitudes of fortune without having recourse to any such aid. During the time of the assignats, specie disappeared, and was thought to have been exported. But, as soon as the assignats were put an end to, gold and silver coin immediately reappeared in the very same Louis d'ors and crowns which were thought to have taken flight to other countries. An Englishman who visited France in June, 1800, wrote that all traces of paper money had so completely vanished that it was impossible, even as a matter of curiosity, to procure an assignat. "They are now as rare as Faust's bibles, and the original plate is

placed in the public library among the antiques and curiosities. The currency consists of Louis, old silver pieces of 6 livres, and pieces of 5 francs, which they continued to coin for the last three or four years, as well as pieces of 15 and 30 sous and single and double sous."[1] And Romilly, who visited Paris in 1802, wrote: "There is at present the greatest abundance of specie. All payments, except of large sums, are made in gold and silver. Gold is scarce as compared with silver, but not in a greater degree than it was before the Revolution."[2]

The National Income.

There is some basis for a rough estimate of the wealth of the country in Pitt's speech when introducing the Income Tax in December, 1798.[3] The various incomes on which a general Income Tax should be paid, conservatively stated, he said, summed up to £102,000,000:

| | |
|---|---|
| Land rental, after deducting one-fifth for exemptions and abatements | £20 millions. |
| Tenants' rental of land, three-fourths of the rack rent, deducting two-thirds | 6 „ |
| Tithes, deducting one-fifth | 4 „ |
| Mines, canals, timber, deducting one-fifth | 3 „ |
| Rental of houses, deducting one-fifth | 5 „ |
| Profits of professions | 2 „ |
| Profits of retail trade (one-eighth of the net sum of total profits on trade)[4] | 5 „ |
| Incomes from abroad (estates in Ireland and the West Indies) | 5 „ |
| Income from public and private mortgages, and from money lent on securities, deducting one-fifth[5] | 12 „ |
| Foreign commerce | 12 „ |
| Profits on domestic trade and manufacture, and profits of skill and industry | 28 „ |

[1] *Scots Magazine*, 1801, 16. [2] *Diary*, ii. 96. [3] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 18.

[4] It is one of the few inaccuracies of *Hansard* even then, that, in the subsequent summing up of these totals, this item appears as "rental of Scotland, taking it at one-eighth of that of England." The "rental" stands for "retail," and the "one-eighth of that of England" is "one-eighth of the net sum of the profits of the trade of Great Britain" (*ibid.* 13, 19). The mistake was copied *verbatim* in the *Scots Magazine*, and appears even in the collected edition of Pitt's *Speeches* published by Longmans in 1806. In the *Annual Register*, the transcript takes the more imaginative form of "Amount of the produce of all the above articles in Scotland." It is rather a striking instance of the scant attention paid to statistics in these days—as is also the transformation of Pitt's "profits of professions" into "Income arising from possessions" in the *Annual Register*, 1799, 176.

[5] Pitt insisted strongly, in opposition to many, that no separate and distinct tax should ever be levied on the public creditor—the most sacred obligations of the state forbade that—but said emphatically that it was a

This calculation, it will be seen, was after deduction of percentages from the various gross incomes, to represent the exemptions under £60 and the abatements up to £200; that is to say, it omitted the wages of labour as well as the profits of small capitalists. Lord Auckland considered that these might amount to as much again, which would make up what we now call a National Income of over £200,000,000. But the calculation, of course, has no pretension to statistical accuracy outside of the incomes from land and from the public funds, and Pitt's estimate that the Income Tax, at 10 per cent. on all incomes, would yield £10,000,000 was not realised.[1]

**Revenue and Expenditure.**

One of the principal things which will engage our attention from year to year is the revenue and expenditure of the country. As the Finance Accounts are very complicated—not to say obscure—and as those who quoted them, in newspapers and journals, generally quoted without any great understanding of what the figures meant and of what translation was necessary, it may be as well to explain in some detail the Budget which Pitt put before Parliament in 1800.

**Budget of 1800.**

In his speech of 24th February, 1800,[2] he announced that the Supply he deemed requisite amounted to £39,500,000. The principal items were as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Navy | £12,619,000 |
| Army | 11,370,000 |
| Ordnance | 1,695,000[3] |
| Miscellaneous services | 750,000 |
| Vote of credit | 3,000,000 |
| Subsidies to German princes | 2,500,000 |
| Expenses of Russian troops | 500,000 |
| Annual grant towards the Sinking Fund | 200,000 |
| Probable contingencies | 1,800,000 |
| | £34,434,000 |

different matter when a tax was being levied on the income of every description of persons in the realm: "I shall have no hesitation in submitting that, when a general assessment upon income is to take place, no distinction ought to be made as to the sources from which that income may arise."

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 11, 195. In 1802 Sir Robert Peel, without giving any reasons for the statement, said that he estimated the wealth of the nation at £300 millions (*ibid.* xxxvi. 544).

[2] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 1516.

[3] The entire average expenditure for naval and military purposes, from 1790 to 1792, had been about £6½ millions a year.

The somewhat formidable balance of £5,000,000 was made up of interest due to the Bank and of deficiencies in the estimates of the previous year.

The Ways and Means were as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| "Land and Malt" (including certain taxes on sugar and tobacco)[1] | £2,750,000 |
| Duty on Imports and Exports[2] | 1,250,000 |
| Lottery | 200,000 |
| Income Tax[3] | 5,300,000 |
| Exchequer Bills | 3,000,000 |
| Loan, without interest, from the Bank of England, in consideration of renewal of charter | 3,000,000 |
| Surplus of the Consolidated Fund | 5,500,000 |
| Loan of the year (exclusive of that of Ireland)[4] | 18,500,000 |
| Total | £39,500,000 |

Queries.

The first thing that will occur to any one acquainted with our modern Finance Accounts, where the most anxious care is taken to make every shilling of expenditure and revenue clear and intelligible to any one who will take the trouble to study them, is the absence from the above estimates of some of our most familiar items. Where, one asks, are the interest and the Sinking Fund on the National Debt; where the Civil List and the Post Office? Where, on the other side, are the Customs and Excise, the Stamps, and, again, the Post Office? And, noticing the smallness of the total, the second question will be: was the great war carried on with £15 millions of annual taxes?

The answer is found in examining the item in the Ways and Means called "Surplus of the Consolidated Fund, £5,500,000."

[1] The Land Tax, which had been at its highest, four shillings in the pound, since the beginning of the American War, was, in 1798, made subject to redemption and purchase. The valuation, however, was the very imperfect one of 1692. The duties on malt, sugar, and tobacco were the chief taxes excluded from the Consolidated Fund.

[2] This "Convoy Tax," as it was called, was first imposed in 1798. Every merchant vessel was required, on penalty of £1,000, to sail under the protection of such ship or ships as should be appointed for that purpose. The tax was payable in respect of goods exported and imported, and on the tonnage of ships outwards and inwards.

[3] The £5,300,000 of Income Tax was net, after deduction of £1,700,000 out of the expected proceeds for "interest on the loan for which this fund was appropriated."

[4] The additional taxes, necessitated by the charge of the loan, were a new duty of 5 per cent. on all teas above 2/6 per lb., and a small augmentation of the duties on British and foreign spirits.

The Consolidated Fund.

It was the Consolidated Fund which received the great mass of the taxes; out of it were paid all the other charges unenumerated in the Budget; and only the free balance appeared among the Ways and Means. The institution of this Fund was one of the earliest of Pitt's reforms, and, if it still left the Public Accounts far from simple, it was at least a vast improvement on the system which had gone before. The history of it is this.

Before 1787, the Customs Duties were exceedingly complex. For instance, a cargo of 2,000 ells of Russian linen paid, in all, a duty of £69 17/-. But this total was built up of no less than ten single duties, according to additions and changes made since the time of Charles II. Then the £69 17/- fell into a number of separate funds, such as the Aggregate Fund, the South Sea Fund, the Sinking Fund, etc. It was hopeless for an outsider to try to understand the Public Accounts, and those engaged in foreign trade had to employ an expert to avoid risk of mistake and penalty. In that year Pitt swept all this away. First, all the existing compound duties were repealed and consolidated into one single rate for each article—which still left a Rate Book comprising 1,414 articles or subdivisions of articles—and, second, the separate funds were consolidated into one, called the Consolidated Fund, and into this fell all Customs and Excise, along with other taxes particularly mentioned, and all future taxes not specially appropriated.[1]

This fund, then, contained *inter alia* the customs and excise, stamps, and incidents, and out of it were paid the civil list, pensions, expenses of the judges, etc., and in particular the interest on the National Debt. But the debt payments were now complicated by the new method adopted to repay the principal, and this needs separate consideration.

Pitt's Sinking Fund:

It was in 1785 that Pitt, as he wrote to Wilberforce, went "half mad with a project which will give our supplies the effect almost of magic in the reduction of debt." In consultation with Price, author of a *Treatise on Reversionary Annuities*, and a fanatic about the power of compound interest, he put the following scheme before the House. He had in that year a surplus of a million—a real surplus over his estimates, although it was due to miscalculation, and came, of course, out of the pockets of the taxpayers. This million he proposed to put into the hands of a

—the first million;

[1] *Customs Tariffs of the United Kingdom from* 1800 *to* 1897 (c. 8706. 1897), pp. 14-16.

Board of Commissioners, to be employed by them in buying up national stock to that amount. But this stock was not to be extinguished, but retained as stock, and the interest continued payable on it. When this interest became due, it also was to be employed in buying up debt, and the additional stock was in turn to remain unextinguished, bearing interest, to be again employed buying more debt. This, it should be noted, carried out Pitt's intention of a Sinking Fund which would in time repay the debt without anybody noticing the burden. But, so far as it went, it put the repayment into the far future. It is no doubt true that, in fifteen years or so at 5 per cent., the original million would have doubled, but, to repay the £250 millions of debt in 120 years, would not have been anything to go "half mad" about.

—the annual million ;

Pitt's further proposal, then, was that, every year thereafter, an extra million should be arranged for in the estimates, to be handed over to the Board and dealt with in the same way. This was to go on till the annual interest paid in to the Commissioners for stock held by them amounted to £4 millions. When that time arrived, the annual million would cease, and it would be for Parliament to determine what to do next. Evidently this changed the character of the Sinking Fund altogether. The "annual million" was not to be a chance surplus, but a part of the estimated taxation. It was, after all, nothing but paying off the debt by raising an extra million a year, and letting the entire burden of the interest hang round the neck of the nation till the debt was extinguished. The taxpayers were shown that this would pay off the debt in a comparatively small number of years; what was concealed from them was, that they were to get no progressive diminution of the burden of the interest, as would have happened if the annual million had been used to buy up debt and extinguish it. This certainly was no effect "almost of magic": it could not claim to be an unfelt burden by anyone who examined the Consolidated Fund, and saw the interest remaining at its full amount though the actual debt was disappearing. But this much may be granted; it was one way of paying off the debt, and Pitt certainly succeeded in making the "inviolability of the Sinking Fund" an article of faith.

In 1792, within a few months of the beginning of the war, the prosperity of the country was so great and the revenue so elastic that Pitt, counting on fifteen years of peace, gave £400,000 as a

chance addition to the Sinking Fund from another surplus, and engaged future taxpayers to pay an extra £200,000 a year in addition to the million. (This, as will be seen, did not come through the Consolidated Fund, but appears as a separate item in the Supply of 1800.)

—paying off debt by borrowing.

Then came the war, when there was every year a deficit in the annual revenue, made up by loans. There could be no illusion now that the annual million was a surplus; it was simply paying off debt by borrowing. Still the million was handed over to the Commissioners, and expended by them in buying up a cheap debt out of money raised by a dear one. More than that. Out of every new loan, one per cent. was laid aside to act as sinking fund according to the same principle—a sinking fund got by borrowed money, ignoring the plain fact that "compound interest" could not be producing its magical effects, seeing that simple interest was constantly paid to supply the wherewithal. It has been calculated that, during the war, the absolutely useless and unrequited loss by the operation of the fund was nearly £20,000,000.[1] And yet Pitt considered this Sinking Fund his best title to honour!

The Assessed Taxes.

The new Income Tax was the lineal descendant of the Assessed Taxes. When Pitt became Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1784, the Customs and Excise were, of course, the great sources of revenue; but he found taxes in existence levied on certain classes according to the "establishment" they kept up, such as North's tax on male servants, Pelham's on carriages. To these, Pitt added a tax on horses kept for the saddle or for carriage use, and a tax of a guinea on certificates of qualification for sport. These were taxes, evidently, which took luxurious expenditure as the evidence of ability to contribute. In 1785, he put these taxes, along with the Window Tax and the Inhabited House Duty, under one Board, and henceforward the Establishment Taxes, the Window Tax, and the House Tax, became known as the Assessed Taxes. In 1797, after defraying the expenses of the war thus far by means of loans, he carried the House with him in laying down the principle that, thereafter, a considerable portion of the war supplies should be raised by taxation within the year. This involved the addition of several millions to the annual taxes, and nothing seemed so suitable for this purpose as an increase in the Assessed Taxes. He argued that under them the

[1] Hamilton, *An Inquiry concerning the National Debt*, 1813.

burden was diffused and vexatious enquiries were avoided, while graduation and differentiation could be effected. The Assessed Taxes were then yielding £2,700,000. He proposed to increase this to £7,000,000 by trebling the amount under some of the categories, and increasing the amount under others by even more, while exempting incomes under £60, and making allowances to large families.

This was the famous Triple Assessment. Pitt made no secret that the intention was to obtain a full tenth of all incomes above £200 by this direct tax. It was very unpopular—Pitt was mobbed at the Thanksgiving—realised only £4,000,000, and the deficiency was made up by one of the few instances of voluntary taxation on the part of the commercial and trading classes. In 1798, Pitt confessed to failure, not, he said, due to any miscalculation of the national resources, but to an error of judgment as regards method. He had taken the Assessed Taxes because he thought that "some visible criterion by which to estimate and regulate the extent of the contribution" was necessary, but he had been sensible that much wealth which should contribute would escape; and, as a fact, the frauds and evasions which had taken place were both "disgraceful to the country and injurious to those who honourably discharged their obligations." He now took the bolder step of laying aside the "presumption of income," and imposed a general tax upon all the leading branches of income. The statement of income was to proceed from the taxed party himself, and thus he hoped to obtain "an efficient and comprehensive tax upon real ability." Incomes under £60 would be exempt. From £60 to £200, the tax would be graduated. At £200 and upwards, it would be one-tenth, or two shillings per pound. Allowances would be made as before in respect of families. He then made the calculation given on page 31, to show that the income thus taxable was £102,000,000, and, counting on this, he issued exchequer bills to the amount of the revenue expected. But, during the passing of the Bill, it underwent several modifications, and Pitt reckoned on no more for the first year than £7,500,000. As a fact, it realised only £6,200,000. But Pitt, always sanguine, ascribed the deficiency to the newness of the principle, and to ignorance of the means of enforcing the collection. "That it will be augmented to the full extent of my original estimate, I firmly believe." But, for 1800, he did not venture to anticipate more than £7,000,000.

**The Triple Assessment.**

**The Income Tax.**

Up till the end of the century, the affairs of Ireland were

managed, not from Westminster, but by an Irish Parliament sitting in Dublin. The situation had now become impossible. The Irish Rebellion of 1798, and the help sent—happily too late—by France, seemed to point to a union of the two kingdoms as the only solution of the problem; and, on 2nd July, the Bill for the Union of Great Britain and Ireland was passed. The exchequers, however, were not amalgamated, and each country raised its revenue independently. For the first time the arrogant assumption of "King of France" was dropped from the titles of the Crown.[1] The two articles in the Act which concern us were the 6th and 7th.

The Union with Ireland

—the 7th article;

By the 7th article, each kingdom was left with the separate discharge of its public debt already incurred—the Irish debt being then £36 millions—and, for twenty years thereafter, the national expenses were to be defrayed in the proportion of fifteen parts by Great Britain to two by Ireland—this proportion being arrived at by a comparison of the imports and exports and of the excised articles of consumption of the two countries.

—the 6th article;

As regards commerce between Great Britain and Ireland, the principle laid down by Pitt was, "That the consequences of the Union ought to be a perfect freedom of trade, whether of produce or of manufactures, without exception if possible; and that a deviation from that principle should be made only where adhering to it might possibly shake some large capital, or materially diminish the effect of the labour of the inhabitants, or suddenly and violently shock the received opinion or popular prejudices of a large portion of the people." This was carried into effect by the 6th article. It provided that Great Britain and Ireland should be on the same footing as to encouragements and bounties on the like articles, being the growth, produce, or manufacture of either kingdom respectively; and generally in respect of trade and navigation in all ports and places in the United Kingdom and its dependencies; that all prohibitions and bounties on the export of such articles of either country to the other should cease, and that the said articles should be exported from the one country to the other without duty or bounty on such export.

—scheduled goods;

Certain articles, however, were scheduled as subject to 10 per cent. of the true value on import into either country from

[1] This had been demanded by France in 1797, as one of the preliminaries to a negotiation for peace. What was then denied to force, was now given as an act of grace.

the other, viz. apparel, wrought brass, cabinet ware, coaches and other carriages, wrought copper, cottons (except calicoes and muslins), glass, haberdashery, hats, tinplates, wrought iron, and hardware, gold and silver lace, gold and silver thread, bullion for lace, pearl and spangles, millinery, stained paper, pottery, saddlery, silk manufacture, stockings. And certain other articles, subject to internal duties either in themselves or in the raw materials of which they were made, were charged with countervailing duties on importation from England into Ireland, viz. beer, glass, leather, stained paper, paper, silk, spirits, refined sugar, sweets, tobacco.

Woollen manufactures were to pay, as a "protecting duty," on importation into each country the duties then payable on importation into Ireland; salt and hops, on importation into Ireland, duties not exceeding those then paid in Ireland; and coals on importation to be subject to burthens not exceeding the existing ones. Calicoes and muslins—for the encouragement of which the Government was "very anxious"—and cotton yarn and cotton twist, were to be subject to the existing duties till 1808, to be afterwards greatly reduced. In all other articles, trade between the two countries was to be free: "provided that nothing herein shall extend to take away any duty, bounty, or prohibition which exists with respect to corn, meal, malt, flour, and biscuits."[1] —protecting duties. Free trade.

Apparently the only serious economic objection raised was on the part of the British woollen manufacturers. Wilberforce objected to English wool being exported free into Ireland at the same time as Ireland maintained her protective duty against English woollens, maintaining that the wool grown in Great Britain was already inadequate to the consumption of its manufacturers. In the course of his speech, he used the following curious argument: "The woollen manufacture has another claim to the notice of Parliament. It has a value not to be stated in figures, not to be estimated from a book of rates. Many manufactures which contribute largely to the national wealth are highly injurious to the public morals, but, whatever other claims may be set up for the cotton manufacture, I may justly assert for the woollen manufacture a superiority of a higher kind. It is a domestic manufacture, not so much carried on in large factories, where multitudes are collected together, and children too often learn Economic objections.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 31.

prematurely the vices of more advanced age; but any industrious individual possessing credit for a capital of £10 buys therewith a pack of wool, works it up with the assistance of his wife and family, and brings it to the public market for sale, just as the little farmers bring their several articles of produce; the wealth thus acquired and diffused is not obtained at the expense of domestic happiness, but in the enjoyment of it."[1]

As this chapter has for its purpose merely to remind the reader at what stage of economic evolution we had arrived when the nineteenth century opened, any detailed account of the social life of the people would be out of place. But a good deal regarding manners and customs, tastes, and ways of looking at things, is suggested by recalling what people were writing and reading.

Literature. Shortly before the end of the century several great names had disappeared—Adam Smith in 1790; Robertson, the historian, in 1793; Gibbon in 1794; Burns in 1796; and Burke in 1797. Among poets, Cowper, who died in 1800, and Crabbe had an established reputation, but the others were just rising into notice. Wordsworth had lately published the *Lyrical Ballads*; Coleridge the *Ancient Mariner*; Campbell his *Pleasures of Hope*; and Southey had revised his *Joan of Arc*. Roger's *Pleasures of Memory* appeared in 1792. Scott published his first rhymes, partly translated, partly original, in 1796. Fanny Burney had been a favourite novelist since the appearance of *Evelina* in 1777. Maria Edgeworth commenced her career with *Castle Rackrent* in the last year of the century. But Henry James Pye was still poet-laureate, and ground out his Odes on all public occasions. The *Annual Register*, apparently with some satisfaction, records that "the total number of all the new publications published in London during the year 1800 was 693: the cost estimated in boards amounted to £230 5/-."[2] One would be disposed, however, to question the accuracy of this "cost."

Newspapers. The chief newspapers appearing in London daily were the *Times* (begun in 1788), the *Morning Chronicle* (1769), which had Porson, Mackintosh, and Thomas Campbell among its writers, the *Morning Post* (1772), to which Coleridge was now the chief, and Charles Lamb a frequent, contributor, the *Morning Advertiser* (1794)—the organ of the licensed victuallers—and the *Morning Herald* (1780). There were four Sunday papers, the chief being the *Observer*. These newspapers, however, were of a

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 133. [2] 1801, Chron. 29.

very different character from those with which we are familiar; they had nothing in the shape of general intelligence—law and police news, and public proceedings of all kinds were entirely ignored. Since 1797, the stamp duty was 2½d. for each four-page sheet. Few persons below the middle rank of life could afford to buy a newspaper regularly.

Monthly magazines.

The predecessor of any serious review was a monthly magazine of somewhat miscellaneous contents. The *Gentleman's Magazine,* for instance, edited by John Nicholls, contained a parliamentary digest, foreign intelligence, notes and brief reviews of books, popular science, poetry original and selected, an obituary enriched with anecdotes, a meteorological diary, statistics of prices, etc., and had for speciality letters to the Editor "on every subject interesting to mankind." Much the same was the *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine,*[1] primarily a critical review of books of all kinds, the *Scots Magazine or General Repository of Literature, History, and Politics*—"Scottish" in little but name,—and the *European Magazine and London Review,* conducted by the Philological Society of London, and "containing the literature, history, politics, art, manners, and amusements of the Age." Most of them contained little essays "after the manner of Goldsmith," but no serious literary, scientific, or political criticism.

The England of Wordsworth.

For the rest, although this was the England of Wordsworth, it was, to some extent, still the England of Richardson. Those were days when gentlemen wore wigs or hair powder, knee breeches and silk stockings, and carried swords; found a curious vindication of their "honour" in fighting duels, and thought it hardly respectable not to be able to "hold" a bottle of wine without getting drunk—not to say sick; when Vauxhall flourished and the sedan chair was still a popular vehicle; when the upper classes patronised the prize-ring and the lower classes bull-baiting; when no man with any pretensions to rank would have thought of going into trade; when women were still publicly whipped, and even children might be hanged or transported for picking a pocket to the amount of 5/-; when Roman Catholics could not obtain a commission in the army, nor enter Parliament or any of the public services, and neither Dissenters nor Catholics could send their sons to the public schools and the universities; when seats in Parliament were bought and sold "like opera-tickets."

[1] This was not Canning's brilliant but short-lived weekly of that name, which died in 1798, but a more ponderous review which started in the same year.

# CHAPTER II

## 1801. "THE PEACE WHICH ALL MEN WERE GLAD OF BUT NO ONE COULD BE PROUD OF"

Everything against us.

THE first three months of 1801 were critical and alarming to the last degree. All the emergency measures adopted in 1800 were continued and strengthened. Wheat continued to rise till, in April, it was 151/4.[1] The Committee on the High Price of Provisions, in February, issued a recommendation that premiums, amounting in all to about £30,000, should be given for the growing of potatoes—"people were obliged to eat what had never been the common food of the people." With wheat rose all other grain, while meat was double what it had been in January, 1799. On the continent, everything seemed to be going against us. When the first Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland met on 22nd January, the nation, as Carnarvon said, had fallen to the lowest point of despondency.

Pitt's optimism.

Pitt, however, kept a brave face. When he introduced the Budget on 18th February,[2] all that he dwelt on was the flourishing state of the finances and of trade. The year 1801, he said, might be called the era of our prosperity as well as of our trial. The war had been attended with a constant increase of

[1] The prices of wheat quoted by various historians and statistical writers during the period covered by this volume are extremely divergent. For instance, the average price per imperial quarter in England and Wales, for 1800, is given by Porter as 110/5, by the *Annual Register* at 112/8, by Tooke as 113/7, by M'Culloch and by the Customs Tariff blue-book as 113/10. As only one of these, the *Annual Register*, gives the monthly prices as well as the annual, and as it is sometimes essential to note the variations in prices during the year, I have occasionally had to take the prices which appear in the *Annual Register* of each year. I propose, however, to adopt in general the Board of Agriculture prices, extracted from the Annual Agricultural Returns for Great Britain, as given in the Customs Tariffs blue-book of 1897 (c. 8706), and in the Wholesale and Retail Prices blue-book, 1903 (321).

[2] *Hansard*, xxxv. 971.

our commerce and revenue. We were distinguished by our prosperity, trade, and naval superiority above all the other nations of the world. And it was singular, but not more singular than true, that although we had suffered so much, and that recently from unfavourable seasons, the year 1800-1801 was the proudest that the country had ever known with respect to its commerce.

The total Supply asked was £42,197,000. The items were: The Budget.

| | |
|---|---|
| Navy | £15,800,000 |
| Army | 15,902,000 |
| Ordnance | 1,938,000 |
| Miscellaneous services | 757,000 |
| Emergencies | 800,000 |
| Irish permanent grants | 390,462 |
| | £35,587,462[1] |
| Deficiencies in past year, chiefly owing to unfavourable seasons, interest on exchequer bills, grant to the Sinking Fund, etc. | 6,610,000[2] |
| Total | £42,197,462 |

The Ways and Means of raising this Supply were as under:

| | |
|---|---|
| Malt, sugar, and tobacco | £2,750,000 |
| Duty on exports and imports | 1,250,000 |
| Lottery | 300,000 |
| Income Tax, net | 4,260,000[3] |
| Surplus of the Consolidated Fund | 3,300,000[4] |
| To be provided by Ireland | 4,324,000 |
| Sum not issued for subsidies | 500,000 |
| Surplus of grants | 60,000 |
| | £16,744,000 |
| Loan | 25,500,000 |
| Total | £42,244,000 |

[1] This was the sum to be defrayed by Great Britain and Ireland for the service of the year, and, according to the Act of Union, it was allocated between the two kingdoms in the proportion of 15/17ths from Great Britain and 2/17ths from Ireland.

[2] These, as charges arising before the date of the Union, fell on Great Britain alone.

[3] Net meant "deducting the interest on loans with which it stands charged." In 1800, he had estimated for £7 millions, but he did not think that he would now be justified in taking its produce at more than £6 millions.

[4] There had been a considerable diminution in the produce of the Consolidated Fund, owing to the exceptional circumstances of the year; this accounts for the smallness of the estimated surplus.

New taxes.

New taxes amounting to £1,794,000 were proposed for the interest and sinking fund of this loan. Among these were an additional duty of 10 per cent. *ad valorem* on tea (the consumption of which was now about 22 million lbs.) above 2/6 per lb.; an additional duty on pepper consumed or exported; the doubling of the duty on paper; an advance of the duty on calicoes from 2½d. to 3½d. per yard (the drawback on exports being removed); an increase of one-third in the tax on timber, staves, and deals; on all exports of every kind, a tax of 6d. per pound, and, on all articles consumed at home, a duty of 3d. per pound; 20 per cent. extra per cwt. on sugar; a duty on raisins and lead; an additional duty of 4/- on every horse employed in agriculture, and of 10/- on pleasure horses "where only one is kept": some additional stamp duties; and, finally, a change of the penny post to twopence.[1]

As regards the Debt: "by a rigid and scrupulous adherence to the system long since adopted for the discharge of that debt, according to the engagement we had entered into with ourselves in the year 1786, we had paid off no less a sum than £52 millions. . . . The total amount of our Sinking Fund was £5 millions annually."[2]

The Budget was neither criticised nor opposed. "After a clear and full statement by Pitt," says Rose, "everything was so satisfactory that not one word was said by the Opposition; the whole passed off with unanimity, which never happened before in seventeen years of his administration."[3]

Anxiety for peace.

But if Pitt and a few of his followers were convinced that we were "capable of resisting the world in arms," it was evident that both people and government were heartily sick of the war. France was no less anxious for peace. It had always been a marvel to England—it is so still—how France

[1] Pitt defended this last by saying that "it was only a duty on that which individuals found more convenience in than could be obtained by any other mode they could adopt; and for which they paid, in proportion to the expense of any other convenience, very little indeed—infinitely less than they would be obliged to pay if they were to take the thing upon themselves." The result, however, justified the old saying that, in financial arithmetic, two and two do not always make four.

[2] The total amount of the permanent funded debt charged on Great Britain on 1st February, 1801, was £400,709,832 (Finance Resolutions of 1801. *Hansard*, xxxv. 1561). We had added thus far by the war, said Grey, £270,000,000 to the capital of our National Debt, and above £17,000,000 to our annual taxes (*ibid.* 1053).

[3] Rose, *Diaries and Correspondence*, i. 308.

could stand the enormous expense. In 1794, when pressure was put on Pitt by his own party to negotiate for peace, he declared his firm conviction that the resources of France depended entirely on terror—on the unlimited power which the Convention had assumed to purchase or seize property and to issue assignats—and that these resources were at an end. "I ask whether it is likely that France will see you exhausted first. I think not."[1] But, by the end of 1799 at any rate, the French Treasury was exhausted. The army, indeed, had been paid their wages—in the Italian campaigns, "victory," in Buonaparte's words, "had given them bread"—but the rest of the people had not this resource. Buonaparte himself wished at least a breathing space to reorganise the institutions of France, and in December, 1799, had addressed what Fox afterwards called a frank but respectful letter to the King of England expressing a desire for peace.[2] On the side of England, one principal reason always given for continuing the war had disappeared. A time had now come, it was said, when a stable government, with which the Ministers might enter into negotiations, was established in France;[3] and England was only waiting for a success that would make the balance more even. This was secured in April by the Battle of the Baltic—which Nelson himself called "the most terrible of all his engagements"; the dissolution of the Northern Confederacy between Russia, Sweden, and Denmark on the murder of the Czar; the occupation of Egypt after the battle of Alexandria; and the consequent isolation of France.

Meantime, in March, Pitt had resigned office, after having been Prime Minister for seventeen years: "nothing became him better than the leaving of it," said Fox afterwards. He had become converted to the claim of the Roman Catholics to admission into

Pitt resigns.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxi. 1043.

[2] The answer was an uncompromising refusal to negotiate with "those whom a new Revolution had so recently placed in the exercise of power," and the letter was generally regarded by Parliament as an evidence of Buonaparte's duplicity; but, on any sympathetic reading, it might be construed very differently. In justice to the statesmen of these days, however, it should perhaps be remembered that it was almost impossible for an old monarchy to take the First Consul as anything better than an "upstart Corsican," who had been thrown to the surface among other successful soldiers by the Revolution, and would fall as quickly as the others had.

[3] This argument for coming to terms, however, was a little thin. As Talleyrand did not fail to remind them in 1800, the Cabinet of London had twice offered to treat with a French government which certainly was not entitled to a greater degree of confidence than that then existing.

Parliament, and the King was immovable—"I shall reckon any man my personal enemy who proposes any such thing." Grenville, Dundas, Windham, and Spencer resigned with him. Addington, an excellent Speaker but a weak minister, took his place, and Lord Eldon, destined to hold office almost without intermission till 1827, became Chancellor.

On 25th March, negotiations commenced with great secrecy, and, shortly after a desperate attempt on the part of Nelson to cut out the Boulogne flotilla—foiled by the ingenious method of chaining the vessels to each other and to the shore—hostilities between the two nations ceased in the autumn.

**The Peace of Amiens**

The preliminaries of peace were signed in London on 30th September, and announced to Parliament on 29th October, among a frenzy of public delight unequalled since the Restoration. The funds rose 8 per cent. on the news. In France, Buonaparte was hailed as the "hero pacificator of Europe."[1] Thus began the brief Peace of Amiens.

**—criticised.**

In the debates on the preliminaries, however, when Parliament met for its second session on 29th October, much dissatisfaction, reflecting a large body of public opinion, was expressed with the terms of the peace. It was urged that England was restoring all the colonies she had taken during the war except Trinidad and Ceylon, giving Malta to the Knights of St. John, and giving back Egypt to Turkey, while France retained all she had acquired during the war, and did no more than retire from Naples and the Papal States; and that no commercial treaty, which should give some protection against the wall of prohibitive tariffs on the Continent, had been stipulated for. Windham, who was most violent, said that it was indeed a glorious peace—for France: that to him the ringing of bells over the peace was the knell tolling us to our grave; and he most solemnly pro-

[1] *Annual Register*, 277. He had by this time greatly strengthened his position in France by the Concordat (signed with the Pope on 15th July), by which the Catholic Church was re-established in France, its clergy put on salaries, and the patronage placed in the hands of the First Consul. An "honorary member of all religions," as a squib circulated at the time said: "Pour être roi d'Égypte, il croit à l'Alcoran, Pour être roi de France, il croit à l'Evangile." The delight of the devout at the restoration of the Dimanche (the seventh day Sunday) in place of the Décadi (the tenth day of rest, introduced by the Republic in 1793) is charmingly told in Fanny Burney's Letters, of April, 1802: "At the little hamlet near Clermont where we rested some time, two good old women told us that this was the happiest day ('twas Sunday) of their lives; they had lost *le bon Dieu* for these last ten years, but Bonaparte had now found him."

nounced that ministers had signed the death warrant of the country. Earl Spencer spoke of peace as involving the degradation of the national dignity; no single object of the war had been obtained, and we had sacrificed all our means of protection: and Lord Grenville agreed with him. The Bishop of Rochester said that, although he was a friend of peace, he was an enemy to a mere semblance and counterfeit of peace, which contained within it the germ of future war and perhaps of the destruction of the country. Nelson, however, contended that, as the government of France had now the appearance of permanency, his Majesty's ministers were obliged to seize the first opportunity of ending the war, and said that the preliminaries were honourable and advantageous to this country.[1]

An abundant harvest

The general satisfaction at the peace, and at the expected relief from war taxation, was enhanced by "one of the most luxuriant crops ever remembered." Wheat, in November, fell to 72/8, and the quartern loaf, from the average of 1/9, at which it stood in the earlier part of the year, to 10¼d.[2] The average price for the year, however, according to the returns of the Board of Agriculture, was the highest then on record, viz. 119/6. The import of wheat and wheat flour amounted to nearly a million and a half quarters.

General Enclosing Act

The first general Enclosing Act was passed in 1801. Experience had shown that the private acts were accompanied by much hardship to those unable to fight for due compensation for the loss of their ancient common rights, and this General Act had for its object the cheapening and facilitating of the process of enclosure, and thus, so far, safeguarding the interests of the poorer claimants on the land.

Foreign trade

The Official values of Imports into and Exports from the United Kingdom during the year were as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports - - - - - - - - - - | £31,786,262 |
| Exports of produce and manufactures of the United Kingdom - - - - - - - | 24,927,684 |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise - | 10,437,710 |

The first year of the century saw the first authoritative enumeration of the people, on a Bill seconded by Wilberforce on 19th November, 1800.

The last attempt to institute a census, in 1753, had met

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 8 *seq.* [2] *Annual Register*, Chron. 168.

Census first proposed 1753.

with a most extraordinary outbreak of hostility.[1] A Bill was then brought in by Mr. Potter, son of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The arguments adduced for it were, one would think, reasonable enough, and all we know of the nature of the opposition to it is gathered from the very foolish speeches of Thornton, the member for York—speeches which owe their immortality to the fact that he, apparently, communicated them to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, from which they were reproduced in *Hansard*. "I did not believe," he began, "that there had been any set of men, or, indeed, any individual of the human species, so presumptuous and so abandoned as to make the proposal which we have just heard." It would acquaint our enemies abroad with our weakness and our enemies at home with our wealth. It would be "totally subversive of the last remains of English liberty," and he, personally, would give his servants orders to duck the census officer in the horse-pond. The idea came from France—like the police—and, in this respect, the nation should follow the example of Cromwell, who refused to treat with the French ambassador in any language but Latin, in case it might "introduce a conformity to the slavish constitution and modes of government of our ancient enemy." It was all to satisfy the curiosity of those gentlemen who dealt in political arithmetic. Probably indeed, it had a more sinister meaning, to serve as basis for new taxation, and for heaping new burdens on the shoulders of those who were already sinking. It would give inquisitorial powers to the overseers, who were to conduct it, to determine even the sex and age of young women. It would cause endless trouble to the local officials. It would cost £50,000. Besides, it could not be done, as many of the overseers, and, indeed, many even substantial farmers could not write. It would raise a panic in the country, and lead to riots, etc., etc. On the first division, Thornton could only raise one vote against it, but, as the Bill went through, the opposition grew in strength, and it passed the House of Commons against a minority of 57. But the House of Lords threw it out on the second reading—"it was thought to be of so dangerous a tendency." There seems little doubt that what most influenced the decision was the horror of taxation: the art of raising a revenue still was, as Colbert said, to secure the greatest amount of feathers with the least amount of hissing.

The first census.

This time, however, there was no opposition. The schedules

[1] *Hansard*, xiv. 1317 *seq.*

were filled up by the resident clergy and parish officers in every parish and township, on the method followed in 1786, in the enquiry then made into the poor rate. The results were as follows:

England, 8,331,434; Wales, 541,546; Scotland, 1,599,068; army, 198,351; navy, 126,279; seamen in registered shipping, 144,558; convicts, 1,410; a total of 10,942,646.[1]

The census was, confessedly, imperfect, inasmuch as from some parishes no returns were received. The population of Ireland was not enumerated till 1813; the British census, guessing by the Hearth Money, put it down as "somewhat exceeding 4,000,000."[2]

Towns.

The populations of the more notable cities and towns in England and Wales were: London, 864,000;[3] Manchester, 84,000; Liverpool, 77,000; Birmingham, 73,000; Bristol, 68,000; Leeds, 53,000; Plymouth, 43,000; Newcastle, 37,000; Norwich, 37,000; Bath, 32,000; Portsmouth, 32,000; Sheffield, 31,000; Hull, 29,000; Nottingham, 29,000; Dover, 19,000; Exeter, 17,000; Leicester, 17,000; York, 16,000; Coventry, 16,000; Chester and Stockport, 15,000; Greenwich, 14,000; Oldham, Sunderland, Bolton, Blackburn, and Preston, 12,000; Wigan, Ipswich, Worcester, and Derby, 11,000; Huddersfield, Carlisle, Warrington, Chatham, and Dudley, 10,000; Lancaster, 9,000; Halifax, 8,000; Bradford, 6,000.[4]

The populations of the chief towns in Scotland were: Edinburgh (including Leith), 82,500; Glasgow, 77,300; Paisley (including Abbey parish), 31,000; Dundee, 26,000; Aberdeen,

[1] A census of the United States, taken about the same time, showed a population of 6,000,000; merchant shipping, about 100,000 tons; the value of yearly exports, above 80 millions of dollars; and the public revenue, 16 millions of dollars (*Annual Register*, 1802, p. 460). The population of France was given by Windham, in the following year, at 24 millions; with those under her immediate influence, between 50 and 60 millions—"half the population of Europe" (*Hansard*, xxxvi. 973).

[2] It has been estimated that, in 1700, the population of England and Wales was probably 6,000,000. In 1699, Petty calculated that, in 1800, the population of England and Wales would be 9,825,000, of which 5,359,000 would be contained in London alone, leaving 4,466,000 "to perform the tillage, pasturage, and other rural works necessary to be done without the said city."

[3] The City of London within the walls showed 75,377; without the walls, 54,151; the City of Westminster, 153,272.

[4] *Annual Register*, Chron. 171. Porter, however, gives Manchester and Salford as 94,876, and Sheffield as 45,755 (*Progress of the Nation*, 26, 253). It is interesting to compare this with the population of French towns given in the *Annuaires* for the year II. of the Republic: Paris, 672,000; Marseilles, 108,000; Bordeaux, 104,000; Lyons, 102,000; Lille and Brussels, 66,000 (*Annual Register*, 1802, 473).

17,500; Greenock, 17,500; Perth, 15,000; Dunfermline, 10,000; Falkirk, 9,000; Inverness, 9,000; Montrose, 8,000; Dumfries, 7,000; Campbeltown, 7,000.[1]

In the records of the time, both contemporary and subsequent, the ignoring of anything occurring at home, except the scarcity, is very marked, and industrial matters in particular are scarcely mentioned.

**Steam navigation.**

Since the application of steam to drive factories, the idea of steam navigation had been in the air. Lord Stanhope,[2] who had come in contact with Fulton, took out patents for a steam vessel in 1790, and, in 1792, the *Gentleman's Magazine* announced that his experiments had been so satisfactory that a ship of 200 tons was being built under his direction on this principle. In 1794, Stanhope wrote to Wilberforce: "Great Britain is vulnerable in so many ways that the picture is horrid. By letter, I will say nothing upon that subject. One instance, I will, however, state, because it is information you cannot, as yet, receive from any other quarter, though in two or three months from the date of this letter, the fact will be fully established and you may then hear it from others. . . . The fact is this. I know (and in a few weeks shall prove) that ships of any size, and, for certain reasons, the larger the better, may be navigated in any narrow or other sea without sails (though occasionally with), but so as to go without wind, and even directly against both wind and waves. . . . The most important consequence which I draw from the stupendous fact . . . is that it will shortly, and very shortly, render all the existing navies of the world (I mean military navies) no better than lumber. For what can ships do that are dependent upon wind and weather against fleets wholly independent of either? Therefore the boasted superiority of the English navy is no more! We must have a new one."[3]

[1] Census Returns. At Glasgow, it may be noted, the Clyde was only five feet deep at high water.

[2] Charles Stanhope, third earl of that name; in private life, a man of wide sympathies and unbounded generosity; in science, a hard worker making experiments in many fields, a Fellow of the Royal Society, inventor, among other things, of the printing press and of the lens which bears his name; in politics, impetuous, erratic, and ill-balanced, a sympathiser with France, Chairman of the Revolution Society in 1790—"Citizen Stanhope"—and generally deserving of his nickname, "the minority of one." His first wife was Pitt's sister, and their daughter, Lady Hester Stanhope, was Pitt's faithful friend in later days.

[3] *Wilberforce Correspondence*, i. 109.

The working out of the new idea did not come so soon as Stanhope expected, but, in the *Annual Register* of the year, we find the following: "An experiment took place on the river Thames, for the purpose of working a barge, or any other heavy craft, against tide, by means of a steam engine, on a very simple construction. The moment the engine was set to work, the barge was brought about, answered her helm quickly, and made way against a strong current, at the rate of 2½ miles an hour."[1]

Wooden railways.

This year also dates the beginning of railways. Before 1801, indeed, there had been a few colliery railways privately constructed, and generally with wooden rails. These "extraordinary roads" had greatly excited the enthusiasm of Saint Fond when he visited Newcastle in 1784—logs of hard wood, laid in parallel lines, and firmly fixed to the earth with pins, the upper surface cut into a kind of rounded moulding into which the hollowed rims of the waggon wheels fitted. He asserted that the economy thus induced enabled English coal—"which they export in such abundance to all our ports"—to be sold cheaper in Marseilles than the much inferior French coal obtained from a few leagues away.[2] But, in 1801, the first Act of Parliament was passed for the construction of a railway, the Surrey Iron Railway, nine miles in length, between Wandsworth and Croydon, carried out at a cost of £60,000. It was not opened, however, till 1803, when, we are told, "the Committee went up in waggons drawn by one horse; and, to show how much motion is facilitated by this ingenious and yet simple contrivance, a gentleman, with two companions, drove up the railway in a machine of his own invention, without horses, at the rate of fifteen miles per hour."[3] This latter tale, if true, would seem to anticipate the locomotive by ten years. It is singular that, till the making of the Liverpool and Manchester line in 1826, no railway was undertaken with a view to the conveyance of passengers; even then, the chief inducement held out by the prospectus was the carrying of raw cotton, manufactured goods, coals, and cattle.[4]

The first iron railway.

[1] Chron. July, 23.

[2] *A Journey through England and Scotland* (Geikie's translation), i. 139.

[3] *European Magazine*, 154.

[4] Porter, *Progress of the Nation*, 332.

# CHAPTER III

## 1802. A BREATHING SPACE

The Definitive Treaty.

AFTER prolonged negotiations, during which the actions of Buonaparte gave rise to much suspicion, and the enthusiasm over the peace began to cool, the Definitive Treaty was signed in April at Amiens. The army and navy received the thanks of Parliament; the militia and fencibles were disbanded; and the reduction of the regular troops to a peace footing was announced. "At Amiens," said Napoleon afterwards, "I believed in truth that the fate of France and of Europe, as well as my own, were fixed. The wars once over, I meant to give myself up entirely to the affairs of France, and I believe I should have worked wonders (*enfanté des prodigues*)."

Budget.

The Budget, which was framed with Pitt's full approval, was introduced late in the year—on 5th April—on account of the uncertainty attending the final negotiations, and the doubt whether the nation would have to provide for a war or for a peace establishment. Even then, Addington contented himself with enumerating the sums already voted for army, navy, ordnance, and miscellaneous services, which provided only for five months of the year, leaving the other seven unestimated for—merely assuring the House that every retrenchment practicable would be made.[1]

Repeal of Income Tax.

Its chief interest was the immediate repeal of the obnoxious Income Tax. Experience of its working does not seem to have made it any more popular. Pitt, indeed, did not cease to maintain that it was founded on "a principle which no man had yet by any solid argument disputed." But it was resented by many even as a temporary tax for an emergency. At any rate, nothing, it was thought, could excuse it but actual war, and,

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 445.

when peace came, no one apparently thought of renewing it. Fox, who confessed that he knew nothing about political economy, called it "an impost against all principles of taxation; in fact, a confiscation of property." To the livery of London, which unanimously demanded its repeal, it seemed "destructive to the trading world, and unjust in making no discrimination between fluctuating and certain income, hostile to the liberties and morals of the people, and incapable of being made equitable or efficient." Oppressive, pernicious, vexatious, odious, monstrous, intolerable, detestable, inquisitorial, unconstitutional, fraudulent, boldly tyrannical, a tax on industry, a temptation to continue the war—these are only a few of the epithets applied during the debates.

New taxes.

The difficulty about its repeal was that it had been charged with the interest on over £56 millions of debt, and some other way had to be found to provide this interest. The method taken was to fund these £56 millions, along with £11 millions of exchequer bills, and to raise a new loan for the current year. In all, the charge on £98 millions of capital had to be provided for; four millions of new taxation, then, had to be imposed; and this could not be done without proposing taxes which must bear heavily upon the people. Two millions extra were put on malt, hops, and beer—the private individual as well as the brewer being subject, although "it was painful to increase the price of that necessary article of life, malt liquor"; one million was put on the old assessed taxes—"it could not be expected that those who were now to be excused from the pressure of the income tax were to feel nothing after the repeal of it"—and another million was obtained from a new tax on exports and imports, as a substitute for the "convoy" tax.[1] As the services were not yet back to the peace footing,[2] a new loan of £25 millions was called for. Addington now proposed the amalgamation of the two Sinking Funds (the annual million appropriated in 1786 and the 1 per cent. of every loan since), and the abolition of the four million limit, by which, he said, the

[1] This substitute, in time of peace, for a former war tax was a good deal criticised. Addington's only defence was that the convoy duty had become at last a direct tax on trade, cheerfully borne, and that trade had "wonderfully increased" under it (*Hansard*, xxxvi. 550).

[2] The *Annual Register* in March calculated that the national expenditure attending the armistice was at that moment costing Great Britain not less than a million per week.

debt—now upwards of £500 millions[1]—would be extinguished in forty-five years. The salt duty, though acknowledged to be a grievous one, was not repealed.

Homage to Pitt.

Nicholls, in May, proposed a motion calling the attention of the House to the misconduct and delinquency of the late government, more particularly the criminality of the late Chancellor of the Exchequer. This attack was met by the carrying of a vote "that the Right Honourable William Pitt has rendered great and important service to his country, and especially deserves the gratitude of the House"—a tribute without parallel—and, a few days later, Canning's magnificent ode, "The Pilot that weathered the Storm" was recited at a banquet where some nine hundred persons, the most eminent in rank, character, and talent, met to celebrate Pitt's birthday.

Continuation of Restriction.

In April, the Bank Restriction Act was continued—for political reasons: of the solidity of the Bank there was no question, and it had even manifested a readiness to return to specie payments.[2]

In June, on the dissolution of Parliament, the King's Speech said: "It is a relief to me to contemplate the state of our manufactures, commerce, and revenue, which afford the most decisive and gratifying proof of the abundance of our internal resources and the growing prosperity of the country."

Paris.

In July, Buonaparte, by a plebiscite, was made First Consul for life, and, in the same month, he instituted the Legion of Honour. The Court and ceremonial of the Tuileries became again of imperial splendour and exclusiveness. After the long confinement, there was a great exodus from England of travellers and pleasure-seekers to France, especially during the general election of the summer. "All the world has been there," writes Creevey. A French paper estimated that the number of English in Paris in September was no less than 12,000.[3] But, by the order of the day, no English person was presented to the First Consul who had not previously been presented at St. James', and Madame Buonaparte could not receive the Duchess of Cumberland.

[1] "We have a revenue equal to all Europe," said Pitt to Malmesbury, "a navy superior to all Europe, and, to make us quite gentlemen, a debt as large as that of all Europe."

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 547.

[3] "Such eagerness," says the virtuous *Annual Register*, "to visit a capital not too remarkable for the morality and decency its various societies exhibit, is more to the advantage of our sneering neighbours than to our national character" (Chron. 443).

Among others, Romilly[1] spent three weeks in the capital. The diary he kept during his stay is particularly interesting from the fact that he had last been there in 1789, and had witnessed the opening scenes of the Revolution. Two of the entries seem worth recording. One is his impression of Buonaparte: "None of the prints of him are very like. He has a mildness, a serenity in his countenance, which is very prepossessing; and none of that sternness which is to be found in his pictures. His painters seem rather to have wished to make a picture of a very extraordinary man than to paint a portrait very like him." The other is: "What strikes a foreigner as most remarkable at Paris is that the despotism which prevails there, and the vexatious and trifling regulations of the police are all carried on in the name of liberty and equality." Has it been only for this, he moralises, that rivers of blood have been shed? "Such an exclamation is very natural. It is, however, to all these horrors of the Revolution that Buonaparte owes his power. If public opinion is not strongly expressed in his favour, it is strongly expressed against everything in the Revolution which has preceded his consulate. The quiet despotism which leaves everybody who does not wish to meddle with politics (and few at present have any such wish) in the full and secure enjoyment of their property and of their pleasures, is a sort of paradise compared with the agitation, the perpetual alarms, the scenes of infamy and of bloodshed, which accompanied the pretended liberties of France."[2] And this is the more striking that Romilly had written, in 1792, that even the conduct of the Assembly had not been able to shake his conviction that the Revolution was the most glorious event, and the happiest for mankind, that had ever taken place since human affairs were recorded.

Romilly's impressions.

Mackintosh also spent four weeks in Paris, meeting many distinguished Frenchmen, and, while disclaiming to base anything on such short observation, he left the following acute forecast: "It appears to me that all the elements of a free, or even of a civil government, have been broken and dispersed in the course of the Revolution. Nothing, I own, would surprise me more than

Mackintosh's impressions.

[1] Samuel Romilly, grandson of Huguenot refugees and son of a London tradesman; born 1757; educated at home; entered Gray's Inn at age of 22; called to the bar, 1783, and went on circuit, 1784; by 1799, his practice had increased so much that he confined himself to the superior courts in London; knighted in 1806 when he became Solicitor-General.

[2] *Diary*, ii. 90, 99-100.

to see any authority in France not resting chiefly on military force. . . . Frenchmen seem destined to be the slaves of a military chief, and the terror of their neighbours for a time; beyond which I can pretend to see nothing."[1]

Great expectations.

From the newspapers and magazines of the time, one gathers that in England there was unbounded expectation of great prosperity. Before the peace, America had been the great market for manufactured goods, and so great was the oversupply that, in New York, British goods were selling at 50 per cent. discount. Since then, the great demand had been from the Continent. The manufacturing towns had felt the impulse: we hear, for instance, that in nine months from the signing of the Treaty, 15,000 people had come to settle in Glasgow; building had never been so brisk; there was not an empty house, etc.

Another fine harvest.

As the year drew on, another fine harvest added to the contentment. The *Annual Register* says, in September: Accounts from all parts of the United Kingdom agree that there never has been a harvest more abundant, nor grain more flowery, nor does there appear to have been the slightest failure of crops in any district or even parish; thus "has Providence by two years' general bounty delivered us from the worst of evils, scarcity of food for man."[2] In November, the King's Speech said that the internal prosperity of the country had realised the most sanguine hopes; the harvest had been abundant, and the state of manufacture, commerce, and revenue of the United Kingdom was flourishing beyond example.[3] The price of wheat fell from 76/- in January to 58/3 in December. The Board of Agriculture average for the year was 69/10.

Sun spots.

In the *Transactions of the Royal Society*, we find a paper by Herschel, suggesting that the solar spots were symptoms of a copious emission of light and heat from the sun's body, and that, in proportion to their number, greater or less, corresponding crops of corn might be expected on our earth; and instituting a comparison between the scantiness and abundance of the harvest and the number of the solar spots during five remarkable periods between 1650 and 1713.

[1] *Life*, i. 179.

[2] 447.

[3] On 10th December, Addington said it was impossible for him to refrain from saying a few words on a subject of no small interest and importance—he alluded to the rapid increase in the prosperity of Ireland (*Hansard*, xxxvi. 1129).

Foreign trade.

Of Imports and Exports, the Official values were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports | £29,826,210 |
| Exports of produce and manufactures of the United Kingdom | 25,632,549 |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise | 12,776,180 |
| Total exports | £38,408,729 |

The ships built and registered in the several ports of the empire during the year amounted to 1281, representing 137,508 tons.[1]

Clouding over.

But the political sky of April was already clouded over. In the debates on the signing of the Definitive Treaty, it had become clear that the peace was regarded as an insecure one: even those who had been most eager for it were dissatisfied with its terms, and each nation suspected the other of bad faith.[2] After the signing, the great expectations showed little prospect of being realised. No measures had been taken by the treaty to check the ambition of Buonaparte. The resumption of trade between the two countries had been one of the strongest motives urged in the petitions for peace; but the commercial treaty, which most people thought should have been stipulated for in the terms, and which was at least expected to follow, was not now spoken of. The prohibitions imposed during the war were not removed. British merchandise continued to be enemy's goods, and its importation and sale were prohibited throughout France. Already Buonaparte had begun to confiscate English merchant vessels driven by stress of weather into his ports.[3]

The press.

During the summer, too, the press in both countries did its best to make friendship impossible. English newspapers were persistent in exposing the hypocrisy of the First Consul, and his acts of violence done to the weaker States—Portugal, Spain, Holland, and Switzerland. In August, most violent and unqualified abuse of the British press began to appear in the *Moniteur*. English

[1] *Hansard*, vii. 1131.

[2] England, indeed, was not charged with designs of aggression on Europe, but with "arrogance in overbearing other people's will and affairs; insatiable rapacity about annexing islands and distant coasts to her dominions; and a shop-keeping ambition to monopolise the commerce and command the industry of the world" (Harriet Martineau, *History*, 1800-15, p. 6); hence the popularity of the French catchword, "the liberty of the sea and the repose of Europe."

[3] The *Annual Register* gives cases of this in December, 1801, and in July and September, 1802, pp. 223-6.

newspapers were seized, and their circulation was forbidden. *The Times*—"which is said to be under ministerial inspection"—was charged with perpetual invectives against France—"two of its four pages are every day employed in giving currency to the grossest calumnies."[1] The French Ambassador warned Lord Grenville that, if the English press was not controlled as regards its censures on Napoleon, there must be war.[2]

Not peace but a truce.

In autumn there was a general election which did not make much change in the strength of parties or in the *personnel*, except that Castlereagh, already disputing with Canning the reputation of being the ablest of the younger generation, became President of the Board of Trade. When Parliament met in November, the King's Speech contained an ominous clause calling for "a watchful solicitude"; and the debates which followed showed that, in the opinion of all, the peace was but an armed truce, its continuance depending on the further action of France. The language used, certainly, was not such as to make for peace. Continual reference was made to French encroachment on the independence of other nations—notably Italy and Switzerland. Canning spoke of "those notorious transactions on the Continent";[3] Nelson, of the new alarm caused by the "restless and unjust ambition in those with whom we desire a sincere amity";[4] and even Fox said that "no man in England could feel the aggrandisement of France more strongly or regret it more than he did"—"I did not say that I was for peace on any terms and purchased by any submission."[5] In December, the *Annual Register* noted that the Court Calendar for the ensuing year had enumerated Buonaparte

[1] *Annual Register*, 638. The British Government, in reply, pleaded that "the calumnies to which His Majesty's Government, and many of the best subjects in this country are frequently exposed in the public prints, must necessarily convince all foreign governments of the difficulties which exist in a constitution like that of Great Britain, in preventing the abuse which is often unavoidably attendant on the greatest of all political benefits"; and pointed out that the paragraphs in the newspapers complained of had not appeared under any authority of the British Government, and were disavowed and disapproved of by it, while the *Moniteur* was avowedly official and responsible, "as His Majesty's Government is responsible for the contents of the *London Gazette*" (*Hansard*, xxxvi, 1268, 1272).

[2] The change in public feeling is evident even in the grave *Annual Register*. The "Buonaparte" who, in the volume of 1801, was spoken of with very considerable respect, and even praised for his "magnanimous and courageous spirit," in 1802 is "Buonapartέ," the "nameless military adventurer," the "Corsican usurper," "our implacable enemy."

[3] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 959. [4] *Ibid.* 937. [5] *Ibid.* 983.

among the sovereigns of Europe, and, in the current specification of each monarch's birth, etc., had stated that he was born on the 15th August, 1769, and "began to reign" the 15th December, 1790.[1]

Buonaparte's designs.

The general opinion was that France was using the breathing time to prepare for a deadlier struggle. The French, it was said, were making the greatest and most unremitting exertions to seduce our manufacturers and artificers over to France, and to procure models of our machinery, and they had not been unsuccessful. Buonaparte was credited with the desire to re-establish the maritime power of France and dispute our colonial supremacy. It would take him ten years, he calculated, to have a fleet equal to that of England; but after that time, with the help of Spain and Holland, he might hope to challenge the power of Great Britain with some chance of success. "France must be first among states or she must disappear." It was noticed that she had not relaxed her military preparations in the slightest degree, and that hundreds of men were employed in deepening the harbour of Boulogne. War evidently was not far off. Addington, "happy and irremovable," was losing the support of Pitt, who was visibly chafing at his own inactivity, and fretting at the incapacity of his successor.

Domestic affairs.

In 1802, domestic affairs, except in their bearing on foreign policy, received little attention from Parliament. It would almost seem as if, during the exciting times of war, members had forgotten the ordinary life and interests of their constituents. There were debates on the Civil List, on the Estimates, on the Treaty, on Non-residence of the Clergy, on Trinidad, on the Bank and the Debt, etc.; but the only one of general interest was on a Bull-baiting Bill—most notable for the light it throws on the ideas even of educated people of those days as regards animals. There was no question that the sport was abominably cruel both on the bull and on the dogs. But Windham,[2] among other absurdities, condemned the "abridging of men's pleasures," and "encroaching upon the few amusements of the poor"; maintained, with curious infelicity, that "the bull felt satisfaction in the contest not less than the hound when he heard the sound

Bull-baiting.

[1] P. 471.

[2] William Windham, born 1750; educated at Eton, Glasgow (where his ability as a mathematician was recognised and developed by Anderson and Simson), and Oxford; political pupil of Burke; member for Norwich, 1784; Secretary for War, 1794, and resigned with Pitt in 1801; one of the finest gentlemen and sportsmen of his time.

of the horn which summoned him to the chase"; and he found sixty-three members to help him in throwing out the Bill.[1]

But what catches the attention of the modern reader, even more than the callous words of one then recognised as the very ideal of the English gentleman, is the contempt he threw on such a subject being brought before Parliament at all. The discussion of "paltry local complaints" such as that about bull-baiting, was "wholly unworthy of the legislation of a great nation, and could only have been procured by canvass and intrigue!"

First Factory Act.

It is, perhaps, due to this conception of what the "legislation of a great nation" ought to be that there is no mention, either in *Hansard* or in the *Annual Register*, of the first Factory Act on the statute book—the Health and Morals of Apprentices Act, brought in by Sir Robert Peel. Peel said afterwards that he had no difficulty in getting it passed, as the House was quite convinced of its necessity. The new textile machinery had created a great demand for children as minders, and, as the factories were still being built away from towns to take advantage of the water supply, there must often have been a scarcity of child labour. This demand was met by the overseers and workhouses. One reads of as many as 500 children being taken by one manufacturer. Even in 1811, Romilly tells us, the pauper apprentices were being sent from London by "waggon-loads at a time." It was to remedy and provide against the abuses of such a system that Peel's Act was introduced. Its provisions were: Working hours to be limited to twelve a day; night work to cease after 1804; apprentices to be given one suit of clothes a year, to be taught reading, writing, and arithmetic, and to attend church at least once a month; factories to be whitewashed twice a year, and at all times to be properly ventilated; separate sleeping apartments to be provided for different sexes, and not more than two to occupy a bed; justices to appoint two visiting inspectors from among them-

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 829. Two years before, when a similar Bill was brought in, Canning—from whom one expects better things—had professed that he did not understand whether the "shocking cruelty" alleged was to the dogs or to the bull: the amusement was a most excellent one; it inspired courage and produced a nobleness of sentiment and elevation of mind. The dogs, of course, were dangerous, and accidents might happen from the bull getting loose; but, if things of this sort were to be brought to the notice of the legislature, the House might sit for ever making new laws, and whimsical laws they would make (*Hansard*, xxxv. 211).

selves, of whom one was to be a clergyman; all factories to be registered annually. It should be observed that the chief clauses of the Act extended to pauper apprentices only.[1]

The *Charlotte Dundas*.

It was in this year that the first working steamboat appeared. As far back as 1788, Symington had fitted a two horse-power engine into a double boat, with paddles inside, and driven it on Dalswinton Loch at the rate of five miles an hour. But, in 1801, he built the *Charlotte Dundas*, a stern-wheeler, with engines made at Carron on an improved principle, and put it on the Forth and Clyde Canal in March, 1802. It travelled 19½ miles against a strong head wind, towing two barges, in six hours; but it was laid aside "on account of the injury it threatened the banks of the canal by the agitation of the water."[2] It was from this boat that Fulton got the idea which he carried out on the Hudson.[3] In the same year a small steam engine fitted to a carriage was tried in London, but abandoned owing to the badness of the roads.

Literature.

In the literature of economic theory, the year was marked by the appearance of Canard's *Principes d'economie politique*, and, in general literature, by Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, and the establishment of Cobbett's *Weekly Political Register*. But, unquestionably, the literary event of the year—described by Lord Cockburn as "electrical"—was the starting of the *Edinburgh Review*, with Sydney Smith, Jeffrey, Brougham, and Horner, as chief contributors. The *Review* was begun on the suggestion of Sydney Smith, then a curate in the middle of Salisbury Plain, who had started for Weimar as bear leader to the son of the squire of the parish, and put into Edinburgh instead when Germany became the seat of war. He remained long enough in Edinburgh to edit the first number, and his account of the circumstances of the time will bear quoting once again.

The *Edinburgh Review*

[1] As to the origins and ineffectiveness of the Act, see Hutchins and Harrison, *History of Factory Legislation*, 14.

[2] *Tilloch's Philosophical Magazine*, quoted in *Annual Register*, 1815, p. 504.

[3] It is not generally known that Fulton, who had been in Paris for some years, and had succeeded in "propelling a boat through the water by the aid of steam," offered his services to Napoleon at Boulogne in July, 1804: "I can remove the obstacles which protect your enemy, and, notwithstanding his fleets, I can transport your armies to his territory at any time and within a few hours, without having to fear storms or wait for a favourable wind." Napoleon submitted the invention to a special committee, which unanimously condemned it (Nicolay, *Napoleon at the Boulogne Camp*, p. 213). Fulton claimed also to have invented a navigable submarine which could remain under water for seven hours (*Scots Magazine*, 505).

"To appreciate the value of the *Edinburgh Review*, the state of England at the period when that journal began should be had in remembrance. The Catholics were not emancipated—the Corporation and Test Acts were unrepealed—the Game Laws were horribly oppressive—steel traps and spring guns were set all over the country—prisoners tried for their lives could have no counsel—Lord Eldon and the Court of Chancery pressed heavily upon mankind—libel was punished by the most cruel and vindictive imprisonments—the principles of political economy were little understood—the law of debt and of conspiracy were upon the worst possible footing—the enormous wickedness of the slave trade was tolerated—a thousand evils were in existence, which the talents of good and able men have since lessened or removed. . . . From the beginning of the century to the death of Lord Liverpool was an awful period, for those who had the misfortune to entertain liberal opinions, and who were too honest to sell them for the ermine of the judge, or the lawn of the prelate:—a long and hopeless career in your profession, the chuckling grin of noodles, the sarcastic leer of the genuine political rogue-prebendaries, deans, and bishops made over your head—reverend renegades advanced to the highest dignities of the Church, for helping to rivet the fetters of Catholic and Protestant Dissenters, and no more chance of a Whig administration than of a thaw in Zembla—these were the penalties exacted for liberality of opinion at that period; and not only was there no pay, but there were many stripes. It is always considered as a piece of impertinence in England if a man of less than two or three thousand a year has any opinions at all upon important subjects; but in addition he was sure at that time to be assailed with all the Billingsgate of the French Revolution—Jacobin, Leveller, Atheist, Deist, Socinian, Incendiary, Regicide, were the gentlest appellations used; and the man who breathed a syllable against the senseless bigotry of the two Georges, or hinted at the abominable tyranny and persecution exercised upon Catholic Ireland, was shunned as unfit for the relations of social life. Not a murmur against any abuse was permitted; to say a word against the suitorcide delays of the Court of Chancery, or the cruel punishments of the Game Laws, or against any abuse which a rich man inflicted, or a poor man suffered, was treason against the *Plousiocracy*, and was bitterly and steadily resented. Lord Grey had not then taken off the bearing-rein from the English people,

as Sir Francis Head has now done from horses. To set on foot such a journal in such times, to contribute towards it for many years, to bear patiently the reproach and poverty which it caused, and to look back and see that I have nothing to retract, and no intemperance and violence to reproach myself with, is a career of life which I must think to be extremely fortunate."[1]

The advertisement of the new "Critical Journal" (to give it its sub-title) bore that it would confine its notices, in a great measure, to works that either had attained, or deserved, a certain degree of celebrity. In the first number—to which Sydney Smith contributed five articles—both the slashing criticism and the conscientious judgments which distinguished it in its long "species of duel" with Lord Eldon, are abundantly evident. —its character.

Among the parliamentary grants of 1802, appear two rather noticeable ones. For many years, smallpox, although somewhat mitigated by inoculation from mild cases, had been the scourge of the country. For the last decade, 92 out of every 1,000 deaths were due to it. It was estimated to be killing 40,000 persons a year over the United Kingdom, and 3,000 in London alone. In 1798, Edward Jenner made public his discovery that inoculation from the cow-pox was preventive of the dreaded disease. The remedy was at once taken up; royal families got themselves inoculated to make it popular; and, in this year, Jenner was voted a grant of £10,000. On the same day, another life-saving discovery was similarly recognised: Greathead was voted £1,200 for his invention of the life-boat.[2] Jenner. Greathead.

The Copyright Act of 1802 is another measure which was not noticed in *Hansard*. "Previous to this date, Ireland was unaffected by the Act of Anne which prevailed in England, and the Irish publisher was at perfect liberty to reprint any books which were published in England, without incurring any penalty for a piratical invasion of the author's privileges. So extensively was this trade of reprinting carried on at the time, that most of the literature of England found its way to the United States through the medium of the printers in Ireland."[3] Copyright Act.

[1] Preface to collected *Works*, 1839. [2] *Annual Register*, 182.

[3] Plunkett, in 1818, *Hansard*, xxxviii. 159.

# CHAPTER IV

## 1803. THE RUPTURE OF THE PEACE

War again.

BY January, hope of a lasting peace was waning, and the funds were going down. When the Bank Restriction was again renewed in February, the debates showed very well how things were tending. No reasons were alleged for its renewal except that £20 millions of specie had been sent out of the country to pay for the vast quantity of grain purchased during the past three years, and that it would take some time to get it back. The country was confessedly in a state of the highest prosperity; the Bank position was sound; the directors were quite willing to resume specie payments.[1] The idea of continuing the restriction originated solely with the Government, and what the Government left unsaid, Auckland did not scruple to hint—he "would offer no decided opinion on the probable period to which the continuance of the peace might extend"—"it might," said Grenville, "be of very short duration." Large additions to the army and navy were voted. France imposed a rigidly protectionist tariff, which put an end to all hope of a commercial treaty. On 8th March, the King's message to Parliament, asking additional measures of precaution for the security of the British dominions, in face of "very considerable military preparations being carried on in the ports of France and Holland"

[1] Thus far, however, no inconvenience had attended the restriction. Tooke shows that there was no rise of prices due to an increase in the current money. All the same, attention was now being drawn to the danger of overissue. Previous to 1797, the average amount of the circulation of Bank of England notes had been about ten millions. Since then, it had been up to fifteen and sixteen millions. The overissue in Ireland was becoming notorious. The issue there had been about £600,000 in 1797; now, it was some £2,600,000. In May, Lord King moved, without success, that the Bank of Ireland be compelled to pay in Bank of England notes—the Marquis of Sligo pertinently asking how it would be possible to get these notes except by giving guineas for them (*Hansard*, xxxvi. 1247).

though "avowedly directed to colonial service," and the calling out of the militia two days afterwards, were received all over Europe as the signal of approaching war, and, on 18th May, this was followed by the formal declaration. "England compels us to conquer the world," wrote Buonaparte to his minister. The peace had lasted just one year and sixteen days. On 20th May, Nelson sailed from Portsmouth to take command in the Mediterranean, and for two years his foot was never out of the "Victory."

Buonaparte's account of the rupture.

The causes of the rupture, from the side of England, have been sufficiently suggested. It is interesting to know that Buonaparte considered that the real cause was commercial. In 1806, at the beginning of the fruitless negotiations with Fox, Talleyrand, when laying down the principle that "peace with France is possible and may be perpetual, provided there is no interference in her internal affairs, and that no attempt is made to restrain her in the regulation of her customs' duties, to cramp her commercial rights, or to offer any insult to her flag," wrote: "The Emperor does not imagine that any particular article of the Treaty of Amiens produced the war. He is convinced that the true cause was the refusal to make a treaty of commerce, which would necessarily have been prejudicial to the manufactures and the industry of his subjects."[1] At the time, however, his reading of the rupture was given in an Exposé of 16th January, 1804:[2] "Malta was the cause of the war . . . it was England who began the war, even without a declaration."

British subjects made prisoners of war.

The first move on the part of France was the detention of some thousands of peaceable citizens. All British subjects between the ages of eighteen and sixty then resident in France and Holland—believed to be some 11,000 in France and 1,300 in Holland—were constituted prisoners of war,[3] "to answer for those citizens of the republic who may have been arrested and made prisoners by the vessels or subjects of his Britannic Majesty previous to any declaration of war." This roused the active resentment of the country—"if it had been Bonaparte's object to give strength to the British ministry," wrote Romilly, "and to make the war universally popular in England, he could not have

[1] *Hansard*, viii. 95. [2] *Annual Register*, 1804, 608.

[3] The English at Rouen were taken to Dourlens; those at Calais to Lille; and those at Brussels to Valenciennes (*Annual Register*, 399). Buonaparte is now "the ferocious Corsican" (*Ibid.* 391).

devised a better expedient"—and the war recommenced amidst popular enthusiasm. Meetings were held up and down the country, to send addresses of loyalty to the King, and to arrange plans for defence. Men like Wilberforce, lamenting that they could not serve, racked their brains to think if they could not help by stirring up the people and "correcting erroneous impressions."[1] The Presbytery of Edinburgh offered two guineas, above all other bounties, to the first hundred who should enlist in the royal navy or the line. Pitt returned to Westminster to deliver one of his greatest speeches in support of the war.[2] The merchants, bankers, traders, and other inhabitants of London and its neighbourhood, issued a stirring declaration that this was a struggle for national existence, for civilisation against brute force, for all that Englishmen held dear against all they most hated, and pledging themselves to be ready with services of every sort on every occasion.[3] During the summer, coast defence was established and strengthened. By the end of the year, 300,000, and, by the beginning of the next session, 400,000 volunteers were drilling all over the country—making indignant complaint of being armed only with pikes. Pitt, it is noticed, "going through the fatigues of a drill sergeant," and in command of 3,000 volunteers, astonished the officers of the army by his military knowledge and capacity. The regular force available was calculated at 495,000 men in Great Britain, 120,000 in Ireland, and 1,652 vessels of all orders employed in the defence of the country.

Popular enthusiasm.

Hanover.

The first act of hostility was the occupation, in June, of Hanover, of which George III. was Elector. The Hanovarian army was disbanded, and the artillery, horses, and military stores delivered up to France.

Budget.

In bringing in the Budget on 15th June,[4] Addington asked the country to submit to the sacrifices necessary to prepare not only for a vigorous but for a protracted war. The total Supply asked on account of the United Kingdom was £33,730,000, of

[1] *Correspondence*, i. 275.

[2] He spoke for two hours and a half: the peroration was "a complete half hour of his most powerful declamation," says Horner. Fox's reply on the succeeding night—his best speech, as he said himself—took three hours.

[3] *Annual Register*, 411 The declaration was written by Macintosh.

[4] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 1594.

which £3,332,000 fell on Ireland, leaving, for Great Britain alone, £30,398,000. The chief items in the joint charges were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Army | £10,021,000 |
| Navy | 8,721,000 |
| Army extraordinaries | 2,000,000 |
| Extraordinaries of preceding year | 1,032,000 |
| Ordnance | 1,280,000 |
| Vote of Credit | 2,000,000 |
| Corn bounties | 524,000 |
| Miscellaneous services | 1,300,000 |

The chief items of Ways and Means were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Annual Malt and other taxes in room of the Land Tax | £2,750,000 |
| Exchequer Bills | 3,000,000 |
| Surplus of Consolidated Fund | 6,500,000[1] |
| Exchequer Bills on aids of 1804 | 1,500,000 |
| Lottery | 400,000 |

New taxes

Besides these, it was proposed to raise £12½ millions of special taxes, to be considered "applicable to war only," and to cease within six months after the restoration of peace. Customs was to contribute £2 millions of this by an increased import duty of 20 per cent. on the existing sugar duty, and of 12½ per cent. on other duties with the exception of cotton wool, tea, and wine; by an export duty of 1 per cent. *ad valorem* on all articles to any part of Europe, of 3 per cent. to any other part of the world, and of 1d. per lb. on cotton wool exported; and by an additional duty on tonnage. Excise was to contribute £6 millions by an additional duty of 15 per cent. *ad valorem* on the lower sorts of tea and 45 per cent. on the higher; an additional duty of £18 per tun for French and £12 per tun for other wines; 50 per cent. on the existing duty on all foreign and British spirits; and 2/- a bushel extra on malt. And £4½ millions were to be got by the re-imposition in a modified form of the Income Tax, now called the Land and Property (or Rent and Funds) Tax.

Property Tax.

The rate of the Property Tax was 1/- in the pound on the actual rent of all land in England paid by the landowner, and 9d. in the pound paid by the tenant. (In Scotland the tenant was to pay only 6d.) The tax was charged besides on the net produce of

[1] When the accounts were made up at the end of the year, it was found that the Income of the Consolidated Fund was £31,863,000, and the Charge (including £25 millions of interest on the Debt), £26,700,000, showing an actual balance of £5,163,000. *Hansard*, i. 1111.

all trades and professions, and on the dividends from the public funds except those dividends due to foreigners residing out of the country. The schedules A to E were now introduced. There was total exemption below £60, and abatements were made between £60 and £150.[1]

Criticism. The tax was again opposed as an income rather than a property tax, as "an outrage," as a tax of equal sums on the income from bodily labour and skill and on income from capital—the "precarious produce of industry and permanent income"—a contention set aside by the easy answer from Addington that "equality of taxation was a thing not to be brought about by human wisdom."[2]

Loan The loan was £12 millions, £10 millions of which were for England. The interest and sinking fund for this were to be obtained by increased customs duties on certain articles and by a new receipt-stamp duty. The great object he had in view, said Addington, was "to raise a large part of the supplies within the year," and to carry this principle to the extent that "there should be no increase whatever of the public debt during the war." He anticipated meeting an annual war charge, however prolonged the contest, of £26 millions without any increase of the public debt—"unless demands should be made upon us by the intervention of foreign powers who may wish to make a common cause with us." Such a system would convince the enemy that it was hopeless to contend with our finances.

Cobbett on the Sinking Fund. If the Sinking Fund still remained the "sheet-anchor of the country," it was not for want of criticism. A most vigorous one appeared in Cobbett's *Political Register* of 18th June. "The Sinking Fund is, it seems, to be kept up in all its glory, and *no addition whatever* is to be made to the Public Debt during the war, be its duration ever so protracted! How is this to be, Sir? You estimate the annual supplies for the war at £26,000,000. All this, say you, is to come out of the taxes raised

[1] As originally drafted, landed proprietors and receivers of incomes from the funds were not entitled to exemption or abatements, but, on Pitt's strong opposition, this was given up. The alteration made a difference of a million in the estimates.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 1662. Addington considered that, of all the cases of hardship to which the tax was subject, it seemed to him most severe on the income arising, not from bodily labour, but from the learned professions—"almost every person engaged in trade may carry on that trade by means of representatives, but persons engaged in the learned professions must give in person that advice which is necessary, for no proxy can possibly be admitted."

during the year, except about £6,000,000 which is to be obtained by a loan annually made to that amount; but, as the debt annually created by these loans will be no greater than the part of the Public Debt bought up annually by the Commissioners of the Sinking Fund, *the loans will make no addition to the debt!* It is, I think, impossible that you should not perceive the fallacy of this statement. What becomes of the part of the Public Debt bought up by the Commissioners? What, Sir, becomes of the stock so bought up? Why, it is carried to the account of the nation; it becomes the property of the nation; the nation annually receives the dividends on it, but *it first raises the money to pay these dividends.* And what becomes of the dividends after the nation has thus received them from itself? Why, they are disposed of in the buying up of more stock, in order that the nation may have an increase of dividends, which, like the former, are to be paid to itself by itself; and thus the delusive whirligig goes on, but without ever lessening the Public Debt in the amount of one single penny. If, indeed, the stock bought up by the Commissioners were destroyed: if, when so bought up, it instantly *ceased to exist,* as nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of the people imagine it does, then your statement would be fair; but while it is in existence, and while the people have regularly to pay taxes to discharge the dividends on it, where is the difference whether the said stock be called the property of individuals or the property of the nation? Where is the difference, as to the £6,000,000 to be annually borrowed, whether the interest of it be paid to individuals or to the Commissioners of the Sinking Fund? So that it must be paid by the people, where is the difference to them whether it be paid on the right hand or on the left? Another question brings your statement to the test. You say there will be no increase to the debt during the war, because stock, equal in amount to that which is created by the annual loan of £6,000,000, will be annually bought up by the Commissioners of the Sinking Fund. Now then, Sir, if this be really so, why not take the produce of the Sinking Fund during the war and appropriate it to the public use, instead of a loan to the same amount? . . . Oh, no! 'that would *alarm* people; that would *shake public credit.*' This, then, is the touchstone of the system; to continue the operation of the Sinking Fund *we must go on paying interest on all the stock bought up,* and to be bought up, by the Commissioners; if, therefore, this continuation be

absolutely necessary to the *preservation of public credit*, that credit must be destroyed unless we continue to pay, as we now do, interest *on all the stock that ever was created.* When and how, then, is the debt to experience that *diminution* with which you, Sir, thought proper to amuse the tame and stupid crowd who were listening to you from the galleries?"[1]

*à Londres.*

In the end of the year all thoughts were occupied with the great demonstration at Boulogne. A descent on Britain from that port, by means of flat-bottomed boats, was not a new idea in France. It had been proposed by Lally in 1774, and for the moment accepted by the French ministry, although quickly abandoned as impracticable. Now apparently the great adventure of 1066 was to be repeated. Fifty thousand maps were selling in Paris at six sous, with the streets all described and houses stamped with a particular mark, "that the invaders might know where to get to work when they arrived."[2] The road to Boulogne was marked with fingerposts *à Londres.* 500,000 troops were ranged along the coasts. In all the ports over against England there was extraordinary bustle of preparation. The Minister of the Interior (Chaptal) addressed a letter to the prefects asking for contributions to give the government the means of reaching their enemy: "Two feet of water are sufficient to carry a flat-bottomed boat not armed . . . if each department and each large town, by a general and rapid movement, put vessels on the stocks, the French army will soon go and dictate laws to the British government." At the same time, all the ships' carpenters and boat builders everywhere in France, from the age of fifteen to sixty, were put in requisition to work only for the government.[3] For this flat-bottomed flotilla Buonaparte built a new basin, and enlarged and fortified the port.

On our part, all the King's Speech had to boast of was some successes in the West Indies.

First Order in Council.

This year dates the beginning of the great struggle on the part of each of the two nations to cripple the trade of the other. On 17th May, the first Order in Council was issued by England, proclaiming an embargo on all French and Dutch ships in British ports. It was expressly stated to be a measure of "reprisals" against the ships, goods, and subjects of the French Republic, the justification being that Napoleon had not only filled Holland

[1] iii. 920. [2] So at least says the *Scots Magazine*, 1803, 575.
[3] *Annual Register*, 399.

with French troops, but had prohibited the import of British manufactures, as if Holland were already annexed to France. On the occupation of Hanover, the further measure was taken—also by Orders in Council—of declaring under blockade the Elbe and Weser, and all the ports of Western Germany. As no vessel could enter or leave the Elbe, Hamburg particularly experienced great distress. The commerce of North Germany with the states of the Empire was directed to Lubeck.[1]

Buonaparte's reply.

As provisional reply, in June, Buonaparte issued a proclamation to the effect that "there shall not be received in the ports of the Republic any produce from the English colonies, nor any merchandise coming, directly or indirectly, from England. In consequence, all produce or merchandise coming from the English manufactories or colonies shall be confiscated. Captains of French or neutral vessels who do not attend to certain forms of declaration shall not be suffered to enter the ports of the French Republic."[2]

Agriculture.

As regards agriculture at home, wheat came back to its old level before the scarcity, remaining very steady in price all the year through. The Board of Agriculture average was 58/10. The *Annual Register* of 20th August notes: "So few rainy days within a twelvemonth have not been experienced in any year since 1792 as during the last 365 days; from the extreme drought many inconveniences have occurred."[3] Owing to this, turnips and cattle food generally were scarce and dear, and meat fell slowly. Although the harvest was only an ordinary one, grain did not rise. The prices of other commodities were not distinguished by any marked variation.[4]

Trade.

All one can gather regarding general industry and trade is from Addington's remark in the Budget speech of April, 1804, that, during the negotiations and on the commencement of the war, commerce was stagnant.[5] But trade with the Continent did not stop. British goods got access by Lubeck, Danzig, and other ports to the north of Germany and even to France. By Trieste and Venice, they reached Switzerland and the southern parts of France, in disguises either not detected or winked at by the cordon of customs officials. The great profits made on the transit and sale of such goods induced the traders of every

[1] *Annual Register*, 423.
[2] Quoted in *Annual Register*, 398.
[3] 423.
[4] Tooke, *History of Prices*, i. 238-9.
[5] *Hansard*, ii. 349.

country to encourage their reception.[1] Meanwhile, however, the ominous Poor Rate steadily increased; the money actually expended on the relief of the poor rose to £4,627,000 in this year.[2]

Poor rates.

Foreign trade.

The immediate effect of the resumption of the war was seen in the reduction of our foreign trade by over £3 millions in imports, £5 millions in exports, and £4¾ millions in re-exports.

The Official values were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports - - - - - - - - - - | £26,622,696 |
| Exports of produce and manufactures of the United Kingdom - - - - - - | 20,467,531 |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise - | 8,073,874 |

The vessels built and registered in the several ports of the empire during the year were 1,402, representing 135,349 tons.[3]

Barren records.

The records are again almost entirely barren as regards internal politics and social interests, except for Emmett's abortive rising in Ireland in July, followed by the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, and for the war of pamphlets between their respective supporters which followed Pitt's gradual estrangement from Addington. The parliamentary debates are taken up exclusively with the rupture with France, military and naval preparations, the numerous skirmishes at sea, the defence of the country, and the coercion measures in Ireland.

Scots education.

The superior education of Scotland had long been a reproach to England, and it is a little remarkable that Parliament, which had not yet dreamed of universal education for the southern part of the island, should find time to improve still further that of the northern. In 1696, Parish Schools had been set up in Scotland by the Act of William, which ordained that there should be a school established and a schoolmaster appointed in every parish by advice of the heritors and minister thereof, and that the heritors should provide a commodious house for a school, and settle a salary for a schoolmaster of not less than 100 nor over 200 merks, to be raised by a stent on the heritors within the parish according to their valued rent, allowing each heritor relief from his tenants of the half of his proportion. In 1803, for the reason that these salaries, "by difference in the value of money and change in the circumstances of the country, had become a provision altogether inadequate for a body of men whose labours were of so great public utility," the Schoolmasters'

[1] *Scots Magazine*, October. [2] *Hansard*, xxvii. (1814), 701.

[3] *Hansard*, vii. 1132.

Act was passed, providing that the salary should not be less than 300 nor above 400 marks Scots (£16 13/4 and £22 4/5 respectively). The Act further provided that, in every parish where a commodious house for the school and a dwelling-house for the schoolmaster had not been provided, the heritors should provide the same; the house to consist of not more than two apartments, including the kitchen, and the garden to be not less than a fourth of a Scots acre; the expenses to be defrayed as in the former Act.

The result on Scottish education subsequently was that the General Assembly of 1818 could say that there was a school in every parish, competently endowed as provided for by law, and in general supplied with a suitably qualified teacher. Few cases could exist, they stated, where those who were willing to be taught and resided within reach of a school were left without the means of common education. The schoolmaster was by law obliged to teach gratis poor scholars recommended by the session, and, it is added, "it is but justice to the schoolmasters to state that many reports mention and applaud their disinterested readiness to receive indigent children on their list without fees."[1]

Caledonian Canal.

The Caledonian Canal was begun in this year; partly, we are told, to give employment to the people of Scotland, partly, at the request of those concerned in the Baltic trade and on petitions from Ireland, Liverpool, Bristol, etc., that many ships were lost in the dangerous waters of the north of Scotland. For two summers, Telford had been employed by the Treasury in taking soundings and elevations; he pronounced that the scheme was perfectly practicable, could be completed in seven years, and would not cost more than £345,000. The estimate adopted was £500,000. In 1816, when economy was the order of the day, Lord Lauderdale thought that the £50,000 of annual grant might be dispensed with, as, in the opinion of naval men, it would never prove of any utility, and, according to the universal opinion of Scotland, it was of no use whatever. But, in 1819, when it had cost £700,000, and a grant of £50,000 more was asked to complete it, one member, a little unkindly, said that the undertaking had been worth more than the money expended, as it had introduced "the spirit of labour into that part of Scotland"—which must have been by example, as, according to

[1] Nicholls, *History of the Scotch Poor Law*, 98, 120.

another member, it was English and Irish labourers who had been employed.[1] When the Canal was opened for traffic in 1822, its total cost was estimated to have been £1,149,613.[2]

Malthus.

In the annals of economic science, the year was notable for the appearance of a second edition of Malthus's *Essay*, materially different from the former. In the first edition, published 1798, Malthus was mainly interested in arguing against Godwin and Condorcet, whose optimistic views on the perfectibility of society had attracted much attention. "The power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man. Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio." Population accordingly must always be kept down to the level of the means of subsistence. The means by which this has been effected in the past is Misery and Vice. "This natural inequality of the two powers . . . forms the great difficulty that to me appears insurmountable in the way to the perfectibility of society." In the second edition—"very much enlarged"—it appears that the subject had seized hold of Malthus for itself. The argument against perfectibility falls into the background. The "main subject" of the *Essay* is now the "explanation and illustration of the theory of Population." And "throughout the whole of the present work," he says in the Preface, "I have so far differed in principle from the former as to suppose another check to population possible which does not come under the head either of vice or misery"—the check being Moral Restraint.[3]

Other economic literature.

Other publications in economic science were Sismondi's *De la richesse commerciale* and Jean Baptiste Say's *Traité d'économie politique.*

French calendar and currency.

In France, two important changes were made. The Gregorian Calendar, interrupted by the Revolutionary Calendar since 1793, was ordered to be restored from 1st January, 1806. The law of 28th March ordained that the unit of currency was the franc, defined as a weight of five grammes of silver, 9/10ths pure, and gold was equated at the ratio of 15½ to 1.

Australian wool.

In 1803, this country was first made aware of the wool-growing possibilities of Australia. A Captain Macarthur, who,

[1] *Hansard*, xxxix. 1119. [2] Porter, *Progress of the Nation*, 312.

[3] See Cannan, *Theories of Production and Distribution*, 2nd edition, 1903, for an exhaustive account and criticism of the *Essay* in its historical relations and further developments throughout later editions.

for some years, had been breeding in New South Wales from a few merino sheep taken from Holland in 1797 to the Cape and thence to Port Jackson, brought samples of wool and submitted them to experts. They reported that the wool possessed a softness superior to many of the wools of Spain, and that it certainly was equal, in every valuable property, to the very best obtained from that country. Macarthur calculated that, with proper care, his existing stock, then 4,000 sheep, would double itself every two and a half years, and that, in twenty years, it would produce as much fine wool as was being imported into England from Spain and other countries at an annual expense of £1,800,000. He submitted a memorandum in July to the Secretary of State setting this forth, asking for the protection of Government, for permission to occupy a sufficient tract of unoccupied land to feed his flocks, and for power to select from amongst the convicts such men for shepherds as knew something about the business. With some difficulty he obtained a grant of 5,000 acres; but, although he had the powerful backing of Sir Joseph Banks, he was unsuccessful in his ultimate object of forming a Pastoral Company, and returned to New South Wales to become the first squatter: that is, a person holding land as a sheep-walk only, resumable by Government, if the land should be required for other purposes, on condition of giving a similar area further distant from the cultivated lands of the colony.[1] The next reference to the subject was in 1813 when "after a long suspension of news from this remote dependency," the following was received: "It appears that the growers of fine wool in the colony consider that they are enabled to vie with Spain in the quality, if not the quantity of produce, which, however, is greatly increased.[2] Finally, in 1818, we are informed that in that year a considerable quantity of wool was on its way from New South Wales.[3]

[1] Bonwick, *Romance of the Wool Trade*, 72.

[2] *Scots Magazine*, 1813, 218.

[3] *Blackwood's Magazine*, March, 716.

# CHAPTER V

## 1804. PAUSE

In the early part of the year, war and the preparation for war shut out everything else from public consideration. A recurrence of the King's malady added to the general gloom. *Hansard* is filled with endless debates on the volunteers and militia, the policy as to the regular army, and the "mismanagement of the navy."

Budget.

In the Budget of 30th April,[1] Addington asked for a total Supply of £41,000,000; £4,711,000 to be raised on account of Ireland, leaving £36,283,000 on account of Great Britain. The chief items in the joint charges were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Navy | £11,715,000 |
| Army, England | 15,256,000 |
| Army, Ireland | 3,887,000 |
| Ordnance, England | 3,693,000 |
| Ordnance, Ireland | 369,000 |
| Vote of Credit | 2,500,000 |
| Miscellaneous, England and Ireland | 883,000 |
| Irish permanent grants | 400,000 |

As regards Ways and Means, the yield of the war taxes (customs, excise, and property tax) estimated at £14,440,000, he proposed to "invigorate by the addition of a million," to be got by another—the fifth—addition to the duty on wines (£11 18/6 per tun on French, and £7 19/- on other wines),[2] and by another

[1] *Hansard*, ii. 345.

[2] The feeling with which the high duties on wine were regarded was amusingly expressed in a memorial in the following year to the House of Lords, "signed by a number of officers in the army, praying, on account of the high price of wine, and on account of the excessive duties, a drawback with respect to the latter in their favour." The Earl of Suffolk lamented that the price of the article was now so high that a subaltern officer could not afford to indulge himself with a glass of wine. (It seems that the remission was actually enjoyed in the navy.) *Hansard*, v. 45, 123.

12½ per cent. on the produce of sugar and customs generally, excluding tea, wine, cotton wool, deals, and fur, but including coal carried coastwise.

The Ways and Means, then, were as under:

| | |
|---|---|
| Malt duty | £750,000 |
| Duty on pensions, offices, etc. | 2,000,000 |
| Surplus of Ways and Means, 1803 | 1,370,000 |
| War taxes | 15,440,000 |
| Surplus of Consolidated Fund | 5,000,000[1] |
| Lottery | 250,000 |
| Loan | 10,000,000 |
| | £36,510,000 |

The interest and one per cent. sinking fund for the new loan were provided for by a general consolidation of the stamp duties, reducing the number of stamps from over 400 to about 30, the chief additional revenue being got by a stamp tax on transfers of property, bearing some relation to the value of the property transferred.[2]

Sinking Fund.

Addington's speech was again remarkable for its optimism as regards the Sinking Fund: the system adopted, he said, would prevent the evil of any accumulation of the public debt, and at the same time enable the country to maintain its exertions, however long the contest might continue. For once, no objection was taken to the Budget.[3]

Pitt resumes office.

By the month of May, Pitt became convinced that the country was not safe in Addington's hands. The war had been declared for more than a year, and nothing had been done except to take a few ill-defended Dutch and French colonies in the West Indies, and to prepare for the threatened invasion. He put himself, accordingly, at the King's command if his services were desired. On

[1] Warned by last year's experience, Addington estimated at this moderate figure. But the fall in the revenue proved to be much heavier than was anticipated. The actual result of the year ending 5th January, 1805, was, roughly, an income of £30 millions and a charge of £28 millions, leaving a balance of only £2 millions. *Hansard*, v. Append. 1111.

[2] The newspaper stamp duty, which had been 1d. in 1760, 1½d. in 1765, 2d. in 1789, and 2½d. in 1797, was now raised to 3½d., with a reduction of 20 per cent. on large supplies. The successive increase of price, it was noted, seemed to have no effect on the growth of newspapers.

[3] *Hansard*, ii. 345, Dowell, *History of Taxation*, ii. 221. Dowell's figures, it may be noted, as taken from the Acts of Parliament, do not always exactly correspond with the figures given in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statement and the subsequent debates.

the 12th, Addington resigned, and Pitt, "like a giant refreshed," again became Prime Minister, retaining the Chancellorship of the Exchequer in his own hands. The murder of the Duc d'Enghien by Buonaparte on 21st March—"in self-defence," as he alleged—gave Pitt the backing of public opinion throughout Europe, and enabled him to plan the coalition which came into existence in the next year. The preparations for invasion were "daily augmenting," said the King's Speech in July.

Buonaparte crowned

On the same day as Pitt resumed office, Buonaparte was declared Emperor by the Senate, and the crown was made hereditary in his family. As if to emphasise his designs, he celebrated his birthday in great state at Boulogne. On 19th November, he was crowned in Nôtre Dame in presence of the Pope.[1] The *Annual Register* reflects the opinion of the time in England. Napoleon is now "the monster," "the scourge of the human race," "the Corsican assassin and poisoner." Alexander, on the other hand—"the Sir Charles Grandison of Europe," as Hazlitt called him—is "the youthful and amiable Sovereign of Russia," and "the godlike benevolence of a Titus or a Marcus Aurelius" is compared with the temper of "his upstart rival, ferocious, inequitable, and impatient of control," who "hardly conceals his aspiring to the dominion of the world."

Spain declares war.

As yet, Spain had not declared herself, although she was suspected of being at Napoleon's mercy whenever he liked to assert his power. Friendly to England she dared not be, neutral she could not be, and hostile she must be, said Hawkesbury. But, in October, three Spanish treasure ships were seized by Britain on the high seas, on the excuse that Spain was giving underhand help to France.[2] This questionable step, though formally approved subsequently by Parliament, did not add to Great Britain's reputation on the Continent, and, in December,

[1] The prayer appointed by the Concordat to be recited at the end of divine service in all the Catholic churches of France, "Domine, salvam fac rempublicam: Domine, salvos fac consules," was now changed to, "O Lord, preserve our emperor Napoleon," and a special prayer was presented to God, "the protector of all kingdoms and especially of the French Empire." Letter of Cardinal de Caprara to the French bishops, 8th June, 1804.

[2] The situation, indeed, was not one which could very well be judged by ordinary rules. It was known that Spain, unable to resist, was paying contributions to France, and permitting French troops to march through her territories. And it was suspected that she was only waiting for the arrival of the treasure to declare war. "The long continuation of the peace with Spain," as was said, "has been matter of much greater surprise to the public than the declaration of war" (*Hansard*, iii. 9).

Spain declared war.[1] In October, too, the "Catamaran Expedition" against the Boulogne flotilla, intended to destroy it by fireships,[2] ignominiously failed.

Barren records.

It is disappointing that for this year, as in 1803, nothing can be gathered about the progress of industry or the state of trade. The short leading articles of the *Times*, like the monthly digests of the reviews, deal almost exclusively with the doings of "our relentless enemy," the imminent invasion and the preparations to meet it, and the intrigues of politics: for the rest, *silent leges inter arma.*

Imports and exports.

The records of foreign trade show an increase upon the low level of the previous year of about £1,200,000 in imports and of nearly £3,000,000 in exports.

The Official values were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports - - - - - - - - - - | £27,819,532 |
| Exports of produce and manufactures of the United Kingdom - - - - - - | 22,687,309 |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise - | 8,988,654 |

But there was a heavy reduction in shipbuilding. The ships built and registered in the several ports of the empire during the year were no more than 991 (as compared with 1,402 in 1803), representing 95,979 tons (as against 135,349).[3]

Industry.

Still, in spite of the universal alarm as to invasion and the many discouragements to commerce, the industry of the country went on its way. The *Annual Register* notes with much congratulation that the great public works suffered little interruption. The West India Docks, opened in 1801, were paying 10 per cent.; the London Docks, with their immense warehouses, were being built; the East India Docks were beginning. The

[1] The Prince of the Peace, in an address to his people, commanded them to "hunt down the smugglers who might attempt to introduce English manufactures into Spain," and called upon all Europe to shut its ports against England, that her people might "perish in fury on heaps of her own goods and merchandise." Spain, however, did not seem to have counted the cost if there was any truth in the following: "Our unfortunate enemies make strong appeals to the humanity of the British Government that, in the event of the calamity of war, ships laden with grain and flour may not be prevented from entering into the different Spanish ports" (*Scots Magazine*, January, 1805, 65).

[2] They were better called "explosion ships." The flotilla simply opened out to let them through, and they exploded harmlessly in the air. "It evinced a great absence of common knowledge," says the *Annual Register*, "as well as of professional information in the Admiralty, to countenance for a moment this base and contemptible species of warfare" (143).

[3] *Hansard*, vii. 1132.

Grand Junction Canal was near completion. The Caledonian Canal—the "grand national undertaking"—had been started, and was employing 150 labourers, at an average of 1/6 per day.

Wages

The ten Reports of the Commissioners of Naval Enquiry, published in an Appendix to *Hansard*, iii., give an account of wages paid at Plymouth and Woolwich dockyards. But the Commissioners showed that many abuses had crept into the pay-sheets—daily rates mixed up with piece-work rates and with conventional calculations of "two for one or double pay," etc. The figures in other respects are so confused and complicated as to be misleading and dangerous for statistical purposes.

–in Scotland.

But more unambiguous information, happily, is to be got in another quarter. The *Farmer's Magazine*, published in Edinburgh since 1800, had been doing admirable work in promoting interchange of views between farmers, noticing new process and experiments, etc., and, in 1804, it turned aside for a little from more technical matters, such as "Thoughts on the Application of Dung," to an economic discussion of the phenomena and causes of high wages.[1]

In Scotland, there had been of late much complaint among landowners and farmers of the "enormous rise" in the price of labour. In a letter to the *Farmer's Magazine*, Sir George Mackenzie called attention to the danger of Government raising wages by their "magnificent projects for the improvement of the Highlands,"—the Caledonian Canal, making of roads and bridges, and building of barracks in various districts. The rise, he said, in craftsmen's wages had been so great that landowners were unable to provide the necessary accommodation without raising rents to a height which their tenants could not pay. He subsequently explained that what he meant was that, in the past years of scarcity, the price of labour had necessarily followed the price of provisions, but had not now fallen when provisions fell, being kept up, among other things, by the urgent demand for labour on the part of the Government. Hence proprietors in the vicinity of the Canal were complaining that the 1/6 a day was affecting the wages they had to pay. Indeed, the canal labourers themselves had threatened to leave unless their wages were raised; and, as another writer said, "if 18d. a day has been refused, as we are informed has been done, this circumstance must afford sure evidence that the people are

[1] In a very short time the *Farmer's Magazine* had become the recognised authority in the northern part of the kingdom, and boasted the "unprecedented" circulation of 4,000 copies—at a time when the *Gentleman's Magazine* had only 3,500.

in a comfortable way." In this letter, Sir George made the suggestion that the correspondents of the Magazine in each county should send in, along with the usual reports on crops, some statement of the current wages. The idea was taken up, and in February and May, there appear figures of wage which seem to be as reliable as wage statistics ever are.

At Falkirk, although "the present circumstances of the country had put an entire stop to almost every improvement beyond the ordinary routine of farm operations, nevertheless the wages of labourers were very high—masons and carpenters from 15/- to 18/-, and labourers from 9/- to 12/- per week."

In Inverness-shire, wages of journeymen masons during the past summer and autumn were 16/- to 20/- per week; carpenters, 10/- to 12/-; labourers, 7/6 to 9/-. "If the grand Caledonian Canal and the intended roads and bridges go on next season, wages will, of course, rise considerably."

At Perth, the wages of masons averaged 2/6 per day; carpenters, 2/3; labourers, 1/4 to 1/8; ploughmen's wages, £12 12/- per annum, with 6½ bolls of oatmeal *sap*, salt, and lodgings.

At Glasgow, where trade had been very dull for three months past, with but little prospect of a speedy revival, and buildings were finishing, carpenters' wages, which had once been very high, were now 15/-; masons, 10/- and 11/-; labourers, 9/- per week.

In Fife, the wages of workmen and tradesmen, and the price of wood, iron, and every other article used upon a farm, were advanced beyond precedent.

In East Lothian, the value of labour, especially that of masons and carpenters, had of late prodigiously increased; wages per day were from 3/6 to 4/-, nay, even 5/- had been paid in some cases for good masons. The rise was said to be chiefly occasioned by the erection of barracks at Haddington and Dunbar, while "no funds were in the farmer's hand for carrying forward new works upon such extravagant terms."

In Selkirk, ploughmen with board got £14; where they maintained themselves, 6 bolls of oatmeal, grass and fodder for a cow, land which would plant three pecks of potatoes, and £9 in money. Shepherds had the pasturage of "45 sheep smeared, and ten to dispose of at Martinmas," which returned them nearly the same money as paid to ploughmen. Wrights received 8/- with and 12/- without board; masons nearly the same.

In Aberdeenshire, the price of every kind of work had advanced

as much as in any part of the kingdom, as might be expected from the very extensive works carried on in the city of Aberdeen, the immense drain of men for the army, and the making of the turnpike roads through the county.

In Berwickshire, wages of masons were from 12/- to 14/-; carpenters, from 10/- to 13/; labourers, from 9/- to 10/- per week; and masons were expecting a rise.

In Ayrshire, the price of farm labour, as also that of mechanics, remained as high as ever. Hired servants were paid from £5 to £9 or guineas the half-year; day labourers, from 1/6 to 2/- per day without victual.

—in England. In Wales, the current price for labourers was 2/- a day; near a town, 2/6; masons and carpenters, 2/6 and 3/-; in iron and coal works and "in the new railways," labourers expected 20/- to 24/- a week.

In Lincolnshire, owing to improvements being carried on in the fens, and the number of men employed in the army and volunteer corps, there was a scarcity of hands, and the value of labour had, of course, increased. Farm labourers received 2/- a day in winter, 3/- and 3/6 in summer; carpenters, 3/- to 4/-; masons, 3/6; all without board.

In Essex, where work was done by the day, 10/- per week was the general rate, unless close to the metropolis, where it was higher. The many barracks lately erected had made the wages of carpenters and bricklayers very high—carpenters, 18/-; bricklayers, 17/- per week; masons, from 4/- to 5/- per day.

In Yorkshire, the wages of masons and carpenters were about 2/6 to 3/- per day; farm labourers, from 1/6 to 2/6.

In Northumberland, artificers' wages were even more than doubled. Carpenters and masons, who used to work for 9/- a week, advanced about four years since to 15/-, and last year to 21/-. Such high wages might be afforded by manufacturers making 30 to 40 per cent. of their capital, but could not be paid by a farmer who was selling barley at 2/2 per bushel.

The pause. As we now see it, 1804 was a year of pause—of tremendous forces massing themselves for an international struggle. To all appearance, little was happening in Europe generally. The smaller powers, Switzerland, Lombardy, Holland, Tuscany, were under the heel or cowering in the shadow of the strange new empire. Austria, so soon to come into tragic prominence, was "preserving a strict neutrality." Prussia, presumably the friend of France, was

keeping quiet, watching how events would turn, and what she could get out of them. Russia, withdrawn to her snows, was reported to be arming against France. Sweden, with ignorant braggadocio, was speaking of "Monsieur Napoleon Buonaparte." The storm, it was expected, would break above the white cliffs facing across the narrow channel. Napoleon, all the year, was busy in Paris, but every now and then he would disappear without notice, and it would come out that he had been paying a surprise visit to Boulogne, where the grand army was being welded into a striking force. An English fleet was in the Channel, jealously watching the gathering of the strange flotilla in the harbours of Boulogne, Wimereux, and Ambleteuse.

And all the while the working life of England went on, in its fields, and factories, and cottages—Scotland, indeed, too far north to be much concerned; and, in the capital, the intrigues of party were as bitter as if men who loved their country had nothing to think of but how to get into or remain in power.

A year of pause, indeed—almost forgotten in the clash of arms which followed.

Irish currency.

During the session, the attention of Parliament was drawn to the state of the currency in Ireland. The Bank of Ireland, restricted since 1797 from paying specie, had, for various reasons, greatly enlarged its issues—from £600,000 before the restriction to no less than £2,700,000, a million being in denominations under £5—while the Bank of England, under the similar restriction, had increased its issues only by one-fifth. In Ireland, moreover, there was no control over the private banks. Numbers of them sprang up, all issuing paper, and, encouraged by the facility given them to make good their obligations in no other form than Bank of Ireland notes, followed the example of that Bank and became liberal with their discounts. The total money in circulation was estimated to have risen from about £5 millions in 1797 to £20 millions in 1804.

Several things were drawing attention to the depreciation. One was that, in the north of Ireland, gold was demanded in payment—linen bleachers, *e.g.*, were obliged to pay their weavers in gold, and the landlords insisted on gold in payment of rents—and the guineas were obtainable only at a premium of 2/4 each. Another was the loss which fell on absentee landlords. The Bank had sufficient address to inform the people that the high premium fell solely on that unpopular class; but attention was

drawn in Parliament to the fact that while the military forces in Ireland were paid altogether in paper of the county banks, certain Irish officials managed to get paid at par. A third was the difference in exchange—10 per cent. between Dublin and Belfast, and no less than 17 per cent. between Dublin and London.

**Disappearance of gold**

In these circumstances, as might be expected, gold was fast disappearing; there was not more than a million in circulation. The economic tendency was assisted by the habit of hoarding which prevailed; "the object of the lower classes in Ireland was to get specie, and the moment it was obtained it was buried"—and often lost. "Tenants, before they would pay their rents in specie, would suffer themselves to be distrained, and their cattle sold." Silver had entirely disappeared, all but counterfeit shillings so bad that, for a one pound note even at its depreciated value, 26 or 27 such shillings would be given in exchange—"not one real shilling from one end of Ireland to another." In Dublin "the affair fell into the hands of professed coiners who issued flat pieces of silver from 4d. to 8d. in intrinsic value."[1] Small coinage was supplied by paper issued by irresponsible persons—"there were many persons who, without any capital whatever, set up a kind of banking shops, and issued notes of 6d. and 1/-, and a note for 3/6 was considered a very large sum."

**—of silver.**

As consequence, the prices of all articles of consumption rose rapidly; forgery of notes became common; distress was universal; and all the phenomena which usually emerge in such circumstances now manifested themselves. At the same time, the Bank of Ireland increased its dividend, and gave besides a bonus of 5 per cent.

**The remedies.**

The matter came to a head when Pitt gave the Irish exchequer to Foster. Suddenly the shillings hitherto current were refused by the Post Office. Universal stagnation ensued, and, for a few weeks, there was great anxiety. The measures taken were to issue, with the connivance of the Government—but not without a strong protest from Fox—silver tokens of 5/- value, made in Birmingham, and to bring silver dollars into circulation at 6/-. At the same time, the Bank of Ireland opened an office where the depreciated silver was received at a fair value. Thus, for the moment, the danger passed.[2]

Apart from this, the only economic legislation of the year

[1] *Annual Register*, 150. [2] *Hansard*, i. 649, 697, 1101; ii. 890.

was a Cotton Manufacturers' Act, to settle disputes in the trade. In 1800, serious disagreements had arisen between masters and workmen, and petitions were presented asking for legislation to put an end to the friction. A Bill accordingly had been passed in that year, intended to provide a "short, summary, impartial, and competent tribunal," by means of arbitrators nominated by masters and workmen, but it does not seem to have worked well. In April, 1804, a Committee recommended that the arbitration should be vested in any Justice of the Peace whom the parties should require by writing to act: failing such requirement, the Justices had the power of forthwith nominating four impartial persons, two from each side; "from and out of which persons so nominated the masters and workmen shall and may severally choose one, which person so chosen shall have power to hear and finally determine such disputes." On these lines the new Bill, "for settling disputes that may arise between masters and workmen engaged in the cotton manufactory," was passed.[1]

**Cotton trade legislation.**

This year, Wilberforce[2] came before the country in two connections. One was in the attempt to amend the existing law and secure better regulation for parish apprentices. Representations, he said, had been made to him by forty to fifty respectable and experienced magistrates in the county of York, that they had not the power to enforce the law and exercise that superintendence which the legislature intended—no provision was made, *e.g.*, for the guardianship of an apprentice transferred from one district to another.[3] In May, he obtained leave to bring in a Bill for this purpose. But nothing more was done in the matter during the session.

**Parish apprentices.**

The other was when he resumed the struggle for the abolition of the Slave Trade, interrupted by the more urgent events of late years.

**The slave trade.**

It is strange to realise that one of the most painful and scandalous developments in history should fitly find its place in economic annals—and these the annals of England. The traffic

[1] *Hansard*, i. 1080; ii. 107, 942.

[2] William Wilberforce; born 1759, son of a Hull merchant; a contemporary of Pitt at Cambridge and his life-long friend; member for Hull in 1780—his success at this election due to "his personal popularity and his lavish expenditure"—and for Yorkshire since 1784; "converted" in 1785, and, from 1787, devoting himself to plead the cause of the slaves in Parliament. Always a delicate man with a troublesome conscience, suffering in health from his great exertions.

[3] *Hansard*, ii. 397.

in human beings had been a great trade of English merchants since the days of Elizabeth; it was specially protected by Government after 1713; and it doubled under the administration of Pitt. Till the last quarter of the century, the Society of Friends—to its eternal honour—was the only religious body which discountenanced and condemned it; after 1761, indeed, they excluded from their membership anyone who had direct dealings with the unrighteous commerce.

Clarkson: Wilberforce: Pitt

The general movement was first started by Thomas Clarkson with the publication, in 1786, of his Cambridge prize essay on the subject: "*Anne liceat invitos in servitudinem dare.*" A year later, the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade was instituted, and secured the help of Whitbread, Wilberforce, Grenville, Pitt, and Fox. The first effective step in the agitation was the appointment of a Committee of the Council of Trade, in 1788, to "enquire into the state of that part of Africa whence the slaves are brought, the manner of obtaining them, the transportation and sale of them, and the effects of the slave trade upon the colonies and the general commerce of the kingdom."[1] The second was the presentation by Pitt—in Wilberforce's absence through illness—of a petition to Parliament, when he delivered one of his greatest orations in favour of the stoppage of the trade. In 1791, Wilberforce introduced his Bill to prevent further importation into the West Indies, but it was lost by 88 to 163. "We have but one consolation under this disgrace," wrote Romilly; "it is that our House of Commons is not a national assembly, and certainly does not speak the sense of the nation. It is remarkable that, though the question was carried by a great majority, not one man who has any character for abilities spoke on the side of the majority, and all the members who are most eminent for their talents took very active part on the side of the abolition."[2]

Resolution of 1792.

In the next year, 1792, Wilberforce moved that it is the opinion of this House that the African Slave Trade be abolished, when a resolution was carried that the trade should end on 1st January, 1796. The resolution was then sent to the Lords, who examined witnesses, but the matter got no further in that year. In 1796, Wilberforce called upon the House, as he put it, for the

[1] Leone Levi, *History of British Commerce*, 59. For the earlier history of the trade, see Lecky, ii. 11.

[2] Romilly, *Diary*, i. 425.

execution of its own sentence, and was strongly supported by Pitt and Fox—"there are some things so bad," said the latter, "that even to regulate them is, in some measure, to participate in their criminality. Let us send the Bill to the House of Lords; if it is there rejected, let us send it up session after session."[1] But it did not get that length, as, on the second reading in the Commons, it was lost by 70 to 74.

During the first period of the war, the movement made little progress. In truth, many notable people saw no harm in it; among others, the King, Lord Liverpool, and even Nelson, who thought abolition "a damnable and cursed doctrine."[2] From 1800, Wilberforce, acting on the advice of Pitt, who was strangely apathetic, refrained from bringing in a Bill, although, as he said in 1802, the trade had been carried on of late to a greater extent than at any former period of our history. But the prospect of peace had suggested to him "a grand Abolition plan"—nothing less than an international convention—and, when he next raised the subject, the opinion of the House had veered round in an extraordinary way.

**Wilberforce's motion.**

In May, 1804, he submitted a motion to consider the propriety of introducing a Bill for the abolition of the slave trade "after a time to be limited." He reminded the House that, in 1792, it had passed a Resolution to abolish the trade gradually: that measures should be taken to prevent more slaves from being imported into the West Indies; and that the traffic should totally cease in four years. The resolution had not been followed up, and the trade, with a few modifications then enacted, had continued ever since.

**Objections.**

It is interesting to note the objections still made to the motion. The condition of the slaves, it was said, was equal, nay, superior, to the condition of the labouring poor at home; they were better lodged, better fed, and had lighter work. In their own country, they were so wretched and so poor that their situation could not be altered for the worse, and one way of punishing them was to threaten to transport them back to their own country. The slaves were accustomed to slavery in Africa, and the taking them to another quarter of the globe was therefore no great hardship.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxii. 737.

[2] George III. was always personally most averse from the abolition of the trade, and constantly opposed it through those men in both Houses who were usually called his friends. Cobbett, too, was "steadily for the slave trade," and supported his case by arguments from Scripture.

The horrors of kidnapping and forced deportation were "much exaggerated"; the coast of Africa was as well governed as England, and the laws as fairly administered. If our traders did not take the slaves offered them at the Coast, those slaves would all be massacred. It was impossible to keep up their numbers in the West Indies except by constant importation, on account of the scarcity of females. The trade had gone on so long without correction that it could not be abolished. If we stopped the trade, other nations would take it up, and would not carry it on in the same humane way. It was an unjust attack on private property—on a trade long recognised and favoured by the Government.[1] "By the operation of the measure, persons were about to be plundered of one of the finest properties under the canopy of Heaven, in order to gratify ill-designing men in this country." It would seal the death-warrant of every white man in the West Indies—a strange commentary, as Pitt said, on the alleged happiness of the slaves.

In these debates, happily, we miss two arguments which had been often adduced in 1792: that the negroes were no better than a species of brutes—although the Moravian missioners were censured by one speaker for telling the slaves that all men were equal in the sight of God—and that vessels employed in the trade were a nursery for the navy and commercial marine.

Emancipation.

Emancipation, of course, was not yet within sight. Pitt observed that no man who had considered the subject well had any thought of the emancipation of the negroes of the West Indies. The Bishop of St. Asaph complained that he "had been much misconceived of if it was thought that he had any view of further consequences than the abolition of the slave trade; he took the opportunity of declaring that, in his opinion, that event would gradually produce all the amelioration in the state and condition of African slaves that was practicable, or indeed desirable, and that he looked to no further consequences whatever."[2]

Fate of the Bill.

The Slave Trade Abolition Bill passed the Commons in June—its supporters now as overwhelming in numbers as they had always been in argument. But it was thrown out by the Lords,

[1] "How useful is this subordination which the vulgar call slavery!" said a caustic article in the *Edinburgh Review*. "Not to mention other things, it is the source of good government, peace, sugar, and coffee, national prosperity, ships, and fine colonies." July, 1805, 326.

[2] *Hansard*, ii. 440, 543, 926, 931.

on the ground that there was not time in the current session to give it due deliberation. Something, however, was done to prevent the extension of the trade by a Royal Proclamation, forbidding English ships to carry slaves into the newly conquered Dutch colonies.[1]

In the literature of political economy, appeared Lord Lauderdale's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of the Public Wealth*, and Wakefield's *An Essay upon Political Economy*; and, in general literature, Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel.* Literature.

MISCELLANEA.

The British and Foreign Bible Society was founded in March, by Wilberforce among others, inviting the co-operation of Christians in general without the least distinction of party, "to promote the circulation of the Scriptures, without commentary or preface, in the principal living languages."

Following on some very dreadful revelations of the cruelty practised on the "climbing boys," a Society was established for superseding the necessity of employing children in the destructive and dangerous business of sweeping chimneys.[2]

[1] See *passim*, Wilberforce's *Life*, ii.

[2] *Annual Register*, 406.

# CHAPTER VI

## 1804. THE NEW CORN LAW

Former Corn Laws.

THE Corn Law passed in 1804 can scarcely be understood without some reference to its predecessors. For nearly four centuries after the Conquest, the importation of corn was free and the exportation was prohibited, both, according to the ideas of the times, in the interests of the consumer. In 1436, as a concession to the agricultural interests, exportation was allowed when the price of wheat fell to 6/8 per qr., and, in 1463, importation was prohibited until it rose above 6/8. From 1570, the consideration of revenue seems to have had some place, and an export duty was now charged: under the last Stewarts, the duties were raised so high as to kill the exports. In 1633, first, the internal corn trade was made free by the abolition of the Engrossing Acts which had practically prevented the moving of grain from one district to another. In 1670, came the first systematic corn law. No corn was now admitted free. When the home price was 53/4 or under, the imports paid what was considered a prohibitory duty of 16/-; between 53/4 and 80/-, the duty was 8/-; above 80/-, the duty was 5/4. There can be no explanation of such a law but Protection, for even 53/4 was "a famine price" in these days. In 1689, this importation scale was continued, but now, again in the interests of agriculture, the old exportation policy of duties on export was reversed, and a bounty of 5/- was given when the price was at or below 48/-, the intention being to prevent the price falling too low. In 1773, came the second corn law, the work of Burke, which Adam Smith said was like the laws of Solon: "though not the best in itself, it is the best which the interests, prejudices, and temper of the times would admit of." When the home price was not above 48/-, the high duty of 16/- was imposed; above that figure, only a nominal duty of 6d.

In 1670.

In 1773.

The bounty was continued at and below 44/-, but, when the price rose above that, exportation was prohibited. Under this liberal act, there grew up a regular system of imports, varying with the abundance or scarcity at home; and, instead of England being an exporting country as before, a regular balance of imports began to appear. It is not generally known that, in 1789, during the early sittings of the States General, Pitt received a request from the French government for 20,000 sacks of flour, when the ports were closed to exportation; and it is a testimony to the good feeling which Pitt's policy had produced between the two nations that he felt disposed to accede to the request on his own authority. But the rapid march of the Revolution changed this feeling, and the third Corn Law Act of 1791 was reactionary and protective.

In 1791. In 1791, the price of grain was rising, and was never far from 48/-. No doubt it seemed a hardship that, just when prices were beginning to show a good profit, the ports should be thrown open to foreign corn to prevent them going higher. The "high duty" was now raised, and it was imposed at a higher level. Up till a home price of 50/-, the grower was protected by a high duty of 24/3; above 50/- and under 54/-, there was a middle duty of 2/6; at and above 54/-, a nominal duty of 6d. The 5/- bounty on exportation was continued when the price fell below 44/-, but, at and above 46/-, exportation was entirely prohibited. Colonial preference was now introduced on the same terms as enjoyed by Ireland; grain imported "from the province of Quebec, or the other British colonies and plantations in North America," was charged the various import duties at a home price of 48/- and 52/-, instead of 50/- and 54/-.

Warehousing. By the same Act the "warehousing system," begun experimentally in 1773, was confirmed; foreign grain might be imported, warehoused at a charge of 2/6—"stored under the king's lock," as it was called—and re-exported free of duty; if taken out for home consumption, it paid the usual duties. The argument for this warehousing of foreign corn was put thus by the Committee of Privy Council which recommended it: "This regulation tends to secure us a very important branch of commerce; it enables our merchants who receive corn from the Americans in payment of their debts to lodge it here, either for the home or foreign market as occasion may require: it also the only method of forming magazines of a public nature

in this country against times of distress and scarcity, without prejudice to the British farmers and growers of corn."

Between 1795 and 1800, both importation and exportation laws were frequently suspended on account of the scarcity, and premiums given on corn imported, to secure that importers should have certain prices.[1]

**The position in 1804.**

Up till 1804, then, we may say that agriculture was protected by a regulation which aimed at securing the interests of the grower till a point was reached in price at which the interests of the consumer became the more urgent consideration. In 1802, as we have seen, the average price of wheat for the year was 69/10. In 1803, it was still lower, namely, 58/10. But in 1804, thanks to the succession of good harvests, the average price of wheat for March touched 49/6, and the loaf was 8d., to "the great fear and anger of the agricultural classes." In the ordinary course of events, the high duty would now come into operation, and the grower be protected against foreign rivalry. But what alarmed the farmer was that the price should have come down to such a low figure, and, with some reason, he thought that the foreign supply, already admitted at a low duty—although it was only 373,000 quarters in 1803—had at least contributed to that. And, even at the very low price current, he was not allowed to relieve the market by exportation, as corn could not be exported until the price was at or under 46/-. Meetings were held throughout the country to consider the position of the farmers, and numbers of petitions were sent up praying for a revision of the Corn Laws. On 13th April, a Committee was appointed to enquire into certain parts of the laws, and particularly whether the regulative prices fixed for export and import in 1791 were adequate to the existing circumstances,—whether they were equal to the present rate of money, the price of labour, and of all the necessaries of life.

**Exportation hardships**

It is noticeable that the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if correctly reported, when moving for this Committee, dwelt almost entirely on the exportation provisions. Exportation had been permitted when the price was at 46/- "in order to give encouragement to agriculture." He was sorry to say that the principles of

[1] There are articles on the early Corn Laws, more or less complete, in M'Culloch's *Commercial Dictionary* and in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (9th edition) *ad verb.* Cf. also *Customs Blue-book*, c. 8706 (1897). The speech by Rose in 1814 (*Hansard*, xxvii. 666) gives an annotated list of over 120 corn laws passed since A.D. 1225.

commercial policy had not been applied to this subject, and, on that account, the growers of corn were liable to many hardships. It would be the object of the Committee to consider whether the regulative prices fixed for export and import were "calculated to answer the objects intended by the act," and whether, "for the purpose of giving encouragement to agriculture, it might not be necessary to fix a higher price for exportation." The Committee would have to consider what were the best measures to adopt for increasing the agriculture of the country. But the corn trade between Ireland and Great Britain was not to form any part of their remit.

Report of Committee.

The Committee reported, some time before the end of May, that the price of corn, from 1791 to the harvest of 1803, had been very irregular, but, on an average, increased in a great degree by the years of scarcity, had in general yielded a fair profit to the grower. But, they said, the casual high prices had had the effect of stimulating industry, and of bringing into cultivation large tracts of waste land, which fact, combined with the abundance of the two previous seasons and other causes, had occasioned such a depression in the value of grain, as, it was feared, would greatly tend to the discouragement of agriculture, unless maintained by the support of Parliament. They recommended raising the importing prices to 63/- and 66/-, and the exporting prices to 48/- and 54/-. That is to say: when the price of home middling wheat was under 63/-, foreign wheat should be imported at the high duty of 24/3; when at 63/- but under 66/-, at 2/6; when at and above 66/-, at 6d. The bounty of 5/- was to be given on exportation when the home price was under 48/-, and exportation was to be prohibited when at or above 54/-. And, instead of importation and exportation being regulated by the price in each district as before, the determining price should now be, for England, the aggregate average of the 12 maritime districts, and, for Scotland, the average of her 4 maritime districts.[1] The colonial preference should be extended from the existing 2/- to 10/-, 53/- and 56/- being substituted for 63/- and 66/-.

The Report, as might be expected from the time given to it, was very unsatisfactory. The farmers, it said, had had fair profits.

[1] Up till now the sixteen districts had distinct regulations in each, so that "one might be exporting corn at one part of the kingdom while we were importing it at another (*Hansard*, xxxvi. 363).

But these profits had encouraged the bringing in of waste lands, and the supply of grain was increased from that cause, at the same time as the harvests were good and prices fell. These low prices would tend to discourage agriculture unless Parliament did something for it. Low prices were the enemy, although these low prices were caused by abundant harvests and by the very thing which had been widely advocated, the bringing in and cultivation of new lands.

**The new Corn Law**

A Bill embodying these proposals was introduced by Western and passed before the end of the session. It was impossible, he said,[1] for the grower to raise and sell his corn at the same price as in 1791, when the existing regulative price was fixed. The measure proposed was meant to prevent thousands of acres from being deserted by the plough, to prevent the recurrence of scarcity, and ultimately to make the price of corn moderate and cheap by increasing the supply. France, he added, had issued an order for permitting the exportation of corn with the view that its agriculture should not sustain any injury: he hoped Parliament would take care that it would not be necessary to import French corn, "which must operate as an encouragement to the agriculture of France, and as a discouragement to that of Great Britain." If some help was not held out to make it more worth the farmers' while, we could expect nothing but scarcity.

**—a protective measure.**

Although some argued that the measure would protect the consumer, by preventing the late excessive fluctuations of price, the Bill was almost undisguisedly intended for the protection of agriculture, by raising the price at which foreign corn should be allowed to enter into competition with British. The necessity for the change was argued on four grounds:

(1) The rise in the price of labour—"the excessive price" as some called it—due to the high price of provisions (doubled within 20 years), to the high bounty given to soldiers and sailors, and to the new demand for labour from the enclosures.

(2) The general rise in prices, due to the depreciation of money, increasing agricultural costs all round.

[1] Charles Callis Western, M.P. for Maldon since 1790—"Squire Western," as he was called—a staunch Whig, protectionist, and recognised champion of the agricultural interest; born 1767, and educated at Eton and Cambridge; raised to the peerage in 1833 as Baron Western of Rivenhall.

(3) The increase in the poor rates of England and Wales charged on land (from £2,129,000 in 1783 to £5,128,000 in 1803).

(4) The desirableness of giving Ireland every chance of securing the British market.

There was some grumbling that the price was fixed too high— that Lancashire would suffer—but the opposition, it must be said, was not great The Bill was passed on 7th July, and the only speech of much importance against it was that of Lord Stanhope in the Lords. He vehemently denounced it as, directly and professedly, a Bill to raise the price of corn and bread: its framers, he said, spoke of the blessings of Heaven, and the Providence of God in giving us a plentiful harvest, as a thing to be dreaded and a curse; its argument simply was that the price of corn might decrease by a plentiful season, so as not to repay the grower, and, to prevent this, they tried to keep up the price by forced and artificial means.[1] Little opposition.

In view of the changes in the Corn Laws which were made in 1815, and of the arguments on which those changes were based, it is well to note that this alteration of 1804 was due to the low prices of home grain, and the apprehension that such prices would so greatly discourage the farmers as to put a check to what seemed to many an object of the first importance, the bringing of the large areas of waste land under cultivation. The low prices were primarily due, it is true, to the two abundant harvests at home, but it was open to argue that, if foreign-grown corn had not been coming in at the low duty (as it did when the price was 50/-) or free (as it did when the price was 54/- and upwards) the home price would have been higher. It might be expected, indeed, that the foreign import would be checked by the restraints on shipping incidental to a war, but this, in turn, raised the other question, whether, in all the circumstances, it was advisable to allow agriculture to be discouraged. Was it not wiser to aim at making England independent of foreign supply "even at the expense of a dearer loaf." This, so far as one can gather, was the The argument for.

[1] *Hansard*, ii. 141, 478, 481, 780, 879, 939, 957, 1000, 1023, 1042, 1056, 1066, 1072, 1086, 1110, 1116, 1132, 1134. Stanhope's remedy was public granaries —a proposal much in favour with some. Burke, in 1795, in his *Thoughts on Scarcity*, referred to a report gone abroad that intentions were entertained of erecting such granaries in every market town, at the expense of the State, "in order to extinguish the dealer," and considered the project worth reasoned condemnation.

reasoning which induced this further step in Protection. But it should be observed that independence of foreign supply was not an argument much used at this time. It was rather the waste lands that were thought of.

**Course of prices.**

As it happened, the argument lost most of its force before the Bill passed. Whether because of the coming change or because of the harvest prospects, wheat rose eight to ten shillings in the beginning of July. The summer was marked by excessive cold rains. Blight and mildew caused a general failure of the crops both in quantity and quality, wheat especially being very much affected. The harvest of England and Wales was deficient by one-fourth to one-third, and, although Scotland had an average crop, the quality was very inferior. By the end of the year, wheat rose to 86/2 and the quartern loaf to 16d.[1] And, in the very next year, a Committee was appointed to consider numerous petitions from the manufacturing towns—some of them, it was noticed, presented before the Act had come into operation—alleging that the new Corn Law was the cause of the rise, and praying for relief from its effects.[2]

**Cost of production.**

It is curious to note that, in 1804, the opposition from the manufacturing classes was not much in evidence. The argument kept most to the front was that there had been a general rise in cost of production of grain in England, with the underlying assumption that there had not been a corresponding rise in other countries. It was not yet said, in so many words, that the cost of growing was greater in England than abroad; merely that there was a rise in paper prices due to the Restriction Act (Western put it at 13½ per cent.); to this extent, the foreigner could get in his grain really at a lower figure than before; and the change would simply put matters where they were in 1791.

**Western answers himself.**

But the observer will notice how Western refuted his own argument about increased home supply. He harped on the assumption that, in time, increased supply would bring down

[1] The Board of Agriculture gives the average price of wheat for the year as 62/3. "Pursuant to a notice in the 'Gazette,' a considerable rise took place this day in the fares of hackney coaches on account of the high price of oats." *Annual Register*, 21st December, 441.

[2] The Committee examined a few witnesses as to questions of fact, and presented the evidence without comment. It seemed to show that there was no such connection, and that the rise in price was due to the deficiency of the crops.

price at the same time as he was complaining that it was the already increased supply that had just brought down price. It might very well have been retorted that, from the consumers' point of view, there was little good increasing the supply, and bringing down the price, if, the moment it was down, artificial measures were again to be taken to raise it!

# CHAPTER VII

## 1805. THE LAUNCHING OF THE THUNDERBOLT

Napoleon's letter.

In January, Napoleon addressed a remarkable letter with his own hand, to George III., professing the most ardent desire for peace. It began: "Monsieur mon Frère; Called to the throne of France by providence, and by the suffrages of the senate, the people, and the army, my first sentiment is a wish for peace. France and England abuse their prosperity. They may contend for ages; but do their governments well fulfil the most sacred of their duties, and will not so much blood, shed uselessly, and without a view to any end, condemn them in their own consciences? I consider it no disgrace to make the first step. I have, I hope, sufficiently proved to the world that I fear none of the chances of war; it, besides, presents nothing that I need to fear: peace is the wish of my heart, but war has never been inconsistent with my glory. I conjure your Majesty not to deny yourself the happiness of giving peace to the world, nor to leave that sweet satisfaction to your children: for certainly there never was a more fortunate opportunity, nor a moment more favourable, to silence all the passions, and listen only to the sentiments of humanity and reason. This moment once lost, what end can be assigned to a war which all my efforts will not be able to terminate? Your Majesty has gained more within ten years, both in territory and riches, than the whole extent of Europe. Your nation is at the highest point of prosperity; what can it hope from war?—To form a coalition with some powers of the continent?—The continent will remain tranquil; a coalition can only increase the preponderance and continental greatness of France. To renew intestine troubles?—The times are no longer the same. To destroy our finances?—Finances founded on a flourishing agriculture can never be destroyed," etc.

The King replied officially, through the Secretary of State, to "the head of the French Government," and, next day, in his Speech from the Throne, that he could do nothing without previous communication with those powers with which he was engaged in confidential intercourse and connection, especially Russia.

The letter was either the impulsive utterance of an honest man, or the careful composition of deep political craft. England, having little reason to believe in Napoleon's honesty, accepted it as the latter—not a little annoyed, it would seem, by the presumption of equality on the part of Buonaparte in addressing their sovereign as Monsieur mon Frère.[1] But there is little wonder that such a letter, read at public meetings, published throughout France, and quoted along with Lord Mulgrave's cold and balanced reply, convinced France that England meant war.

Pitt presented his last Budget on 18th February.[2] The total Supply asked was £49,093,000, including £5,000,000 for "such an addition to the general supply of the year as would enable his Majesty to afford with effect any pecuniary succours (to the continent) which it might be thought necessary to afford." Of this, £5,403,000 fell to Ireland, leaving £43,690,000 as the supply for Great Britain. The chief items were as under: Budget.

| | |
|---|---|
| Navy | £14,645,000 |
| Army, England | 14,778,000 |
| Army, Ireland | 3,838,000 |
| Ordnance, England | 4,246,000 |
| Ordnance, Ireland | 600,000 |
| Miscellaneous, England | 800,000 |
| Miscellaneous, Ireland | 650,000 |
| Further extraordinary expenses | 5,000,000 |
| Deficiency on the estimated surplus of the Consolidated Fund for 1804 | 2,800,000[3] |

[1] Even Thiers, always too ready to give the benefit of any doubt to Napoleon, says that it was "too palpably designed to affect moderation and to seize an occasion to address the King of England as from monarch to monarch." *The Consulate and the Empire*, v. 274.

[2] *Hansard*, iii. 543.

[3] Addington, it will be remembered, had estimated for a surplus of £5 millions, calculating it by the previous year (1803)—"a year of almost unexampled produce"; the deficiency of £2,800,000 was, however, "of a temporary nature, and by no means so discouraging as it might appear at first."

The chief items of Ways and Means were as under:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Malt and personal estate duties | | £2,750,000 |
| War taxes | £8,300,000 | |
| Property Tax, at 15d. | 7,450,000 | |
| | | 15,750,000 |
| Surplus of Consolidated Fund | | 4,000,000[1] |
| Lottery | | 300,000 |
| Surplus of Ways and Means, 1804 | | 1,192,0[illegible] |

The Property Tax, it will be seen, was now raised from 5 per cent. to 6¼ per cent.

New taxes

The loan for the year was £20 millions. The interest and sinking fund for this were provided by the following additions: 1d. on each single general post letter, 2d. on double, 3d. on treble, and 1d. extra on single letters carried to the vicinity of London by the 2d. post; 5/- per bushel extra on salt, making it 15/-;[2] one-fifth extra on pleasure horses; additions to the duties on glass, bricks and tiles, auctions, coffee, cider and perry, gold and silver wire, slates and stones carried coastwise, iron, barilla, and turpentine, and 2½ per cent. extra on the other customs; an increase in legacy duties, including a tax on direct succession, and a rise of 8 per cent. to 10 per cent. on legacies to strangers in blood.

Fox's criticism.

To some of these additional taxes Fox objected—"They are almost all of them direct taxes . . . yet the tax on consumption is probably the only legitimate tax." As to the increase on the property tax, he had never approved of the tax, nor of the principle on which it was founded. "When a house tax became too high, a man might avoid it by ceasing to keep any house; but property was a thing by which there could be no limit till the whole was taken. With respect to wine, tea, or any other articles of consumption, taxation might proceed without reserve, because the individual would always have it in his power, as soon as the tax became oppressive and intolerable to him, to desist from them."

[1] This proved to be again an overestimate. The actual income on 5th January, 1806, was £33,035,501, and the charge £30,188,407, leaving a surplus of only £2,847,094. *Hansard*, vii. Append. vii.

[2] The duty proposed for Scotland was 9/-. But as the salt tax of 1795, introduced there at 6/6, had been reduced to 4/-, for the reason that salt was manufactured from salt water and was subject to an increased expenditure for fuel, the additional duty, as regards Scotland, was made proportionate to the existing difference. Pitt proposed also an export duty of 6d. a bushel on salt—"We carry on a great export trade to Europe . . . foreign nations cannot be supplied at cheaper terms by any other nation"—but this was withdrawn. *Hansard*, iii. 710, 864.

But this tax was "taking little by little from the property of the subject till the reduction was tantamount to the risk of the whole," and, although he might be reminded of the fable of a woman who had a calf which she accustomed herself to take in her arms every day, and, from the gradual increase, was able to bear it when it came to be a large ox, he did not like its application in the present case. Pitt himself confessed that he might think with Fox, in a great measure, "as to the superior advantage of a taxation wholly, or almost wholly, indirect," but appealed to the best writers on the subject as agreeing that it "would be most desirable to levy direct rather than indirect taxes, if peculiar circumstances did not render that far from practicable in the whole extent of a nation's wants."[1]

The salt tax.

The increase in the salt tax was, of course, bitterly opposed as a tax on the necessaries of the poor. Pitt admitted this, but "taxes on consumption, to be productive, must be laid on articles of general consumption"; he argued that the consumption of a cottage containing a family of five persons would be considerably short of a bushel a year, representing an annual burden of three or four shillings, and that we were engaged in a contest for the defence both of rich and poor. The use of salt in the fisheries was provided for by the drawback on salted fish. In any case, said Pitt, there was no other tax which could yield half-a-million with less hardship.[2]

The loan policy.

The policy of adding on loans every year was not allowed to pass without criticism. In introducing a debate on the state of public affairs, Grey reminded the Chancellor of the Exchequer that, "at the beginning of the war, we were assured that it could be carried on for several years without any addition to the capital of the Debt, by borrowing no more than was extinguished by the operation of the Sinking Fund, whereas, in three years, we had added at least £30 millions beyond what the Sinking Fund had redeemed."[3] Pitt replied that he was not in office when the promise was made, but he was satisfied that, if great and unexampled burdens had not been rendered necessary, the pledge would have been amply fulfilled, and congratulated himself on

[1] *Hansard*, iii. 552 *seq.*

[2] *Hansard*, iii. 697. It was suggested that members might give up their privilege of franking, but this was not listened to—it was the last privilege left them, said Windham.

[3] *Hansard*, v. 491.

the regular payment of nearly £8 millions a year by the Sinking Fund.[1]

In January, the military resources of the kingdom, in troops of the line, militia, and volunteers ready to take the field, now considerably exceeded 600,000 men.[2] But none of these could be spared to leave the country; and, when Pitt came back to power, his only policy was the old one of forming coalitions and subsidising Europe to carry on the war; as he said, "the ultimate security of the country is materially and intimately connected with the security of the Continent"

Pitt resumes his old policy.

The third coalition.

In April, accordingly, a treaty of concert was signed between Russia and England, agreeing to proceed against the French government, "without waiting for further encroachments," by forming a general league of the states of Europe, and by collecting a force of 500,000 effective men, independent of the succours furnished by his Britannic Majesty. The principal objects of the league were stated to be the evacuation of the country of Hanover and of the north of Germany, the establishment of the independence of the republics of Holland and Switzerland, and the establishment of an order of things in Europe which might effectually guarantee the security and independence of the different states against further usurpations. The parties further bound themselves not to make peace with France but by common consent of all the powers concerned. A special clause disclaimed any intention of controlling public opinion in France with respect to the form of government which it might be proper to adopt. Besides contributing forces both by sea and land and transport-vessels, Great Britain undertook to give a subsidy of £1,250,000 for every 100,000 regular troops furnished by the other signatories. In August, Austria acceded to the treaty, but secretly; and Sweden made separate treaties with Great Britain and Russia. Prussia, for purposes of her own which became clear enough in the following year, temporised and negotiated with both parties.

Napoleon King of Italy.

On 26th May, Napoleon placed the iron crown of Lombardy on his head, and proclaimed himself King of Italy, adding the Ligurian Republic to France immediately thereafter.

The flotilla at Boulogne.

All this time, the flotilla across the narrow channel was never out of the people's mind, although in Parliament one finds little recognition of its danger, and, among the military classes,

[1] *Hansard*, v. 528. [2] *Ibid.* iii. 15.

nothing but contempt for it.[1] Since September, 1804, the date fixed for the invasion, everything had been ready at Boulogne—nearly 2,000 vessels lying in the harbours round about—the "army of England," 115,000 strong, kept at the highest pitch of efficiency, constantly exercised in embarking and disembarking. To Napoleon, in his sanguine moments, nothing seemed wanting but that his admirals should come up from Toulon and Brest, and hold the channel sufficiently long[2] to allow the transports to cross. But, as the year wore on, this seemed more and more improbable. By the end of March, Villeneuve escaped the vigilance of Nelson at Toulon, put into Cadiz, and sailed from there on 10th April for the West Indies. Nelson followed, but missed him, and Villeneuve returned. But instead of "holding the channel," he was forced to fight Calder in the Bay of Biscay, and ultimately took refuge in Cadiz, and was blockaded there by Collingwood and Nelson. The news of this failure, and the threatened coalition of the Austrian and Russian armies, made Napoleon rapidly change his plans; on the 24th August, he broke up the flotilla, and the army began its march from the coast towards the Rhine. On 19th October, the combined fleets of France and Spain put out to sea, to be shattered at Trafalgar. Trafalgar.

Meanwhile Napoleon had burst upon the Austrians before the Russians had come up. Mack, surrounded, capitulated at Ulm

[1] Even yet one cannot be certain whether Napoleon had a serious intention of invasion or not. There is a good deal to be said for the ulterior purpose served—the putting of republican troops through the discipline of a great camp that welded them into the imperial Grand Army; and a good deal also for Mazière's view that, while acting as a daily menace to England, it constrained her to turn her good commercial men into bad soldiers, to have her coasts bristling with camps, and to suspend to a great extent the work of the nation (Nicolay, *Napoleon at the Boulogne Camp*, 165). But it is as difficult to believe that so much money and energy were expended in a gigantic bluff, as to credit that Napoleon was mad enough to risk everything on such a crazy enterprise. "The ruler of France," said the Earl of Selkirk in 1807, "if he had made the attempt, would have staked the existence of his power on the success of the enterprise. His authority in France was ill-secured; his enemies without were formidable. He had unequivocally pledged himself to lead the expedition in person, and, even if he had not, the undertaking was too great to be delegated. An unfortunate result would have occasioned a counter-revolution in France; and even a doubtful contest would have drawn upon him a dangerous attack from the continental powers" (*Hansard*, ix. 1125).

[2] As to the time this would require, Napoleon does not seem to have made any nice calculations. Now he says six hours, now twelve, now twenty-four, now "a favourable wind and thirty-six hours"; once it is "eight hours of night and propitious weather," then three days, then again a fortnight. It is only one indication of the extraordinary "chances" which Napoleon took. One is reminded of Woronzoff's "Il finira mal, faute de bon sens."

on 20th October, the day before Trafalgar, with 30,000 men. From there Napoleon swooped down on Vienna, whence the Emperor fled, and Napoleon occupied the palace on 13th November. On 2nd December was fought the "battle of the three emperors," when Napoleon overthrew 100,000 Russians and Austrians at Austerlitz.[1]

Austerlitz.

Austria, "compelled to withdraw from the contest,"[2] made terms with him on 26th December, losing by the Peace of Pressbourg three millions of her subjects and one-sixth of her revenue; and Prussia swallowed her indignation at the violation of her territory, and sent Haugwitz to treat with the emperor. "Roll up the map of Europe," said the stricken Pitt, when the news of Austerlitz came in; "it will not be wanted these ten years." And this reflected the dismay and consternation which pervaded all classes of society in Great Britain. Alexander made no propositions for peace or offer of submission, but retreated, with his armies still unbroken, towards Russia, preserving too formidable a front for pursuit or molestation. Thus broke up the "ill-concerted, ill-conducted, ill-supported, and ill-executed plans" of 1805.[3]

"Roll up the map of Europe."

India.

The close of the year saw peace made with Holkar, and the end of the Mahratta war in which Sir Arthur Wellesley first won his fame.

The revenues of France.

While the historian, year after year, finds from the Public Accounts how the war expenses of Great Britain were defrayed, there is no similar guidance to be got from the government accounts

[1] On the night of Austerlitz, Napoleon issued a proclamation to his soldiers which deserves quotation, even among his many studies in grandiloquence. "Soldiers of the grand army! Even at this hour—before this great day shall pass away and be lost in the ocean of eternity, your emperor must address you, and express how much he is satisfied with the conduct of all those who have had the good fortune to combat in this memorable battle. Soldiers! you are the first warriors in the world. The recollections of this day, and of your deeds, will be eternal. Thousands of ages hereafter—so long as the events of the universe continue to be narrated—will it be told that a Russian army of 76,000 men, hired by the gold of England, was annihilated by you on the plains of Olmutz. The miserable remains of that army, upon which the commercial spirit of a despicable nation had placed its last hopes, are in flight, and hasten to make known to the savage inhabitants of the north what the French are capable of performing; they will likewise tell them that, after having destroyed the Austrian army at Ulm, you said to Vienna, 'that army is no more.' . . . Soldiers, you are worthy of immortality. What will your relatives, what will every Frenchman say?" etc., etc.

[2] The euphemistic expression is from the King's Speech, 21st January, 1906 (*Hansard*, vi. 3).

[3] The words are Fox's (*Hansard*, vi. 19).

of France. Napoleon's principle, as is well known, was to make "war pay for war"; after Austerlitz, *e.g.*, 170,000 men were kept in cantonments within striking distance of Vienna and Berlin, at the expense of the country. In the printed Budget, as we should call it, for 1807, Mollien, the minister of the Treasury, congratulated his emperor in the following terms: "Your Majesty has protected your people from both the scourge and burden of war: your armies have added to their harvest of glory one of foreign contributions, which has secured their support, their clothing, and their pay."[1] "If it be asked," says the *Annual Register*, "what supplies enable Buonaparte to defray the expenses of his vast civil and military establishments, the answer is:—as, in the shape of subsidy, loan, or tribute, Spain, Portugal, the Hanse Towns, etc., etc., etc., have all been obliged to contribute their quota to the wants of France, so, in like manner, Italy, Switzerland, the north of Germany, have been obliged to maintain her armies in their own respective countries at their own expense. He will ever be anxious," it continues, "that the war tide he has poured upon the rest of Europe shall not be refluent, and he has just reason to dread the hour, if it ever shall arrive, when even the most glorious peace to him shall subject three or four hundred thousand disbanded soldiers to return upon France, the creatures of military views and habits, destitute of employment, and whom it will be equally dangerous to keep on foot or to disband."[2]

Progress of France.

But the war had comparatively little effect on the internal resources of France till Napoleon changed his plans at Boulogne. "The interruption of her foreign trade had produced little inconvenience, except in some particular districts, after the first six months of the war. Her agriculture was flourishing. Her domestic manufactures were encouraged by the difficulty of procuring manufactured articles from abroad. Her capital was invested in occupations which the hostility of England could not materially disturb."[3]

Thus ended the "pause" since the rupture of the Peace of Amiens, and the great struggle definitely began. The thunderbolt, forging for two years past, had been launched—but not at England. The year ended with the curious spectacle of the two deadly enemies, each invincible, unassailable, the one by sea, the other by land.

[1] *Annual Register*, 1807, 274. [2] *Annual Register*, 1805, 182-3.
[3] *Annual Register*, 6.

Parliamentary debates.

Parliament sat from 15th January to 12th July. In the early part of the session, its time was mostly taken up with the events leading up to and justifying the war with Spain, measures for the defence of the country, and the continuance of the Habeas Corpus Act in Ireland; in the latter, with the petitions of the Roman Catholics in Ireland against their disabilities, and the Reports of the Naval Inquiry, which issued in the impeachment of Lord Melville for irregularities as Treasurer of the Navy in the former Ministry.[1]

*Hansard* improved.

*Hansard* now becomes much more detailed and accurate, and boasts of having rescued "the proceedings of the British Parliament from the disgrace of a slovenly and unintelligible mode of publication." The Minutes of the two Houses are first given in 1803, and although many important economic events are merely mentioned in them or remain known to us only by the title of the Bill carried, they contain much valuable information, and one recognises how much has been lost to history by their omission from previous volumes.

The slave trade.

Encouraged by his success in the Commons of the previous year, Wilberforce, on 15th February, again brought in and carried a resolution that leave be given to bring in a Bill to abolish the slave trade in a time to be limited. A Bill was introduced, but, to general astonishment, was lost, on the second reading, by 70 to 77.[2] The disappointment was a heavy one, but Wilberforce did not give way. "If we cannot stop the whole of the accursed traffic," he wrote, "it is much to stop half of it," and he bent his energies to secure that the newly acquired Guiana colonies should not be supplied with slaves by English capital. In this he succeeded, and, on 15th August, an Order in Council was passed to prohibit the importation of slaves (except in certain

[1] The trial dragged on till June, 1806, when he was acquitted. The importance of the *Times*, it has been said, dates from the time when it attacked and exposed Lord Melville, thenceforth adopting an independent attitude towards political affairs. For this, however, it was made to suffer. The editor's packages from abroad were always stopped by the Government at the out-ports, while those for the ministerial journals were allowed to pass. But the *Times*, since the beginning of the war, had a light cutter running across the channel, getting papers from the French fishermen, and kept ahead of its competitors in spite of all obstacles.

[2] In the course of the debates, Wilberforce said that he "had never concealed his hope that the emancipation might be the *ultimate* effect of the abolition of the African importation," but disclaimed all idea of this being in the near future (*Hansard*, iii. 521, 672).

cases) into any of the settlements, islands, colonies, or plantations of America or in the West Indies, which had been surrendered to his Majesty's arms during the present war.[1]

It is perhaps to be expected that, in the stress of such a year, little account should be taken of economic events at home. Almost all that can be gleaned from the parliamentary records is a few casual references. We gather that trade was good and credit good. Peel speaks of the "prosperity of the country." Lord Elliot, in January, says that the flourishing state of our commerce must be obvious to everyone. But the imports and exports of the year scarcely bear this out. Barren records.

The Official Values were: Foreign trade.

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports - - - - - - - - - - | £28,561,270 |
| Exports of produce and manufactures of the United Kingdom - - - - - - | 23,376,941 |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise - | 7,687,551 |

The Real (declared) value of the exports was £38,077,144.[2]

The vessels built and registered in the several ports of the empire (except Ireland) during the year were 1,001, representing 89,584 tons.[3]

Owing to unfavourable prospects, wheat rose to a very high price in August, but fell again when a full average crop—in many places, indeed, "the best ever secured"—was gathered. The Board of Agriculture gives the annual average as 89/9. The farmers, rejoicing for the moment in their new protection, were content, although the foreign imports of wheat and wheat flour rose to 920,000 quarters. The price of the quartern loaf, which had remained between 14d. and 16d. from January to August, fell to under 1/- from September to November. Agriculture.

In March, the Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer mentioned that the export of Irish linen had much increased, thanks to the removal of the export tax on linen in the previous year.[4] Irish linen.

The mingled feelings with which the spread of canal navigation

[1] *Hansard*, vii. 1268. Wilberforce, *Life*, ii. 211 *seq.*

[2] The declared values are authoritative only from this year. (*Customs Tariffs of the United Kingdom*, c 8706, 51).

[3] *Hansard*, ix. Append. xv.

[4] *Hansard*, iv. 6. In the Irish Budget, it is interesting to note that, on the ground of its being "well known that bachelors pay very little towards the revenue," an additional tax of 15/- was put on every bachelor's male servant, to produce about £4,000. (*Ibid.* 10).

Feeling about canals.

was regarded are reflected in a "conversation," in the House of Commons, on Huskisson's[1] motion for a Committee to consider how far it might be expedient to allow coals, to a limited extent, to be brought to London by the Grand Junction and Paddington Canals, upon payment of the same rates and duties as were then paid on coals brought to the city coastwise. One member desired the House to be on its guard against any interference with a trade which formed so great a nursery for seamen. Another declared that the proposed measure would strike at the root of a trade upon which the employment and support of the hundred thousand seamen, now fighting the battles of their country, would, on the return of peace, in a great measure depend. A third said it would diminish the working of the northern collieries. The shipowners of North and South Shields petitioned against the proposal. Huskisson's motion, however, was agreed to, and an Act was passed allowing 50,000 tons to be brought by the Paddington Canal on payment of 10/2 per ton.[2]

Limitation of apprentices—for;

The factory system was already raising the questions which Trade Unionism later was to bring into prominence. In March and May, petitions were presented from journeymen calico printers in Lancashire, Derbyshire, Cheshire, Lanark, and Renfrew, praying for the aid of Parliament to settle in an amicable manner the disputes existing between them and their masters. The grievance was the excessive multiplication of apprentices—"far over the proportion ever known before in any mechanical profession"—and the limitation in the silk weaving trade was alleged as a precedent. Apprentices, it was said, were paid 4/- to 7/-, while the current price of goods was based on a 30/- rate of wages to adults. In consequence, the trade was flooded with boys, and thousands of journeymen were out of work. Lord King took credit for the petitioners that they had preferred

[1] William Huskisson, born 1770; son of a small landed proprietor in Staffordshire, and, later on, himself a country gentleman; an early sympathiser with French ideas, but speedily chilled by the excesses of the Revolution; private secretary to Lord Gower when ambassador in Paris till his recall on the outbreak of the war; thereafter in Lord Gower's household, where he became well acquainted with Pitt, who made him Under Secretary of State in the department of War and the Colonies in 1795; entered Parliament as member for Morpeth, 1796; resigned with Pitt and Canning in 1801; member for Liskeard, 1804; and a Secretary to the Treasury when Pitt returned; already attracting attention by his abilities, and rising to be, as Canning called him, "the best practical man of business in England."

[2] *Hansard*, v. 8, 183, 191, 856. The Act was an annual one, but was renewed from year to year up till 1820 at least.

to petition Parliament rather than have recourse to "those combinations which are so injurious to trade and the peace of the country."[1] A proposal to appoint a Committee was withdrawn, and the subject does not appear to have been brought up again till 1807.

On the other hand, a petition presented in April, from the master printers in London and Westminster, protested against the limitation of apprentices. In the "extraordinary increase of the printing trade for several years past," they had constantly advanced wages, but had not been able to satisfy the exorbitant demands of their compositors and pressmen, conceiving that, "if such demands should be complied with, the price of elementary books for the instruction of youth, and many other useful tracts of literature, would be so enhanced as to place them out of the reach of many." Within the last month, nearly all the pressmen had struck, "thereby putting all public and private business nearly to a stand," and preventing government papers and periodical publications from being completed. When they had been inclined to take apprentices, the journeymen had thrown impediments in their way. They therefore recommended that, to meet this evil, the period of apprenticeship (seven years) should be shortened, so as to "provide hands sufficient to execute the printing business." A Committee was appointed to examine and report.[2] —against.

Among matters of interest, it may be noted that the Townleian Collection of ancient sculpture was vested in the trustees of the British Museum at a cost of £20,000; and that the Thames Tunnel Bill was read a second time on 30th April. Townleian Collection.

In economic literature, appeared Lord Liverpool's great *Treatise on the Coins of the Realm*. In Germany, Jakob published the *Grundsätze der Nationalökonomie*. In general literature, the success of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, published in January in a magnificent quarto, decided Scott to make literature the main business of his life.[3] Literature.

[1] *Hansard*, iii. 46; ii. 8, 146. [2] *Hansard*, iv. 213.

[3] The first edition of 750 copies was immediately sold out, and succeeded by an octavo impression of 1,500. Scott's whole share in the profits came to £769. In the same year, he entered into partnership with Ballantyne.

# CHAPTER VIII

## 1806. THE MINISTRY OF ALL THE TALENTS

Death of Pitt.

WHEN Parliament met on 21st January, the usual amendment on the Address was postponed "from the consideration solely of the indisposition of a right honourable gentleman at the head of His Majesty's Councils." On the 23rd, Pitt died.[1]

A Coalition government.

Lord Grenville,[2] "the most finished political economist of his time" according to Harriet Martineau, was asked to form a Coalition Government. Under pressure of circumstances, the King at last consented to Grenville's condition, and Fox became Foreign Secretary. Addington, now Lord Sidmouth, was Lord Privy Seal; Grey, now Lord Howick, First Lord of the Admiralty;[3] and Windham, Secretary for War.

[1] His last speech, on 9th November of the previous year, contained a memorable phrase. To the Lord Mayor's toast of "The Saviour of Europe," Pitt replied: "Europe is not to be saved by any single man. England has saved herself by her exertions, and will, I trust, save Europe by her example." The proposal to honour the "excellent statesman" by burial in Westminster Abbey, one regrets to note, was passed only by 258 to 89. The main objection—voiced by Windham among others—was that something more than personal character was wanting to make a great statesman, namely, success. Wilberforce replied, with some indignation, that the idea that success was a proper criterion by which to appreciate the merits of a great man was inconsistent with wisdom and justice. If the character of the dead statesman were to be tried by great public virtues and splendid talents, by a love of country as sincere and ardent as ever existed in any human bosom, where were we to look among the great men of ancient or modern times for anyone who had stronger claims to the gratitude and respect of their country?

[2] Grenville was born 1759; member for Buckingham, 1782; Speaker of the House of Commons, 1789; then, successively, Home Secretary, President of the Board of Control, and Foreign Secretary; resigned with Pitt in 1801, but refused to go back with him when Fox was not included in the Ministry; little adapted for a party leader, with the cold manners and retired character and habits of his family, he seems to have strongly impressed those who met him in private life.

[3] Charles, afterwards second Earl Grey; born 1764; graduate of Cambridge; member for Northumberland 1786; "one of Fox's most trusted lieutenants"

Conceiving that his chance had come, Fox, on the faint suggestion of an approach on the part of Napoleon, entered into negotiations with Talleyrand for peace. Yarmouth and Lauderdale carried these on, in face of all discouragement, till the beginning of October.[1] The principle which Fox laid down, and never swerved from, was that, while England was united to Russia by such close connections that she could not treat, still less conclude, upon anything but in concert with the Emperor Alexander, she had no other wish than that of treating with the French Government on the basis proposed by France herself, that of actual possession (*uti possidetis*), except in the case of Hanover, which was to be ceded to his Britannic Majesty. But, before the negotiations had gone very far, Fox saw that he had mistaken his men: "the shuffling, insincere ways in which they act show me they are playing a false game." And long before they were finished, on 13th September, Fox was laid beside his great rival in Westminster. "Little did I think," said the King, who had so long kept him out of office, "that I should ever live to regret Mr. Fox's death." The negotiations for peace

Perhaps on account of the knowledge that negotiations were in progress, the debates of the first part of the year do not give the impression that England thought herself in any serious situation. The affairs of India and of Lord Wellesley's administration were much discussed, and measures were passed for the improvement of the various branches of the military system. But the war Indifference of England.

and a steady opponent of Pitt and the war policy; on the death of Fox, became leader of the House of Commons as well as Foreign Secretary, and opposed Grenville's war policy. After the fall of the Ministry of All the Talents, Grey remained out of office for twenty-four years. "A fine nature, a just and vigorous understanding, a sensitive disposition, and infirm health; these are his leading traits. His excellencies are courage, discretion, and practical sense; his deficiency, a want of executive coarseness"—this is Sydney Smith's summing up of Grey (*Memoir*, ii. 70).

[1] The full text of the negotiations is given in *Hansard*, viii. 92, and also in the *Annual Register*, 708 *seq.* In reading these deeply interesting papers—and they afford a fine study in contrast between Fox, in many respects the typical Englishman, and Talleyrand, the prince of diplomatists—it is impossible to resist the conclusion that France was aware that she could have a durable and honourable peace if she wanted it, that England asked nothing more than France could very well give and at the outset was willing to give, and that Napoleon, while not unwilling for peace at the beginning of the negotiations, changed his mind as he saw the prospect of further conquests. But, in subsequent discussions in Parliament, there were many complaints that Fox and the Government had been duped and outwitted, and much grumbling at the breach in the time-honoured methods of diplomacy.

does not intrude in every discussion like a death's-head that will not be denied. For once, the strife of political parties was laid. The country seemed safe enough under such a Ministry, especially when its foreign policy was in the hands of a great reformer steadied by responsibility. The King's Speech, at the close of the session in July, only alluded to the war to say that he was "engaged in discussion with a view to the restoration of peace on just and honourable terms."

Budget. The Budget was presented by the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Henry Petty, on the 28th March.[1] In general he followed the lines laid down by Pitt, religiously respecting the Sinking Fund, and the policy of raising as large a proportion as possible of the necessary supplies within the year. By way of preface, he gave a plain statement of the position of "the principal and, he might say, the only great feature in the state of the finance of the country, the amount of its burthen or annual debt, funded and unfunded," showing that, on 5th February, 1806, after deduction of the amount redeemed and in the hands of the Commissioners, the funded debt had risen to £517 millions, the unfunded to £23 millions.

The total Supply asked was £48,916,000. The amount on account of Ireland was £5,927,000, leaving £43,618,000 to be raised by Great Britain. The chief items were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Navy | £15,281,000 |
| Army | 18,500,000 |
| Ordnance, England | 3,911,000 |
| Ordnance, Ireland | 807,000 |
| Miscellaneous, England | 1,500,000 |
| Miscellaneous, Ireland | 670,000 |
| Arrears of subsidies | 1,000,000 |
| Vote of Credit, England | 1,400,000 |
| Vote of Credit, Ireland | 600,000 |
| Deficiency, Ways and Means of 1805 | 1,707,000 |

[1] *Hansard*, vi. 564 *seq.* Lord Henry Petty, afterwards Lord Lansdowne; one of Fox's young men, born 1780; educated at Edinburgh University, where he was one of the group—with Horner, Cockburn, Brougham, Jeffrey, Sydney Smith, etc.—who came under Dugald Stewart's influence; graduated at Cambridge, 1801; made the grand tour in company of Etienne Dumont, the friend of Mirabeau and Romilly and the translator of Bentham; entered the House as member for Calne, 1802; first made his mark by a speech on the Bank Restriction in 1804, and an attack on Pitt over the Melville affair in 1805; now member for the University of Cambridge, and Chancellor of the Exchequer at the age of twenty-five.

In Ways and Means, the chief items were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Malt and personal estate duties | £2,750,000 |
| Grants from proceeds of ships captured prior to the war | 1,000,000 |
| Lottery | 380,000 |
| Surplus of Consolidated Fund | 3,500,000[1] |
| War taxes | 18,000,000[2] |

In these Ways and Means, the increase in the yield of the war taxes was due to an estimated addition of £5 millions by raising the Property Tax—pronounced by Petty to be, as compared with those which had preceded it, such as the assessed taxes, "a most equal and equitable tax," with this in its favour, that it was an established tax—from 6¼ per cent. to 10 per cent., and to the imposition of an extra million on customs and excise (including 3/- per cwt. additional on sugar). **Property Tax raised to 10 per cent.**

His defence of the sudden increase in the Property Tax to 10 per cent. was, that "a gradual rise would have led to the supposition that this was a fund to be drawn upon to an indefinite extent: but, being raised at once to its natural limit, there would be less suspicion of future augmentation";[3] and Fox, with doubtful sincerity, supported him by saying that this had disposed of his great objection to the tax.

The full 10 per cent. was levied on all incomes, however small, from funded and landed property.[4] The exemption limit was reduced from £60 to £50. Generally, the exemption was limited to incomes arising from professions, trades, and offices. But for the relief of those "employed in laborious or handicraft occupations and paid weekly wages," it was extended to **Exemptions.**

[1] The Consolidated Fund, he explained, consisted of permanent taxes to the amount of £33 millions. The charges on this were the interest on the debt, £23 millions; for paying off the five per cents., £4¾ millions; civil list arrears, £958,000; pensions, £284,000; miscellaneous services, £2,170,000, etc., making in all £29¾ millions chargeable on the Consolidated Fund, and leaving an excess of over £3 millions. "This state of the Consolidated Fund he wished gentlemen to bear in mind, as it was to the Consolidated Fund that we were to look for the payment of the interest of the public debt." For once the surplus was not underestimated; it actually yielded £3,817,000.

[2] The estimate of the Property Tax (included in the war taxes) was £10,500,000.

[3] Francis, however, with some reason, asked "How so? Why is 10 per cent. a more natural limit than 11 per cent., or how does one violent act furnish an internal security against others of the same quality?" (*Hansard*, vi. 577).

[4] It was pointed out that the number of persons holding property in the funds under £50 a year was 220,000 (*Hansard*, vii. 411).

those whose wages did not exceed 30/- a week or 5/- on any one day; and abatements were allowed to life annuitants and small tradesmen with incomes up to £150. The exemption from the Property Tax of stock belonging to the King was passed without opposition in Parliament, but was sharply commented on in other quarters. The important principle of "payment at the source" was now introduced, the Bank of England having consented to collect the tax on the dividends paid through it. In the course of the debates, a clause introduced that, where the income was less than £150, a life insurance premium might be deducted, was agreed to. Wilberforce tried to introduce another clause, granting a reduction of 5 per cent. for each child where the income was under £400, and of 4 per cent. where under £1000, and this was supported by the contention that the father of a large family paid taxes in numberless ways that others were exempt from—"he wore several pairs of shoes a day, whilst the nobleman who had no children wore only one"—but he failed to carry it.[1]

New taxes

The loan for the year was £20 millions (£18 millions for Great Britain and £2 millions for Ireland). The interest, one per cent. sinking fund, and charges for this, amounting to £1,136,000, were provided by additional wine duties of half a million, by an addition of 10 per cent. to the assessed taxes, calculated to yield half-a-million, by equalising the duties on cheaper teas (making 96 per cent. duty on all teas) and by a stamp tax on appraisements.

—criticised.

These new taxes did not pass without criticism. Brushing aside their specific merits, Francis[2] attacked them in the mass; they were unnecessary. The charges on account of the new loan should have been taken from the Sinking Fund. Admitting that the integrity of the fund was, perhaps, advisable in the early years of its growth, was it advisable now when it had grown to £8 millions? "In what way are we the better for this fund?—I mean sensibly, palpably, tangibly, and not in distant hopes or airy speculations. Has it relieved the public from any old burden, or has it prevented any new one? . . . As we manage the matter now, the more we pay off, the more we borrow. The sinking fund, the debt, and the taxes grow and improve together, and keep pace with one another. For what purpose is this enormous revenue extracted from the people, not

[1] *Hansard*, vii. 264.

[2] Sir Philip Francis, member for Appleby since 1802; generally identified with "Junius"; now a man of sixty-six.

only without being applied, as it might be, to their relief, but even without protecting them from fresh and intolerable exactions? All I know is that, in fact, the debt thrives by the reduction, or in spite of it. And what is the final result of it? The constant application of the produce to the purchase is just sufficient to keep the price of the three per cents. at sixty, and for this important service the nation pays £8 millions a year. But what is the result of the service? To enable ministers to make new loans, on terms always said to be highly favourable to the public; that is, to furnish them with a facility to borrow more and more. This Sinking Fund then, in contradiction to its title, and to all its pretensions, is, in fact, the medium not of real diminution but of positive increase of debt."[1]

Proposed tax on pig-iron

The Budget debates were more interesting, perhaps from the discussion of some proposals which did not pass into law. Chief among these was a duty of 40/- per ton on pig-iron, calculated to yield half-a-million—a similar tax to the one proposed (at 20/- however) and dropped by Pitt ten years before. From all sides the obvious objections were urged. The manufacture of iron was rising into great prominence—in nine years the output had increased from 100,000 tons to 250,000—and demand was so great that "the pigs were not allowed to be cold before they were taken away."[2] To tax its raw material, would be a heavy handicap,[3] and would, moreover, be an indirect tax on agriculture and manufactures, on canal, bridge, and ship building. It would not produce more than £200,000 to the Treasury, said Wilberforce, and it would cost £1,000,000 to the community.[4] Much of its flourishing state it owed to the ingenuity of the persons concerned in it, but, if it was to come under "the gloomy supervision of the excise," there would be an end to this.[5] After long discussion Petty gave way,[6] and replaced it by the addition of 10 per cent. to the assessed taxes.

[1] *Hansard*, vi. 599. [2] *Hansard*, vii. 85.

[3] "The manufacture of iron," said Wilberforce, who got a good deal of credit as the principal instrument in defeating the proposal, "had this peculiar recommendation belonging to it, that it had arisen and flourished most in those parts of the country which nature seemed to have damned to perpetual sterility" (*Hansard*, vii. 80).

[4] *Hansard*, vii. 80. [5] *Hansard*, vii. 86.

[6] When taxes were necessary, said Petty, the attention of ministers was naturally directed to those persons who were able to bear them. Finding, then, the iron manufactory to be a flourishing trade, they very naturally thought proper to select it. From the immense increase of the output of

—on private brewing.

Another proposal was a tax on private brewing. Although the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed to effect this without troublesome excise supervision, the outcry among the country gentlemen was so great that this proposal also was dropped.

Aliens and the tax.

Most notable, perhaps, in view of subsequent changes, was the rejection, in spite of Francis' powerful advocacy, of a proposal to tax non-resident aliens on their holdings in the funds.[1] Fox, who had at first vigorously denounced such an idea, as inconsistent with the faith of Parliament and contrary to the fundamental maxim of the constitution that no one should be taxed who was not represented in Parliament, was driven back on the argument that it would be impolitic, as discouraging foreigners from vesting their property in British funds and inducing them to withdraw it altogether.[2]

The continuance and increase of taxation on the old lines by those who had so often opposed it, was amply commented on outside. Petty got the name of the "Rehoboam of taxation," and Fox and he appear, in the caricatures of the day, as "the new tax-gatherers," with a copious stream of new taxes flowing from the "Petty fountain."[3]

New Auditors' Bill.

The Budget, as Wilberforce noted in his *Diary*, was "very well but not quite first rate." Petty won more applause for his New Auditors' Bill. It appears that, when the existing Ministry came in, there were some twenty years' arrears of unaudited accounts, to the enormous sum of £534 millions. When Pitt took office, he had found similar arrears, and had established a new board of auditors with more ample powers, by whom the accounts that had accumulated during the American War were audited and settled. But since then there had been a fresh accumulation, and a similar remedy was called for; and Petty now asked for a Bill consolidating the Boards of Commissioners and providing more effectual means of examining and auditing the Public Accounts now in arrear. This was taken by Pitt's friends as a reflection upon the late administration, and an active

late years, he inferred the superior capacity of the manufacturers at present to pay the duty which Pitt failed to pass in 1797 (*Hansard*, vii. 88). Even in the general absence of clear thinking as regards taxation, characteristic of these days, the double assumption by a Chancellor of the Exchequer that the incidence would fall on the manufacturers, and that they were not sufficiently "got at" by the Income Tax, is notable.

[1] *Hansard*, vii. 396. [2] *Ibid.* 407.

[3] Dowell, *History of Taxation*, ii. 224.

opposition was made by George Rose and others, but the Bill duly passed.

Napoleon's progress.

Meanwhile Napoleon was marching from success to success. In February, the King of Prussia ranged himself definitely on his side by accepting the bribe of Hanover, and concluded a treaty by which the Electorate—Napoleon's "by right of conquest"—was transferred to Prussia, in consideration of the cession of three of her provinces to France;[1] thus the Elbe, Weser, and Ems were closed to British shipping and trade. In March, Joseph Buonaparte was proclaimed King of Naples. In June, the Batavian Republic became the Kingdom of Holland, with Napoleon's brother Louis for King. In July, the ancient constitution of Germany was subverted, and its western states, separated from the Empire, became the Confederation of the Rhine, under the protection of France. In August, the Emperor Francis was told that he must renounce the title of Emperor of Germany and yield to the precedence of France, and the "Holy Roman Empire" became extinct.

Another election.

In the beginning of October, Lord Lauderdale at last received his passports from France, and, on the 21st, the King issued a Declaration announcing the non-success of the negotiations. The people in general, as Hawkesbury said,[2] seemed to rejoice at the rupture, but, on the 26th, "to the astonishment and consternation of the whole kingdom" said the Opposition,[3] Parliament was dissolved, "to give people an opportunity of declaring their minds on so marked a crisis." The new Parliament gave a large majority for the "Ministry of All the Talents," as Canning called it. Sidmouth became President of the Council, Lord Howick succeeded Fox as Foreign Secretary, and Lord Holland[4] became Privy Seal.

[1] There was deep indignation in England over this shameless transaction. Fox did no more than echo the general opinion of the time when he described the conduct of Prussia as "the union of everything that was contemptible in servility with everything that was odious in rapacity. No example could be found in all the histories of war, and no mention had ever been made by the writers on the law of nations, of any power having a right to receive as a present a country occupied by one of the belligerent powers but not ceded by the other. . . . The principle of transferring the subjects of one prince to another strikes at the foundation of every government and the existence of every nation."

[2] *Hansard*, viii. 276. [3] *Ibid.* 23.

[4] Henry Richard Vassal, third Lord Holland, nephew and political pupil of Fox; born 1773; educated Eton and Oxford; took his seat in the House of Peers, 1796. After the fall of the Ministry, in 1807, Holland House, very much owing to his fascinating wife, became the headquarters of the Opposition.

Jena.

By this time, Napoleon had taken the field against his late ally. On 1st October, Frederick William, overreached, goaded by public opinion, and irritated by the discovery, among other things, that Napoleon had offered the complete restoration of Hanover to the King of England, after humbling himself to ask peace from Great Britain, declared war against France. The struggle was short. Within a fortnight, the Prussian power was almost annihilated at Jena and Auerstadt. "The Prussian army and monarchy have ceased to exist," wrote Napoleon to Joseph.[1]

On the 24th, Napoleon was at Berlin, sending to the Hotel des Invalides in Paris, as a present to his old soldiers, the sword, the black eagle, and other memorials of the great Frederick.[2] Almost all the fortified places of Prussia fell into the hands of the conqueror, and Napoleon swept unopposed over North Germany. Frederick William, refusing overtures of peace, escaped with the wreck of his army, and joined Russia beyond the Vistula.

The Continental System.

This dates the beginning of the Continental System—that "unprecedented system of warfare" which was expected to bring Britain to her knees. Napoleon's idea was that, while France owed her wealth to her agriculture and internal resources, England owed hers primarily to her trade as the great carrying nation. To destroy this trade, all that was necessary was to prevent every country in Europe from receiving British ships and goods. Thus England would at once lose a market for her manufactures and for her great colonial produce, and be deprived of her carrying for other nations. Possibly also he did not lose sight of the difficulty England would have in retaliating without embroiling herself with neutral powers, especially America. It was from Berlin on 21st November that he launched the famous Decree.

[1] "It is scarcely possible," said Jersey, "to find in all history an instance of a great power so totally overthrown—one might almost say annihilated—in the course of a few days. Prussia, who had made sacrifice after sacrifice to France, apparently with the view of averting war, at length rushed precipitately into hostilities, and met with an unexampled fate" (*Hansard*, viii. 18). "The plain fact is," said Grenville, "that Prussia had gone on from year to year, from month to month, and at last from week to week, under the same illusion as to her safety from France, and still pursuing the same selfish policy, until she found that she was placed in a situation of the most imminent danger. Then she displayed as much precipitancy as before she had evinced indifference to the fall of Europe, and acted with that want of caution which had brought on all her disasters" (*Hansard*, viii. 32). "They who lend their aid to have others devoured, will be at last devoured themselves," said Hawkesbury (*ibid.* 24).

[2] "I would rather have these than twenty millions," he said.

The Berlin Decree.

In form, the Berlin Decree was a retaliatory measure. When Napoleon, in spring, made Prussia exclude British ships—as he had already forced Naples and other neutral ports to do—England had put an embargo on Prussian ships in British ports, and declared a blockade from the Elbe to Brest, forbidding neutral ships to enter the ports unless they carried the produce of their own country or British manufactures. The blockade, however, was enforced strictly only from Ostend to the Seine, and, in the preamble to the Berlin Decree, this blockade—quite untruly said to be not enforced by a single warship—was denounced as a breach of international law, and as aimed at destroying the world's commerce. England had ceased to observe the law of nations; had extended the right of conquest to the cargoes and property of private individuals; had monstrously abused the right of blockade with a view to aggrandise the commerce and industry of England at the expense of other nations between whom communication was impeded. As this was her object, all those who carried on traffic in English commodities on the continent seconded her views, and rendered themselves her accomplices; and France had a right to employ the same weapons against England as England had employed against her. It then went on to order that the regulations of the Decree should be considered as fixed and fundamental laws of the Empire so long as England refused to acknowledge one and the same law as applicable both to sea and land, and till she ceased to consider private property as good prize.[1]

The chief article in the Decree declared the British Isles in a state of blockade,[2] and interdicted all trade and correspondence,

[1] Quoted by Perceval, 4th February, 1807 (*Hansard*, viii. 628). The full text is given in the *Scots Magazine*, 1806, 953. As the Advocate-General said, the demand that Britain should renounce the right of capture of private ships of any nation with which she was at war, and confine the right to the navies of the belligerent nation, was "a principle as novel in the usages of war as the edict itself was contrary to the law of nations"—the right was "as old as war itself." *Ibid.* 634.

[2] An empty menace, which the French government had no power to enforce, nor, as it afterwards appeared, any intention to act upon. The arrogance of the threat could only be equalled by its absurdity:—"a blockade by a country, which had hardly dared to trust a ship out of the protection of its batteries, against a country which commanded the sea, and could, if it thought fit, intercept the commerce of the whole world" (*Hansard*, viii. 44). "He might as well have talked," said Erskine, "of blockading the moon and possessing himself of all the lunar influences" (*Ibid.* x. 473). But the parts of the Decree which prohibited all commerce in English produce or manufactures filled the commercial cities of the continent with dismay as fatal to their prosperity (*Annual Register*, 201).

direct or indirect, between the British dominions and the countries subject to the control of France. But, besides this, no ship was to be admitted into any port under the control of France without a certificate, declaring where she came from and that no part of her cargo was English: the persons of all English men and women were declared captive and their property confiscated wherever either could be found; and punishment was threatened on all persons who held any sort of intercourse with any British native. This justified the arrest of all British resident in or visiting any port under French influence, the seizure of their property, and the cancellation of all debts due to them.

**Confiscation at Hamburg.**

As a fact, Napoleon had not waited until the publication of the Decree to put it into force. Two days before, on the 19th November, Hamburg was occupied by French troops: the property of English merchants was immediately confiscated, and their persons put under arrest. A further order was issued that every banker or merchant, having in his possession English manufactures or funds arising from the sale of English manufactures, whether belonging to the English or others, should give in a statement of the same, and domiciliary visits were authorised to effect this. And, in December, he issued a decree that all the English merchandise, or productions of the English colonies, which had been placed under requisition at Hamburg, Lubeck, and Bremen, should be immediately removed to France.

**Trouble with America.**

Meanwhile trouble had been growing up for England in another quarter. In the War of Independence, American shipping had been almost annihilated; but, during the first period of the present war, the Americans had more than regained their position, chiefly through evading the British Orders in Council of 1794, 1798, and 1799, by means of the "broken voyage." These Orders forbade direct trade between France, Spain, Holland, and their colonies. But American ships loaded at the colonies, sailed to an American port, entered their cargo for import, and immediately re-exported the goods, getting a drawback of the duties, and sailed for the continent with a clearance as from America. When this plan was upset by a case tested in England, the ships touched at a shipbuilding port in America, landed and stored the cargo, waited a little to clean and repair, and then loaded up again for the continent with a clearance.

The great increase in American shipping was noticed in Parliament in 1802. The amount was then said to be as great as

ours had been at the end of the revolutionary war, and the increase was contrasted with the decline in the number of our own vessels employed in the American trade: "at the moment," said a member in April, "there are four foreign for one British vessel employed in the imports and exports of this country."[1] The Peace of Amiens stopped this growth—it was to be expected, and it was just, said Jefferson, in his Message to Congress of December, 1802. Since the resumption of the war, the interrupted progress had been resumed. The merchant flag of every belligerent save Great Britain almost disappeared from the sea. In two years' time, almost the whole carrying trade of Europe was in American hands.[2] The most profitable part of that trade was the carrying of colonial produce from the colonies of France and Spain to Europe. In one year, it was said, 45,000 hogsheads of sugar were brought, in American bottoms, into Amsterdam alone.[3] It was only to be expected that this traffic would be stopped when France began the blockade policy, and tried to prevent England getting goods from any quarter of the world. In May, 1805, accordingly, came the test case of the *Essex*, when an American ship, making a broken voyage from Barcelona to Havana *via* Salem, was condemned on the ground that the cargo had never been intended for sale in the United States, but exported from Barcelona for sale in Havana, and that the voyage was in effect direct.

The "broken voyage" stopped

The decision caused immense excitement in America. There was a loud outcry for reprisals, if not for war; and in April, 1806, was passed the first of a series of retaliatory measures, the Non-importation Act, forbidding the exportation of a long list of goods to Great Britain or her dependencies. The measure was put in force on 15th November, but, by the end of the year, it was suspended.[4]

Non-importation Act.

On the 19th December, Napoleon entered Warsaw, and began enormous preparations for the humbling of Russia, levying contributions on various ports—among others, releasing the confiscated British merchandise in Hamburg for a payment of £700,000. On the same day, the British Parliament reassembled, in deep gloom over the state of Europe and in not a little

Progress of the war.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 549. [2] *Cambridge Modern History*, vii. 327.

[3] The system is very well described in a pamphlet, *War in Disguise, or the Frauds of the Neutral Flags*, 1806.

[4] *Cambridge Modern History*, vii. 323, 327.

anxiety as to the position of the country and its military resources. Against the long sum of French successes, all England had to show was the recapture of the Cape in January, the taking of Buenos Ayres in June, and the brilliant victory of Maida in Calabria, which saved Sicily for Ferdinand, in July. The alliance with Russia was now spoken of as the "only remaining hope of safety for the Continent of Europe."[1]

**Popham's circular.**

The Buenos Ayres expedition deserves mention in another connection. It was one of these "little expeditions" in which the ships and resources of the nation were dissipated till the Government adopted the steady Peninsular policy. Sir Home Popham was commodore of the expedition which, under Sir David Baird, took the Cape from the Dutch in January. For some unexplained reason, he thought fit to make a dash with his whole fleet for the River Plate, on his own judgment and responsibility, and in teeth of the accepted policy that Spanish America should be left to revolution rather than to conquest. In June, he seemed, for the moment, like Nelson at Copenhagen, to justify his disobedience, by taking Buenos Ayres, and sending to London specie enough to load eight waggons, each containing about five tons of dollars. Flushed with success, Popham sent home an extraordinary circular, addressed to all the manufacturing towns in Great Britain, advising the sending of a list of articles as follows: "the light western woollen cloths; printed linens; the articles usually made up at Birmingham for the African trade, namely, hardware rings of small value, and buttons, with a metal buckle of enormous size universally worn throughout Spanish America; plated Sheffield goods, and a knife of a particular make made at the latter place, in universal use in these provinces; flowered cotton and Manchester velvets as peculiarly adapted and in request for this market; and, universally, the muslins, calicoes, cottons, and printed linens, the manufacture of England and Scotland."[2]

When the goods arrived, however, Buenos Ayres was in other hands. Within a couple of months, it had been recaptured by the natives and the troops made prisoners of war. An expedition under Auchmuty, sent out in autumn, captured Monte Video, but found that nothing could be done with Buenos Ayres. In the next year, another expedition, under Whitelock, after a street

[1] *Hansard*, viii. 16. [2] *Scots Magazine*, 1806, 784.

fight in Buenos Ayres, made terms with the commander, and the British forces retired from the Plate in return for the release of all the prisoners. Whitelock and Popham were court-martialled; the former dismissed the service, the latter reprimanded.

Limited service in the army.

One of the notable events of the year was the change made, after long debates and much opposition, in the recruiting system for the army. Hitherto enlistment had been for life, and men were drawn from the lowest ranks—occasionally from the hulks. Now Windham, laying down the principle that the only way to recruit an army by voluntary enlistment was to improve the trade of the soldier and bring it into competition with a sufficient proportion of the trades and callings of the lower orders,[1] introduced a limited service of seven years, with three more in case of actual war; and the reform at once justified itself by the increased numbers recruited. No mitigation, however, was yet made in the inhuman punishments to which the men were subject.

The Slave Trade.

The first great triumph in "the greatest battle ever fought by human beings" was won somewhat unexpectedly. In the spring, as a kind of preliminary, a Foreign Slave Trade Bill was brought in by the Attorney-General, to prevent the importation of African negroes, by British subjects or British shipping, into the colonies conquered by or ceded to us in the course of the war—thus confirming the late Order in Council—and to prevent the fitting out of foreign slave ships from British ports.[2]

[1] "It is the merit of Mr. Windham that, abandoning the complex plans and visionary speculations of his immediate predecessors . . . he trusted to the simple and obvious expedient of bettering the condition and prospects of the soldiery for the future increase and supply of the army, on the sound and universally acknowledged principle that, wherever men are wanted for any occupation in society, they may be obtained for that service by holding out to them a suitable encouragement, and in no other way except by compulsion" (*Annual Register*, 40). "I then said of that important measure," said Grenville, "that it never would have its full effect until the sight of a soldier impressed upon the peasant's mind the idea of a service for seven years instead of a bondage for life" (*Hansard*, viii. 29). Windham's argument, however, for not improving the pay of the men was somewhat curious. The pay of an army cannot be increased to a great extent, he said, without rendering the troops licentious, and, in proportion as the army becomes licentious, a severity of discipline must be resorted to which defers from enlisting. It was, indeed, one of the current opinions of the day that high wages were not in the interests of the "lower orders." "More human misery is produced," said even the humane Whitbread in 1815, "by over-payment than by under-payment; large wages lead to idleness, extravagance, and dissipation" (*Hansard*, xxix. 995).

[2] *Hansard*, vii. 1268.

Even this very limited measure was vehemently opposed. If the Bill passed, said Rose, the Americans would take up the trade, and the manufacturers of Manchester, Stockport, and Paisley would be going about naked and starving. He had, he said subsequently, been a friend to the abolition originally, and it might have taken place long before this had it not been for the ill-judged manner in which Wilberforce introduced it, and the pertinacity with which he persevered in it.[1] "Nothing could be conceived almost which would tend more to injure the interests of the navy," said Tarleton, the member for Liverpool: "one great foundation of our maritime strength was the slave trade, and therefore it ought not to be restricted: the African trade had been the great cause of the prosperity and opulence of Liverpool."[2] It was "another instance of the infatuated disposition to sacrifice the navigation and commerce of the Empire," said Sheffield.[3] Even Sir Robert Peel spoke of the Bill as mischievous: "if we were to philosophise, let us do so while our looms were full."[4]

**Fox's resolution.**

The Attorney-General's Bill passed the Lords in May. Wilberforce had intended to follow up this measure by a general Bill, but, after several anxious consultations, gave this up in favour of a general Resolution. On 10th June, Fox—now very ill—made his last appearance in the House to move it. "So fully am I impressed," he said, "with the vast importance and necessity of attaining what will be the object of my motion this day, that if, during the almost forty years that I have now had the honour of a seat in Parliament, I had been so fortunate as to accomplish that, and that only, I should think I had done enough, and could retire from public life with comfort and conscious satisfaction that I had done my duty." The resolution was: "That this House, conceiving the African Slave Trade to be contrary to the principles of justice, humanity, and sound policy, will, with all practicable expedition, proceed to take effectual measures for abolishing the said trade, in such manner, and at such period, as may be deemed advisable." Romilly, now Solicitor-General, and a man of mark since his appearance in the impeachment of Lord Melville, in supporting Fox, reminded the House that it had, more than fifteen years before, had the courage to enquire minutely into the subject, and had ascertained by a great body of evidence, which

[1] *Hansard*, vi. 917, 1025. [2] *Ibid.* vi. 918.
[3] *Ibid.* vii. 235. [4] *Ibid.* vi. 1022.

stood recorded against the nation, that the trade was carried on by robbery, rapine, and murder; and had yet, with the full conviction of this, persisted in the trade, and, in the intervening period, dragged from the coast of Africa not less than 360,000 human beings.[1]

The Resolution was agreed to with but little opposition in the Commons, and, on 24th June, by the Lords. Immediately on its passing, Wilberforce moved and carried an Address to the King, beseeching him "to take such measures as in his wisdom he should think proper, for establishing, by negotiation with foreign powers, a concert and agreement for abolishing the African Slave Trade, and for affording assistance mutually towards carrying into execution any regulations which may be adopted by any or all of the contracting parties for accomplishing their common purpose."[2] In July, a temporary measure, entitled the Slave Ship Restriction Act (46 Geo. III. c. 119) was passed, to prevent slaves being rushed into the West Indies in the interval.[3] "By the operation of these measures," says the *Annual Register* —as it turned out, a little prematurely—"not only was a stop put to the future increase of the British slave trade, and a pledge given by both Houses of Parliament for the total abolition of that iniquitous traffic with all practicable dispatch, but a slave trade was abolished which used to carry over yearly above 40,000 Africans from their peaceful homes, through the multiplied horrors of the middle passage, to perpetual bondage and wretchedness in the West India plantations."[4]

Fox had often told him, said Holland subsequently, that the two objects nearest his heart were the restoration of peace and the abolition of the slave trade: when, by the shuffling of the French government, he anticipated disappointment in the former, he consoled himself with the hope that he might obtain the latter.[5] Thus, before Fox retired from life, he saw at least one of his aims accomplished.

**Agriculture.**

As regards the general condition of the country in the meantime, the year's records are still very barren. A backward spring, and the threatened check by Prussia to the Baltic supply, sent the price of wheat up to 84/- in June,[6] but it fell slowly to 73/5 before the

[1] *Diary*, ii. 145. [2] *Hansard*, vii. 580. [3] *Hansard*, vii. 1143.

[4] 93. Wilberforce, *Life*, iii. 255 *seq.* [5] *Hansard*, viii. 672.

[6] In view of subsequent events, it is interesting to notice that, in Parliament, Stanhope received much censure for "alarmist language," when he

harvest. The imports of wheat and wheat-flour fell to 310,000 quarters. The crop was a bare average in quantity, and inferior in quality.[1] The Board of Agriculture average for the year was 79/1. The price of the loaf remained round about 1/- all through the year.[2]

**Rise of wages and rent.**

The parallel upward course of wages and rent excited a good deal of attention. The *Farmer's Magazine* of February said that accounts from the different districts of the island all agreed in two particulars, namely, that rent and labour had of late increased most enormously in value—not to be accounted for on ordinary principles, as almost every one of the productions of the soil had fallen in price within the previous six months. The rise in rent was most notable in Scotland, where it had doubled or trebled within the last twenty years, and had increased by 25 per cent., it was said, since 1804. The *Magazine* accounted for it by three things: the increased prosperity for a number of years leading offerers for farms to think that it would continue at a progressive rate; the amount of wealth accumulating in the hands of agriculturists among others, tending to a spirit of speculation and a "rage for farming"; and the increased size of farms decreasing the supply relative to the demand. The rise in wages was, unquestionably, due to the growing prosperity of the country, which called for the employment of a greater number of hands, and to the competition of the army and navy. The rise in both cases seems to have continued all through the year.

**Free trade in corn with Ireland.**

Another very important change was made in the Corn Laws. As early as 1802, when a Committee was appointed by Addington to enquire into the state of the Corn Trade between Great Britain and Ireland, strong opinions had been expressed that the two countries should become one as regards their agriculture.[3] Now, on 3rd June, the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer moved to bring in a Bill—in which he was supported by the authority of the ministers—for making the intercourse in home-grown grain between Great Britain and Ireland free and unrestrained, without bounties or duties, the hope being expressed that this was merely preliminary to the free interchange of every other commodity

spoke of "a matter which vitally concerned the great majority of the community"—a threatened scarcity of corn owing to the closing or probability of closing of the Baltic ports.

[1] Tooke's *History of Prices*, i. 266. [2] *Annual Register*, 628.

[3] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 360.

between the two countries. The measure would place all the ports of the United Kingdom exactly on the same footing, as regards exportation or importation of grain, as the different parts of Great Britain were then with regard to each other.[1] The Bill was passed in July. In the course of the debates, one learns that the principal grain export from Great Britain to Ireland was barley, amounting to 110,000 quarters in the previous year, and that the principal grain export from Ireland to Great Britain was oats—of which, beyond the necessary consumption, the quantity was "very great indeed."[2] This free trade, of course, contributed greatly to the extension of Irish tillage which had begun in 1782, and to the increase in Irish exports.[3] The growing prosperity of Ireland formed subject of general congratulation. In May, the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer said that the exports, now amounting to about £5¼ millions, were about £30,000 above those of the previous year, and greater than in any year since 1792. The linen export had increased to 5,500,000 yards. The course of exchange was lower and more fixed than it had been for several years.[4] By the end of the year, he could say that the trade to America had increased by one-third; the shipping had increased in number and tonnage; the British shipping trade with Ireland had also increased; and exchange had fallen to 9½ per cent.—"a rate much lower than had been known for many years."[5]

Prosperity in Ireland

Of the course of industry generally during this year, nothing can be gathered except from the figures of foreign trade, which show a decrease in imports and an increase in exports.

Foreign trade.

The Official values were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports - - - - - - - - - - | £26,899,658[6] |
| Exports of produce and manufactures of the United Kingdom - - - - - - - - | 25,861,879[7] |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise - | 7,782,265 |

The Real value of the exports was £40,874,983.

[1] *Hansard*, vii. 514. [2] *Ibid.* 521.

[3] *Report of the Select Committee on the Corn Trade*, 1813, 18.

[4] *Hansard*, vii. 35. [5] *Ibid.* ix. 191.

[6] A large proportion of these imports consisted of materials of manufacture, as flax, hemp, hides, iron, wood, yarn, dyeing goods, wool, and cotton; or of necessary consumption, as wine, spirits, oils, fish, fruit, and grain (*Hansard*, ix. 239).

[7] There was a great increase in the exports of hardware, woollen, and, particularly, cotton goods. From a debate on the Calico Printers' Bill in the following April, we learn that the value of cotton goods exported had risen to £9¾ millions (*Hansard*, ix. 533).

The vessels built and registered in the several ports of the empire (except Ireland) during the year were 772, representing 69,198 tons,[1] being a reduction from the former year of 229 and 20,036 respectively.[1]

**Bounties.** In the same Finance Accounts appear the following figures of bounties: on Cotton and Linen manufacture, British and Southern Whale Fisheries and White Herring Fisheries, £307,000; for the encouragement of the growing of flax and hemp, £2,956.

**The woollen trade.** In the parliamentary records, we get two important sidelights on the condition of the Woollen Manufacture. One is from a Bill passed in March to permit the importation into the United Kingdom of wool from the British plantations in America. This was opposed as being unnecessary on the ground that, while we needed the fine wool of Spain to mix with our own, there was no scarcity whatever of coarse wool in this country, and that the unlimited importation would discourage the growth of the article at home, "by placing the landed interest at the discretion of the manufacturers, who would, upon a surplus in consequence of the importation, be at liberty to offer any price they pleased."[2]

The other is from the Woollen Trade enquiry. Great part of the trade of Yorkshire was at this time in the hands of men of small capitals, who, with the aid of their families, prepared the goods at home, and sold them at the adjoining cloth halls. In the beginning of the year, there was much agitation among the workmen and these domestic clothiers, with the object of subjecting the manufacture to the most arbitrary restrictions—the workmen being desirous of reviving an obsolete law against machinery, and the domestic manufacturers, of preventing the production of cloth on a large scale in factories. A Committee was appointed to enquire into the subject. After sitting for five weeks, it gave Wilberforce, who was member for Yorkshire, the task of preparing the Report "in a very confiding but really very friendly manner," as he says naively, and the result justified the confidence. His personal bias, he acknowledged on another occasion, was towards the domestic system:—"There were very many who carried on manufactures in their own houses and in a domestic way, and he considered this better, both for trade and for the morality of those engaged in it, than that way of carrying on manufactures where many journeymen were employed by a few masters in huge manufactories." It was between these

[1] *Hansard*, xi. Append. xiv. [2] *Hansard*, vi. 352.

domestic makers and the factory owners that Wilberforce had now to mediate, and the Report—which was warmly approved—laid down clearly the principles upon which the trade must be conducted; befriending the domestic clothier, while it freed the factory owner from needless and harassing restrictions.[1] Wilberforce's report.

In the *Scots Magazine* for August—which, it may be noted, contains also the account of an enterprise "in a state of great forwardness," a tunnel under the Forth at Rosyth—there is mention of the small beginnings of what is now one of the great national trades. An article on Paisley tells of the rapid increase in the population to 35,000, 20,000 of them employed in the unrivalled muslin weaving which succeeded the making of silk gauze; of its 20 large cotton mills employing 7,000 hands; its 4 tanneries, 3 soap and candle houses, 2 distilleries, and 2 "founderies." Another manufacture, employing nearly 1,500 persons, was linen thread, which had made its home in Paisley since its introduction from Holland in 1772, in the various shapes of ounce, nuns, heddle twine, Lisle thread, etc. Then comes the first mention, I believe, of cotton thread: "Cotton thread has been fashionable of late; it is wound by a machine into little balls of a nice appearance, and well calculated to attract the attention of the ladies. It works very pleasantly, and has only one fault, which is want of strength. It may answer for sewing light fancy muslins, but will not do for articles that are expected to wear for any length of time; this is now beginning to be found out by attentive housewives, and consequently cotton thread is getting out of demand."[2] Cotton thread.

MISCELLANEA.

As reply to a slashing attack in the *Edinburgh Review*, on the *Odes and Epistles*, which had just appeared, Moore challenged Jeffrey to a duel. None of them knew anything about firearms. Horner, who was Jeffrey's second, had to be shown how to load, and there was some suspicion that he forgot the bullet. The two had their pistols raised, when some police officers—warned of the event by Moore's second—rushed from behind a hedge and arrested both. At Bow Street the whole party were put into one waiting room, and were soon engaged in an animated conversation on a literary subject. Jeffrey, who,

[1] Wilberforce, *Life*, 264; *Hansard*, vi. 424. [2] 499, 579.

it seems, had taken a great fancy to his antagonist "from the moment he saw him, pistol in hand, to kill him," subsequently apologised, and the two became excellent friends. The whole affair is narrated, with much self-appreciation, in Moore's *Memoirs*, i. 199.

A report on the French finances by the Minister of Finance, in April, estimated the expenditure of the government at 894 millions (of francs) for the current year. The system of direct contributions continued to be so unpopular that their amount was considerably diminished, this being made possible by the increasing productiveness of the customs and other branches of indirect taxation. The turnpike duties were abolished throughout France as odious, vexatious, and unproductive.[1]

[1] *Annual Register*, 218.

# CHAPTER IX

## 1807. THE YEAR OF TILSIT

ONCE Parliament had made up its mind about the iniquity of the African Slave Trade, the steps already taken were followed up with all speed.[1] A Bill for its Abolition was brought before the House of Lords by Grenville on the second day of the year,[2] and carried by 100 to 34: it was sent to the Commons in February, and received the Royal assent on 25th March.[3] Grenville congratulated Parliament on "having now performed one of the most glorious acts that had ever been done by any assembly of any nation in the world."[4] Romilly's famous peroration on the occasion deserves to be given in full: "When I look at the man at the head of the French monarchy, surrounded as he is with all the pomp of power and all the pride of victory, distributing kingdoms to his family and principalities to his followers, seeming, as he sits upon his throne, to have reached the summit of human ambition and the pinnacle of earthly happiness, and when I follow that man into his closet or to his bed, and consider the pangs with which his solitude must be tortured and his repose banished by the recollection of the blood he has spilled, and the oppressions he has committed; and when I compare with those pangs of remorse the feelings which must accompany my honourable friend (Wilberforce) from this House to his home, after the vote of this night shall have confirmed the object of his humane and unceasing labours, when he shall retire into the bosom of his happy and

Abolition Bill passed.

[1] The *Annual Register* for once departs from its judicial summarising, and gives a whole chapter sympathetically to the debates and to discussion of the subject, p. 110.

[2] *Hansard*, viii. 256.

[3] Wilberforce, *Life*, iii. 291.

[4] *Hansard*, ix. 170.

delighted family, when he shall lay himself down on his bed, reflecting on the innumerable voices that will be raised in every quarter of the world to bless him—how much more pure and perfect felicity must he enjoy, in the consciousness of having preserved so many millions of his fellow creatures, than the man, with whom I have compared him, on the throne to which he has waded through slaughter and oppression."[1]

**Emancipation.**

As might be expected, during the debates on the abolition of the trade in slaves, the further question of their emancipation was raised, but it met with little encouragement. Lord Holland said that, "whilst, on the one hand, it was essentially just that the trade should be abolished, it would, on the other hand, be injustice to the slaves in the islands to give them emancipation, because it could only tend to their own injury."[2] Grenville expressed the same sentiment.[3] But, on the very day after the third reading, Earl Percy moved for leave to bring in a Bill for the gradual emancipation of slavery in the West Indies, his intention being to propose that the children of slaves born after a certain date should be free. It was at once said that the abolitionists had now "shown the cloven hoof," and Sheridan at least promptly pleaded guilty to the charge. Wilberforce, however, declared himself against immediate emancipation, and deprecated the discussion at that moment, and the question was dropped.[4]

**But some doubted.**

The widespread difference of opinion on the subject may be surmised from the motion proposed by Hawkesbury that the words, "consistent with the principles of justice and humanity," be left out of the preamble, confining the necessity of abolition solely to the inexpediency of its continuance—"some allowance should be made for the feelings and characters of those who have embarked their property in the African trade."[5] Lord St. Vincent, in a last protest, said that, "as soon as France made peace with this country (and she would hasten a pacification in consequence

[1] *Hansard*, viii. 978. "Is it true," Wilberforce was asked by a friend, "that the House gave you three cheers upon the conclusion of the Solicitor's speech—was this not an unprecedented effusion of approbation?" "I can only say," replied Wilberforce, "that I was myself so completely overpowered by my feelings, when he touched so beautifully on my domestic reception (which had been precisely realised a few evenings before on my return from the House of Lords), that I was insensible to all that was passing around me." Wilberforce, *Life*, iii. 298.

[2] *Hansard*, viii. 692. [3] *Ibid.* 702. [4] *Ibid.* ix. 142.

[5] *Ibid.* viii. 679.

of this measure), her first object would be to get complete possession of the slave trade."[1]

In pursuance of the second of the resolutions adopted by the House in the previous session, Grenville said that, with the view of procuring the abolition of the trade by foreign nations, communications had taken place with France during the recent negotiations, and that the subject formed one of the articles in the treaty being negotiated with the United States; but, owing to the war, no communications had yet been possible with Spain, Portugal, and Holland.[2]

Budget.

Petty brought in his second Budget on 29th January.[3] The total Supply asked was £45,841,000, of which the Irish share was £5,314,000, leaving £40,527,000 to be raised on account of Great Britain. The chief items were:

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| Navy | | £16,977,000 |
| Army, Great Britain | £10,202,000 | |
| Army, Ireland | 3,445,000 | |
| Barracks, Great Britain | 506,000 | |
| Barracks, Ireland | 469,000 | |
| Commissary General's Department[4] | 841,000 | |
| Extraordinaries | 2,758,000 | |
| | | 18,223,000 |
| Ordnance, Great Britain | £3,264,000 | |
| Ordnance, Ireland | 479,000 | |
| | | 3,743,000 |
| Miscellaneous, Great Britain | £1,200,000 | |
| Miscellaneous, Ireland | 666,000 | |
| | | 1,866,000 |
| Vote of Credit, Great Britain[5] | £2,400,000 | |
| Vote of Credit, Ireland | 600,000 | |
| | | 3,000,000 |

In the Ways and Means, the chief items were:

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| Duty on malt, pensions, etc. | £2,750,000 |
| Surplus of Consolidated Fund[6] | 3,500,000 |
| War taxes[7] | 19,800,000 |
| Lottery | 450,000 |
| Exchequer Bills on vote of credit | 2,400,000 |

[1] *Hansard*, viii. 693. [2] *Ibid.* 431. [3] *Ibid.* 564.

[4] Formerly included in Extraordinaries of the Army.

[5] One million of this was for arrears of subsidies, in consequence of existing treaties, and half-a-million for further subsidies.

[6] The actual surplus of the past year had been £3,800,000. "Notwithstanding the inauspicious changes and events which have occurred in Europe, I feel myself perfectly warranted in taking it at the same sum as last year."

[7] This large estimate was justified by the unexpected productiveness of the Property Tax—"far exceeding any expectations." It had been estimated for the previous year at £10,500,000, and had actually yielded £12,800,000.

The loan for the year was £12,200,000 (obtained at £4 19/7 per cent.) raised as "a war loan, to be charged upon the war taxes." For once, no additional taxes were imposed.

**New Plan of Finance.**

Along with this Budget, Petty put forward a "New Plan of Finance" for coming years of war, providing for borrowing £12,000,000 in each of the years 1807, 1808, and 1809; £14,000,000 in 1810, and £16,000,000 in each of the ten following years, supposing the war should last as long; the interest and sinking fund of all these to be charged upon the war taxes of customs and excise. The attraction of the scheme was that, under it, for the first three years, not a shilling of new taxes would be imposed upon the country.

The plan excited much interest, and was debated at great length. The chief objection taken to it at the time was that it would make the war taxes permanent. Nor was the point omitted that, just as Addington had promised that there would be no further increase of the debt, assuming that the expenditure would not exceed £26,000,000 a year, so now did Petty base his New Plan on the assumption that the expenditure would not go beyond £38,000,000. The resolutions on which the scheme was based were agreed to, but the plan was not accepted by the Ministry which followed. For this reason, but more particularly for the reason that it had the condemnation of being the worst, and by a great deal the worst, and most wasteful of any financial scheme proposed for such a purpose,[1] it need not be further discussed here.

**End of All the Talents.**

The Slave Trade Act was the only measure of any importance passed during the thirteen months of this, the last Whig administration for nearly a quarter of a century. In March, the Ministry of All the Talents, now hopelessly divided against itself and exceedingly unpopular, was dismissed by the King, in exercise of his Royal prerogative, on its refusing to give him a pledge never to propose any further concessions to the Catholics—the concession they had proposed to make being that of admitting them to all commissions in the army and navy.[2]

[1] Hamilton, *Inquiry concerning the National Debt*, 145.

[2] Was it prudent, was it politic, argued Howick, when they were contending with such a powerful enemy, to prevent a large portion of the population of the country from contributing to the common defence? "Louis XIV., when he revoked the Edict of Nantes," wrote Peter Plymley, in his first letter, "never thought of preventing the Protestants from fighting his battles; and gained, accordingly, some of his most splendid victories by the talents of his

Lord Portland, old and infirm as he was—not even able to appear in the House—now became Prime Minister, with Perceval,[1] the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as real head. Lord Eldon was Chancellor; Canning, Foreign Secretary; Hawkesbury, Home Secretary; and Castlereagh took the War and Colonial Office. Sir Arthur Wellesley was Chief Secretary for Ireland, but without a seat in the Cabinet. After a Royal Speech almost exclusively occupied with a defence of the change of administration, and making no mention of the war, a General Election followed in April, amid much complaint of the unreasonableness of a dissolution at a time when there was very little difference between any of the branches of the legislature.

Sale of seats.

One feature of the election was the immense efforts made by both parties. The price of seats, like that of any article in demand, went up to unheard of figures—not without a suspicion that the new ministers had bought up all the seats that were for sale and at any price. Tierney offered £10,000 for two seats and was refused. When Wilberforce, who had spent between £8,000 and £9,000 to get in for Hull in 1780, was asked to contest his old constituency of Yorkshire, he found that the expense would be beyond his means. Some very rich men had announced their intention of getting in at any cost—Lord Harewood was "ready to spend on it his whole Barbadoes property"—and the election was only secured by Wilberforce's friends declaring that his cause was a county object and subscribing £18,000 among themselves.[2]

Romilly's opinion.

What a conscientious man felt about this way of "representing" the people, is well reflected in Romilly's *Diary*. When a young man, Romilly had been offered a seat in Parliament "in the handsomest manner imaginable," without any condition, and with perfect freedom to vote and act as he thought proper. At that

Protestant generals. No power in Europe but yourselves ever thought, for these hundred years past, of asking whether a bayonet is Catholic, or Presbyterian, or Lutheran; but whether it is sharp and well-tempered." Perceval, on the other hand, thought such a concession "one of the most dangerous measures that had ever been submitted to the judgment of the legislature."

[1] Spencer Perceval, born 1762, son of the Earl of Egmont; graduate of Cambridge, and afterwards at the bar; in early life a friend of Romilly, who described him in 1786 as a man of strong and invincible prejudices on many subjects, yet by his excellent temper, engaging manners, and sprightly conversation, the delight of all who knew him; a King's Counsel in 1796, when he entered the House; Solicitor-General, and then Attorney-General, under Addington; retired from office on Pitt's return; refused to join the Ministry of All the Talents; always an ardent opponent of Catholic Emancipation.

[2] Wilberforce, *Life*, iii. 315 *seq.*

time he made "an unalterable resolution never, unless he held a public office, to come into Parliament but by a popular election or by paying the common price," and to this resolution he adhered when he was offered a seat in 1805 by the Prince of Wales himself. He now paid £2,000 for his seat at Horsham, on which transaction he wrote as follows:

"This buying of seats is detestable; and yet it is almost the only way in which one in my situation, who is resolved to be an independent man, can get into Parliament. To come in by a popular election, in the present state of the representation, is quite impossible; to be placed there by some great lord, and to vote as he shall direct, is to be in a state of complete dependence; and nothing hardly remains but to owe a seat to the sacrifice of a part of one's fortune. It is true that many men who buy seats, do it as a matter of pecuniary speculation, as a profitable way of employing their money; they carry on a political trade; they buy their seats and sell their votes. For myself, I can truly say that, by giving money for a seat, I shall make a sacrifice of my private property, merely that I may be enabled to serve the public. I know what danger there is of men's disguising from themselves the real motives of their actions; but it really does appear to me that it is from this motive alone that I act."[1]

Weakening of party feeling.

But perhaps the most striking feature of the election was that public opinion, in great measure, seemed for the moment to have superseded the influence of faction and party. Sir Francis Burdett and Lord Cochrane became popular by disclaiming attachment to any party and declaring their intention to attack abuses and nothing but abuses.[2] "That all public men are corrupt, and that the true interests of the country are disregarded in an unceasing struggle between contending factions for power and emolument," said Romilly in July, "is an opinion spreading very fast through the country," and no man, he said, had contributed so much and so successfully to propagate that opinion as Cobbett by his *Political Register*.[3]

[1] *Diary*, ii. 117, 119, 201.

[2] *Annual Register*, 235. Burdett at that time had not developed those characteristics which afterwards made earnest men fight shy of his support. The *Annual Register* speaks of his "matured talents and virtues, his acute understanding, prompt eloquence, and manly sense, uniformly employed for the good of his country and mankind," p. 236.

[3] But of "this vain and ambitious man" he had a very low opinion—"he is an enemy of all foreign trade except the Slave Trade, of which he has

For many weeks after the election, there was endless recrimination between the old and the new ministers—by no means calculated to raise the character of the House, and very much out of place at a time when "the map of Europe had become only another name for the map of France." But, before the Grenville government went out of power, and under its encouragement, a remarkable series of measures had made considerable progress. In May of the previous year, Whitbread[1] had given notice that, early in the next session, he would propose some regulations for the amelioration of the Poor Laws, adding that the provision for the employment of the poor would form a leading feature of his plan.[2] In February, accordingly, he submitted what he called "one of the most interesting propositions which ever occupied the attention of any deliberative assembly upon earth. . . .[3] I wish to engage you in an attempt at a solution of the most difficult of all political problems; namely, how to reduce the sum of human vice and misery, and how to augment that of human happiness and virtue amongst the subjects of this realm." Whitbread.

Two centuries ago, he said, the state embodied a great Christian principle in a succession of statutes. The last of these, the 43rd of Elizabeth, had till lately been considered the Bible on this subject. No one ever ventured to surmise that its system was radically defective and vicious. But it was an assertion now pretty generally made that our Poor Laws had served to degrade those whom they intended to exalt, to destroy independence, to hold out hopes that could not be realised, to encourage idleness and vice, and to produce a superfluous population, the offspring of improvidence and the early victims of misery Failure of the poor laws.

always declared himself the champion"—and he thought that Cobbett was expecting a revolution, in which he hoped to play some very conspicuous part (*Diary*, ii. 211). Cobbett's abilities and his enormous power over the working-classes were fully recognised at the time—"he has more influence, we believe," said the *Edinburgh Review* of July, "than all the other journalists put together"—and, for the past three or four years, he was considered to have done good public service. But within the previous six months he had "undergone a most extraordinary and portentous change," and thereafter most people were of Romilly's opinion.

[1] This was Samuel Whitbread, the great brewer. He was born 1758; graduated at both universities; after making the grand tour, married the eldest daughter of the first Earl Grey; entered Parliament in 1789; after the death of Fox, one of the prominent men of the Whig party. His last notable appearance had been when he led the attack on Lord Melville.

[2] *Hansard*, vii. 292. [3] *Ibid.* viii. 865.

and want. Returns laid before Parliament, made up to 1803, showed that, out of a population in England and Wales of 8,870,000, 1,234,000—nearly one-seventh—were partakers of parochial relief. The maintenance and relief of the poor in the year ending Easter, 1803, cost £4,267,000—almost double the average of 1783-1785, and nearly treble the sum raised in 1776.

**Poverty inevitable.**

A remedy for an evil so great and so rapidly increasing ought immediately to be sought, and he thought he would be able to propose improvements, regulations, and modifications to effect that end. He disclaimed all visionary views. He knew the laws of God to be immutable. He believed man to be born to labour as the sparks fly upward; that a certain portion of misery was inseparable from mortality; and that all plans for lodging, clothing, and feeding of all mankind with what might be called comforts were quite impracticable. He knew it was impossible that even the wish of that amiable monarch, Henry IV., could be realised and every peasant in the kingdom have "a pullet in his kettle." Physically, it could not be accomplished—the earth did not produce the wherewithal to gratify such a desire. Nevertheless, he believed that the situation of the "lower and more useful classes" was better in every respect than at any former time, and that he who should attempt to persuade them to the contrary was either weak, misinformed, or wicked.

**Malthus and the poor laws.**

He alluded to Malthus, who had said that the Poor Laws had not only failed in their object, but had been productive of much more wretchedness than would have existed without them, as having "completed that change of opinion with regard to the Poor Laws which had before been in some measure begun." But, he contended, no one had been bold enough to propose their total and immediate abrogation, and it was absolutely out of the question. Their gradual abolition, indeed, had been proposed by Arthur Young and by Malthus. Young's plan, to take the amount of the poor rate at a given time and enact that it should never be increased, he considered neither wise nor practicable: Malthus's plan, to enact that no child born after a year from the date should ever be entitled to poor relief, was equally impracticable.

His own proposal was, not to get rid of the Poor Laws, but to take steps by which they would become almost obsolete in

half-a-century. The method was, "by exalting the character of the labouring classes."

National education.

The House would expect that, in the forefront of his plan for exalting the character of the labourer, must appear a scheme of general national education, and the plan by which he proposed to bring this about was establishment of parochial schools, not compulsory upon the poor—"for that would destroy its object" —but voluntary. Here he adduced the case of Scotland—"the theme of panegyric among all who had visited her, on account of the situation of her labouring classes"—ascribing this altogether to the universality of the schools and the influence of the schoolmaster. When his Bill was printed, it would be seen that the "mainspring of all that is good on earth, religious instruction," had been attended to, and that the interests of the establishment were strictly guarded.

A labourers' bank.

The second step towards exalting the character of the labourer which he would propose was, "to encourage him to be possessed of property," by the establishment of "one great national institution in the nature of a bank, for the use and advantage of the labouring classes alone," where men living by wages could lodge any sum from 20/- upwards, not to exceed £20 in any one year nor £200 on the whole. Combined with this, would be an insurance office for the poor, providing annuities as well as sums at death.

Settlement.

The third step would be to make a change in the Law of Settlement: he would urge, for instance, that, in addition to the means by which settlement could at present be acquired, should be added residence as a householder for five years without becoming chargeable.

Vestries.

The next matter in which he wanted an alteration made was the constitution and power of vestries. He would restore the monthly meetings of the vestries, as required by the 43rd of Elizabeth, instead of "yearly, or as often as was thought convenient." He would abolish the equal voice of everyone in the vestry by giving a person assessed in a certain sum two, three, or four votes, according to his contribution to the funds. He would restore what seemed intended by the 43rd of Elizabeth, the rating of personal property, instead of leaving the whole burden on land. He would give vestries power to exempt from the poor rate such occupiers of cottages as they should think too poor to pay, and give Justices power to exempt occupiers of

cottages under £5 in yearly value. He would remedy the extreme inequality of burden between one parish and another—for which the existing legislation had proved quite ineffectual—by means of the county rate, charging it on every parish in proportion to its assessed property and relieving the more heavily burdened parishes from it.

Arousing of emulation.

Beyond this, he would awaken the labourer's laudable ambition to be distinguished above his associates—for "the love of distinction is deeply implanted in the human breast"—by following the example of the Agricultural Societies, and bestowing rewards through the Justices upon labouring men who should have brought up six or more children to a certain age without parochial relief, giving them a moderate sum of money, or "a parchment certificate with the county seal attached to it," which each labourer might hang up in his cottage as a gratification to himself and an incentive to his children. And he would remedy the prevailing overcrowding by giving compulsory powers to the churchwardens and overseers to buy land, not exceeding five acres, and build cottages to be let at fair and full rents.

The able-bodied.

As to the employment of those healthy and capable of work, he laid it down, as of the most essential importance for maintaining the character of independent industry, that the recipient of relief should not be in a "more desirable or more favourable situation as to food, lodging, or raiment," than the independent labourer, excepting always the cases of age, infancy, and sickness.[1] Parochial relief should be confined to necessaries whether in or out of the poor-house. Although he did not propose to abolish workhouses altogether, he was an enemy to the workhouse system. It had almost universally increased the burden of the poor rate, and, instead of adding to the comfort of the poor or to the improvement of their morals, it had furnished seminaries of idleness and vice. He considered that the independent labourer could by no means afford to lay out upon each of his family anything like the sum spent upon each head in a workhouse. Workhouses might in some instances have tended to ease parishes by terrifying the most meritorious from applying for relief, and some, indeed, had been established for that

[1] "To age, infancy, and sickness I would hold out the hand of support, protection, and care, widely extended, filled with all the blessings the most copious charity could afford."

iniquitous purpose. Fortunately, the humanity of the nation had prevented these evils from being so great as they otherwise might have been, by overlooking the law which prohibited relief out of the house, and its rigour had been in some degree mitigated by occasional relief. But the restraint ought, in his opinion, to be entirely taken away, and he would propose to repeal so much of the Act of Geo. III. as imposed that restraint. Further, he would put an end to one very great grievance, that of depriving a man of every worldly possession before relief was administered.

Parish employment.

As to the general question of the parish providing employment, he did not believe that the Act of Elizabeth, which enjoined the authorities "to take order for setting to work all persons having no means to maintain themselves" ever was, or ever could be, generally executed. The nation could not, in the character of a great capitalist, employ all its labourers, and all such attempts had failed. He thought that there were now comparatively few places where fair wages might not be obtained for labour. But he would go the length of authorising overseers to contract with any other person for the labour of a pauper, making up his wages out of the rates, always provided that the wages of such a person were kept below the rate of wages current in the parish. He ended by saying that, in his own parish, there was not one wretched being, nor one well-founded cause of complaint, and the workhouses exhibited regularity, industry, economy, cleanliness, and health. If such could be made universal, he would ask no more, but he was not misled by the success of his own experiment.

Motion Passed.

The motion to bring in a Bill "for promoting and encouraging industry amongst the labouring classes of the community and the relief and regulation of the criminal and necessitous poor," was passed amid a shower of compliments.

These general proposals Whitbread subsequently divided into four Bills, dropping plural voting and the rating of personal property, and two of them were fully discussed.

Parochial School Bill.

The Parochial School Bill, "for establishing a plan of education for the poor," was committed on 24th April. No parish schools in existence were to be superseded, but, "in every parish where there was a number of poor who could not afford to pay for the education of their children, there should be a school established for their instruction. At these schools children should be

entitled to two years' education between the ages of seven and fourteen.[1]

At this stage, very little dissent was expressed as to the necessity of universal education, except by Windham, who confessed himself a sceptic as to the diffusion of knowledge, thought that it would only tend to make the people study politics, and lay them open to the arts of designing men, and ended by saying that the plan did not possess the least possible means of moving poverty from our door for an instant. Scotland, of course, was held up as the happy example, the preamble indeed containing the words, "Whereof we have had most convincing proof by long experience in that part of the United Kingdom called Scotland."[2] Henry Erskine saw in the emigration from Scotland not a proof of the proverbial quotation, "Need makes the old wife trot," but of the advantage Scotsmen had by reason of their education over the people of most nations to which they congregated: "If it were not for the introduction of the Scots into England," said Porchester, "there would be a great vacuum in many stations of society in this part of the country."

Objections.

The chief objection was the expense thrown on the land. Whitbread had mentioned a possible addition to the rates of 1/- and some calculated the total at £2,000,000. Other objections were:—that there was a danger of educating men above the positions they could hope to obtain—it was very desirable that everyone should be taught to read, but there was no necessity for writing or arithmetic; that it would hurt the secondary schools "to which no person would subscribe when the Parochial Schools should be established"; that "the value of learning had risen less than anything else, and that there would be a difficulty in

[1] It is evidence of the great influence of Malthus at this time that a letter written by him to Whitbread, saying that the measure was entitled to support, was quoted as disposing of any sound objection to the Bill (*Hansard*, ix. 541). In July, in a letter to Jeffrey, we find Horner, who was beginning to reproach himself with not having attempted to speak in the House, making an interesting reference to Malthus. "A more philosophic candour, calm love of truth, and ingenious turn for speculation in his important branch, I have seldom met with. It is quite delightful to find how closely he has taught himself to examine the circumstances of the lower classes of society, and what a scientific turn he gives the subject. There is a new speculation of his, about the importance of the people being fed dear, which I wish you were here to discuss; it has the look of a paradox, and, like most of his views, is revolting to the common belief; but I have not yet detected the fallacy, if there is one" (*Memoirs*, i. 406).

[2] *Hansard*, ix. 1051.

getting schoolmasters and schoolmistresses competent."[1] Wilberforce, however, admitted that, so far as he had been able to observe the disposition of the country, the Bill had not been received so favourably as he could have wished.

When the Bill came up in July, its treatment was very different. A good many petitions in the meantime had been presented against and not one for it. There was a "general disinclination to it throughout the country," said Rose.[2] "The public were against all these Bills," said Sturges Bourne.[3] In committee, the clause making it compulsory upon the parishes to provide schools was lost, in favour of one making it lawful for them.[4] When the second reading came on, many were decidedly hostile. Giddy totally objected to its principle; "it would teach the labouring classes to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants in agriculture and in the laborious employments to which their rank in society had destined them; instead of teaching them subordination, it would render them fractious and refractory, as was evident in the manufacturing counties; would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books, and publications against Christianity; would render them insolent to their superiors, and would burden the country with a most enormous and incalculable expense. For himself he would abolish the poor laws altogether."[5] One member affirmed that every magistrate with whom he had conversed was decidedly averse to it, and had instructed his representative to oppose it; another, that he believed that the majority of the principal inhabitants throughout the north of England were averse to the measure.[6] The reception of the Bill, in fact, was so discouraging that Whitbread said that he meant to persevere only in order to have the grand question decided, "whether it was proper that education should be diffused among the lower classes or not."[7]

Opposition.

[1] A sidelight on the education of the time is thrown by one speaker, who said that, in Reading, with a population of 10,000, 7,500 of them poor, there was hardly a child who had not learned to read "at some of the threepenny schools kept by the poor old people" (*Hansard*, ix. 544).

[2] *Hansard*, ix. 857. [3] *Ibid.* ix. 853. [4] *Ibid.* ix. 858.

[5] *Hansard*, ix. 798. [6] *Ibid.* 799, 805.

[7] *Hansard*, ix. 802. In the course of the debates, attention was again called by Sturges Bourne to the situation of parish apprentices. It was the practice, said Romilly, to send them to as great a distance as possible where they had no friends—in some parishes of London they sent them hundreds of miles, contracting with the proprietors of the Lancashire cotton mills, etc., and sending them off in carts like so many negro slaves (*Ibid.* 800).

The Bill lost.

The Bill, however, passed the Commons. It was thrown out by the Lords on the second reading, without division. Hawkesbury thought the preamble "absolute nonsense," although he "would not deny that education to the lower orders, under proper direction and limitations, might be desirable." Redesdale's principal objection was that "there seemed to be little reference in the Bill to the religious establishments of the country, but he considered also that it would go to interfere with private scholastic establishments." The Lord Chancellor opposed it as taking education in a large measure out of the superintendence and control of the clergy: the Archbishop of Canterbury said it "would go to subvert the first principles of education in this country."[1] Only two members stood out for it: Lord Holland, who thought it would have been an insult to the understanding of the House to go into elaborate arguments to prove that education would improve the morals and comfort of the people, and Lord Stanhope, who denounced the "abominable principle that no part of the population of the country ought to receive education unless in the tenets of the established church," and could not see what the teaching of spelling, reading, writing, and arithmetic for purposes useful in life had to do with sects of religion.

Till the end of the war, Parliament heard no more about the education of the people.

Poor Relief Bill.

The second of Whitbread's measures, the Poor Relief Bill, "for promoting and encouraging industry among the labouring classes, and for the better regulation and relief of the necessitous poor," did not get so far. Introduced on 13th July,[2] it passed the second reading in the Commons on 20th July with general approval,[3] but, on the 29th, Whitbread declared his intention of abandoning it for the session.[4]

Support of the war.

When Parliament met in June, it was practically unanimous that the crown was to be supported in the prosecution of the war

[1] *Hansard*, ix. 1174 *seq.* Romilly never expected it would get so far as the Lords. "I said a few words in the House of Commons in support of Whitbread's Bill, for establishing schools for the education of the poor in all the parishes in England. The question was carried, but the Bill will certainly be lost. Many persons think that the subject requires further consideration and a more matured plan; but I am afraid a much greater portion of the House think it expedient that the people should be kept in a state of ignorance" (*Diary*, ii. 213).

[2] *Hansard*, ix. 794. [3] *Ibid.* 846. [4] *Ibid.* 1015.

with the whole energy and resources of the nation. In the Royal Speech, it was said that "his Majesty's endeavours had been most anxiously employed for the purpose of drawing closer the ties by which he was connected with the powers of the continent."[1] The year was destined to see the utter failure of this policy.

Napoleon had now matched himself with the remaining great power in Europe. In February, he met Russia and Prussia at Eylau in East Prussia.[2] After a Titanic struggle and horrible carnage, the result was indecisive, and France received a momentary check. Napoleon commanded twelve regiments of the conscripts of 1807 to be sent to the theatre of war six months before the time fixed by the constitution, and ordered the 80,000 conscripts of 1808 to be prepared and held in readiness to march when called upon.[3] The allies appealed to Great Britain, in confident expectation of the help promised, Russia urgently asking a loan of £6 millions. The Grenville ministry replied by a subsidy of half-a-million to Russia[4] and a smaller sum to Prussia. When the new ministry came in, they found, as they asserted in the bitter recriminations which followed in Parliament, no preparations made either for a descent or a diversion, and the whole of the transports for foreign service paid off some time before. When an expedition was at last sent to Rügen, it arrived too late. Dantzig was captured in May, and at Friedland, on 14th June, Russia and Prussia were totally defeated. Two days afterwards, Alexander and Napoleon met on a raft in the Nieman while their staffs fraternised on shore, and drew up the shameful

Eylau.

Friedland.

[1] *Hansard*, ix. 577.

[2] His forces took the field, it is said, in 50,000 greatcoats made of Yorkshire cloth (Harriet Martineau, *History*, 271).

[3] *Annual Register*, 1807, 22.

[4] Considering the immense sums lavished by way of subsidy in former years, this refusal of a loan to Russia at such a critical stage seems ill-judged economy. It was years before the explanation was given, and then by a political opponent. It was the unfortunate experience of Britain in regard to an Austrian loan. In 1796, £7 millions three per cents. were advanced, on which securities were formally taken, and the right given of suing the Emperor on these securities in his own courts. On account of the misfortunes of Austria and subsequent subsidies to her, the British Government had never pressed for payment, and nothing more was said about the matter till Lord King brought it up in 1816. After this experience, it had become a maxim, with every administration, not to engage in any transaction of that kind (Lord Liverpool in 1816; *Hansard*, xxxii. 1031).

Treaty of Tilsit, dragging Prussia in helpless and humiliating acquiescence.[1]

Treaty of Tilsit.

The most important terms of the treaty[2] were:—the recognition by Russia of all Napoleon's acquisitions; co-operation with France against the maritime schemes and conquests of Great Britain; shutting of all the Prussian ports against her and stoppage of all trade between the countries; the coercion of Sweden, Denmark, and Portugal to join the Continental System and form "one general confederacy" against Great Britain. Prussia, however, was the heaviest sufferer. Deprived of immense territories—Russia, her late ally, enriched by Polish Russia—of half her revenues, and of five millions of her subjects, she lost in one day all that had been won by the great Frederick in twenty years. The Treaty states explicitly that it was out of esteem for the emperor of all the Russias, and to afford him a proof of Napoleon's sincere desire to unite both nations in the bonds of immutable confidence and friendship, that certain territories were restored to Prussia. Napoleon, in fact, had suggested that Prussia should be wiped out, and the Vistula made the boundary between the two empires of east and west.

The Danish fleet.

But England struck first. Anticipating Napoleon's scheme of bringing the whole of the naval force of Europe, and particularly the fleets of Denmark and Portugal, to bear on Great Britain; dreading that Denmark, in spite of her Solemn Declaration that

[1] Of what happened on the *pont volant* at Tilsit much has been asserted, little is known. Harriet Martineau's highly coloured account of the interview—"The first words were spoken by Alexander, who said, 'I hate the English as much as you do, and am ready to second you in all your enterprises against them'"—is certainly not reliable, nor is much more credence to be attached to Thiers' elaborate version of the speeches on both sides. Probably it is true enough that the Czar resented the failure of Great Britain to satisfy expectations which he had, rightly or wrongly, formed. Before Eylau, he sent repeated entreaties for a diversion—"an attack on any part of the coast of France, or even the alarm of an attack, promulgated with confidence, would tend to relieve Russia from the concentrated forces of the French army" (*Hansard*, x. 632)—but, as Earl Gray said, not more than 25,000 or 30,000 men could have been spared out of the country, and so small a force could not act with effect anywhere (*ibid.* 438). As to a loan, Grenville, with every disposition to help, found that private lenders would accept nothing short of a guarantee of the British Government (*ibid.* 438). In any case, especially in view of Fox's steady refusal even to consider a separate peace, nothing can excuse the perfidy at Tilsit of one whom England, three years before, had compared with Titus and Marcus Aurelius, and who had written only a few days before to George III. that "there was no salvation to himself or to Europe but by eternal resistance to Bonaparte" (Malmesbury, *Diaries*, iv. 398).

[2] The text is given in full in *Annual Register*, 720.

she was resolved to remain neutral, would not be strong enough to withhold her fleet at the requisition of Napoleon; and acting on "the most clear and positive information that it was the intention of the enemy to compel the courts of Denmark and Portugal to subscribe their navies to a general confederacy," Canning, after vain endeavours to make Denmark trust her fleet to the safe keeping of Britain, took the extreme and much controverted step of seizing the fleet and bringing it to England. Up till this time, the Emperor of Russia seemed disposed to resume his relations with this country, and had sent a direct communication offering mediation with France, but now he declared war. Prussia and Austria, without any distinct cause, withdrew their ambassadors, and Sweden and Portugal alone were left on the side of Great Britain.[1]

Portugal disappears.

But, later in the year, Portugal practically disappeared from among the powers of Europe. One result of the Treaty of Tilsit was that Napoleon was left free to complete his conquests in the west. He had no cause of quarrel with Portugal; in fact, the Prince Regent, on a peremptory demand to close the ports and confiscate English property, had advised the British merchants to sell their goods and depart the kingdom. In face of this, Napoleon, in October, dispatched an army of 30,000 French and Spaniards under Junot, by forced marches from Bayonne, across the Pyranees to Lisbon. In November, Junot arrived, and, amid the sullen hostility of the inhabitants, levied a war contribution, and shut the ports against England. But he did not get their fleet. Some months before, the Portuguese Government had given timely notice to the British court of the demands and designs of France, and of Napoleon's threats of instant and destructive hostility in case of her declining to comply.[2] Acting on the recommendation of the British Government, the fleet, containing the royal family, set sail for Brazil as Junot's columns came in sight, and Napoleon's organ in Paris issued the statement "the House of Braganza has ceased to exist."[3]

[1] The action of Austria was the more unexpected. "Nothing appears to me more surprising," said Ponsonby, "than the circumstance of England being at war with Austria" (*Hansard*, x. 51).

[2] *Hansard*, x. 3.

[3] "Dartmouth harbour," writes Creevey on 2nd November "exhibits a curious spectacle at present. The flags of Portugal and Denmark flying on board at least twelve or fourteen detained ships of both nations, the crews of which are maintained by Government" (i. 85).

British unconcern.

Thus, long before the year was out, not only was France surrounded by kingdoms of Napoleon's own making—"Crowns and sceptres," said Sheridan, "are the palisades of his entrenchments, and kings are his sentinels"[1]—but many powers hitherto neutral or in alliance, Russia, Turkey, Prussia, and Denmark, had ranged themselves on the side of the great enemy. Yet the debates in Parliament bear out the astonishing statement of the *Annual Register* that "it cannot escape observation with what unconcern so large an accession of hostile agency is received by the British public." Horner, in fact, admits the attitude and defends it:—"You talk with great contempt," he wrote to Jeffrey, "of our solicitude about elections and our financial enquiries, and would have us think of nothing but Buonaparte. My system is quite the contrary; foreign dangers are always in this country sufficiently exaggerated, besides that, this one is, I am persuaded, transitory; on the other hand, the decay of liberty at home goes on by imperceptible steps, requires a constant vigilance, and all the little successes we gain by that vigilance are immediately productive of others."[2] There was good reason, one would think, for questioning if this danger was "transitory," and if it was quite a "foreign danger." Many people must have felt that invasion was more imminent than in 1804. But, "entrenched behind a miserable ditch," as one said, and trusting in the might of her navy, England undoubtedly took things very calmly.

Agriculture.

The harvest, though, on the whole, scarcely an average one, was well got in. Wheat was the best crop, and its price, which had been high in January, fell to a low point in November. The average of the year, according to the Board of Agriculture, was 75/4. 405,000 quarters were imported. In Scotland, however, the harvest was one of the worst. A great storm of wind and rain fell on the country when the grain was ready for the scythe, and frosts and rains followed. Peas and beans were a total failure; potatoes and turnips not much better; wheat alone was about an average. What with heavy rents, an income tax generally condemned as weighing unduly on the farming as compared with other classes, high wages, low price of live stock, and dull markets, there had seldom been a more gloomy prospect before the Scots farmer than in this year.

In the annals of agriculture of the time, one notes two things: that the cultivation of potatoes as a field crop was now taking a

[1] *Hansard*, ix. 1198. [2] *Memoirs*, i. 404.

great place in general discussion, and that the steady trend towards the economy of large farms was raising the old problem of what to do with the people displaced.

Of the state of manufacture and commerce during the year, there is scarcely a single record save what is to be gathered from the figures of foreign trade. The mover of the Address, in January of the next year, said: "So far from our means having diminished, the aggregate of our commerce exceeds that of the most prosperous period of our history"; but it is hard to say on what he based the statement, as imports, exports, and ship-building were all lower than in the previous year. Industry.

The Official values were: Foreign Trade.

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports - - - - - - - - - - | £26,734,425 |
| Exports of produce and manufactures of the United Kingdom - - - - - - | 23,391,214 |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise - | 7,673,726 |

The Real value of the exports was £37,245,877.

The vessels built and registered in the several ports of the empire (except Ireland) numbered 770, representing 68,000 tons.[1]

Besides those already mentioned, only two matters of economic interest came before Parliament, and only one passed into law.

It is difficult to believe that, at this time, when a landowner died, his freehold estate was not liable for the payment of his ordinary debts; the land passed to his heirs unhampered by what we would now consider only an obligation of common honesty. Before the fall of the Grenville government, Romilly, when Solicitor-General, brought in a Bill to alter this, by making the freehold estates of persons dying in debt assets for the payment of their simple contract debts. The measure appeared to be very well received; indeed, Perceval, then the leader of the opposition, spoke in its favour. But the Ministry was now breaking up; the chief men had something else to think of; Romilly's friends stayed away, and the enemies of the Bill made a point of attending; and the Bill was thrown out by 69 to 47. Canning, indeed, professed to see in it "an attempt to sacrifice the landed to the commercial interest, a dangerous attack upon aristocracy, and the beginning of something which might end like the French Revolution." Freehold estates and debts.

A few days later, Romilly brought in the same Bill, but now confining its operation to persons in trade. As he notes, many of

[1] *Hansard*, xiv. Append. xiv.

the objections which were made to the former Bill applied to this one, but not a single word was said in opposition to it at any stage, and it duly passed the House of Commons. "Country gentlemen," he wrote bitterly, "have no objection to tradesmen being made to pay their debts—and to the honour of men in trade, of whom there are a good many in the House, they too had no objection to it." Although not mentioned in *Hansard*, the Bill passed into law, under the somewhat suggestive title of "an Act for more effectually securing the payment of the Debts of Traders" (47 Geo. III. c. 74).[1]

**Limitation of Apprentices:**

We saw that, in 1805, the "excessive multiplication of apprentices" in the calico printing trade formed the subject of petitions presented to the House. In *Hansard*, we now find a Bill introduced by Sheridan, evidently intended to limit the number of apprentices, and, on 23rd April, at the second reading stage. While expressly disclaiming to give any countenance to combination, he appealed to the Report of the Committee to prove the necessity of the proposal. The case of the complainants was that, after having served seven years in an occupation confessedly injurious to health and rendering them unfit for any other occupation, the journeymen were turned loose upon the world, and supplanted by whole legions of apprentices from 12 to 14 years of age, working for wages of 4/-, 6/-, and 8/- per week, instead of 25/-. He instanced one house which had 50 apprentices and only 2 journeymen.

**—for.**

**—against.**

On the other hand, it was argued that, while, once a day, calico printing required "some degree of philosophy," and a considerable knowledge of chemistry, now, owing to the division of labour, a boy of fourteen could, in a few months, learn the whole business; that the occupation did not require more skill than any other handicraft trade; that, nevertheless, the average wages were over 25/-. To prevent masters taking more than a certain number of apprentices, it was urged, was against the first principle of civil liberty, and was a demand unparalleled. "The cry against numbers coming into the trade was as ridiculous," said Henry Erskine, "as if he or others, old journeymen in the profession of the law, should come to parliament to complain of the number of young men of talents that were educating for that profession,

[1] The evolution of the measure in Romilly's mind, and a full account of the progress of the Bill, are given in the *Diary*, ii. 173 *seq.* See also *Hansard*, viii. 561, 851 ; ix. 81 159.

and beg that the House would shut the door against them, for fear they should interfere with the old practitioners. . . . Nothing was more dangerous than combinations among journeymen; it was not now the tyranny of kings and great men that was to be apprehended so much as the tyranny of the many over the few: if the agricultural labourers were to combine in a similar manner, the country must rapidly fall to ruin." Sir Robert Peel, though on sick leave, returned to the House to give his decided opposition to a measure he considered so mischievous. On the one hand, the journeymen had brought the grievance on their own heads, thinking that, by combination, they were able to give the law to the masters; on the other, they were making masters think seriously about removing themselves and their capital to some other country where they would be free from such restrictions, for "a man of property could never bear the idea of receiving the law, in every instance, from his journeymen." A Bill like this would injure the whole trade, and, consequently, would be to the hurt of the journeymen themselves.

No action taken.

As usual, between the two parties, were those who thought that something must be done. Admitted that, in consequence of the division of labour, a boy could be taught to do the work in a very short time, here were loyal, dutiful, and faithful subjects, with the "kind of right derived from having served an apprenticeship," without employment and without bread. Some regulations were wanted to ensure such journeymen a subsistence, and prevent them sinking to common daily labourers at 9/- per week, or force them to become soldiers or sailors—trades for which, indeed, they were unfit. Horner, among others, opposed the Bill. and, finally, it was lost without a division.[1]

The "Hudson."

In this year, Fulton, who had watched Symington's experiments on the Forth and Clyde Canal, took over to America engines made by Boulton & Watt, and workers from Birmingham, and launched the first steamer on the Hudson, thus anticipating the "Comet" by some four years.

Gas.

Pall Mall saw the first attempt to light a city by means of the new illuminant. The introduction of gas extracted from coal was due to Robert Murdoch, a Scotsman employed in Boulton & Watt's, in 1798. He found that "the gas might be collected in reservoirs, purified, conveyed by pipes to a great distance from the furnace where it was generated, and affording

[1] *Hansard*, ix. 532 *seq.*

by its slow combustion a beautiful and steady light when allowed to escape through small orifices." Gas was first applied in Murdoch's manufactory at Soho. The Lyceum Theatre was lit by it in 1803. In 1805, Philips & Lee of Manchester used it in the lighting of their great cotton mill.[1] In 1807, a German, named Windsor, lighted Pall Mall from St. James's to Cockspur Street, experimentally, and raised a subscription of £50,000, the whole of which, however, was sunk without any pecuniary return. But it was not until three years later that the first company was formed which made the new lighting a commercial success, the Gas-light and Coke Company.

Jenner.

On a report of the Royal College of Physicians in July, the Government proposed a further grant of £10,000 to Jenner for his national services in checking that dreadful malady, the smallpox. One or two members objected on the ground that vaccination had not always succeeded, or, at anyrate, was "not infallible"; but, on a division, the grant was increased to £20,000.[2]

Literature.

In literature, one notes the appearance of Moore's *Melodies* and of Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*. But more stir was made by a remarkable series of political letters under the signature "Peter Plymley," attacking the Government in a very plain-spoken way for its attitude towards the Roman Catholic claims. Edition after edition was bought up as fast as it could be printed, and cheaper editions were called for by the Catholics for circulation in Ireland. The Letters were, as Lord Murray said, "after Pascal's, the most instructive piece of wisdom in the form of irony ever written." The Government made every effort to discover the author, but in vain. Yet many knew that there was only one pen in England which could "make the most irresistible wit and pleasantry the vehicle of the soundest and most unanswerable argument"—that of Sidney Smith.[3]

[1] M'Culloch, *Commercial Dictionary*, 602.

[2] *Hansard*, ix. 1007. Perceval made a curious use of Malthus: "An objection might be made to the utility of the discovery because it tended to increase population, but he would prefer the principle of practical humanity in preserving life where it existed to the encouragement of those checks mentioned by Mr. Malthus whereby population might be kept down."

[3] *Memoir*, i. 102. The Letters are printed in the third volume of his collected works.

MISCELLANEA.

Hall's *Travels in Scotland by an Unusual Route*, which appeared in 1807, contains the following sidelight on the standard of life in the north: "The people of Caithness are stunted creatures, with sharp visages indicative of both intelligence and want. I was at pains to enquire into the diet of these poor people. Breakfast, meal and bree—that is water gruel—not the substantial porridge of the Lowlanders. Dinner, meal and bree kail, or a kind of soup meagre, in which there is boiled, perhaps, some barley and grits, with some kail, and a scanty allowance of barley cakes. Supper, meal and bree; or, in place of this, sowens—a kind of frumarty made from the husks of grits or oatmeal. On Sundays or other festivals they have, after their meal and bree, some milk, or perhaps two eggs. If any farmer is reported to eat flesh, the laird considers this as a fraud on him: 'I must look sharp after this man—he has his farm too cheap. They tell me he eats flesh meat.'"

# CHAPTER X

## 1807. THE ORDERS IN COUNCIL

Berlin Decree.

In November of 1806, as we saw, Napoleon's Berlin Decree established a ring fence, practically round Europe, to prevent the entrance of British persons, British ships, and British goods, and another ring fence of blockade round the British Isles to prevent all ships, neutral or otherwise, from supplying them with goods. Possibly the most effectual policy for England would have been to treat the threat with contempt, especially as France had neither the power, nor, as it appeared, the intention to carry out the blockade.[1] By such a policy, she would at least have avoided all the subsequent trouble with neutral nations, and ranged them on her side.

But this was almost more than could be expected in the circumstances. France, by the assistance of neutrals, was enjoying as great advantages of trade as England had with her victorious navy. Neutral ships were bringing France all that she required, and England, all the time that she could not attack her enemy on land, seemed to be getting no advantage from her unchallenged supremacy at sea.

The first "mild retaliation."

Accordingly, the British Government decided to retaliate, and it did so by an Order in Council of 7th January, 1807.[2] The justification is stated in the preamble. France had violated the usages of war by prohibiting the commerce of all neutral nations with the British dominions, preventing such nations from trading with any other country in articles the growth, produce, or manu-

[1] America, said Grenville, had received the most satisfactory assurances from the French Government that its blockading decree would not be acted upon against American shipping (*Hansard*, x. 25).

[2] The full text is given in *Hansard*, x. 120; the substance in the *Annual Register*, 671. For the position and practice of neutrals before the Orders, see Levi, *History of British Commerce*, 105.

facture of these dominions, and, besides, declaring a blockade at a time when her fleets and those of her allies were confined within their own ports by the superior valour and discipline of the British navy. But in place of giving measure for measure, and prohibiting commerce between all neutral nations and France, as England might have done with right and with effect, this Order in Council merely stopped what might be called the "coasting trade" of France and her allies: "No vessel shall be permitted to trade from one port to another, both which ports shall belong to or be in the possession of France or her allies, or shall be so far under their control as that British vessels must not freely trade thereat."

Criticism.

This "mild and moderate measure" was formally dictated by consideration for the few neutral powers, Denmark, Austria, Portugal, and America, to whom it would cause less distress than more drastic measures. It did not pass, however, without criticism. Perceval pointed out that a coasting trade was not easily interrupted where vessels could run into the shelter of their own rivers or estuaries and slip along under the protection of shore batteries; that the measure only diverted traffic from sea to land and did not stop communication; that a much more effective way of retaliation would have been to shut France off from certain necessary commodities, as might easily have been done by preventing the importation of the colonial produce of France and Spain into France and the countries under her control. Other members at the time complained of the moderation of such retaliation, and condemned the excessive consideration shown to America, the principal neutral nation affected.

Napoleon's reply.

The immediate consequence was that Napoleon replied from Warsaw, in the same month, by ordering the confiscation of all British goods and colonial produce found in the Hanse towns. On this, the British blockade from the Elbe to Brest was renewed and made actual. The effect of the French Decrees was shown by August, September, and October, when they first came into full effect; English commerce was not only greatly restricted but almost paralysed, and the failure of the Order in Council thus far was fully acknowledged.

Disappointed in the expectation of neutral interposition,[1] the

[1] This expectation was avowed in a letter from Erskine to the President of the United States, of date 23rd February, 1808: "His Majesty has been induced hitherto to forbear . . . by the expectation that the governments

The second Orders.

British Government took stronger measures, and retaliated in kind by establishing a ring fence round France and her allies. On 11th November, after Russia had acceded to the Continental System, three Orders in Council were issued, declaring the dominions of His Majesty's enemies and of countries under their control to be in a state of blockade. With certain exceptions, all ports and places, in the colonies or otherwise, of countries at war with Great Britain, or from which the British flag was excluded, would henceforth be subject to the same restrictions, in point of trade and navigation, as if the same were actually blockaded by His Majesty's naval forces, and every vessel trading to or from such ports, together with all goods and merchandise on board, and all articles of the produce or manufacture of such countries or colonies, would be captured and condemned as prize to the captors. At the same time, desirous not to subject neutrals to any greater inconvenience than was absolutely necessary to counteract the designs of the enemy, and to "retaliate on his enemies themselves the consequences of their own violence," neutral vessels were allowed to import goods into Great Britain from countries which were not at peace and amity, subject to the usual payments and drawbacks, and such vessels were permitted to trade with hostile ports on condition of touching at some port in the United Kingdom, or at Gibraltar or Malta, and paying the taxes and customs imposed by the British Government.[1]

Why they were adopted.

As Canning explained in February to the American minister, Great Britain might have retaliated by the simple method of proclaiming France and her allies as in a state of blockade, and forbidding the entry of all goods into France, as France had done to England. Instead of this, the British Government adopted the "more mitigated measure of permitting intercourse under the

of the neutral states, who have been the objects of the French decrees, would have been awakened to a just sense of what they owe to their interests and to their own rights, and would have interposed with effect either to prevent the execution of the French decrees or to produce their abrogation." Disappointed in this, he can no longer refrain from such measures as, "by retorting on the enemy the inconveniences and evils produced by his injustice and violence, may afford the only remaining chance of putting an end to the system" (*Hansard*, xii. 243).

[1] As Lord Holland said on one occasion, the Orders fall short of that clearness which would enable one who ran to read. They are indeed so long and complicated, and contain so many supplementary regulations giving certain relaxations, that it is impossible to summarise them adequately. The full text is in *Hansard*, x. 134.

restraint and regulations of a duty *in transitu*."[1] Earl Bathurst, however, with more frankness, summed up the policy: "France, by her Decrees, resolved to abolish all trade with England; England said in return that France should then have no trade but with England."[2]

Concessions to America.

But the Orders contained several provisions and exceptions as regards the United States. Their direct intercourse with the colonies of the enemy was unrestrained, and flour, meal and all grain, tobacco, and other articles the produce of the soil of America, with the exception of cotton, were allowed to pass to the continent without payment of any duty, on condition of first touching at a British port. The exception of cotton was avowedly due to "the great extent to which France had pushed the manufacture of that article, and the consequent embarrassment upon her trade which a heavy impost upon cotton, as it passed from Great Britain to France, must naturally produce."[3]

Their purpose.

The purpose of these Orders in Council was not retaliation in the sense of mere revenge. It was, as explained in Parliament in February of the next year, "to make the enemy abandon the measures he had adopted, and to cause him to feel what otherwise must have been felt alone by this country";[4] and, in defending the prohibition of the export of Jesuits' Bark, Canning said that "the measure was not intended to promote the greatest possible degree of affliction among our enemies; God forbid! the object was to endeavour to bring the system acted upon by the enemy to an end."[5]

It will be noticed that these Orders refer to neutrals generally. But, as all the maritime powers of Europe, with the exception of Sweden, were then at war with England, their practical effect may be better understood by the following analysis given by our Board of Trade to American merchants:

[1] *Hansard*, xii. 341. The logic was good enough, but it did not need much perspicacity to see that it was one thing for France to declare a blockade which she was incapable of enforcing, and quite another for England which could and did enforce it; that a theoretical blockade of Great Britain did not inflict any damage on neutrals, while an actual blockade of the continent did.

[2] *Hansard*, xxi. 1053.

[3] Letter of Erskine to the President (*Hansard*, xii. 243).

[4] The Chancellor of the Exchequer (*Hansard*, x. 720). A good statement of the Government's point of view is given in the Advocate-General's speech of 18th February, 1808 (*Hansard*, x. 666).

[5] *Hansard*, x. 728.

Practical working as regards America.

"All trade directly from America to every port and country of Europe at war with Great Britain, or from which the British flag is excluded, is totally prohibited. The trade from America to the colonies of all nations remains unaltered by the present Orders. America may export the produce of her own country, but that of no other, directly to Sweden. With the above exception, all articles, whether of domestic or colonial produce, exported by America to Europe must be landed in England, and can only be re-exported on the payment of certain duties to the British Government—with an exception in favour of such articles as are actually the produce of the United States (cotton excepted). Any vessel, the cargo whereof shall be accompanied with certificates of French consuls abroad of its origin (called certificates of origin) shall, together with the cargo, be liable to seizure and condemnation."[1]

Anger of America.

America, however, was not in the least pacified by these concessions, and "never ceased to consider the Orders in Council as violating its rights and affecting most destructively its best interests, upon grounds wholly inadmissible both in principle and fact."[2] The ill-feeling was fanned into flame by the capture of an American frigate by the British in February, and this "outrage on American shipping" forms part of the Proclamation by the President on 1st July.[3]

The Milan Decrees

Napoleon's last answer was the arrogant Milan Decrees of November and December. The British dominions in all parts of the world were now declared in a state of blockade. Protesting against the "barbarous code adopted in London," he denationalised all ships that had touched at a British port; ordered that every ship coming into a French port should bring a certificate attesting that her cargo was not the produce either of British soil or British industry; and declared that any ship, of whatever nation, sailing from any British port or from countries occupied by British troops, was good prize if captured by a French war-ship or privateer.[4]

As was natural enough, both the French Decrees and the British Orders in Council caused deep resentment in America. From this time onward, it was expected that she would declare war, but no one could be sure whether it would be against France

[1] Baines' *History of the Wars*, ii. 56.
[2] Letter of Pinkney to Canning (*Hansard*, xii. 256).
[3] *Annual Register*, 718. [4] *Hansard*, x. 317, 318.

or England, and both nations played the game of trying to persuade her that "Codlin was the friend, not Short."

Attitude of America.

The expediency of the Orders may be doubted, but their "right" seems clear enough. As was abundantly pointed out, they proceeded on the authorised principle—the "rule of 1756"—of not suffering a neutral to enjoy that trade to an enemy's port in time of war which that enemy would not allow him in time of peace. The general policy of Europe was that the trade of every colony was monopolised by the mother country of that colony, and France, which gladly employed neutrals to carry for her in times of war, had rigidly reverted to monopoly in all times of peace (including that of Amiens), and shut the ports of her colonies to all vessels but her own. And the policy of England now was one of retaliation—of doing to France what France had tried to do to England. One can understand the position taken by America; it is difficult to sympathise with it. It was no more than a demand that her selfish interests should be allowed to override the interests of two nations who were flying at each other's throats—to carry on her business undisturbed across the battlefield—as a fact, to render assistance to the nation which, in this respect, was the weaker. No doubt it was a grievous thing to miss such a chance. While her two friends were playing at "Beggar my Neighbour," she had counted on amiably carrying for both, or at least on continuing to carry the colonial produce which France could not bring in her own ships. But could America in reason expect that England, powerless to touch her enemy on land, would consent not to strike by sea, and would look on while France got all the goods she wanted? America might, one would think, have had imagination enough to see that France was really in the position of a besieged city, and that England could not allow her to carry provisions through the enemy's lines.

Right of search.

But America had a more legitimate cause of complaint. For years, desertions from British war-ships to American vessels, where the pay was higher owing to the great increase of demand for sailors, had been a very real grievance to England. British commanders, it must be confessed, enforced the right of search for such deserters in a high-handed way, and America issued proclamations and protests against it in vain. But the attack of the *Leopard* on the *Chesapeake*, when only one English deserter was found, and three American sailors were impressed,

was more than any proud nation could stand. War appeared imminent. Jefferson, however, contented himself with putting the Non-Importation Act, suspended since January, into force in December, and issued an Act of Embargo on all vessels belonging to the United States, prohibiting them from departing from any of the ports, at the same time commanding that ships of all other nations should quit American harbours as soon as the Act was notified to them, with or without cargoes. By this Act, America shut herself off from the old world altogether, interdicting commerce alike with England and France—"choosing," as Napoleon put it, "to renounce the commerce of the ocean rather than to acknowledge its subjugation." Probably both nations had hoped to force America out of neutrality into alliance: as it was, America practically said, "A plague of both your houses," and till March, 1809, all legal trade with foreign countries ceased.[1]

The three ring fences.

Thus we have now the curious spectacle of three ring fences drawn round great quarters of the world to cut them off from foreign intercourse—the paper blockade of Britain, the real blockade of Europe, and the voluntary shutting up of the United States.

By this system of mutual blockades, there is no doubt that far greater injury was inflicted on France and her allies than on Great Britain, and one British purpose at least was served—the interests of consumers all over Europe were enlisted against the Continental System.[2]

[1] Simond, who left America at the end of 1809, and so was witness of the effect of the Embargo, thought that measure a most unwise one. In 1807, at the height of the restrictions by the Orders, the United States, he says, were exporting to the amount of £24 millions of merchandise, half of which was their own produce, and employing 1,397,000 tons of shipping, almost entirely American vessels; while the exportation of Great Britain in that year amounted only to £34 millions, and her whole merchant tonnage was actually somewhat less than America's. This enormous trade was a consequence of the war. "And yet, because other consequences of the war prevented some further increase, we chose to abandon the whole. If the United States had too much commerce, as I am inclined to think, why quarrel for a little more? If they had not enough, why abandon the whole?" (*Journal*, i. 245).

[2] A curious Circular Letter was addressed by the French Minister of the Interior to the Chamber of Commerce, in reference to the Order of Great Britain "that henceforth no ship shall navigate the seas without touching at its ports, without a tribute to its pretended sovereignty, and without receiving from it an ignominious licence." It suggested two ways of escaping the inconveniences thus caused: first, the power was now given of attacking every ship that renounced the independence of its national flag by a shameful submission to the British sovereignty—"such a resource will not prove ineffectual,

Evasions.

But in effect it was found impossible to carry out these various provisions. Europe could not do without British manufactures and the produce of British colonies. Bourienne tells how, when Napoleon ordered him to provide an immense supply of clothing for the armies in Prussia, he authorised a house in Hamburg, in spite of the Berlin Decree, to bring cloth and leather from England; otherwise the French troops would have perished from cold. A Birmingham manufacturer, examined before the Committee on the Orders in Council in 1812, believed that orders for the accoutrements and ornaments of Soult and his army had been executed at Birmingham. No small portion of the two million pairs of boots and cloaks for the Russian invasion came from England through Dantzig. What the various acts did was to change commercial intercourse into smuggling, enormously enhance price, and introduce a regular licensing system on both sides.

Licenses.

In 1807, 2,606 licenses were granted by Britain to neutral ships; in 1809, the number exceeded 15,000, and, in 1810, 18,000. It was asserted by an Admiralty judge in 1809, that the whole carrying trade of the world was being done under licenses, chiefly in hostile bottoms. Such ships carried two sets of papers; by one they were free from search by British cruisers; by the other they escaped confiscation on arrival. The system declined after 1810, when nearly 600 so-called neutrals were captured by Russia and their cargoes confiscated. Napoleon, too, from 1806, granted temporary licenses, giving certain French shippers the right to bring in prohibited goods—always excepting cloths, muslins, cotton goods, and hosiery—on a payment equal to a duty of 40 per cent. But, from 1809, his licenses were granted mainly for the export of French, Italian, German, or Prussian merchandise in ships of these countries. Afterwards the French license system degenerated into bribery and favouritism.[1]

and French commerce will not devote itself needlessly to that sort of warfare which never lets courage, dexterity, and decision go unrewarded"; second, in view of the privation of certain materials, more especially cotton and ingredients for dyeing cotton, France should have recourse, so far as possible, to hemp and flax, in order to provide occupation for those manufacturers who would no longer be employed with articles of cotton. It speaks of "the unhappy effects of habits and taste contracted for manufactures that would render France dependent on foreign countries"; suggests, in regard to dye stuffs, that they could dispense with "greater beauty"; confesses that sugar and coffee may become scarce and dear, but says that the great mass of the nation would not suffer from a temporary privation of these "articles of a secondary utility" (*Annual Register*, 781).

[1] J. H. Rose, *Cambridge Modern History*, ix. 375.

# CHAPTER XI

## 1808. THE BREAK IN THE CLOUDS

King's Speech.

WHEN Parliament assembled on 21st January, the Speech from the Throne referred to the intention of the enemy, as declared in the Treaty of Tilsit, to combine the powers of Europe in one general confederacy against Great Britain, and congratulated the nation on the successful execution of the "painful but necessary service," the taking of the Danish fleet, while the fleet of Portugal, "destined by France to be employed as an instrument of vengeance against Great Britain," had been secured from the grasp of France, and was now "conveying to its American dominions the hopes and fortunes of the Portuguese monarch." It was matter of regret that the Prussian and Austrian Ministers had demanded their passports without assigning any distinct cause for that proceeding. The King of Sweden, however, had resisted every attempt to induce him to abandon his alliance. The United States Commissioners, on 31st December, 1806, had signed a Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation, but the President had refused to ratify it. The cause of the refusal was not, however, "the unauthorised act of force committed against an American ship of war"—this was the capture of the *Chesapeake* by the *Leopard*—for which, indeed, His Majesty had offered immediate and spontaneous reparation, but an attempt to "connect, with the question which had arisen out of this act, pretensions inconsistent with the mercantile rights of Great Britain," which His Majesty was "determined never to admit." Notwithstanding all difficulties, the resources of the country had continued during the last year to be so abundant as to have produced, both from the permanent and temporary revenue, a receipt considerably larger than that of the preceding year.[1]

[1] *Hansard*, x. 1.

At the same time, the Orders in Council were laid before the House, and, for many weeks thereafter, what time was not devoted to the Roman Catholic petition, was taken up almost entirely with the Copenhagen Expedition and with the Orders. There was undoubtedly a large and powerful body of opinion which considered that the taking of the Danish Fleet was unnecessary and impolitic, and had dragged down England's dignity and good name among nations; and this was strengthened by the refusal of the Government to give the source of the information on which it had acted, or to publish the "secret articles" which, it was alleged, the Treaty of Tilsit contained. It was broadly hinted by many that there were no such articles; and the statement that the Danish navy had been found "oversupplied with every material of equipment, its magazines replete with stores ascertained to have been purchased by the agents of France," and that it had been "on the eve of being fitted out,"[1] was scarcely credited. But by others the act was strongly approved—and their view seemed confirmed by the violent transport of passion into which the news of the *coup de main* had thrown Napoleon—and was hailed as a sign that the Government had at last awakened to the danger of the situation.[2]

**The taking of the Danish Fleet criticised.**

The policy of the new Orders in Council was denounced as both futile and dangerous, particularly by the members of the late Government which had authorised the "mild retaliation" of the first Order. They professed themselves unable to understand either their meaning, import, object, or presumed effect, and urged the inconsistency of endeavouring to unite a belligerent measure with a commercial policy. "When the measure was censured as unproductive, they were told that it was not a measure of revenue, and yet, when the suffering manufacturer and the injured trader petitioned for relief against its

**The Orders denounced.**

[1] Earl of Galloway, in moving the Address (*Hansard* x. 7). The "secret articles" are given with much confidence by Thiers (*The Consulate and the Empire*, vii. 628)|

[2] Lord Palmerston, entering the House in 1806 at the age of twenty-two, as member for Horsham, made his first speech on this occasion, supporting the Government on the ground of the weakness of Denmark and the power of France to force her to become instrumental against Great Britain. Palmerston, then noticed as "serious and modest," was another of Dugald Stewart's training; he had boarded with him when a student at Edinburgh, and he acknowledged in after life that the foundation of whatever useful knowledge and habits of mind he possessed had been laid there.

ruinous operation, they were driven from the bar and told it was a measure of revenue."[1] What was the ultimate object of the new commercial code seemingly established by the joint consent of the governments of France and Great Britain, asked Lord Auckland, but mutual destruction? "It resembled the efforts of a set of persons whose chief object was to starve each other, and who, to obtain their respective gratification, were all pursuing the means of ensuring the inevitable starvation of themselves."[2] France had shut the door against our commerce and we had bolted it.[3] The Orders injured neutrals, said Lauderdale, much more than the enemy; they were, in his opinion, tantamount to a declaration of war against America.[4]

Night after night, the subject was brought up and the Orders condemned as inconsistent with the law of nations, unconstitutional, illogical, impolitic, unjust to neutrals, and, particularly, calculated to produce resentment, if not war, on the part of America. Indeed, war with America was spoken of as more than a possibility, and some very foolish things were said as to our ability to face with calmness a conflict with "that illiberal and prejudiced people."[5]

**Licenses criticised.**

The system of granting licenses by the Privy Council to persons engaged in foreign trade was also made the object of attack. Horner wanted to know to what extent it had been carried; whether the licenses were given impartially, or given to some and refused to others; by what rule and at what rate they were imposed; how much the receipts amounted to, etc. The fact was, he said, that almost the whole of the foreign trade was carried on by these licenses; fees originated in them which amounted to a direct impost and taxation on foreign commerce; and he pointed out that it was a serious breach of the constitution that the executive should thus take upon itself the levying of taxes.[6]

**The Government's optimism.**

The optimistic tone adopted by the Government is, in truth, a little surprising. Fifteen years before, France had begun a war against a confederacy of all Europe, headed by England, and the war she was now prosecuting was a confederacy of all Europe joined with her against England, which now stood alone.[7] With the exception of Sweden, all the powers of

[1] *Hansard*, x. 1240. [2] *Ibid.* 150. [3] *Ibid.* 328.
[4] *Annual Register*, 81. [5] *Hansard*, x. 9. [6] *Ibid.* 183.
[7] *Hansard*, x. 863.

Europe were prostrate at the feet of France, and obedient to the mandates of their domineering master.[1] Yet the mover of the Address could say that Great Britain exhibited the astonishing spectacle of a country which, at the end of fifteen years' war with a most powerful antagonist, had gained everything and lost nothing. Everywhere we had inflicted blows on our enemy; nowhere had we received a blow from him. Our commerce had flourished; our wealth had increased; our possessions had multiplied. Our navy, always formidable, had swept every hostile fleet from the face of the ocean. War, the curse of every other nation, had, to Great Britain, been a comparative blessing. Indeed, such was the extraordinary state of Europe that he apprehended very much that war was the only mode by which the advantages which we had acquired could be maintained.[2]

Popular discontent.

But, if the Government was confident, the people were becoming restless. Yorkshire operatives were asserting that they were starving from the effects, not only of the war but of the Orders in Council. In February and March, petitions began to be presented, some against the Orders,[3] others asking for the opening of negotiations for peace;[4] and, as the year went on, the demand, at first timid and tentative, then growing more outspoken, was heard in Parliament. Would there ever be a chance, it was asked, of negotiating on better terms with a conqueror who had marched from success to success and vowed to wage eternal war against this country? Windham thought we need not think of peace with honour: safety was all we could look for.

The policy adopted to retain control of the seas was now bringing about a very serious state of things. How the Orders were working out may be seen in three curious proposals of

[1] *Hansard*, x. 9. [2] Viscount Hamilton (*Hansard*, x. 33).

[3] A petition from the merchants and manufacturers of London interested in the trade with America put their particular difficulty very well. It represented that the value of British manufactures exported to America exceeded £10 millions, and that, as our consumption of American produce fell far short of that amount, the only means that America had of paying us must arise from the consumption of the produce of America in other countries, which the operation of the Orders in Council was bound to interrupt and in most cases totally destroy—that America, in short, was not only prevented buying from us, but was deprived of the means of paying her debts to us (*Hansard*, x. 1057).

[4] The Manchester petition—which contained a vivid description of the suffering in that city—was signed by 50,000 persons (*ibid.* 1182); that from Bolton by 30,000 (*ibid.* 693).

Ways and Means brought up in February by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The first was an export duty of 9d. per lb., to be imposed on all colonial cotton wool re-exported from Great Britain. (This assimilated colonial cotton wool with cotton wool the produce of neutral nations—particularly, of course, America.) He explained that his purpose was not to raise a revenue by this means, but to effect a prohibition of the export of the article "in the only way it could be effected." A few days later, however, in consequence of representations from various quarters, and without any explanation of how the impossible could now be effected, the proposal of an export duty was changed to direct prohibition of the article, and this was carried. The object, of course, was to secure the monopoly of the raw material to England, and put a further check on the growing cotton manufactures of France.[1]

**Export duty on colonial cotton**

**—on salt.**

The second was an export duty of 9d. per lb. on all salt sent to the continent of Europe, and of 3d. per lb. on salt sent to distant parts of the world (with the exception of the British colonies). The object here was revenue; salt was indispensable to the north of Europe, and, thanks to the measures of the enemy, Great Britain would have the monopoly of the salt supply to these quarters. It was pointed out that the monopoly was not perfect—that this heavy duty was likely to act as a protection to American salt—but the proposal was carried.

**Prohibition of quinine.**

The third made a much greater outcry. It was the prohibition of Jesuits' Bark—better known since as quinine. The avowed object of this was to put pressure on the enemy, whose armies were already suffering from the want of it; the price in Paris, it was said, had gone up from 10/- to 70/- per lb. The proposal was vehemently opposed on grounds of humanity. Whitbread called it "most detestable—a war upon the helpless, the sick, and the hospitals." Wilberforce said that it would unite the French people in a general union of hatred against the English nation.

[1] From the debates, one gathers that cotton was now grown in the Levant, in Italy, and in Sicily, and that Germany was endeavouring to obtain a supply from Turkey by land carriage. In the protest lodged by Lauderdale, King, and Albemarle, the curious argument is used that the usual exportation of cotton wool from America was 250,000 bags, amounting to some three millions sterling in value; that all this supply forced into British ports would reduce the value of that commodity to a trifle, and in the end discourage the growth of it to such an extent that, on the return of peace, when the demand for our cotton goods revived, this must deeply injure our manufactures by producing a deficiency in the supply and consequent dearness of the raw material (*Hansard*, x. 1351).

Grenville, answering the argument that, if the enemy resorted to an unauthorised mode of warfare, nothing remained for us but to follow his example, asked, with indignation, whether, if the enemy poisoned our streams, we were to retaliate by poisoning their fountains?—such, he thanked God, had never been our system of waging war. Canning admitted that a war of this kind was most detestable, but urged that no system had yet been devised of carrying on war without the injury falling on the innocent as well as on the guilty, and that retaliation of this sort was most likely to bring the system to an end. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, however, explained that the proposal did not mean absolute prohibition. As in the case of cotton wool, licenses might be granted in certain cases for exportation, and, in the case of Jesuits' Bark, France should be allowed to receive it on condition of taking at the same time other articles from this country—British colonial produce or British manufactures. On this footing, the Bill embodying the proposals passed, not, however, without a strong recorded dissent on the part of several of the Peers against it, as, *inter alia*, "repugnant to the principles of the Christian religion, contrary to humanity, and not justified by any practice of civilised nations."[1]

**Suffering in France.**

France and her allies, indeed, were beginning to suffer very materially from the want of colonial produce. Coffee, which in England was 90/- per cwt., was selling in France and Holland at £16, and sugar was £11—more than twice its ordinary price. In the Berlin *Telegraph* and the Paris *Moniteur* appeared offers of reward to those who would point out the best mode of supplying the place of the colonial articles most in request. "Chymists," we are told, "were invited to vie with each other in attempting to free the world from the tyranny of English commerce."[2] In England, on the other hand, the only complaint of this kind one hears of is a rise in the price of paper, due to a great deficiency in the usual import of rags from Germany and Italy, followed by a strong recommendation to "adopt a system of domestic economy in the article of rags," and to discontinue the use of ceremonious envelopes and thick writing paper.[3]

**Budget.**

Perceval's first Budget, already foreshadowed on 11th April, was presented on 1st June.[4] The total Supply asked for the

[1] *Hansard*, x. 689, 695, 727, 728, 730, 1321, 1324, 1326.
[2] *Scots Magazine*, 144, 222. [3] *Ibid.* 123, 205.
[4] *Hansard*, xi. 11, 764.

United Kingdom was £54,173,000, of which £5,868,000 formed the Irish proportion, making the sum to be defrayed by Great Britain £48,305,000. The chief items were as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Navy | £17,496,000 |
| Army | 19,439,000 |
| Ordnance | 4,534,000 |
| Miscellaneous | 1,750,000 |
| East India Company | 1,500,000 |
| Swedish subsidy | 1,100,000 |
| Vote of Credit | 2,500,000 |
| Interest on Exchequer Bills, 1808 | 1,400,000 |
| Exchequer Bills not funded | 4,024,000 |

In the Ways and Means, the chief items were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Duty on malt and pensions | £3,000,000 |
| Bank advances[1] | 3,500,000 |
| Estimated surplus of Consolidated Fund[2] | 3,500,000 |
| Surplus Ways and Means, 1807 | 2,253,000 |
| War taxes[3] | 20,000,000 |
| Lottery | 300,000 |
| Exchequer Bills of various kinds | 7,161,000 |

The loan for the year was £8,000,000 for the service of Great Britain (plus £2½ millions for Ireland), raised at £4 14/6¼ per cent. The new charge for interest, sinking fund, and management was provided by short annuities fallen in (£375,000), saving in management of debt (£65,000), increase upon assessed taxes (£120,000), and new stamp duties (£170,000).

In national finance, three interesting matters came before Parliament, the introduction of annuities as a means of extinguishing the national debt, the rise of the opposition to lotteries, and the taxing of aliens.

Annuities. (1) The exchange of either of the great three per cents. into life annuities, calculated according to the age of the individual, would tend, said the Chancellor of the Exchequer in May, to a more speedy and efficient reduction of the National Debt. It is curious to note that the proposal was denounced by Windham

[1] The directors of the Bank of England had now decided to offer this advance, without interest, during the war, on condition of the balances of public money, however large, being still left with them.

[2] The income of the Fund in 1807 had been £36,483,000, and the charge £32,643,000.

[3] He felt warranted in this estimate, as the duties to be levied under the Orders in Council were applicable to the war taxes.

and others as "immoral and highly injurious," holding out inducements to the lower classes of speculating in annuities, and to parents of "sacrificing the future interests of their children to their own immediate gratification." The Bill embodying the proposal passed into law during the session.[1]

(2) The first state lottery was in the time of Elizabeth— "erected by Her Majesty's order to the intent that such commodity as may chance to arise thereof, after the charge borne, may be converted towards the reparation of the havens and strength of the realm and towards such other good works." From that time, both state and private lotteries were drawn intermittently, except when the Government, in one of its periodical fits of virtue, suppressed them. About 1780 the state lotteries became a regular institution—a voluntary taxation, if not based upon, at least taking advantage of, the vices of the people. They were not, however, managed by the Government but farmed: the Chancellor of the Exchequer would hold a conference with a few leading stockbrokers, naming the sum to be drawn, and ask tenders for the concession.[2] Their evils, however, were widely recognised, and their abolition was intended before the war broke out. We find Romilly, in 1792, saying that "it seems understood that, after the present year, there are to be no more lotteries." In France, they had been abolished by the Constituent Assembly, as "destructive of the morals of the people," but they were revived by the Directory, and Romilly noted that, in 1802, one could hardly pass through a street in Paris without seeing a lottery office or meeting fellows offering lottery tickets for sale.[3] In March of the present year, Scrope Bernard asked for a Committee to enquire into the subject. The Chancellor of the Exchequer replied that "he was not prepared to say that, if it was the object of the mover to abolish the present system of lotteries, by which the public gained to the amount of £500,000 or £600,000 annually, he would consent to any such proposal." The Committee, however, was appointed, and, in June, put forth a very strong report against the state continuing any longer to derive a revenue from the encouragement of "a vice which it is the object of the law, in all other cases and at all other

Lottery.

[1] *Hansard*, xi. 261, and *Annual Register*, 223.

[2] John Ashton, *History of English Lotteries*, *passim*.

[3] *Diary*, ii. 3, 89.

times, most diligently to repress." "No mode of raising money appears to your Committee so burdensome, so pernicious, and so unproductive; no species of adventure is known where the chances are so great against the adventurer; none where the infatuation is more powerful, lasting, and destructive. In the lower classes of society the persons engaged, whether successful or unfortunate, are, generally speaking, either immediately or ultimately tempted to their ruin; and there is scarcely any condition of life so destitute and abandoned that its distresses have not been aggravated by this allurement to gaming held forth by the state." [1]

Exemptions to aliens.

(3) In the previous year, Bankes[2] had obtained a return of the exemptions from Property Tax granted to foreigners on dividends from the various public funds. In June, he brought up the policy of continuing such exemptions, but the question was refused consideration. The view put forward by Hibbert—which may be supposed to be the opinion of the time—was that, while the foreigner who resided in Great Britain or held land there was a "partner," the foreigner who only held property in the funds was merely a moneylender, who had contracted to lend on faith of exemption: to tax him would be "to surprise the foreign moneylender by a tax." [3]

Stoppage of distilleries.

The first subject of discussion after the Budget was the stoppage of the distilleries. In February, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had moved for the appointment of a Committee to enquire into the best means of granting relief to those engaged in the West Indian trade.[4] The Report, presented in April, bore that the Committee was appointed, in the first instance, to consider means of affording relief to the West India planters, who were suffering severe depression from low prices, due, it was alleged, to the closing of the continental market to sugar. The seriousness of the question arose from the fact that these islands sent us an income of between eight and nine millions sterling, which was spent in this country, yielded in customs and excise £5½ millions, employed a third of the shipping of Great Britain, and consumed British

[1] *Hansard*, x. 1269; xi. cxxxiii.

[2] Henry Bankes, member for Corff Castle; born 1757; educated at Westminster School and Cambridge; an industrious politician, who generally took part in all important debates but without making much impression on them; author of a *History of Rome*—"better his room than his company," said the wits of the day.

[3] *Hansard*, viii. 699; xi. 898. [4] *Ibid.* x. 712.

manufactures to the extent of £6 millions.[1] The remedy which suggested itself as most immediately effectual, by giving a new outlet for sugar, was to stop the distillation of spirits from grain here, and to force the distillers to use sugar and molasses instead.

A new issue.

But, in the course of this enquiry, said the Report, it became necessary to ask how far the agriculture of the country would be affected by such a restriction, and this investigation led to the knowledge of facts which established the wisdom and necessity of the restraints on distillers, quite apart from any consideration of the interests of the West Indian Islands.[2] The "facts" were, that "this country was generally dependent for a sufficient supply of corn and flour upon foreign countries, and that this supply was cut off, in the present state of Europe, without any prospect of a sufficient resource in the last year's crop of this country."[3] The annual importation of grain was 770,000 qrs.[4] The distilleries used some 470,000 qrs. To stop the distilleries using grain would enable the country to do without half the importation.

Arguments for

Whether it was that the majority of the Committee were resolved to do something for the planters, whatever the cost to home agriculture, or that they had really got into a panic at the possible effect of the war restrictions—particularly of the American embargo, under which, it was said, importation was now impossible—the logic used in support of the measure seems curious. The last harvest "was not sufficiently abundant to have a surplus fund that might be relied on"—witnesses were cited who said that it had actually been "short." The present prices were "far from low," and were rising. Prices of grain were higher than in the scarcity of 1795, and as high as in 1800, when the distilleries had last been prohibited.[5] The state of the West India Islands was, indeed, serious; it was a mischief which England had brought on them by the blockade, and was consequently bound to relieve: but the relief to the planters was merely, if happily, incidental —the primary object was to provide security against scarcity. "Though, fortunately, there was not at present a scarcity, yet, in the deficiency of means of supply, and the badness of the

[1] *Hansard*, xi. 496. [2] *Ibid.* 428. [3] *Ibid.* 429.

[4] The old fallacy of averages. The figure could be obtained only by counting in the excessive imports of 1800 and 1801.

[5] *Hansard*, xi. 447.

crop, under the apprehension of a possible scarcity, with the foreign ports closed against us, was it not wise to provide beforehand against these threatening appearances?"[1]

—against. Against this, it was asserted that there was no scarcity either in Scotland or in Ireland, and that in England the harvest had not been bad, except in barley; that the crop of wheat was in general good; that the price was low—it had remained steadily round about 70/- since the last harvest, although the foreign supply was cut off, until the Committee had commenced its enquiries, and the price had then risen from the distilleries rushing forward the supply of grain spirits in anticipation of a suspension; that in December, 1800, when the last suspension had taken place, the price of wheat had risen to 125/-, and the suspension had ceased in February, 1802, when the price had fallen to 75/6; that there was neither scarcity nor any ground of apprehension of a scarcity.[2]

The "facts." The "facts," it will be seen, varied according to the point to be proved. The debate was somewhat discreditable, but it only followed the example of the Committee, of which it was publicly said that it was impossible to determine from the evidence whether the object of its appointment was to relieve the sugar merchants, or to ascertain the character of last year's crops. In any case, it ought to have been clear that the remedy came too late to economise the harvest of the last year, and too early to forecast the harvest of the present—"it would have done one's heart good to hear the Chancellor of the Exchequer talking so eloquently about the scarcity of last year's potato crop when the season of using potatoes was so nearly past." As it happened, the only result of a Bill that was to prevent scarcity was to set the distillers working double tides for the two months allowed them, to send up the price of barley enormously, and to use up all the supply. If the intention of the framers of the Bill was to prevent bread-corn from being made into whiskey, in order that the labouring part of the community might be supplied with bread, the measure in view had the very contrary effect;

[1] *Hansard*, xi. 442.

[2] *Ibid.* 494, 531. William Spence, in a pamphlet much read at the time, *The Radical Cause of the Present Distresses of the West India Planters*, put forward the thesis that the West Indian colonies were growing more sugar and rum than the whole world could consume, and that the true remedy was to be found in diminishing the growth of sugar. "Mr. Spence is an acute man," said the *Edinburgh Review*, "but, unfortunately, quite ignorant of the principles of political economy."

"whether it will enable West India planters to pay their taxes or not is doubtful: it is certain that Scots farmers will not be enabled to pay theirs." The measure, indeed, fell with particular severity on Scotland, where barley and oats were the only grain cultivated over three-fourths of the country.[1]

Western anticipates.

Western took the opportunity to put forward a doctrine which was to come into prominence a few years later. He protested vehemently against any interference with the market for agricultural produce in the interests of a particular class.[2] He did, indeed, entertain apprehensions that, in the future, there might be a scarcity; but the remedy for that was, not to curtail the consumption of grain but to encourage the home grower, so that in time the country might supply itself from its own resources, without relying on foreign supply. The principles of the Corn Law of 1804 should be extended, and the foreign supply stopped at a much earlier point than a fall in price to 66/-.[3]

But in spite of the general hostility of the landed interest—"majorities so very small and the minority so respectable"—and of many petitions against the measure, the Bill was passed in July.[4]

Bank of Ireland.

The Charter of the Bank of Ireland was renewed to run until 1837, and its capital was increased from £1½ to £2½ millions—apparently for the purpose of enabling the directors to lend £1¼ millions to the Government. Considerable indignation was expressed that, by law, neither governor nor directors could be Roman Catholics.[5] Incidentally, the state of the Irish currency came up again, on a proposal from Huskisson to bring in a Bill to regulate and restrain the issue of promissory notes in England, forbidding the issue of any notes under one pound. Newport sympathised, speaking of the frauds formerly practised by the issuers of notes under one pound in Ireland. Parnell said that the issue of such notes was "owing to the deficiency of silver coinage," and urged upon the Government to apply the only efficient remedy, a new silver coinage.[6]

Irish currency.

[1] *Farmer's Magazine, passim.*

[2] The argument was repeated in many forms. To relieve the West Indies by the hurt of English agriculture, said a Protest from the Lords, was as new and injurious as would be a prohibition of the wearing of woollen cloth in times of cotton trade distress (*Hansard*, xi. 1115).

[3] *Hansard*, xi. 533, 822. [4] *Ibid.* 810.

[5] *Hansard*, xi. 700, 714, 720, 808, 901, 976, 996. [6] *Ibid.* 811.

Romilly's crusade.

The idea of reform in the Criminal Laws had not been heard of in the House of Commons for about sixty years when Romilly, on 18th May,[1] began the crusade resolved upon twenty-three years before, when he first went on circuit, and never relaxed till his untimely death. The great defect of the Criminal Code was that capital punishments were so frequent, and appointed for so many crimes. Since Beccaria had laid down the principle, it was generally acknowledged that it was the certainty much more than the severity of punishments which made them efficacious, but the converse of this would be a faithful description of the criminal law of England, where perhaps, out of twenty condemned to die, only one suffered death. As one judge had said, "the law exists indeed in theory, but has been almost abrogated in practice by the astuteness of judges, the humanity of juries, and the clemency of the crown."

Its scope.

Romilly's immediate purpose was to call attention to one class only of these severe statutes, those in which the capital part of the charge depended upon the amount of the property stolen. The severity, indeed, had arisen from no intention of the Legislature: the alteration in the value of money since their imposition was so great that, "while all the articles of life had been gradually for many years becoming dearer, the life of man had been growing cheaper and of less account." Such laws could not be executed. Juries were reduced to the alternative of violating their oath, or being mistakenly induced to think the dictates of humanity more binding on them—a most immoral "pious perjury." He proposed, then, to bring these various statutes one by one under the review of the House, and to begin with the most objectionable, the 8th of Elizabeth, c. 4, which made stealing privately from the person a capital offence—a statute so absurd and illogical that he had heard of but one single instance when an offender convicted under it suffered death. Another subject he meant to bring under the consideration of the House later was the question of compensation to persons tried and acquitted after having been long detained in prison; on suspicion of having committed a crime, a poor man might lie eight months or a year in jail, his family meanwhile sent to the workhouse.[2]

[1] *Hansard*, xi. 395.

[2] One member objected to the compensation proposals on the ground that he suspected that, in Ireland, many indolent persons would think it no hardship to be confined in a comfortable prison! (*Hansard*, xi. 400).

Meanwhile, he moved to bring in a Bill to repeal so much of the 8th of Elizabeth as took away benefit of clergy from persons convicted of stealing privately from the person of another.[1] The reasons on which he based the Bill were contained in the preamble—which, however, he was subsequently forced to omit—"Whereas the severity of penal laws hath not been found effectual for the prevention of crime; but, on the contrary, by increasing the difficulty of convicting offenders, in some cases affords them impunity, and in most cases renders their punishment extremely uncertain."[2] Privately Stealing Bill.

The objections raised to this very modest proposal are scarcely worth repeating now; they only show that, when any evil has lasted long enough, it will find defenders on the ground of its antiquity. The strangest argument urged, perhaps, was that the repeal of the law of Elizabeth would leave the offence a mere larceny, punishable with seven years' imprisonment only, which was one of the most objectionable punishments that could be inflicted, as it only rendered the criminal more hardened and depraved than ever, and then turned him loose on society![3] Leave was given to bring in the Bill in June; a clause was added by the Solicitor-General making the maximum punishment for such crimes transportation for life, the minimum, transportation for seven years;[4] and the Bill passed the House of Lords without a word being said against it. Objections.

Up till the middle of this year, the growing power, insolence, and aggression of Napoleon had met no check. The tranquillity of France under the new despotism was unbroken. There was neither disposition to cabal or party among the upper, nor sedition among the lower classes. The only discontent was caused by the conscription. In March, 1807, Napoleon had anticipated the conscription of 1808, placing the conscripts in training for six months within the boundaries of France. In January of 1808, by a decree of the Senate, 80,000 of the conscription of 1809, taken from among the lads born between 1st January, 1789, and 1st January, 1790, were placed at the disposal of the government—the motive asserted being "to carry war into England and Ireland and the deliverance of India." But these measures, though not popular, were agreed to by the people as necessary to external security and for "his glory." He now adopted his son-in-law, Eugene Beauharnois, as his son and the heir to the kingdom of Italy, placed Napoleon's progress.

[1] *Hansard*, xi. 395. [2] Romilly, ii. 251. [3] *Ibid.* 250. [4] *Hansard*, xi. 883.

his brother-in-law, Murat, on the throne of Naples, and, in May, annexed Rome, with all the ecclesiastical estates, to the French Empire. "Whereas," said his declaration, "the Temporal Sovereign of Rome has refused to make war against England, and whereas the assignment by Charlemagne, our illustrious predecessor, of the countries which formed the Holy See was for the good of Christianity, and not for that of the enemies of our Holy Religion," etc. In vain His Holiness protested, in a formal declaration, that his sacred character of Minister of Peace, his quality of Universal Pastor and Common Father of the faithful, and the holy laws of justice could never permit him to enter into a permanent system of war, and still less to declare war without any motive against the British Government, from which he had never received the slightest offence. Rome was annexed and the Pope put in confinement.[1]

"Buonaparté."

It is very significant that, in all the parliamentary debates, no one ever speaks of Napoleon with respect, or attaches any credit to his words or assurances. To England, he is a man "ready to break all laws, divine and human, to obtain his purpose." The British Government consistently refuses him the title of Emperor; he remains Buonaparte—generally "Buonaparté"—the "ruler of France," the "head of the French government," or rather "the person exercising the powers of government in France"—a successful and terrible soldier, not a monarch. When peace is urged—as when Whitbread says, "'to this complexion we must come at last'; we must finally treat with France"—it is always on the grounds of policy and expediency, but there is no hope of obtaining from him anything but the highest price he can exact. There is no regret for past kindness, no expectation that he will declare himself a king indeed. He is, in fact, despite his overwhelming influence, still an outsider from the courts of Europe, who has thrust himself into the circle and stands there with his hand on his sword hilt.

Revolution in Spain.

But, with the second part of the year, a new hope broke upon England. While Napoleon had been ostensibly acting against Portugal, he was quietly taking up positions of advantage in Spain; and when, in May, an insurrection broke out in Madrid, he summarily and treacherously settled the disputed succession of father and son, whom he had beguiled into his power, by setting

[1] The text of both declarations is given in the *Annual Register*, 314-5.

his own brother Joseph on the throne.[1] On 20th July, Joseph made his public entry into Madrid, and was proclaimed "amid sullen silence." He was glad to fly from it, however, on the 27th, "taking away everything of value belonging to the Crown."[2] But meantime the insurrection of the northern provinces had spread over Spain—the only instance, said Lord Liverpool,[3] since the French Revolution in which a whole people had taken up arms in their own defence, and the "last chance of salvation to the Continent of Europe."[4] The Juntas, or Provincial Governments, appealed to England, and sent delegates, who were received with acclamation. There was but one opinion in the country of the "bad and treacherous, the atrocious and cruel, invasion of the independence of the Spanish people."[5]

The break in the clouds.

On 15th June, Sheridan called attention to the state of Spain. "Since the first burst of the French Revolution, there never existed so happy an opportunity for Great Britain to strike a bold stroke for the rescue of the world." Ministers hitherto had been content with a petty policy—"going about filching sugar islands"—they should now resolve "fully and fairly to stand up for the salvation of Europe against the tyrant of the earth."

This is the first mention in Parliament of a break in the clouds, and Canning gave a sympathetic reply, saying that "it would never occur to us to consider that a state of war existed between Spain and Great Britain. . . . We shall proceed upon the principle that any nation in Europe that starts up with the determination to oppose a power which, whether professing insidious peace or declaring open war, is the common enemy of

[1] The Proclamation to the Spanish people in June begins: "Spaniards! after a long, lingering disease your nation has sunk into decay. I have seen your sufferings; I will relieve them. Your greatness makes a part of mine"; and goes on to say that their princes had ceded to him the rights to the Spanish crown, and that he would lay down these rights and "place your illustrious crown upon the head of one who resembles me" (*Annual Register*, 52).

[2] *Annual Register*, 79.

[3] Lord Hawkesbury had become the second Lord Liverpool by the death of his father ("old Mr. Jenkinson," the first Earl, who wrote the *Coins of the Realm*); born 1770; educated at Charterhouse and Oxford; travelled on the continent for three years, being present at the taking of the Bastille: entered the House of Commons for Appleby, 1790; known under courtesy title of Lord Hawkesbury since 1796; Master of the Mint, 1799; at Foreign Office, 1801; to House of Lords, 1803; at Home Office, 1804; leader of the Opposition to the Ministry of All the Talents, 1806; on its fall, returned to the Home Office and leadership of the Lords.

[4] *Hansard*, xii. 22-23. [5] *Ibid.* 12.

all nations, whatever may be the existing political relations of that nation with Great Britain, becomes instantly our essential ally."[1]

The Royal Speech in July spoke of the intention to support Spain.[2] Wilberforce, in the last speech of the session, only regretted that no communication had been made to Parliament which would have afforded a proper opportunity of giving a sort of authoritative publicity to the unanimous feeling of the nation that all that England could do for Spain and her cause would be done with zeal, promptitude and disinterestedness.[3]

The Peninsular war begins.

It was remembered that Pitt, not long before his death, had pointed to Spain as the only part in Europe where a stand might be made against Napoleon, and the Government, happily, seized the opportunity. Breaking with the old policy of sending supplies of arms and money only to our allies, and supported by the general sentiment of the people, Ministers made up their mind for the great intervention which was in the end to save Europe. A Treaty of Alliance was made with Spain, and 30,000 men were detailed for the Peninsula. On 20th July, Sir Arthur Wellesley, only fourth in command, and with but 9,000 men[4]—a force fitting out at Cork presumably for an expedition against South America—arrived at Corunna and ultimately at Mondego Bay, and the Peninsular War began.

Vimieiro.

On 21st August, Vimieiro, the first battle of the war, was fought. The victory was robbed of its results by the arrival of Sir Harry Burrard, the second in command, who forbade the pursuit which Wellesley had already begun. Junot, fearing that Lisbon would rise in revolt under him, proposed the evacuation of Portugal, and Dalrymple, the first in command, who had just come up, accepted it. By the Convention of Cintra, on 27th October, 25,000 French troops were embarked at British charges and in British ships, and sent back to France, laden with the

Cintra.

[1] *Hansard*, xi. 888 *seq.* [2] *Ibid.* 1141. [3] *Ibid.* 1144.

[4] It had been Castlereagh's intention to place the whole Spanish expedition under the command of the hero of Assaye, but the War Office put Dalrymple, Burrard, and Sir John Moore over him. That a force fitting out to attack the government of the King of Spain in his colonies should be taken to aid in restoring the King of Spain's authority in his home dominions, was, as Sir Herbert Maxwell says, "a strange piece of scene-shifting, opening, as it did, the long and tremendous drama of the Peninsular War" (*Creevey Papers*, i. 87).

spoil of palaces, museums, and convents—thus at least delivering Spain from the fear of a large force acting upon the British rear.

Indignation in England.

The Convention of Cintra produced a perfect roar of indignation in England. Wellesley was attacked with great rancour. The City of London sent an Address to the King expressing their grief and astonishment at the extraordinary and disgraceful Convention, begging him, in justice to the outraged feelings of a brave, injured, and indignant people whose blood had thus been expended, as well as to retrieve the wounded honour of their country and remove from its character so foul a stain in the eyes of Europe, to institute such an enquiry into that dishonourable and unprecedented transaction as would lead to the discovery and punishment of those by whose misconduct and incapacity the cause of the country and its allies had been so shamefully sacrificed. And they were very much incensed when His Majesty replied that he must remind them that it was inconsistent with the principles of British justice to pronounce judgment without previous investigation. The King's Speech, in next January, said that he "most deeply regretted the terms of the capitulation by an armistice and convention, of some of the articles of which His Majesty felt himself obliged formally to declare his disapprobation," and the three generals concerned were brought back to England to appear before a Board of military officers, who, however, reported that no blame attached to any of them.[1]

Sir John Moore.

After the Convention, Sir John Moore took command of the 30,000 British forces—"one of the best armies ever sent out of the country"—and, marching into Spain, reached Salamanca on 8th November, where he waited till December, when he was joined by British troops from Corunna. In November, Napoleon himself appeared on the scene in Spain,[2] crushed the feeble resistance of the Spanish armies, entered Madrid in December, and marched on the 22nd to intercept Moore.

It is significant of the new hope that the petitions for peace from the manufacturing towns, where there was considerable

[1] *Hansard*, xii. 3.

[2] On this occasion he addressed a manifesto to the Spanish nation, in which he promised them all manner of good things if they received Joseph for their king sincerely and with all their heart; if not, he would put the crown on his own head, treat them as a conquered province, and find another kingdom for his brother, "for God had given him both the inclination and the power to surmount all obstacles" (*Annual Register*, 235).

distress, at once came to an end. After May, England had again a large seaboard open to her commerce.

Overture for peace.

The espousal of the cause of Spain, however, had one ulterior result. In October, Alexander and Napoleon—whose empires, they said, were now united "beyond the reach of all change"—dispatched a joint note to George III., flattering themselves on the "grandeur and the sincerity of the step," inviting him to "listen to the voice of humanity" and make peace. As bases of the negotiations, they "saw no difficulty in adopting all those formerly proposed by England, namely, the *uti possidetis*."[1]

Canning at once demanded an immediate assurance that the emperors acknowledged the existing government of Spain as party to any negotiations, and the answers made further progress impossible. The Emperor of Russia could not admit the plenipotentiaries of the "Spanish insurgents"; moreover, he had already acknowledged the Emperor Joseph Napoleon. The French minister accompanied a similar reply by a rather ill-timed and undignified threat: "England will find herself under a strange mistake if, contrary to the experience of the past, she still entertains the idea of contending successfully upon the continent against the armies of France; what chance could she now have, especially as France was irrevocably united with Russia?" To this Canning answered that his Majesty learned, "with astonishment and regret, the expectation which appeared to have been entertained that he would consent to commence a negotiation for general peace by the previous abandonment of the cause of the Spanish nation and the legitimate monarchy of Spain, in deference to a usurpation which had no parallel in the history of the world," and could not conceive how his Imperial Majesty could have found himself compelled to acknowledge the right, assumed by France, to depose and imprison friendly sovereigns and forcibly to transfer to herself the allegiance of loyal and independent nations; and the negotiations went no further.[2] When

[1] It did not escape notice that Napoleon was always officially offering peace on terms which he knew England could not accept, and posing before his subjects as the victim of rejected addresses. "Peace was always in his mouth, war in his heart," said the *Annual Register*, bitterly. Indeed, he had the effrontery to speak of peace as his settled policy: "Our policy is invariable," he said in a message to the Senate in 1807: "we offered peace to England before the fourth coalition had shown itself; the same peace we offer to England still" (1807, 703).

[2] The papers relating to the negotiations are given in full in *Hansard*, xii. 93, and extracts are quoted in *Annual Register*, 351.

Parliament assembled, opinion for once was unanimous, not only that England could never think of abandoning her allies, but that the basis proposed, of the *uti possidetis*, was impossible and absurd.

America

As regards America, there was much feeling in this country, rightly or wrongly, that she was not playing the game, thinking almost altogether of the harm done to her commerce by the restrictions, and little of the gravity of the international struggle and of the desperate position in which England was placed. Neutrality, as Lord Howick had once to remind the Danish Chargé d'Affaires, does not consist in taking advantage. The various exemptions, mitigating the harshness of the Orders as regards the United States, amply showed that we were anxious to do them as little injury as seemed compatible with our own safety. But even Grenville confessed that the American government had, on more than one occasion, manifested a considerable partiality to the side of France.[1] British ships of war, for instance, had been interdicted from ports of the United States, while French ships were allowed free entry—an act amounting almost to direct hostility.[2]

makes a proposal.

In August, however, a proposition was made by America to suspend the Embargo with respect to England, if England would rescind the Orders in Council. "If France should adhere to maxims and conduct derogatory to the neutral rights of the United States," said the note, "the Embargo, continuing as to her, will take the place of your Orders, and lead, with an efficacy not merely equal to theirs but probably much greater, to all the consequences that ought to result from them."

Canning replied, courteously but firmly, that the Embargo, being a measure of impartial hostility to both belligerents, appeared to England manifestly unjust, as, according to every

[1] *Hansard*, xii. 18. The partiality, it should be remembered, was not quite unreasonable. In their struggle for independence France had recognised them as a nation, lent them money, and supplied ships and troops. And, up till the peace of Amiens at least, it was possible for Americans to think of the war as a vindication of the republican principle for which they had fought—when Washington issued a declaration of neutrality in 1793, he could not have been more savagely reviled if he had proclaimed a monarchy (*Cambridge Modern History*, vii. 318).

[2] *Ibid.* 261. We learn, however, from a dispatch of Canning that, some time previous to January, 1809, the interdict was extended to French ships of war—the first symptom of impartiality, he added, towards both belligerents which had been publicly manifested by the American government (*Hansard*, xiv. 882).

principle of justice, redress ought to have been first sought from the party originating the wrong. . . . "If, as has more generally been represented by the government of the United States, the Embargo is only to be considered as an innocent municipal regulation which affects none but the United States themselves, and with which no foreign state has any concern, His Majesty does not conceive that he has the right or the pretension to make any complaint of it, and he has made none." But if so, the offer of its repeal could not in all reason be regarded as a *quid pro quo* for the surrender by His Majesty of his right of retaliation against his enemies.[1]

The Opposition, however, thought that a great opportunity had been lost, and roundly accused the Government of an intention to force matters to a rupture; even Grenville abandoned his old fairness and showed all the pettiness of a party leader.

Agriculture. At home, the harvest of 1808 was even worse than that of 1807. "Eight months of stormy winter," with hurricanes and heavy snow in the beginning of the year, were suddenly succeeded by an extremely hot summer—"not a single cold day from 1st May to 1st October." But the flattering prospects were wrecked by rains and fogs in autumn, and the crop as a whole was less than an average. Wheat generally was a failure, deficient by a fourth in quantity and of poor quality; barley and oats were but average; peas and beans short; turnips defective; potatoes only were abundant in every quarter. The Board of Agriculture average for the year was 81/4, yet the import of wheat was very small, amounting to only 85,000 quarters. In Scotland, the rage for farms was as great as ever, and rents continued high—"farmers, like other good Christians, forgetting the things that are behind, still look forward with hope; nothing can deter or discourage them." In some few places in the vicinity of towns, wages fell, owing to the failure of manufactures and the return of labour to the fields; in most, they remained steady after their six years' rise. Among the farmers' clubs in Scotland, a strong feeling began to be expressed against the Property Tax; unlike many, they fully acknowledged the propriety of the tax, but they spoke bitterly against the mode of assessment according to rental paid without the right to disprove the assessment—especially where they held on long leases entered on before the tax had been imposed or while it was thought only a temporary

[1] *Hansard*, xii. 259.

impost. The profits of farmers, they contended, were at least as fluctuating as those of manufacturers, and, to tax them according to rental paid, was not only to assume that there always were profits, but that profits were fixed during the currency of their leases.[1]

Trade generally.

Of the state of manufactures and trade generally, the only thing I have been able to find in the records of the year—apart from the evidence of suffering and low wages given by the Manchester and Oldham riots—is the statement that, in the vicinity of Glasgow, agricultural wages had gone down, largely because the stagnation in manufactures and in foreign trade was sending men back to the land: "the present prospect of the industrial classes of people in every branch of business is gloomy beyond that of any former period."[2]

Rise of prices

But in another quarter we have more information. Tooke's researches show that, during this year, owing to the prospect of scarcity of many raw materials and naval stores by the shutting up of Europe and America, there was a great speculative rise in prices. Hemp rose from £58 per ton in the summer of 1807 to £118 in the course of 1808, and flax from £68 to £142. Memel timber, which during 1806 and 1807 had varied from 73/- to 170/- per load, reached 340/-, and deals and other woods rose in proportion. Baltic linseed rose from 43/- to 150/- per quarter; Russian tallow from 53/- to 112/- per cwt. Spanish wool rose, from 6/7 and 6/9, to 22/- and 26/- for the Leonessa, and from 2/6 and 5/- to 13/- and 18/- for Seville wools. Piedmont thrown silk rose from 30/- and 47/- to 96/- and 112/-; China raw silk from 19/- and 22/- to 33/- and 45/-; and Bengal from 25/- and 33/- to 52/- and 85/-. Georgia cotton rose from 9d. and 1/- per lb. to 2/- and 2/6, and Virginian tobacco from 4d. and 8d. to 1/4 and 2/-. At the same time, there was a great increase in the number of joint-stock companies, to take advantage of the speculative spirit now awakened. This had proceeded to a considerable extent in 1807, but reached its height in 1808.

In all this, of course, there was very little to help manufac-

[1] *Farmer's Magazine*, 1808, *passim*. "According to the Acts now in force, the farmer may lose every head and tail of his live stock by disease—may have his house and furniture burned—his whole crop blasted and destroyed by the elements—and yet he is considered as enjoying an income not less than one-half of the rent covenanted to be paid to his landlord" (*ibid.* 1809, 115).

[2] *Farmer's Magazine*, 129.

Speculation in South America.

tures and employment generally. But there was one set of circumstances which did give a stimulus for the moment to exports —the opening of the whole eastern coast of South America to British trade. The Portuguese seat of government was now in Brazil. England was in alliance with Spain. With the revolted Spanish colonies we had always been on good terms. The popular imagination, already excited by Popham's eight waggon-loads of dollars, took fire over the unknown possibilities of this new world. The extent and the misdirections of it have been commemorated by M'Culloch: "Speculation was then carried beyond the boundaries within which gambling is usually confined, and was pushed to an extent and into channels that could hardly have been deemed practicable. We are informed by Mr. Mawe, an intelligent traveller resident at Rio Janeiro at the period in question, that more Manchester goods were sent out in the course of a few weeks than had been consumed in the twenty years preceding; and the quantity of English goods of all sorts poured into the city was so very great that warehouses could not be provided sufficient to contain them, and that the most valuable merchandise was actually exposed for weeks on the beach to the weather and to every sort of depredation! But the folly and ignorance of those who had crowded into this speculation was still more strikingly evinced in the selection of the articles sent to South America. Elegant services of cut-glass and china were offered to persons whose most splendid drinking-vessels consisted of a horn or the shell of a cocoa nut: tools were sent out having a hammer on the one side and a hatchet on the other, as if the inhabitants had had nothing more to do than to break the first stone they met with, and then cut the gold and diamonds from it: and some speculators actually went so far as to send out *skates* to Rio Janeiro!"[1]

Foreign trade.

The imports were almost the same as in the previous year; the exports, thanks to this short-lived stimulus, were higher by a million and a quarter; only the heavy fall of nearly two million in re-exports showed the effect of the Continental System.

The Official values were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports | £26,795,540 |
| Exports of produce and manufactures of the United Kingdom | 24,611,215 |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise | 5,837,821 |

[1] *Principles of Political Economy*, 2nd edition, 329.

The Real value of the exports was £37,275,102.

But the Government apparently was content that things were not a great deal worse: "Notwithstanding the measures resorted to by the enemy, for the purpose of destroying the commerce and resources of the kingdom," it was said at the opening of Parliament in the January following, "the public revenue has continued in a state of progressive improvement. Our commerce has increased, and our revenues increased in proportion. It is proved that neither Decrees nor Embargoes can materially affect our trade." [1]

In shipbuilding, however, there was a heavy decline. The vessels built and registered in the several ports of the empire (except Ireland) numbered 568, as compared with 770, representing 57,140 tons, as compared with 68,000 tons.[2]

Cotton weavers.

The only industrial matter brought directly before Parliament related to the wages of journeymen cotton weavers. In May, leave was asked to bring in a Bill to prevent the excessive depression of wages of persons employed in the weaving of cotton. The mover (Rose) was induced to this step, "not from a conviction of the propriety of fixing the minimum of wages," but in compliance with the wishes of many now suffering peculiar hardships with patience and resolution, and the measure, he said, was proposed with the consent of the masters as well as of the journeymen. The proposal was received with much sympathy, but Giddy urged that the distress was due, not to wages being now too low, but to the fact that they were at one time too high, and that more had adopted the trade than there was demand for: a minimum wage would induce ignorant parents to bring up their children in this line, and still further overstock the market. Sir Robert Peel strangely disapproved, and said the distress was due, not to the oppression of the masters, but to the shutting up of the foreign markets: such a measure would only lead to the discharge of workers other than the best. In the end, the proposal was withdrawn,[3] but for several weeks there were riots and outrages in Manchester among the weavers, and the military were on duty night and day. In June, the weavers at Rochdale also began rioting, broke into the prison where several of their confederates had been confined, and set fire to the building. After that, they seem to have resumed work quietly again.

[1] *Hansard*, xii. 3, 4, 6. [2] *Ibid.* xvii. Append. xiv.
[3] *Ibid.* xi. 425.

Literature. In economic literature, there appeared James Mill's *Commerce defended; an Answer to the Arguments by which Mr. Spence, Mr. Cobbett, and others have attempted to prove that Commerce is not a source of National Wealth*, and Torrens' *The Economists refuted, or An Enquiry into the Nature and Extent of the Benefits conferred by Trade and Commerce.* In general literature, the event of the year was the publication of *Marmion*, in a splendid quarto at the price of a guinea and a half. The 2,000 copies of this first edition were disposed of in a month, when a second of 3,000 copies in 8vo. was sent to press.

MISCELLANEA.

In 1808, we read of chain cables being introduced in place of cordage.

In June, Creevey brought forward a motion against the King's proposed encroachments on Hyde Park. A plan, he said, was in contemplation for devoting a great part of Hyde Park to private edifices. At present, it extended only to eight houses—parallel to Park Lane—but, if building was once begun, he was convinced that it would go on. He would not deny that the King had the right of doing so, but whoever had advised His Majesty to that effect had done a very ungracious thing. Creevey was strongly backed by Windham and Sheridan, but the Chancellor of the Exchequer would give no assurance that the project would be delayed, and the motion was lost.[1]

[1] *Hansard*, xi. 1122.

# CHAPTER XII

## 1809. THE SECOND HUMBLING OF AUSTRIA

THE Speech from the Throne, on 19th January, asserted the King's perfect confidence that Parliament was prepared cordially to prosecute a war which there was no hope of terminating safely and honourably except through vigorous and persevering exertion. A Treaty of Alliance had been drawn up with Spain, and, so long as the people of Spain should remain true to themselves, His Majesty would continue to them his most strenuous assistance and support. King's Speech.

The debates, however, at once showed that, great as was the sympathy with Spain, there was nothing like agreement on the policy that the Peninsula was the place "where the great effort should be made,"[1] and that there was a widespread apprehension that England had risked too much in taking up her cause single-handed. This feeling was strengthened by the loss of Sir John Moore. It will be remembered that, late in October, Moore, in command of "the greatest British army that had ever been employed upon the continent of Europe,"[2] misled by the enthusiasm of the Spanish patriots, and counting on the support of the Spanish armies, marched from Lisbon into the heart of Spain, and was met at Salamanca by a detachment landed at Corunna under Sir David Baird. But, meanwhile, the apathy and cowardice—even treachery—of the Spaniards had declared Corunna

[1] "There was nothing which could justify," said Grenville, "our sending into the interior of Spain 30,000 and 40,000 British men to meet an army of 500,000." "A hopeless contest," he called it, "where success could not be the reward of valour, and where a safe retreat was all that the most brilliant exertion could reasonably be expected to effect." (*Hansard*, xii. 12, 21). "We are expecting every day the destruction of the English army by Bonaparte," wrote Sydney Smith in December of 1808.

[2] *Hansard*, xii. 1064.

themselves: their armies were scattered like sheep before the French veterans; and Napoleon himself in overwhelming force was within striking distance. Realising this, Moore showed his greatness by countermanding the advance he had already ordered, retreated to the coast, and fell at Corunna covering the embarkation of the British troops.[1]

Whig policy

Much of the session, accordingly, was taken up in debating the conduct of affairs in Spain. It was at this point that the Whig party made the wrong turning which made them so unpopular for many a year. "I have never ceased to lament," wrote Horner in 1813, "that our party then took a course so inconsistent with the true Whig principles of continental policy, and so revolting to the popular feelings of the country, and to every true feeling for the liberties and independence of mankind."[2]

The old policy and the new were put succinctly by Grenville in a speech of 1810. "The true policy of this country under its present circumstances is the principle of husbanding our resources, and acting upon a system of home defence. In the early period of the last war, the system of policy which then appeared to be the best was essentially different. It was undoubtedly then of importance to endeavour to raise up a determined spirit in Europe, capable of meeting and counteracting the power of France. After, however, France had defeated and broken the confederacy against her, the scene of continental co-operation closed, and our force became no longer available to any useful purpose upon the continent. The same causes operated in the present war; and the late ministers, acting upon the system of policy which they thought the most advisable, determined to concentrate all the means and resources of the country for the purpose of placing her in a position in which we might say to France, 'our situation is such that we are completely defended against any domestic insult, whilst our

[1] A few weeks later, Crabb Robinson read in the French papers, "a flaming address from the inhabitants of Corunna, gratefully thanking the French general for having emancipated them from their oppressors and tyrants, the English"—the very first signatory being a member of the Junta who had implored Robinson to take him on board a transport, saying that he would die rather than submit to the French (*Diary*, i. 286). Yet it was only in July that Robinson, then acting as *Times* correspondent, was struck with the enthusiastic feeling for the English in every province of Spain where the French were not (*ibid.* 270).

[2] *Memoirs*, ii. 158. Crabb Robinson also says that the Whigs by nothing so estranged him from their party as by their endeavour to force the English Government to abandon the Spanish patriots (*Diary*, i. 278).

naval superiority will effectually defeat the execution of your designs against our external interests.' For this purpose a plan was devised adapted to our financial system, under the operation of which we might have gone on to the end of time, still preserving our commanding attitude, and ever and invariably maintaining our ample means of defence. His Majesty's present ministers came into office, and then the system was immediately changed." [1]

Portugal. In the end Parliament endorsed the new policy, and decided to continue the war, although Oporto was in the hands of Soult, and French armies were pouring into Portugal. On 22nd April, Wellesley, still Secretary for Ireland, landed at Lisbon as Commander-in-chief of some 30,000 men, superseding Cradock who had been left in command of the British forces in that city.

Duke of York. The attention of Parliament for some time was directed, to the exclusion almost of everything else, to the scandal which seemed to implicate the Duke of York in the selling of army offices by Mrs. Clarke. Over 1,300 pages of *Hansard*, from 1st February to 20th March, are taken up with the sordid details of the Enquiry. On 20th March, the Duke resigned, and, in train of this, came a vigorous attempt to get rid of many grave abuses connected with army and East India appointments. The request for a Committee to enquire into corrupt practices in the disposal of offices in any department of the State was refused—for one reason, that it would be taking for granted, without any proof whatever, that there were abuses.[2]

Sale of offices. But a Sale of Offices Prevention Bill was brought in by Perceval, intended to check such scandals. On the second reading, the question was raised why no mention was made in it of the greatest abuse of all, the sale of seats in Parliament. "It was matter of public notoriety," said Lord Folkestone, "that, previous to every election, an office was opened in the Treasury for the purchase of seats in Parliament, which again were sold to others, of more or less interest or ability, who again, in proportion to their possession of those qualities, paid a higher or lower price for their seats." [3] Creevey confirmed the charge, stating that "seats had been notoriously bought and sold by the Treasury. . . . The Treasury not only openly bought and sold these seats, but they kept, in a great degree, the monopoly of that market.

[1] *Hansard*, xv. 13. [2] Ponsonby, *Hansard*, xiv. 61.
[3] *Hansard*, xiv. 115.

. . . It was absolute nonsense and delusion on the public for the House to spend their time in considering abuses in the Commissioners of the Lottery and every other minor department, when they knew, and the public knew, that the greatest of all abuses was constantly practised by every Secretary of the Treasury, in buying and selling seats in Parliament. To talk of a dissolution of Parliament as an 'appeal to the people' was mere mockery and imposition. It was perfectly well known that a dissolution of Parliament was not an appeal to the people, but to the Treasury."[1]

The only answer attempted by the Government was that the practice was "common to all administrations," and a promise was given that, if a proposal to remedy the abuse were brought forward, Perceval would consider whether the provision was capable of being applied effectually to prevent it.[2] Following this up in May, Curwen introduced the question of Parliamentary Reform[3] —the Reform which would have been obtained long before "had Mr. Pitt maintained his consistency"—and got leave to bring in a Bill to better secure the independence and purity of Parliament by preventing the procuring or obtaining of seats by corrupt practices, and likewise more effectually to prevent bribery. He brought forward cases where, in a former Parliament, a mercantile house in the city had bought four seats—whether to vend retail, or to dispose of to some special customer, the speaker was not informed—and where a lady had been offered £10,000, and subsequently £12,000, as regards two seats in a constituency where her influence was supposed to be considerable.[4] Windham as usual opposed the slightest encouragement being given to any proposal for Parliamentary Reform; the House should strenuously oppose it as "dangerous and mad."[5] Leave, however, was given to prepare and bring in a Bill.

Curwen's Bill.

When the Bill reached the Committee stage on 1st June, the Speaker made a remarkable speech beginning: "The question

[1] *Hansard*, xiv. 116. [2] *Ibid.* 118.

[3] *Ibid.* 353. J. C. Curwen was member for Carlisle. The only information that I can glean about him is that he was a gentleman farmer, who conducted noteworthy experiments in agriculture, much esteemed as President of the celebrated Workington Agricultural Society, and severely handled by the *Farmer's Magazine* in 1810 for carrying in his corn on the Sabbath Day—a practice "against the laws of God, the welfare of the State, and the best interests of mankind."

[4] *Hansard*, xiv. 357. [5] *Ibid.* 368.

now before the House is no less than this—whether the seats in the House shall be henceforth publicly saleable—a proposition at the sound of which our ancestors would have started with indignation; but a practice which, in these days and within these walls, in utter oblivion of every former maxim and feeling of Parliament, has been avowed and justified."[1]

The Bill finally passed under the title: "An Act for better securing the Independence and Purity of Parliament by preventing the procuring or obtaining of Seats in Parliament by corrupt practices";[2] but, during its course, it was so mutilated and changed—only three and a half lines of the original draft being retained[3]—that several of its friends (among others Romilly) refused to vote for it, as "likely to concentrate corruption" rather than remedy it. Tierney spoke of "the zeal and sincerity the Ministers had evinced in setting themselves in opposition to every wholesome provision in it." Whitbread called the Bill as amended "scandalous and disgraceful." Curwen himself complained that "the most material points were negatived, and that the disposition of the House was not friendly to the principle of the measure."[4] And Lord Folkestone got twenty-eight supporters for a satirical amendment that the title should be changed to "A Bill for more effectually preventing the Sale of Seats in Parliament for Money, and for promoting a Monopoly thereof to the Treasury by means of Patronage."[5]

Orders in Council.

The other object of interest in the first few months of the session was the operation of the Orders in Council. On 17th February, Grenville made a strong representation that the recent offer of the United States, to rescind the Embargo on condition of our rescinding the Orders in Council, should even now be accepted. He dwelt on the practical insult, involved in trying to deprive the United States of the reality of their independence, by forcing them to send their goods into this country and pay duty on them—as if they were still British colonists. He showed, moreover, the futility of the Orders from the commercial point of view, as having, up to the 5th of January, produced "the enormous sum of £31,000"; and asserted that the injury to our commerce done by these Orders was shown by a decrease of over £5,000,000 sterling in the annual imports, and by the alarming diminution in the import of wool, raw materials, cotton, and flax seed. He was

[1] *Hansard*, xiv. 837. [2] *Hansard*, xiv.; Append. lxxvi.
[3] *Ibid.* 986. [4] *Ibid.* 927. [5] *Ibid.* 1015.

seconded by an imposing minority of forty-five Peers; but the Government remained firm in their determination to continue the Orders in Council till the French Decrees should be withdrawn.[1]

Whitbread's attack.

Whitbread again brought up the matter on 6th March.[2] It had been claimed, he said, that the benefits of adopting the Orders in Council would be both numerous and various. Great Britain was to become the emporium of the world. Our manufacturers were to flourish by the monopoly of the raw materials. Our revenue was to be increased by the duties of transit. Europe would be deprived of colonial produce. France was to be forced to rescind her Decrees. As a fact, there was a diminution in imports and exports of eleven millions sterling. Previous to the Orders, Great Britain imported from America thirty-two million lbs. of cotton wool: now from Asia and the Portuguese settlements in South America were imported five millions—"a deficiency of twenty-seven million lbs. in an article essential to our prosperity." In spite of the exclusion of colonial produce, Napoleon had been able, "by commercial processes which surprise us, to supply the wants of the numerous legions which were marched from such different parts of Europe." "If you wish to ascertain the extent of the injury inflicted upon this country by these Orders, reflect upon the condition of the extensive town of Manchester, where the poor rates have risen within the last year from £24,000 to £40,000 in consequence of the number of manufacturers thrown out of bread; where, of the numerous cotton mills which were formerly employed, thirty-two are now idle, and six only at work."

Whitbread's proposal of an address to the King was, of course, negatived, but one effect of the discussion was an Order in Council, issued in April, which partly revoked the former Orders by opening the trade with the north of Europe, and substituting a blockade of limited extent, including France proper and Holland, the coast of Germany as far north as the Ems, and that part of Italy which lies between Pesaro and Orbitello.[3]

America.

The irritation of the United States, and their favouring of France, became more marked in March, when Madison, whose views "were not supposed to be favourable to the interests of this country," succeeded Jefferson as President. War again seemed to be imminent. Since the passing of the Embargo Act in December,

[1] *Hansard*, xi. 771. [2] *Ibid.* xii. 1160.
[3] *Hansard*, xxi. 1042, 1098.

1807, all trade with foreign countries had ceased. On France and England the Act had produced no effect, while its effect on America would have been ruinous if it had not been openly evaded. A long series of supplementary Acts was issued, designed to enforce the Embargo. Finally, came a Force Act, entitling the President to use the army and navy to execute the law. Against this, the commercial part of the community rose in revolt; and, on 1st March, the Embargo was lifted.[1] It was replaced by another Non-intercourse Act, forbidding commercial intercourse either with Great Britain or with France, including the colonies and dependencies of both countries. But, under the Act, power was given to the President to suspend its operation against whichever country should revoke or modify its edicts against American trade; and David Erskine, the English Minister, at once opened negotiations to suspend the Orders in Council on and after 10th June. On that date, hundreds of vessels set sail from America, only to learn that Erskine's agreement was disavowed by his Government, and the Non-intercourse Act was at once renewed by proclamation.[2] Happily, it was provided that no loss should accrue to those Americans who had proceeded to England in confidence of the treaty till after a certain interval. Regarding this, the King's Speech in the following January said that intercourse between His Majesty's Minister in America and the Government of the United States had been "suddenly and unexpectedly interrupted," but that both nations were "desirous of maintaining friendly relations."[3]

Removal of Embargo.

In spring came a new surprise.[4] Austria, alarmed by the conduct of Napoleon to the royal family of Spain and to the Spanish nation, stood forward by a Proclamation as the champion of European liberty, and declared war against France on 6th April. The British Parliament—obviously taken aback, and by no means sanguine of the wisdom of the step—was careful to say that the

Austria declares war with France.

[1] *Cambridge Modern History*, vii. 331.

[2] Canning accused Erskine of having violated both the letter and the spirit of his instructions—"being authorised to concede certain points to the American Government in consideration only of concessions to be by them reciprocally and simultaneously made, he did that absolutely which he was instructed to do only conditionally, and thereby lowered the tone and just pretensions of his country" (*Hansard*, xvi. 1041, and xvii. 742).

[3] *Hansard*, xv. 3.

[4] It was known to Ministers, however, as early as September, 1808, that war was likely to take place between Austria and France (*Hansard*, xv. 17).

war was not undertaken by advice or encouragement on the part of Great Britain, and was due only to "the danger with which Austria was menaced by the oppression and ambition of the enemy." All good-will, however, was expressed, although there was considerable criticism over granting the subsidies which Austria had made so sure of as to draw bills on the British Treasury without waiting to see if they would be honoured:[1] a treaty was made; and Great Britain resolved to take part with her in South Germany. On 13th May, after three victories, the French entered Vienna. On the 21st, Aspern was fought, where Napoleon received a decided check. But, at the mighty battle of Wagram, in July, Austria was decisively beaten, and made peace with Napoleon in October, ceding large territories, and ingloriously joining the continental blockade against England.

Wagram.

Sweden declares war with England.

Shortly before, England had lost the one ally on whom she could count. The King of Sweden was deposed by his subjects without bloodshed, and the new king, Charles XIII., made peace with Russia. For the moment, he declared that he wished to remain on friendly terms with Great Britain. But, on the death of the Crown Prince, the election of a successor to him fell, not on any branch of the royal line, but on the French Marshal, Bernadotte—a soldier of fortune, of humble origin, who had entered the ranks of the French army at the age of fifteen and risen, under Napoleon, to be Prince of Ponte Corvo—and Bernadotte became the acting ruler of Sweden. By treaty, in September, the King engaged himself to adhere to the Continental System and close the ports to Great Britain—with the exception of the importation of salt and colonial produce "which habit had rendered necessary to the people of Sweden." In December, at

[1] *Hansard*, xiv. 536. It had not been thought desirable, said Perceval, that any definite arrangement should be entered into which would give rise to any expectation that His Majesty would furnish his allies with any very considerable pecuniary assistance. But, although no treaty had been entered into with the Austrian Government previous to the war, nor any engagement made with that power, yet an expectation did certainly exist on the part of that power as to what this country would do in the event of a war taking place. In consequence of this impression, without having had any communication with His Majesty's Government, the Austrian Government, on the commencement of the war, had drawn bills upon this country (to an amount estimated at £300,000), which bills it had not been deemed right to pay until the circumstance should be mentioned to Parliament, though he personally would advise the payment. It was as Petty said, a most extraordinary step on the part of the Austrian Government, particularly as Ministers had had no part whatever in advising Austria to take action in this particular way.

the instigation, of course, of Napoleon, war was declared against England.

Meanwhile the Government, in a curiously wooden way,[1] had kept to the agreement made with Austria before her disasters, and the expedition against Antwerp—the greatest single armament ever sent out from the shores of Great Britain—set sail on 28th July; to return almost without results, leaving thousands dead of malaria among the swamps of Walcheren. Walcheren expedition.

The ill-starred expedition was followed by a break out of the long enmity between Canning and Castlereagh.[2] In October, they fought a duel and afterwards resigned from the Ministry. "No example," said Romilly, "has come within our knowledge of a duel more unjustifiable than this which has taken place between these men, whose peculiar duty it was, as being entrusted with the government of the country, and as the favoured servants and confidential advisers of a moral and pious prince, to set an example of obedience to the law and respect for religion."[3] The Duke of Portland resigned, and Perceval became Prime Minister, retaining still the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, while Lord Liverpool succeeded Castlereagh as Secretary for War and the Colonies. The Marquis Wellesley, recalled from his embassy to Spain, took Canning's place, and Palmerston became Secretary at War, without a seat in the Cabinet. In October, the jubilee of George III. was celebrated—"a scene of joy and exultation which could not be equalled in the annals of the world."[4] Perceval, Prime Minister.

From October till the next May, there was a lull in the continental war, and the Peninsula became the only battleground of Europe.

The Budget was presented by Perceval on 12th May.[5] The total Supply asked was £53,861,000, of which the Irish pro- Budget.

[1] Wagram was fought and the armistice signed before the expedition sailed. See the vigorous speech of Lord Grenville, on the moving of the Address, on the folly of the "diversion in favour of Austria" when Austria, practically, had thrown down her arms (*Hansard*, xv. 9).

[2] Castlereagh had arranged the Walcheren expedition, and Canning declared that he would not share in the responsibility and would resign if Castlereagh remained in the Cabinet.

[3] *Diary*, ii. 299.

[4] Lord Grimston, *Hansard*, xv. 6. Romilly, however, had serious thoughts about this "political engine of the Ministry": "I doubt whether the history of mankind can furnish an example of a good man seated on a throne, who, in the course of a long life, has done less for the happiness of any portion of his subjects than the present King" (*Diary*, ii. 302).

[5] *Hansard*, xiv. 530.

portion was £6,273,000, leaving £47,588,000 on account of Great Britain. The chief items were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Navy | £18,986,000 |
| Army | 21,144,000 |
| Ordnance, England | 5,275,000 |
| Ordnance, Ireland | 627,000 |
| Miscellaneous, England | 1,173,000 |
| Miscellaneous, Ireland | 726,000 |
| Vote of Credit, England | 3,000,000 |
| Vote of Credit, Ireland | 300,000 |
| Swedish subsidy | 300,000 |
| Sicilian subsidy | 400,000 |
| Interest on Exchequer Bills | 1,500,000 |

In the Ways and Means, the chief items were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Duty on malt, pensions, etc. | £3,000,000 |
| Surplus of Consolidated Fund[1] | 4,000,000 |
| Surplus of Ways and Means, 1808 | 2,757,000 |
| War taxes[2] | 19,000,000 |
| Lottery | 300,000 |
| Excess of Exchequer Bills, after funding | 3,154,000 |
| Excess of Exchequer Bills, after funding | 1,355,000 |
| Exchequer Bills on Vote of Credit | 3,000,000 |

The total loan (raised at £4 12/10 per cent.—"a rate of interest at which the public had never before been able to borrow money"—) was £14,600,000, of which £3 millions were for Ireland and £600,000 for Portugal, leaving £11 millions for the service of England.

The most of the new charge for the loan was to be got, on Petty's principle, from the war taxes, without imposing any new taxes whatever; the balance, by a consolidation of the Customs.

Lottery. In view of the adverse report of the late Committee, Whitbread, Wilberforce, and Romilly strongly commented on the lottery still forming part of the Ways and Means. The Chancellor of the Exchequer replied that the subject had been discussed over and over again, and that the result had been uniformly in favour of lotteries. On a division, ninety voted for the retention of the item in the Budget and thirty-six against.[3]

[1] The surplus, estimated at £3,500,000, had actually yielded about a million more. The income was £37,214,000, and the charge £32,747,000.

[2] A return, presented to the House in June, gives an account of the net assessment of the Property Tax for the years ending 5th April, 1807, 1808, and 1809 respectively, as £11,299,361, £11,345,350, and £11,359,229.

[3] *Hansard*, xiv. 625.

In introducing the Irish Budget, in May, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that "the value of the imports and exports was greater than ever it had been before, and never had there been a greater quantity of yards of linen exported than during the last year, with the exception of one year a considerable while ago, when it was equalled": exchange was under par and money coming in: there was reason to believe that Ireland was more "affluent than she was heretofore."[1] Irish prosperity

In June, the proposal to abolish the exemptions from the Property Tax granted to non-resident foreigners holding stock in the funds, was again brought up, but withdrawn; the argument being, as before, that it would be a breach of public faith as well as impolitic.[2] Aliens.

While Napoleon was engaged with Austria, the campaign in the Peninsula was pursuing its course. In May, Soult was driven out of Oporto, and Wellesley advanced on Spain. The hard-fought fight of Talavera, the first of all the wars of the reign when "the two nations had fought on a large scale," was won against overwhelming odds in July, but Wellesley—now Viscount Wellington—had to retreat again over the mountains into Portugal. By October, Napoleon, little the worse of the Pope's excommunication,[3] was free to send troops from Austria, and Masséna was preparing to overrun Portugal. Wellington, maintaining his little army at £25,000 a month, was told practically by the Perceval Ministry that he must shift for himself. By the end of the year, all the fortresses of Spain had fallen into the hands of France, all her principal armies had been defeated and dispersed, and "the person who called himself the King of Spain" now thought that the Peninsular War was at an end. "When I shall show myself beyond the Pyrenees," said Napoleon in his usual turgid style to the Legislative Body on 3rd December, "the frightened leopard will fly to the ocean to avoid shame, defeat, and death." Talavera. Pause in the Peninsula.

[1] *Hansard*, xiv. 679. [2] *Ibid.* 1018.

[3] In June, the Pope had issued a protest against being stripped of his temporal sovereignty, and passed formal sentence of excommunication against Napoleon and "all his co-operators in the act of violence." (The text is given in the *Annual Register*, 513.) Napoleon replied by bringing the Pope a prisoner to Avignon, depriving him of his external dignity, of all communication with his cardinals, means of issuing bulls, or convoking a council of the church. Nothing, perhaps, is more singular in Napoleon's career than this daring attack on the most cherished beliefs of his people. "A Romish priest excommunicated me," he said to the clergy in Holland in 1810, "but who gave him the right of excommunicating a sovereign?"

Agriculture.

At home, the farmer's year was as capricious and varied as the last. In the early months, intense frosts and great snows—"the severest winter in remembrance," said some whose memories, perhaps, were not very long—a fine May, a bad June, a more genial July, then rains, and, finally, a harvest of which all that could be said was that it was better than one had a right to expect. The crops varied very greatly from district to district, and in England they were worse than in Scotland, but, on the whole, the harvest was no better than that of 1808. Wheat and barley were deficient in quantity and inferior in quality, and potatoes in some places only half a crop. The only bright spot for the farmer was the high price of live stock.

High Price of wheat.

This was reflected in the prices. Wheat in March was 95/-; went down to 86/6 in July, and rose to 102/6 in December.[1] The quartern loaf did not fall below 13d.; in harvest, it rose to 17d. The Board of Agriculture average for the year was 97/4. The prices would have been much higher but for the importations. "As every port is now shut against Britain whence bread corn can be obtained," said the *Farmer's Magazine* in March, "the truth of the opinion, first pronounced in the Report of the Lords' Committee of Trade, 1791, that Britain does not produce grain sufficient for its inhabitants, will soon be brought to the test." But the foreign import of wheat and wheat-flour for the year was 456,000 quarters. Some came from America—presumably at the time when it was thought that intercourse was to be resumed; more, strangely enough, from Holland and from France. The explanation is that, in July, the farmers of France were so distressed by the low price of grain that they could not pay their taxes—the price being 27/- per sack for what required 36/- on any "fair return." Whether from fear of disaffection among the farmers, or because he needed money, Napoleon freely granted licenses for the exportation of grain to England, charging a heavy export duty, while the British Government also granted licenses to fetch it. In consequence, grain in France rose 50 per cent., while the French Treasury benefited at the rate of 18/- per quarter.[2]

[1] The monthly prices are from *Tooke*, i. 293.

[2] This was Marryat's account of the transaction (*Hansard*, xv. 396). Dr. Rose suggests that possibly Napoleon's action was due to the old mercantile fallacy that, the more imports England took, the heavier would be the drain on her bullion and the greater the blow to her credit (*Cambridge Modern History*, ix. 371-2). Porter instances the import of a million and a half

The makeshift of last year was again resorted to. A Bill was brought in to continue the prohibition of the distillation of spirits from corn or grain in Great Britain. But Perceval now proposed to remove the prohibition as regarded Ireland. The distillation from sugar, he explained, had gone on in this country since the passing of the late Act, and the spirit produced had been quite satisfactory; but in Ireland not a hogshead had been distilled from sugar; on the contrary, the distillation from grain had been illicitly carried on, and the output had greatly increased —more corn had been thus used from June to February than had ever been used previously in a year. Not much objection was raised to the continuation of the Act in the now proved circumstances of scarcity; but the proposed repeal as regards Ireland was rejected. If the prevalence of illicit distilling was to be regarded as an argument for repealing the Act, it was argued, other portions of the country would have a good right to the same favour—"if they would take an excursion of a few miles from the smoke of Glasgow, they would find that malt whiskey was still plentiful in every village," and naturally enough, seeing there was a profit of nearly 200 per cent. on illicit distillation. But the importation of British or Irish made spirits into Ireland or Great Britain respectively was suspended.[1] Stoppage of distilleries.

In March, a Bill was brought in to give a bounty of £20,000 to the Linen Company of Ireland, to encourage the growing of flax seed in that country. The cutting off of the American supply was one of the most serious results of the Embargo. It would be impracticable, it was said, this year to procure seed for sowing the ground usually destined to it. "It was very consolatory no doubt," wrote the *Farmer's Magazine* sarcastically, "to receive information from the noble peer at the head of the Board of Trade that plenty of flax seed might be expected from Canada by the middle of next June, at which period the blossoming of the crop would, in common seasons, be at hand. Perhaps the noble peer believed that it was a matter of little importance whether Bounty on flax growing.

quarters of wheat from the produce of the soil of our bitterest enemy as a proof that no difficulties interposed by governments are adequate to prevent the transmission of goods to a profitable market: "So long as we possess the means of paying for the food which other countries can spare we never need be without an adequate supply of the necessaries of life" (*Progress of the Nation*, edition of 1847, 147).

[1] *Hansard.* xii. 240, 374; *Farmer's Magazine, passim*; 49 Geo. III. c. 7 and 105.

the plant blossomed at one time or another, provided it did blossom."[1]

Parnell's opposition.

The bounty was strongly opposed, among others, by Parnell. He might, he said, be thought a pedant in political economy, but he thought, *pace* Adam Smith, that the Navigation Act was not a wise exception to the rules of that science. He condemned the general policy of commercial restrictions, and deprecated the giving of bounties as originating in erroneous policy. If any part of our trade could bear interruption with less injury than another, it was the linen trade, as the manufacturers were also agriculturists, and could consequently convert their lands and labours to other uses. He deprecated the policy of fostering manufactures in Ireland by legislative protection, as it drew from the improvement of the land the capital which would be more advantageously employed on land. This attitude is worth remembering when we come across Parnell in 1813 as the strongest advocate of the excessive protection of corn.[2] The Bill, however, was passed.

Irish canals

Another proposal indicates the growth of an opinion, which was to come to fuller expression in 1813, that the resources of Ireland for grain supply were capable of very great development. Wellesley, while Chief Secretary for Ireland, before beginning his career in the Peninsula, got leave to bring in a Bill for the further extension of Inland Navigation in Ireland. In defence of the proposal, he spoke of the many millions spent in improving the agriculture of foreign and hostile nations by buying corn from them, while the fertile lands of Ireland were suffered to remain untilled for want of a cheap and easy conveyance of their produce to market: capital was so deficient in Ireland that inland navigation could not be hoped for without considerable parliamentary aids, and so on. But, no doubt owing to the pressure of other concerns, we hear no more of the Bill.[3]

and bogs.

With the same view, another Bill was brought in in May, and afterwards passed, appointing Commissioners (without salaries) to enquire and examine into the nature and extent of the several bogs in Ireland, the practicability of draining and cultivating them, and the best means of effecting the same. That drainage was practicable, said Foster, the Irish Chancellor

[1] 114. [2] *Hansard*, xiii. 539, 767, 769.

[3] *Hansard*, xiii. 824.

of the Exchequer,[1] was obvious from the fact that the solid earth of the Bog of Allen was 180 feet above the level of the sea. Of its desirability, it was enough to say that half the ground of these reclaimed bogs would produce in a year more corn than had ever been imported into Great Britain in any one year, while the other half would grow more hemp and flax—for which the ground would be peculiarly calculated—than would serve for the consumption of the whole United Kingdom.[2]

Scots agriculture.

Scotland was much flattered in this year by the appearance of *A Sketch of the System of Husbandry adopted in the most improved districts of Scotland*, by Sir John Sinclair, head of the Board of Agriculture.[3] Its thesis was that, while agriculture in England had generally remained in its former state, except, perhaps, in Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, and one or two more counties, Scotland was now a long way ahead as regards arable cultivation. Sir John had instituted an enquiry through the Board why this should be so—as he put it, why the farmers of Scotland were enabled, in extensive tracts, to pay double the rent for the land they cultivated, compared to land of a similar quality and description in England. The causes which had contributed, he found, were as follows. The inferiority of its climate made it necessary to pay particular attention to every means by which this could be counteracted; the small proportion of fertile land which it possesses rendered it particularly valuable, and was a strong inducement to make it as productive as possible—where nature is bountiful, man is too apt to become indolent; the skill and experience which the Scots had obtained in gardening gave them

[1] John Foster (afterwards Lord Oriel), born 1740; last Speaker of the Irish Parliament; Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1804 to 1806; in 1807, reappointed.

[2] *Hansard*, xiv. 337. In 1812, it was noticed that this "complete geological survey of seventeen-twentieths of all the bogs in Ireland" had cost £29,000, and Tierney complained of the shameful waste of public money in plans and plates, executed in a manner rather calculated to adorn a library than to instruct members in the subject (*Hansard*, xxi. 193, 1220).

[3] John Sinclair, son of a Caithness landowner; born 1754; educated Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Oxford; entered Parliament, 1780; made a baronet by Pitt, 1786; designed the *Statistical Account of Scotland*, 1790; first President of the new Board of Agriculture, 1793; then member for Buteshire; a most indefatigable and enthusiastic friend of agriculture, but not always zealous according to knowledge. Sinclair was immensely popular—and with some reason—in Scotland, but those who came in contact with him seem to have grown impatient of his flightiness. "He would certainly be a useful man," said the *Edinburgh*, "if he knew how to set about it." "It would be most unjust," said Huskisson, "both to him and to mankind, to suppose him the organ of any other sentiment than his own."

a high idea of the produce which might be obtained from farming land; the improved husbandry began on the borders, and the rivalry of the two countries tended to their mutual improvement; the education, reading, and travel of the Scots farmer were notorious; the proprietors of land in Scotland were distinguished by the acquisition of useful rather than of showy accomplishments, took a delight in rural occupations, and either improved their estates themselves or encouraged their tenants to exertion; leases were the fashion in Scotland: the increase of rents, due to improvements, gave a spur to the farmer;[1] for many years past, every farm had been a distinct possession or held in severalty, as distinguished from the common-field system of England; farmers in general were liable to no material burden but the rent, the landlord paying the land tax and the stipend; the cost of labour was cheaper than in England, the servants more tractable, satisfied with homelier fare, less accustomed to waste their time at the ale house, more regular and constant in their hours of work, had fewer perquisites, and were less addicted to debauchery; the circumstances of the Scots, when their improved system of husbandry commenced, rendered it necessary for them to study economy, to cultivate their land with fewer horses, with cheaper implements, and less labour, and thus originated a system of management distinguished by economy and simplicity; farms in general were of a proper size for arable culture, namely from 200 to 500 acres—small lots were beneath the attention of an opulent and intelligent farmer; the size of the fields (in general from 10 to 15 acres) was better adapted for arable cultivation than that of England, and less room, accordingly, was given for hedges, birds, and vermin; the system of rotation of crops was completely established; the improvements in Scotland had begun later than in England, and had all the advantage of the fuller knowledge; lastly, the character of the Scots —industrious, economical, and persevering—naturally enabled them to reach a considerable degree of excellence in any art or science to which their attention was peculiarly directed.[2]

[1] This is dangerously near a doctrine I find advanced in the *Farmer's Magazine* of 1815, p. 93: "Rent can in no degree regulate the price: it cannot raise it a single penny. But, on the contrary, a high rent, by enforcing industry and economy on the part of the tenant, has a powerful tendency, at least for a time, to increase the supply of the market, and, consequently, to diminish the price to the consumer."

[2] A writer in the *Farmer's Magazine* put it more frankly: "There is one simple and obvious cause of the superiority of Scottish agriculture. The

As regards manufactures and trade, the only record is the suggestive one of the imports and exports. Foreign trade.

The Official values were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports - - - - - - - - - - | £31,750,557 |
| Exports of produce and manufactures of the United Kingdom - - - - - - | 33,542,274 |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise - | 12,834,955 |

The Real value of the exports was £47,371,393.

The vessels built and registered during the year in the several parts of the empire (excluding Ireland) numbered 596, representing 61,396 tons. This showed another great decline in shipbuilding.

It will be noticed that the above figures show an increase in imports of, roughly, £5 millions; in exports, of £9 millions; in re-exports, of £7 millions; and, in the real value of exports, of £10 millions. This extraordinary increase in imports, at a time when the Continental System had reached its extreme rigour, would not be intelligible but for Tooke's investigations. It was due to the enormously high range of prices in England in 1808, at the same time as prices on the continent, by operation of the same causes, were low. When there was such a disparity between the price at which goods could be bought and the price at which they could be sold, merchants on both sides were induced to make great efforts to overcome or elude the obstacles presented. Accordingly, measures were taken, by means of licenses from the Government of this country, and of simulated papers calculated to lull the vigilance or satisfy the scruples of those foreign governments which were the unwilling tools of France, for the purpose of importing on a large scale the commodities which had experienced so great a rise. Hence in wool, thrown silk, tallow, hemp, flax, linseed, among raw materials, the imports rose from two to three times the amount of 1808. Reason of the increase in imports.

The much greater increase in exports, however, can be explained only by the opening up of the new markets in South America, and by the speculative fever which came to such an unhappy end in the following year. Cotton goods here represented £18,616,000 as against £9,846,000 in 1808. A paper presented to the House of Lords on 8th February of the following year showed Reason of the increase in exports.

Scottish farmer *invests* his annual savings in improvements. The English farmer *consumes* them in indulgencies" (xi. 161).

that, "instead of our exports to America amounting to £20,000,000, including £12,000,000 to the United States, they now amounted to £25,000,000, including £7,000,000 to the United States. The fears on the subject of cotton wool had proved groundless—a considerable supply was now obtained from other parts of America, and might also be procured from the East Indies."[1] "With every engine of power and perfidy against us," said Peel, when seconding the Address in the following January, "the situation of this country has proved to Buonaparte that it is invulnerable in the very point to which all his efforts have been directed. The accounts of the exports of British manufactures will be found to exceed by several millions those of any former period. With regard to our internal commerce, while France has been stripped of the flower of her youth, England has continued flourishing, and the only alteration has been the substitution of machinery for manual labour."[2]

Although economic legislation, with the exception of measures founded upon the agricultural deficiency, was very much elbowed out by the overwhelming interest in the war and in politics—for "the fury of political parties never ran higher," says Croker—several projects bearing more or less on the industrial life of the country came before Parliament.

Irish currency.

In April, a resolution was proposed by Parnell that it was "expedient that the coin of the United Kingdom should be of the same standard and value as the coin now is of Great Britain,"—by assimilating the coinage of Ireland to that of England, and making Bank of England notes legal tender there equally with the Bank of Ireland paper. The motion, however, met with no encouragement, and was withdrawn.[3]

Romilly.

Romilly brought in a Bill to alter and amend the Bankrupt Laws—"an attempt to reform some of the most obvious defects of the system"[4]—which was passed; and, in May, he submitted certain motions "preparatory to a measure for the amendment of

[1] *Hansard*, xv. 346. Grenville, however, while admitting the internal prosperity of the country, contended that the fact that the Spanish colonies had been laid open to our merchants was no vindication of the policy of the Orders in Council.

[2] *Hansard*, xv. 43. This was Peel's maiden speech—the "best first speech since that of Mr. Pitt," said the Speaker. Robert Peel, son of Sir Robert; born in 1788; entering Oxford in 1805, he became member for Cashel, in Tipperary, in 1809, at the age of twenty-one.

[3] *Hansard*, xiv. 75.

[4] *Ibid.* xii. 1141.

the Criminal Law," and obtained returns of cases transported to New South Wales and of the numbers who died before their period of sentence expired.[1]

Gas Light Bill.

As we saw, Pall Mall, in 1807, was lit with gas by a German named Windsor, who had raised a subscription of £50,000 and sunk it all in the experiment. This trial had amply demonstrated the superiority of the new illuminant, and the promoters now went further—but too far for the liking of parliament. On 7th June, there is mention in *Hansard* of a Gas Light Bill, then proposed to be read a third time. From the debates, one gathers that it was proposed to make the supply of gas to London a chartered monopoly. Immense subscriptions were expected. In the parish of Saint James' alone, six different establishments would be required to furnish the light, and the cost in this parish would be £550 a year more than lighting by oil. The intention to create a monopoly killed the Bill. Wilberforce, opposing a "charter to procure capital" as being an encouragement to gambling, quoted a pamphlet in advertisement of the plan which claimed that the monopoly would, in the course of a short time, produce no less than £10,201,741 13/2 in the way of taxes, and an annual profit, after a certain period, of £299,000,000! He denounced it as one of the greatest bubbles that had ever been imposed on human credulity, and the Bill was rejected meantime.[2]

Grant to Cartwright.

In the same month, a grant of £10,000 was voted to the Rev. Dr. Cartwright "for his valuable invention of machinery for weaving of cotton and combing of wool." Cartwright had expended a large fortune in carrying the inventions into practice; in 1792, his machinery was destroyed by the mob; before he could get another mill erected, his patents had expired, and he lost all the benefit arising from his labours. "So far as ingenuity and integrity went," said the seconder, "there was no individual in the kingdom more entitled to the bounty."[3]

Seducing artisans to leave the kingdom.

Two cases, mentioned in the *Annual Register* of the year, are interesting, as throwing light on the hindrances still opposed to economic progress. One relates to the "exportation of brains." An old man was indicted for a misdemeanour under an Act of George II., as having seduced an artificer of this country—a cotton manufacturer and wool dyer—to leave the kingdom and go to a cotton manufactory near New York, advancing passage

[1] *Hansard*, xiv. 715. [2] *Ibid.* xiv. 861. [3] *Ibid.* xiv. 922.

money and other sums for the purpose. The Common Serjeant dwelt with peculiar force on the mischievous tendency of the crime—most materially connected with the manufacturing interests of the country. The legal punishment was twelve months' imprisonment and a fine of £500, and the verdict, "without a moment's hesitation," was Guilty. The artificer seduced was then tried and convicted under the 5th George I., which provided "that any artificer, particularly in the manufactures of cotton, wool, silk, mohair, etc., who should be convicted of, or detected in, preparing to leave the kingdom for the purpose of devoting his knowledge for the benefit and advantage of foreign countries, not within the British dominions, should be bound to enter into recognisances, himself and two sureties, for remaining in the country."[1]

Dislike of capitalist enterprise.

The other indicates the disfavour with which capitalist enterprise was still regarded. The millers and bakers of Birmingham secured a prosecution against the Union Flour and Bread Co. under a statute of George I., as being a joint stock company and prohibited by that statute. The judge on this occasion recommended certain points to be submitted to the jury for the purpose of making a special case for the opinion of the Court of King's Bench, and on this the jury returned the verdict;—"that its original institution was laudable, that it was beneficial to the town of Birmingham and continues to be so, but that it was prejudicial to the private interests of the millers and bakers concerned in that trade."[2]

Cruelty towards Animals Bill.

A Bill for the more effectual Prevention of Cruelty towards Animals gives a good idea of how far the country had now progressed towards modern ideas—and, perhaps, of how little modern ideas have yet advanced on those of 1809. It was introduced by Lord Erskine,[3] with the impressive preamble: "Whereas it has pleased Almighty God to subdue to the dominion, use, and comfort of man, the strength and faculties of many useful animals, and to provide others for his food; and whereas the abuse of that dominion by cruel and oppressive treatment of such animals is not only highly unjust and immoral, but most pernicious in its example, having an evident tendency to harden the heart against the natural feelings of humanity."[4] In Committee, Erskine accepted the suggestion of the Chancellor that the operation of the Bill should be limited to beasts of

[1] *Annual Register*, 391.
[2] *Ibid.* 375.
[3] *Hansard*, xiv. 380.
[4] *Ibid.* 557.

draught or burden—"any attempt," said Lord Liverpool, "to make the Bill apply to every species of domestic or tame animal might in many instances become ludicrous and defeat the main object."[1] Even in this mutilated form, when the Bill had passed the Lords, it was attacked in the Commons by Windham—who was suspected of some degree of repentance over his former bull-baiting utterance—with his usual brilliancy and vigour. His arguments were these:

Windham's arguments against the Bill.

(1) that no country had ever yet attempted to regulate by law the conduct of men towards brute animals, except so far as such conduct operated to the prejudice of man;

(2) that the moral duty of not inflicting and of preventing suffering should not be enforced as a legal obligation;

(3) that a bill such as this would be inflicting pains and penalties upon conditions which no man previously was able to ascertain—*e.g.* a man senselessly beating a horse, might have been "wearied by long labour and soured by some recent vexation";

(4) that it would be taken advantage of to gratify spite;

(5) that punishment might fall on the wrong person—the over-driving postboy, for instance, instead of the traveller who encouraged him;

(6) that it could not prevent "clandestine cruelty";

(7) that a whole class of cases was withdrawn from the operation of the Bill, namely, the cruelties committed by those who had "the privilege of killing animals by a cruel and lingering death in mere sport and wantonness." "What a pretty figure must we make in the world," said Windham, "if, in one column of the newspapers, we should read a string of instances of men committed under the 'Cruelty Bill,' some to the county gaol to wait for trial at the assizes, some by summary process to the house of correction; and, in another part, an article of 'Sporting Intelligence' setting forth the exploits of my Lord Such-a-one's hounds, how the hounds threw off at such a cover; that bold Reynard went off in a gallant style, etc., and was not killed till after a chase of ten hours; that, of fifty horsemen who were out at the beginning, not above five were in at the death; that three horses died in the field, and several, it was thought, would never recover; and that upon the whole it was the most glorious day's sport ever remembered since the pack was first set up. Was it possible that men could stand the shame of such statements?

[1] *Hansard*, xiv. 807.

that this House which tolerated such sports, nay, which claimed them as the peculiar privilege of the class to which it belonged, a House of hunters and shooters, should, while they left these untouched, be affecting to take the brute creation under their protection, and be passing bills for the punishment of every carter or driver whom an angry passenger should accuse of chastising his horse with over-severity."

In vain Romilly pointed out that much of the criticism was disarmed by the words "wantonly and maliciously abusing." The Bill was thrown out by 37 to 27.[1]

Bastardy Act.

The "lowest point reached by Poor Law legislation" is marked by the Bastardy Act of this year. With great frankness, the preamble stated that the motive of the Act was the heavy charge thrown upon parishes by children born out of lawful matrimony, and proceeded to throw the expenses on the "adjudged reputed father." On the unsupported oath of a woman to a Justice of the Peace, before her child was born, any man could be committed to prison, unless he could give security to indemnify the parish, or enter into recognisances to appear at the next general or quarter sessions. This was followed up, in 1810, by another Act, reducing the punishment of one year's imprisonment with hard labour, inflicted on any woman having a bastard child chargeable to the parish, to committal to a house of correction for not less than six weeks. As might be expected, the Acts had anything but the effect intended, of diminishing the crime of bastardy.[2]

Literature.

In economic literature, the chief event was the appearance, in September, of a series of letters to the *Morning Chronicle*, by Ricardo, afterwards enlarged into the tract, entitled, *The High Price of Bullion a Proof of the Depreciation of Bank Notes.* Thomas Chalmers published an *Inquiry into the Extent and Stability of National Resources*, showing, it must be confessed, little economic grasp, and marked by an absurd depreciation of manufactures as compared with agricultural produce. In France, was published Ganilh's *Des systèmes d'économie politique.* In general literature, Campbell wrote *Gertrude of Wyoming*, and Byron replied to Brougham's savage attack in the *Edinburgh Review* on his *Hours of Idleness* by *English Bards and Scotch*

[1] *Hansard*, xiv. 1029, 1071. It is right to say, however, that it was lost by an unexpected division in a very thin house, when its supporters thought that its passage was safe. Romilly, *Diary*, ii. 288.

[2] *Nicholls*, ii. 148; Fowle, *Poor Law*, 72.

*Reviewers.* In the same year, the now famous review—"the genius of which," as Sydney Smith said, "seems to consist in stroking the animal the contrary way to that in which the fur lies"—had at last to meet the competition of a formidable rival. "9,000 copies of the *Edinburgh Review* are printed quarterly," wrote Scott, "and no genteel family *can* pretend to be without it, because, independent of its politics, it gives the only valuable literary criticism which can be met with." It owed its great sale, he thought, merely to the fact that there was no other respectable and independent publication of the kind.[1] The *Edinburgh* had become very strongly partisan and even bitter in politics, and it now adopted Grenville's unpopular attitude towards Spain. In the twenty-sixth number appeared *Don Cevallos*, the article by Brougham which was interpreted as "an attack upon the titled orders." "The Tories, having got a handle, are running us down with all their might," wrote Jeffrey to Horner, "and the hosts of all the miserables we have slain are rising to join the vengeance. Walter Scott and William Erskine, and about twenty-five persons of consideration, have forbidden the *Review* to enter their door. The Earl of Buchan, I am informed, opened his street door and actually *kicked* it out. Then, Cumberland is going to start an anonymous rival; and, what is worse, I have reason to believe that Scott, Ellis, Frere, Southey, and some others, are plotting another."[2] The "other" was the *Quarterly Review*, the recognised organ of the Tory party, published by John Murray, with William Gifford as editor. The first number, which appeared in February, contained three contributions by Scott.

The *Quarterly Review.*

In the first article—"Affaires d'Espagne," which indicated the sympathies of the new *Quarterly* in the matter of Spain—there is a striking comparison which seems to have been forgotten, and is, perhaps, worth recalling:—

"There is, we think, a considerable analogy between the present history of Spain and that of Scotland about the close of the thirteenth century. Edward I. was, like Napoleon, the boldest, the most politic, and the wealthiest monarch of his time. Like him, he condescended to interfere, as an ally and mediator, between two candidates for a disputed crown. Like him, he seized the object of the dispute. Like him, he was hailed as a

Edward I. and Napoleon.

[1] Lockhart's *Scott*, iii. where a full account is given of the motives and character of the *Quarterly*.

[2] Horner, *Memoirs*, i. 438.

saviour by a corrupt and venal party. Like him, he garrisoned with his troops all the fortresses of the country to which he granted his protection; like him, formed a new constitution for his intended subjects; and, when resisted, punished by all the horrors of war their delinquency and rebellion. He more than once conquered or at least over-ran the whole country, yet—we trust that the parallel will continue to the end; and that national vengeance has in store some future Bannockburn."

In this year also appeared the *London Review*, with signed articles as its specialty—Crabb Robinson contributing an article to the first number on the strong pamphlet which Wordsworth had written against the Convention of Cintra.

# CHAPTER XIII

## 1810. TORRES VEDRAS

THE pages of Croker and Creevey show that, in 1810, politics were in a very unsettled state. Perceval, dogged by ill-success, was not popular. The general opinion was that a change of ministry could not long be delayed, and that Grenville and Grey would be put at the head of affairs; but in the ranks of the Opposition there was mutiny and rancorous intrigue. State of politics.

In the early debates of the session, full advantage was taken of the unfortunate expedition to the Scheldt,[1] and of the apparent want of success in the Peninsula. There can be no doubt that the former was a fair object for attack, but the persistent hostility to Wellington seems to argue more regard for party than patriotism.[2] On the whole, one does not get the idea that

[1] About half of volume xv. of *Hansard* is taken up with the evidence given before a Committee of the whole House in this enquiry.

[2] The attitude of so many prominent people towards Wellington in these early days of the campaign is very remarkable. "His career approaches very rapidly to a conclusion," wrote Creevey in his diary on 17th February. He was credited neither with a plan nor with results. Even Talavera did not shake the opinion of these critics. It was not to be compared with Maida. It was not a victory but a retreat, marked with all the calamitous consequences of a defeat. It was not decisive; it failed of its object, if it had any. It appeared to Whitbread that Lord Wellington had got his army into a prodigious scrape, and that they had brought him out of it most wonderfully—like the act of an admiral who first ran his ships among rocks and shoals, and then evinced great skill and ability in getting them off again. When the King's Message asked an annuity of £2,000 for Wellington, "in consequence of the eminent services rendered in the brilliant and decisive victory obtained by the troops under his command against a superior French force at Talavera," the City protested against it; Creevey wrote, "this is too bad!"; and Windham said, "if they lavished their honours thus, and he was to take two steps more, the *Court Calendar* would not contain him." Wilberforce, however, stood out in honourable exception. According to competent judges, he said, there was not living a more perfect soldier—as forward to share the fatigues as he was the dangers of his troops. His comprehensive mind embraced every department of the army under his command. He was

the Opposition were much impressed with the dangers of the country, or thinking of politics as anything but the usual ignoble game.

Burdett.

Great part of the session, too, was taken up with the question of privilege raised by Burdett, in the course of which there was some rioting and a little bloodshed.[1] For the moment, Burdett, who had been sent to the Tower, was the popular idol, but in parliamentary circles he lost what repute he had. Possibly it was due to this that, when the question of parliamentary reform was formally brought forward by Brand, asking for a Committee on the subject, it was rejected by a majority of 119.[2]

Continued stoppage of the distilleries.

One of the first measures of the session was to continue the Act prohibiting the use of corn in the distilleries. Parnell and others represented that the circumstances had changed since 1808, and that there was now no need for the prohibition; grain was in great plenty in Scotland,[3] and the potato crop had been particularly abundant; in Ireland, the stock was so great that there was no good reason to look abroad for the supply of grain, and in the last two years 1,200,000 qrs. had been imported from there—"a larger quantity than was annually imported from abroad before the trade was free"; the prices, besides, proved that there was no scarcity, nor reason to apprehend scarcity, what rise there was being due to the depreciation of bank paper. In Scotland there was much excitement at the prospect of the prohibition being continued. It took away the only available market for grain which was not good enough for bread, and this was the

truly the soldiers' friend—attending to their comfort, providing for their necessities, and gaining their confidence, without forfeiting the esteem of the officers (*Hansard*, xv. 15, 280, 462, 463, 466, etc.).

[1] The immediate occasion was the action of Parliament in sending to prison the president of a debating club for printing a resolution passed by it, condemning in offensive terms the exclusion of strangers from the House. Cobbett at this time was suffering two years' imprisonment, after paying a fine of £2,000, for a libel, denouncing among other things, the sentence of 500 lashes on some militiamen at Ely.

[2] *Hansard*, xvii. 123. It would be a mistake to identify the opposition to reform with the landed interest. Whitbread, who strongly seconded Brand on this occasion, had written on 31st March of the previous year: "I cannot say how much I was surprised by Burdett's unprovoked attack upon the great agriculturists, who are, almost without exception, real friends of Liberty and Reform—none more so than the head of them, the Duke of Bedford, who thinks parliamentary reform indispensably necessary to our existence" (*Creevey*, i. 94).

[3] *Sic.* But this statement was not borne out by facts. A good deal of corn, indeed, remained in the hands of the growers, but this was on account of its poor quality.

condition of most of the crop on hand. And strong things were said about the interest of the home farmer being sacrificed to the interest of the West Indian planter. But Scotland does not seem to have been represented by any of the speakers on this occasion, and the Act was continued as regarded Great Britain, and remained in force during the year, much to the indignation of those who witnessed in autumn a public thanksgiving ordered for the plentiful harvest, at the same time as the distillation from grain was prohibited on account of the scarcity! The Irish agitation, however, was more successful, and the Act lapsed as regarded Ireland.

Forecast of 1815.

During the debates on the subject, Marryat[1] gave expression to the view which Western had suggested in 1808. In deprecating the consumption of Irish corn by the distilleries, he urged that the House should husband the agricultural produce of the empire, lest any scarcity should arise which might, perhaps, oblige us to apply to our enemy at once for bread and for peace. With this view he would recommend that the importation of all foreign corn should be interdicted, and that the Irish agriculturist should have the monopoly of the English market.[2]

Budget.

In the Budget speech of 16th May,[3] Perceval began by assuring the House that the accounts would be the best answer to those who were accustomed to take gloomy views of the financial situation of the country. Instead of a deficit in the revenues of last year, which men of great weight and authority had anticipated, there was a very considerable increase.

The total Supply asked for the United Kingdom was £52,185,000, of which the Irish proportion was £6,106,000, leaving £46,079,000 to be provided by Great Britain. The chief items were as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Navy | £19,238,000 |
| Army | 20,337,000 |
| Ordnance | 4,411,000 |
| Miscellaneous | 2,000,000 |
| Vote of Credit | 3,200,000 |
| Sicily | 400,000 |
| Portugal | 950,000 |
| Interest on Exchequer Bills | 1,600,000 |

[1] Joseph Marryat, member for Sandwich; chairman of Lloyd's, and colonial agent for the island of Grenada. (His more famous son, the novelist, after having served with Lord Cochrane in the *Impérieuse* in 1808 and 1809, was now in the *Centaur* flagship.)

[2] *Hansard*, xv. 390, 499, 541, 642, 653; *Farmer's Magazine, passim.*

[3] *Hansard*, xvi. 1043.

In the Ways and Means, the chief items were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Annual duties | £3,000,000 |
| Surplus Consolidated Fund, 1809 | 2,661,600 |
| Surplus Consolidated Fund, 1810 | 4,400,000 |
| War taxes | 19,500,000 |
| Lottery | 350,000 |
| Exchequer Bills | 5,311,600 |
| Vote of Credit | 3,000,000 |
| Loan | 8,000,000 |

The War Taxes of the past year had produced £22,707,000 instead of the £19,000,000 estimated. Of these, the Property Tax actually paid into the Treasury amounted to £13,751,000, as against an assessment of £11,400,000, the large excess being due to arrears of former years, collected with great activity and success—there were now no arrears later than 1807. The Customs and Excise had yielded £9,356,000, against the previous year's yield of £8,806,000.

Lottery.

As to the lottery, the new plan of having the whole lottery drawn in one day had destroyed the insurance system, under which many had risked absolute ruin in the hope of recovering their first losses, and so "almost entirely removed those evil consequences which had been complained of." For his part, he did not think that giving up the lottery altogether would by any means destroy the spirit of gaming among the lower orders; on the contrary, it might drive many of them to modes of gambling more pernicious—he meant the "little goes and things of that description."

The loan of £8,000,000 had been raised at £4 4/3¾ per cent.; *i.e.* 15/7¼ below the legal rate—"terms infinitely more favourable to the public than had ever been, at any former period, known." As the new charges for the loan were provided for by the surplus produce of the existing taxes, no new taxes were imposed.

Perceval's optimism.

He concluded by a most optimistic review of the trade, manufacture, and commerce of the country, congratulating the House on the great increase of imports and of British exports as compared with those of the prosperous year of peace, 1802. The country was not stationary but progressing. In Yorkshire alone, the cloth manufacture had increased in the past year by 1,500,000 yards. The growing prosperity was seen, too, in the public works undertaken throughout the country, the great canals, extensive

docks, etc.[1] At the same time, the enemy had lost all his commerce, and all his colonies, while his few remaining ships were kept pent up in ports, without ever daring to put to sea. And, thanks to the wise measures of the Orders in Council, the Customs receipts of France had fallen from £2,500,000 to £500,000.

Huskisson's warning.

Huskisson struck a new note in Budget discussion, and his words are significant of how more far-sighted economists were looking at the extraordinary international situation. It was impossible, he said, to go on for ever from expedient to expedient, satisfied with getting over the difficulty of one year without adverting to the accumulating difficulties of the next. He begged the House to consider to what, if they went on in this way, they would come at last. He fully agreed that the country was in a state of progressive improvement, but there was a limit to taxation, and we had nearly reached that limit. He asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he thought it possible to continue for any great number of years, adding from a million to twelve hundred thousand every year to the public burthens; whether even this would be sufficient on the present plan; and whether he hoped that the war could be continued in that way. It was our duty to look forward and prepare for the contingency of supporting the war for a great number of years. This, he maintained, would be impossible without a reduction in the scale of national expenditure, but, by suitable reductions, he thought provision might be made either for peace or war, without any diminution of our dominions or of the proper means of defence and carrying on the war. He was disappointed that no reduction had been made in any of the larger departments, and gave an indication of what might have been done by adverting to the navy. A great navy, sufficient to cope with the whole world at sea, was perhaps necessary. But, in one particular at least, the situation was changed. The object formerly was to oppress the commerce of the enemy, with the hope of driving him to reasonable terms of peace. But this was hopeless now. Buonaparte's policy seemed to be to destroy commerce altogether, and to supply the deficiency in his revenue by exactions from the whole continent. Surely the distinction between the present naval war and former wars of the same description was not sufficiently attended to. But,

[1] "None of these paid for from the national purse, either with the false view of forcing trade or of shedding lustre on a reign," said the *Edinburgh Annual Register*, ii. 187.

while urging the propriety and necessity of husbanding our resources, he deprecated anything like despondency regarding them. Rose agreed with Huskisson, but, as to the propriety of new taxation, he could not help observing that we had done quite enough for posterity. How it was that the resources of the country were so prosperous, he declared himself unable to say: "But somehow it appeared that, from the industry and ingenuity of our merchants, every prohibitory measure of Buonaparte's had utterly failed of its object."

Income Tax

There was some slight discussion of the inequalities of the Income Tax, as it was now being called. Turton considered that it pressed too heavily on the small incomes: "a person who had an income of £200 could not afford to pay £20 as well as the person who had £2,000 could pay £200," and it was unequal in that it taxed bachelors and men with large families alike. He objected also to the exemption granted to foreigners—an exemption by which we lost £69,000 a year.[1]

A motion was made asking for exemption from income tax of officers in the army and navy and subalterns in the militia, on the ground that their pay had not participated in the comparative increase which had taken place in the wages of artisans, but this was withdrawn.[2]

—complaints from Scotland.

We learn from the *Farmer's Magazine* that, as result of petitions sent up from many quarters, Perceval had now been brought to see the anomaly and injustice of assessing farmers at half their rentals, and had promised a Bill affording some relief. The following cases quoted show how real the grievance was:

(1) In 1808, about Lammas, a spate in the Kelvin broke down the banks, flooded the fields, and irretrievably destroyed the growing corn. Many farmers lost their entire crops; nevertheless they were subjected to the full assessment according to their rents. When they appealed, they were told that, though it was a hard case, the Property Tax admitted of no exception, and the appeal was dismissed. They then pleaded that the year in question was, in the case of most of the applicants, the first year of a new lease at an advanced rent, and begged, for that year at least, to be rated at the old rent. This application also was rejected.

(2) A tenant whose affairs were under sequestration—whose effects were sold under that sequestration and who had actually

[1] *Hansard*, xvii. 645. [2] *Ibid.* 168.

removed from the farm he formerly possessed in consequence of that sequestration—was afterwards charged for the Property Tax said to be due by him as possessor of the farm, notwithstanding that he was a declared bankrupt, and altogether without either property or income. The tenant and his friends remonstrated with the collector, and maintained that, if any tax was due from such a farm, it ought to be paid by the landlord who had seized and sold the stock and crop thereupon. The collector said that the tenant was liable by law, and that, if payment was not made immediately, he would take steps to compel it. To save an old man from prison, which would probably have been the issue, some friends paid the tax.[1]

Irish Budget.

The Irish Budget, introduced 30th May, spoke of the growing prosperity of that country. The Irish Disturbances Act, passed in 1807, had been repealed. The exports and imports, though somewhat decreased, still compared most favourably with those of 1802. The exportation of linen had fallen by £40,000, but the deficiency was made up in other articles. The export of corn had never been so large, and the area of ground tilled afforded the prospect of a most abundant crop.[2] More doubtful, however, was another evidence of prosperity adduced: hides and skins, and linen and worsted yarn, it was said, had decreased in the exports, and it was "a proof of the increasing prosperity of the country when the raw materials were kept to be manufactured in the country."[3]

Timber duties.

Immediately after the Budget, a new kind of protective duty was discussed. The small amount of timber grown at home had always caused some anxiety, although Arthur Young, in the *Annals of Agriculture*, had hailed it as a sign of progress—"the more wood there is in the kingdom, the fewer persons there must necessarily be fed on the produce of our own soil." In 1805, for instance, a proposal was made that no enclosure should be allowed without it being made compulsory to plant a certain quantity in trees, but this was negatived.[4] So long as the Baltic was free, and the northern powers were our friends, there seemed no ground for alarm. But recent events had given a new complexion to things. The price of timber had risen within a few years as much as 300 per cent., and the rise was being felt in all the building industries, as well as in shipbuilding.

[1] *Farmer's Magazine*, 519, 119.
[2] *Hansard*, xvii. 206.
[3] *Hansard*, xvii. 206.
[4] *Ibid.* v. 162.

We read that in 1809 the expenditure on labour in the making of the Caledonian Canal was in some degree curtailed by the added expenditure on the timber used. In these circumstances, the Government opened communication with several merchants, who engaged, in consideration of the promise of a protecting duty, to embark their capital in the transport of Canadian timber to this country.[1] In 1810, accordingly, George Rose brought forward a resolution "to lay an additional duty on oak wainscot, etc., imported under any shape from the north of Europe, and all timber not imported by the East India Company, or directly from our own colonies in North America." The points he dwelt on were;—the dearness of timber, and the fact that it was brought to us in foreign ships, costing for freight alone between two and three millions sterling. The proposed measure besides would encourage the colonies, not only by buying their timber, but by clearing their lands, and inducing the cultivation of flax, hemp, etc., while they would be enabled to take our manufactures, instead of our ships being sent out in ballast.

Decrease in shipping.

Horner earnestly called the attention of the House, not so much to the resolution, as to the alarming increase of foreign shipping thus incidentally brought under their eyes. He had been informed that not less than ten millions were spent in the past year on the whole foreign freightage, and this, he considered, indicated "an alarming increase of foreign shipping, entirely subversive of our maritime system." It all came of the Orders in Council. Giddy considered it "a matter of general policy to encourage trade with our own colonies," but doubted if North American timber were adequate either in quantity or quality for our purposes.

Perceval deprecated these apprehensions. Doubtless a great many foreign ships were engaged in our trade in the various parts of the North of Europe, where English ships could not go. But the increase of tonnage was owing to a general increase of trade, and the British tonnage thus employed was increasing much faster than the foreign.

[1] Lansdowne in 1820, *Hansard*, i. 588. It is interesting to hear Canada referred to in 1810, by a speaker in Congress, as "perhaps at this time the most flourishing part of the world." Every commercial difficulty in which Great Britain had been involved, he said, had only created a greater demand for her produce, and opened new markets for her merchants; the people were under as mild a government as America was; they enjoyed the full benefit of American protection and American free trade, while they bore no part of American burdens (*Edinburgh Annual Register*, i. 254).

Baring raised another point, namely, that our policy as regards the Baltic trade favoured the northern neutrals, who were in reality our enemies, rather than American shipping—this was the great error of the prevailing system. He feared, besides, that the measure proposed would increase the price of a necessary article already enormously high, but the experiment, he thought, was perhaps worth a trial. Parnell alone opposed it, on the ground that "the trade of the country should always be left free." The resolution was agreed to,[1] and, although nothing more appears in *Hansard*, there appears, among the Acts of the year, one for imposing additional duties of customs on certain species of wood imported into Great Britain.[2]

Linen transit duties.

Although not mentioned in *Hansard*, an important protective duty was imposed in favour of Ireland. As has been noticed, the Irish linen manufacture had always been the object of anxious care, and it had now become the great industry of that country. But a very active competition was still carried on by the linen manufacturers of Germany and Russia, and, to protect the Irish manufacturers, an export duty of 15 per cent. *ad valorem* was now imposed on foreign linens brought to this country for warehousing and subsequent transit to other countries. For the moment, the Linen Transit Duties were accepted as a great boon, but, as we shall see later, it became questionable whether they did not do more harm than good to the industry they were supposed to protect.[3]

Continental System made more rigorous.

During the year, the operation of the Continental System was made even more rigorous than before. Decrees hostile to the trade of Britain continued to emanate from every kingdom and petty state under Napoleon's control. Sweden put in immediate subjection to the French crown the territories where British goods were imported, including new ports on the North Sea and Baltic coasts, relinquishing the import of colonial produce, but retaining that of salt. Up till now, the trade with the northern powers had been very profitable; even those who adopted the system had enforced it too loosely to offer much impediment to trade. In 1810, British merchants embarked largely in the traffic, and, in the early part of the year, a large convoy of neutral ships, laden with British goods, sailed for the Baltic. Unfortunately it was delayed in Wingo Sound by

[1] *Hansard*, xvii. 164. [2] 50 Geo. III. c. 77.

[3] *Customs Tariffs of the United Kingdom*, 1897, c. 8706, 31.

contrary winds until the middle of June. The French in the meantime seized Stralsund and urged the powers to enforce the system strictly. The convoy, amounting by that time to over 600 vessels, with cargoes worth, it is said, eight or nine millions, though fully warned of the change in affairs, ventured into the Baltic, and the majority of the ships were seized and condemned in the Russian, Swedish and Prussian ports.[1]

Holland annexed.

As Napoleon's brother, Louis,—a gentle well-meaning man, made King of Holland in 1806, and much interested in the welfare of his people,—had refused to enforce the Continental System, and had, in fact, thrown open the Dutch ports and repealed his decrees against commerce, Napoleon picked a quarrel with him,[2] and, by a decree of 9th July, "reunited" Holland to the French crown. "This," said the French minister to Napoleon, "completes your Majesty's empire, as well as the execution of your system of war, policy, and trade. It is the first, but a necessary step to the restoration of your navy; in fact, it is the heaviest blow which your Majesty could inflict upon the navy and commerce of England." As Napoleon himself said, "It is no longer two armies who combat on the plains of Fontenoy; it is the empire of the seas which still resists that of the continent—a memorable, a terrible struggle, the catastrophe of which, now perhaps not far distant, will long occupy the attention of future generations."

Trianon tariff.

In the Continental System itself, a new development took place. Smuggling had been the inevitable result of prohibiting British products from entering Europe, and, up till this year, as we saw, Napoleon, aware that he could not meet this directly, tried to turn it to his advantage by selling licenses—licenses to smuggle, as it were. But, in 1810, convinced that colonial produce was coming in from the British colonies, under neutral flags or on forged certificates of origin, he began taking vigorous measures against smuggling. Special tribunals were set up in October to deal with it, inflicting heavy punishments. In place of licenses, he now adopted the plan of taxing all colonial imports. The Trianon tariff averaged about 50 per cent. *ad valorem*. Prussia and Sweden consented to take the same course. Finally, the

[1] *Hansard*, xxi. 1056.

[2] As Sir Walter Scott put it: "A Frenchman at once refusing a crown, and declining to part with his wife, was one of the most uncommon exhibitions of an age fertile in novelties" (*Croker*, 33).

Fontainebleau Decrees of October ordered that all British goods found in the states controlled by France should be seized and publicly burned.[1] Emphasis was given to this new determination to put down smuggling by the annexation of the north-west coast of Germany, on the ground that immense quantities of goods were smuggled from Heligoland and Oldenburg into central Europe and France. Fontainebleau Decrees.

Commercial intercourse with America was resumed in May under very curious conditions. The Non-Intercourse Act was repealed, and America again opened trade with all the world. But, "timorous as women in their relations with France, froward as children towards Great Britain,"[2] under this Act the President was authorised, in case either Great Britain or France should, before 3rd March, 1811, revoke their respective edicts, or so modify them as to damage the neutral trade of the United States no longer, to stop trade with the nation which still refused to revoke or modify her edicts. Napoleon, on receiving this news, made a sudden *volte face*. Under the Rambouillet Decree of 1810 (signed in March, but kept secret till May), he had, as reprisals for the Non-Intercourse Act, just ordered the confiscation of all vessels under the flag of the United States which since May, 1809, had entered, or should thereafter enter, any of the ports or colonies of France, or of the countries occupied by the French armies, and made a prize of cargoes worth about £2,000,000.[3] Before this high-handed action had had time to produce the effect which it certainly would have had on America, he informed the American Minister that he would revoke the Berlin and Milan Decrees on 1st November, if, by that date, Great Britain had recalled her Orders in Council, or if the United States had "caused her rights to be respected by the English." On 2nd November, accordingly, the American President served a America. French Decrees revoked.

[1] Perceval, curiously enough, saw in this the proof that the Orders in Council had answered the purpose for which they were intended, by driving the tyrant of the continent to such an extremity as to burn all British commodities—an act by which he destroyed more of the property of his own subjects than of British merchants. They had, in fact, driven him to such an act as might afford a chance of ridding the world of its oppressor (*Hansard*, xix. 349).

[2] *Edinburgh Annual Register*, i. 250.

[3] For instance, under this Decree a ship conveying tobacco, on account of the American Government, to be sold in Denmark and the proceeds remitted to public creditors in Holland, was captured by French privateers (*Edinburgh Annual Register*, i. 252).

three months' notice on Great Britain, naming 2nd February as the date on which the Non-Intercourse Act would come into effect if Great Britain had not by that time revoked the Orders in Council. Thus the year ended with the French Decrees repealed as regards America, and Great Britain in the invidious position of having her hand forced by her mortal enemy.[1]

**Effectiveness of the Orders in Council.**

In Parliament, the Orders in Council were not much discussed. Whatever harm was done by them to England and to neutrals, there can be little doubt of their effectiveness as regards France and her allies. Macedonian cotton was brought over land into Holland, and Denmark got her supplies from the south of Russia. The trade between Russia and Persia was carried on by caravan—a thousand carriages conveying as much merchandise as a vessel of 300 tons. Premiums were offered at Vienna for substitutes for camphor, Peruvian bark, and opium, and for the discovery of plants having the same virtues as senna, jalap, and ipecacuanha. Many towns went unlit for want of oil.[2] Peas, beans, and lupines were dried for coffee; the leaves of the hornbeam were dried for tea and scented with the roots of the iris. Tea was planted in Corsica—which was nearly in the same latitude as China—and the results were announced to be a complete success. Experiments were made in extracting sugar from raisins, from chestnuts, from honey, even from seaweed. Napoleon showed an example of fortitude by ordering that no sugar should be used in the imperial kitchen except what was extracted from grapes.

**Napoleon's marriage.**

During the year, except in the Peninsula, and on the Danube where war was waged between Russia and the Porte, the peace of Europe was almost unbroken. In December of the previous year, Napoleon, sacrificing, as he said, the sweetest affections of his heart for the good of the nation, had got rid of Josephine, by the expedient of a divorce agreed to by the "kings, queens, princes, and princesses present" at a theatrical meeting of the numerous family.[3] He now secured, for a time, the non-inter-

[1] *Cambridge Modern History*, vii. 332.

[2] *Edinburgh Annual Register*, ii. 86.

[3] It is interesting, from the point of casuistry, to note that, as it was impossible to obtain sanction from the imprisoned Pope, and as such a divorce was against all the canons of the Roman Catholic faith, the shameless assertion was made that the marriage with Josephine had been only by civil contract—ignoring the subsequent ceremony of Cardinal Fesch. One may imagine the feeling of Eugene Beauharnois, when appearing before the Senate to express his delight, and that of his family, at the repudiation of his mother, in order to give France a Napoleonic succession!

ference of Austria by his marriage with Marie Louise,[1] and this allowed him to concentrate his attention on Spain, where he had 366,000 troops under Masséna, the ablest of his lieutenants. The despotism in Paris became more pronounced than ever. Short work was now made of those suspected of disaffection—"there are many persons in France," said a Decree, "accused of various crimes against the state whom it is neither safe to liberate nor to bring to trial." All domestic servants, whatever the conditions of their engagement, were registered under the police, and no one could get a situation without a certificate signed by a prefect; every servant out of a place for above a month, who could not give a satisfactory account of his means of subsistence, was obliged to depart from Paris under pain of punishment as a vagrant.[2] The press was most rigidly censored. The number of printers in each department was limited, and, in Paris, was reduced to twenty. Only one newspaper was allowed to be published in any department except that of the Seine.

Despotism in Paris.

The close of the year has generally been regarded as the culmination of Napoleon's splendour. One power alone refused to acknowledge him as anything else than the person at the head of the French Government. To England, he is still "the Corsican," the "usurper," the "tyrant," even the "arch-tyrant." But the Corsican had no doubt that he would be able one day to repay these insults with interest: "The French empire," he said to a deputation in 1810, "is in the vigour of its youth; it cannot but grow and consolidate itself; that of my

Culmination of Napoleon's power.

[1] The humiliation of Austria may be inferred from the official announcement in the Vienna journals, of "the high destiny to which the Archduchess Maria Louisa has been called by Providence." The inscription of Liberty and Equality, it is said, was erased from the Hotel de Ville before the marriage, that it might not shock the new empress (*Edinburgh Annual Register*, i. 303, 307). The Emperor subsequently—in his manifesto on declaring war against Napoleon in 1813—explained the sordid transaction by saying that, convinced that a peace of some years was necessary to check the overgrown power of France and to allow his own monarchy time to restore its finances, and exalted above all common scruples, he had made a sacrifice of what was dearest to his heart, and consented to an alliance which might incline the stronger and victorious party to a course of moderation and justice (*Annual Register*, 1813, 422).

[2] The ordinary workman had already been looked after. By the law of 12th April, 1803, he was obliged to provide himself with a form supplied by the local police, on which were inscribed his successive engagements; without this form no employer could engage him, and he was treated as a vagabond.

enemy is in the last stages of life, and everything presages its decay."[1]

Torres Vedras.

In the Peninsula, Wellington was getting little encouragement from home.[2] He was, however, allowed to take 30,000 Portuguese into British pay, and contented himself with drilling those troops, and constructing the triple line of fortification between the Tagus and the sea; watching while Joseph entered Seville in triumph, and Malaga, Lerida, and Ciudad Rodrigo fell; retreating before the enemy—except for the splendid action of Busaco, when Portuguese soldiers first encountered French and proved themselves, in Wellington's words, worthy of contending in the same ranks with British troops[3]—till Masséna, drawn away from his base, dashed in vain against the lines of Torres Vedras. Here Wellington had the capital behind him, and a port accessible to all the vessels that the power and wealth of Great Britain could freight, while Masséna had nothing but an already devastated country, was remote from all sources of supply, and was dependent for what he could get on convoys. The year ended with Masséna, who had given himself three months to drive the English into the sea, acting on the defensive at Santarem, while Wellington waited for hunger to do its work.

But, till the splendid strategy of Torres Vedras was vindicated by Masséna's retreat, Wellington's plan was so little understood, and his "inaction" so much condemned, that even his friends had begun to lose heart.[4]

[1] *Edinburgh Annual Register*, 303, and *passim*.

[2] For the maintenance of his troops he was allowed only £80,000 per month, and his policy all through the war had been to pay for everything. As Peel said about the retreat after Talavera, "We could not adopt the summary expedients of modern war . . . we could not involve the wretched peasant in the calamities from which our own privation might spare him. We could not feed up on requisitions and calculate our revenue upon plunder. Our army will not subsist where the troops of the enemy will riot" (*Hansard*, xv. 42).

[3] "They are now the fighting cocks of the army," wrote Wellington to Liverpool in 1813: "I believe we owe their merits more to the care we have taken of their pockets and their bellies than to the instruction we have given them" (*Dispatches*, x. 569). Junot paid them a sincere though a left-handed compliment; he affirmed that Wellington had practised a *ruse de guerre*, and dressed Englishmen in Portuguese uniforms! (*Edinburgh Annual Register*, i. 463; *Hansard*, xix. 392).

[4] Wellington's irritation at the constant attacks made on him, and his firm resolve not to be turned from his own policy, are reflected in a letter to Croker, dated 20th December, 1810. Two or three paragraphs may be quoted: "Those who have seen or known anything of armies are aware that a combined army made up as mine is, and always has been, partly of

Agriculture.

The prospects of the farmer in the early part of the year were very gloomy. The grain markets had seldom been worse: a large proportion of the stock, especially wheat, was useless for human food, and could not be sold, as it had usually been in similar circumstances, for distilling. Wheat and oats were coming in from France and Holland, and wheat to some extent from America; and, what was worse, the foreign grain, harvested in a more equable climate and free from disease, was of superior quality, and made much of the British grain absolutely unsaleable. Nor did the future, for the moment, promise any better. The spring was cold and wet; then drought and frost supervened. The price of wheat, which had been about 100/-, and seemed likely in the first quarter of the year to fall lower, rose to 116/9 in June, and to 117/4 in August. But the high prices were not much compensation to those who had little to sell, and that little in bad condition Then the unexpected happened. There came six weeks of unbroken sunshine, and a fine crop was gathered in fine condition—wheat excellent, oats above average, barley fair, potatoes never better. Still the most striking feature of the year (and that notwithstanding the excessive charges of freight, insurance and licenses, amounting in all to from 30/- to 50/- per quarter), was the immense imports of foreign grain—1,567,000 quarters of wheat and wheat-flour, besides 600,000 quarters of other grain and meal, amounting in value to over £7,000,000—more than one-third of the wheat and nearly a half of the flour from France and Holland. The price of wheat fell again below 100/- in October, and the loaf came down to 1/3.

In two other respects the year ended pleasantly for the farmers: sheep and cattle were in great demand at very high prices, and, in Scotland at least, rents for the moment ceased to

recruits and in a great measure of soldiers in a state of convalescence, and composed of officers unaccustomed to the great operations of war, is not equal to a French army; and those who have been engaged with a French army know that it is not so very easily destroyed even by one equal to contend with it. But nothing will suit editors (friends and foes alike) but that the enemy should be swept from the face of the earth. . . . I cannot but think that I act wisely and honestly towards the people of England to do what I think is good for them, rather than what will please them. . . . I shall either fight a battle or not as I find it advantageous. The enemy have suffered enormously, and at this moment, including Spaniards, I have the inferior army by 10,000 men. But there is a great deal of difference (particularly in the blood to be spilt) between fighting in a position which I choose or in one in which the enemy choose to fight! And the difference makes the question which the London editors and their readers cannot comprehend" (Croker, *Correspondence*, i. 41).

rise—applicants, it was said, becoming alarmed of what might happen over the Bullion Report. The distress was now shifted from the farmers to the corn dealers, many of whom had speculated on the continuance of the bad weather and were ruined.

The progress of agricultural improvement is marked by two mentions in the *Farmer's Magazine*—one, a subscription of over £1,400 raised privately for Andrew Meikle, inventor of the threshing machine which had now come into general use; the other, the statement that many attempts were being made to construct a reaping machine, although they had not as yet attained to any success.

**Machinery.** It would be interesting to know how the intrusion of machinery into all fields of labour, characteristic of these early days of the century, was regarded by those who could, perhaps, better appreciate it by reason of its novelty. I have accordingly noted every mention of the matter in Parliament, but such references are very few. The following is from the *Scots Magazine* of the year. The writer, while welcoming the power of steam and the introduction of the threshing machine, sees nothing but a sacrifice on the altar of Mammon in "the intermingling of youth of both sexes in the receptacles of our cotton mills." But the object of his letter is to hail the invention of Christopher Steen's loom, "that performs all the different operations of weaving by itself," for the reason that he counts on it to diminish the number of those employed in that unhealthy occupation and send back numbers of the youth to healthy operations in the country under the guidance of sober, industrious parents, removing them from "the pernicious examples of debauchery and vice, where thousands are yearly immolated at the shrine of corruption."[1]

**Trade.** But if agriculture was looking up, it was far otherwise with the other industries of the country. As we saw, the preceding year had been characterised by a great speculative movement in foreign trade, owing to the low price of commodities on the continent accompanied by high prices in this country, and by the huge exports to South America to take advantage of the new markets. The prices of most imported commodities, enormously high in 1808, were already falling in 1809, and came down with a run in the early part of 1810: *e.g.* Spanish wool, in which there was much speculation, fell about 50 per cent. While this

[1] p. 357.

was taking place, there came ruin to many by the excessive importation of goods attracted by the new facility afforded by bonded warehouses but unable to find a sale, by the confiscation of British commodities in the Baltic, and by the realised losses on the consignments in South America. On the top of all this, came the Bullion Report, causing alarm among bankers and contraction of discounts.

A commercial crisis.

In July, several houses of the very first respectability failed. In August, a London bank closed its doors—owing to the collapse of a West Indian broker "long considered the first in his line"—bringing down some of the county banks in its train, and from them the evil spread. Wild fluctuations in prices followed, and a financial crisis ensued; the "stoppages and compositions," said the *Monthly Commercial Report*, "are equal in number to one-half the traders in the kingdom." "In Manchester and other places, houses stop not only every day but every hour."

Nor was the commercial distress confined to this country. In Hamburg and other cities on the continent, several great houses failed. In Paris two banking houses stopped payment on account of the great advances made to the government. In New York, such times for money were never known; all confidence was destroyed; from the middle of December, there were between 60 and 70 bankruptcies. All this, of course, increased the distress at home,[1] and the year ended in the deepest gloom.

Foreign trade.

Of Imports and Exports, the Official values were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports - - - - - - - - - - | £39,301,612 |
| Exports of produce and manufactures of the United Kingdom - - - - - - - | 34,061,901 |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise - | 9,506,856 |

The Real value of the United Kingdom exports was £48,438,680.

The vessels built and registered during the year in the several ports of the empire (excluding Ireland) numbered 685, representing 84,891 tons.

Romilly's crusade.

In Parliament Romilly's crusade against the Criminal Laws made considerable progress. In February, he again called attention to the frequency of capital punishments—although not one out of six or seven who received such sentences suffered the penalty—and moved that leave be given to bring in three Bills to repeal certain Acts which punished with death the crimes of stealing privately in any shop, warehouse, coachhouse, or stable, any

[1] Tooke, *History of Prices*, i. 303 *seq.*

goods, wares, or merchandise of the value of five shillings, and for stealing to the amount of forty shillings in dwelling houses, or on board vessels in navigable rivers. Windham, as before, opposed, saying that it appeared to him that his learned friend "wished to take away all discretion in the infliction of punishments."[1] The leave, however, was given.[2]

Principle of the Bills.

In May, on report, the principle of the Bills was fully discussed.[3] The chief arguments now adduced against them were these: that we had all lived happily, and that property had been adequately preserved, under the old law; that punishments were inflicted, not to vindicate justice, but for the prevention of crime, and that intimidation was the best means of effecting this;[4] that property could not be safe without capital punishment; that our penal laws were more severe than those of other countries because control and espionage were less rigid; that, however sanguinary our criminal code might be in appearance, there was not, in its practical application, so mild a system under the sun—it prevented crimes without recurring to punishments; that the capital part of such charges might be avoided by abstaining, say, from stating that robbery took place in a dwelling house or that it amounted to 40/- in value.[5]

To modern minds, the answers made were quite complete: that, to secure prevention, certainty was much more important than severity; that justices slighted their oath to escape convicting; that individuals could not bring themselves to prosecute nor witnesses to give evidence; that it was a wrong principle that the law should be in direct opposition to public opinion; that house robbery under the present drastic penalties had of late years undeniably increased.

Romilly, thinking it prudent to begin with the Bill which was most certain to be opposed, proceeded with that relating to stealing to the amount of forty shillings in a dwelling house. The

[1] "Mr. Windham spoke, as usual, extremely well against the law as it is—and, at the same time, against its reformation." Simond (*Journal*, i. 145).

[2] *Hansard*, xv. 366; Romilly, *Diary*, ii. 309 *seq.*

[3] *Hansard*, xvi. 763.

[4] Sheep stealing was very properly punished with death, said Giddy, because, considering the manner in which sheep were fed upon extensive downs, the exposure to depredation, and the difficulty of detection, such a severe punishment was necessary for the sake of preserving the vast quantity of wholesome food and warm raiment for human use (*Hansard*, xvi. 766).

[5] An instance was given of an old woman stealing a £10 note, and being indicted as stealing 39/- to avoid the capital part of the charge.

Government was unanimous in opposing,[1] and, in a thin house where two-thirds of those who voted against it were in office, the Bill was thrown out by two votes. But, having succeeded in their opposition to this Bill, the Ministry did not oppose that which related to privately stealing in shops, and it duly passed the Commons.

Privately Stealing in Shops Bill.

Romilly then, complaining that both sides were acting without the necessary knowledge of cases, obtained returns of the number of persons committed throughout England and Wales during the previous five years, stating the crimes charged, the numbers of those against whom no bill was found, of those discharged by proclamation, of those acquitted of the capital part of the charge, the sentences pronounced, and the executions which had taken place.[2]

When the Privately Stealing in Shops Bill came up for a second reading in the Lords, Lord Ellenborough strongly opposed the repeal of a law which had so long been held necessary for the security of the public. The practical result of the Act of last session, which mitigated the penalty for the offence of privately stealing from the person, had, he affirmed, been an enormous increase in the number of such offences; pocket-picking was now preferred to any other kind of depredation. So it would be in this case. Private stealing from shops was considerably upon the increase, and nothing but the terror of death would keep retail shops from unavoidable loss, bankruptcy, and ruin. Lauderdale, on the other hand, pointed out that, owing to the change in the value of money, capital punishment was now enforced for the stealing of a sum which would scarcely have amounted to half-a-crown in the reign of William, when the law had been imposed—a thing which the legislature of that day had certainly not intended. Ellenborough, in replying, said that "few of their lordships could estimate the feelings of the judges, or conceive adequately what they suffered, when they laid their heads upon their pillows at an assize town, and had to reflect that the next day would impose upon them the painful duty of pronouncing upon several of their

[1] The Master of the Rolls, however, supported it very warmly. He said that, when the law and the practice were so opposite to each other, one of them must be wrong, and he had no doubt that it was the law; that it was all-important, in all countries, that the law should coincide with public opinion, but more especially in this country, where public opinion had so powerful an influence, and where juries prevailed (Romilly, *Diary*, ii. 323).

[2] *Hansard*, xvi. 834.

fellow-creatures their awful doom"; all the same, he maintained that the severity of the laws was necessary to prevent such crimes. The Bill was rejected by 31 to 11.[1]

Transportation system.

In the same month, Romilly carried his object further by a vigorous and damning exposure of the transportation system. There were three principles in punishment, he said; (1) deterrence of others, (2) prevention from further crimes of the criminal himself, (3) reformation. This last had been very much neglected of late years. The first shipload of 264 convicts was sent to New South Wales in 1787. It consisted of persons convicted in London and Middlesex, and, therefore, of all others, the most unfit for a new colony. The original profligacy of the convicts was much increased by imprisonment for several years in the hulks. They had no chance of returning except by working their passage, and even this was impossible for the females. Hence a new colony was rising consisting entirely of the outcasts of society, the refuse of mankind. The expense, too, was most enormous, and much greater than would have been the establishment of the penitentiary houses advocated by Blackstone and Howard. Wilberforce agreed that the settlement in New South Wales had been conducted with an utter neglect of the natural provisions most important for a colony. Morals were thrown under foot; the government was corrupt and the subjects were licentious. For twenty years, there was no church in the capital city. Even Windham admitted that no sort of moral discipline could reasonably be expected from such a colony. But, in deference to the request for further time to ascertain the facts, Romilly withdrew the matter for the moment.[2]

Penitentiary houses.

On 5th June, he brought forward a motion relative to the penitentiary houses just referred to. The existing methods of punishment for crimes, he said, were the jail or house of correction, the hulks, and transportation. Persons confined to jails returned

[1] *Hansard*, xvii. 196. Among the majority were no fewer than seven bishops. "I rank these prelates amongst the members who were solicited to vote against the Bill, because I would rather be convinced of their servility towards Government than that, recollecting the mild doctrines of their religion, they could have come down to the House spontaneously to vote that transportation for life is not a sufficiently severe punishment for pilfering what is of five shillings value, and that nothing but the blood of the offender can afford an adequate atonement for such a transgression" (Romilly, *Diary*, ii. 331). It should be remembered that, in those days, preferment in the Church was rather by influence than by worth. "Paley is a great man," said George III.: "he will never be a bishop." See Walpole, i. 73.

[2] *Hansard*, xvi. 944.

to society much worse than when they were withdrawn from it, and the prisons—particularly the London prisons—made no arrangements for separation and segregation, and remained a reproach to the country. Imprisonment in the hulks was still more pernicious; of persons there confined, Howard had said that those who came from the country generally died, and that those who came from the great manufacturing towns became in a short time the most daring and dangerous of offenders. As to the evils of transportation, he only added that nothing could be expected from a colony where the whole population consisted of prisoners and jailors.

The objects of the penitentiary houses were, on the other hand, to reform the criminals, to seclude them from their former associates, to separate those of whom hopes might be entertained from those who were desperate, to teach them useful trades, to accustom them to habits of industry, to give them religious instruction, and to provide them with a recommendation to the world and the means of obtaining an honest livelihood on the expiration of their imprisonment. The system could hardly be called an experiment; when tried, it had everywhere been attended with success; but, practically, the plan, though recommended in the highest terms by Blackstone and Howard, had remained on the statute book for upwards of thirty years without any effectual step being taken to carry it into execution.

The motion met with general approval, and a resolution was carried without opposition, pledging the Government early in the next session to take the matter into consideration.[1]

Robbery on navigable rivers.

Before the rising of Parliament, yet another bill of Romilly's was brought in. This was for "the better preventing of robbery on navigable rivers and wharfs." This bill, he said, stood on totally different grounds from his other two bills, inasmuch as it had no antiquity to support it—having been passed only at the end of last session—and moreover, so far as he knew, it had never been acted on. But, as there was no prospect of it passing during the current session, he did not press for its third reading.[2]

Cruelty to Animals Bill.

In April, Lord Erskine's Bill was reintroduced into the Lords, the wording now being altered to "for the more effectually preventing malicious and wanton cruelty to animals." On the second reading, Ellenborough remarked that it would cause more vexation to mankind than was now suffered by the brute creation. In

[1] *Hansard*, xvii. 322. [2] *Ibid.*, xvii. 531.

Committee, the former unanimity of the Peers on the subject was broken up—perhaps owing to Erskine incautiously congratulating himself that the prevention of cruelty out of a consideration for the animals suffering, instead of regarding it only "so far as it was consistent with the ownership and dominion of man," dated a new era in legislation. Ellenborough strongly objected to any such idea; he, as well as Lauderdale and Holland, considered that the moral sense of mankind was sufficient for the protection of animals, and objected to enforcing the laws of God and morality by statute. Finally, Erskine asked for the discharge of the order for recommitting the Bill, saying that he hoped soon to introduce another measure on which there might be a unanimous vote.[1]

Slave trade.

Although the Slave Trade had been formally abolished by England, the African Institution soon discovered that it was still to a considerable extent being carried on surreptitiously. At their instigation, Brougham brought forward a resolution condemning these evasions, and got it carried. At the same time, Lord Holland obtained assent to an Address to the Crown, praying that further steps be taken to induce foreign powers to abolish the traffic.[2]

Naval schools.

Of a measure not mentioned in *Hansard*, one would like to know more. This was a Bill brought in by George Rose, treasurer of the navy, to increase the number of seamen by establishing naval seminaries on the coasts, where boys might be properly educated for four or five years, the boys to be supplied from parish paupers, of whom "the number amounts to 90,000." They would not cost the Government more than £5 each, and would, he calculated, secure a succession of 7,000 seamen every year. This would diminish the hardship of forcible impressment, and might in time do away with it altogether.[3]

Gaslight Bill.

In May, we find the Gaslight Bill reintroduced in the House of Lords. The capital of the proposed company was £200,000, and the term twenty-one years. The clause which rendered the subscribers individually not answerable except to the amount of their subscriptions was retained — the defence being that such a privilege had been usually and lately granted to companies of the same nature, viz. insurance companies, navigable canal companies, water companies, the Flower Company, Whitstable Fishery,

[1] *Hansard*, xvi. 726, 845, 880, 1017.

[2] *Hansard*, xvi. 11, 12. [3] *Edinburgh Annual Register*, i. 160.

Northumberland Fishery, and Highgate Archway Company.[1] "It was not merely gaslight which would be obtained," said Lord Sheffield, "and much money saved now paid to foreigners for tallow and oil, but several other articles of, perhaps, still more importance, such as coke, tar, pitch, asphaltum, ammoniacal liquor, and essential oil, for which we were in a great measure dependent upon other countries." One gathers that, under its provisions, if any district or parish made application for this mode of lighting, the company were to have a monopoly in such district or parish for fourteen years, and to be at liberty to open the streets to lay down their pipes—which, as Lauderdale objected, was a very effectual monopoly, to say nothing of the "most disgusting nuisance created" by the gas. On the third reading, however, the only objection raised, apparently, was the danger that might arise in the metropolis through an accident to any of the main tubes, and the Bill passed the Lords in June.[2]

Lancastrian Schools.

Popular education in England may be said to have begun in this year with the formation of the Royal Lancastrian Association. Lancaster, the son of a Chelsea pensioner, was an enthusiastic young Quaker, who copied or reinvented the "Madras System," of "setting children to teach each other"—that is, employing the older pupils as monitors, to impart, by an elaborate drill, the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic to large numbers at a time. The success—which would hardly be expected from the bare statement of its principle—and the economy of the system caught the attention of many thoughtful observers. The children seemed not only to learn but to enjoy their education; and, as the only materials required were blackboards to

[1] A similar attempt at limited liability was made in the case of Drury Lane. The theatre was burned in February. It was insured for only £35,000. In May, Sheridan addressed a petition to Parliament, on behalf of himself and other proprietors, proposing to raise a fund to rebuild it, by transferring the property to a large body of subscribers, who were willing to raise a fund adequate to the accomplishment of that object, but "on the sole condition that the subscribing individuals should not be subject to any call or demand beyond the amount of their original subscriptions." The petition was referred to a Committee (*Hansard*, xvi. 757).

[2] *Hansard*, xvi. 1038; xvii. 230. In March, Simond saw through a flint glass factory in Birmingham lit by hydrogen gas, and "absolutely as light as day." A leaden tube led round the flats, with 120 cocks letting off a little stream of gas, which, when set on fire, gave a bright flame of several inches in length. The smell, he said, was certainly most offensive, "but the workmen did not seem to mind it," and the cost was only 4/6 a night. "Yet this method is not generally adopted: I have not been able to discover why" (*Journal*, ii. 94).

hold spelling sheets, a few slates, and sand on which the children wrote with their fingers, Lancaster was able to show that 5/- a head annually would cover all the cost. For the past two or three years, much notice had been taken of the movement in the magazines. In 1805, Mrs. Trimmer—whose name still dwells in tradition as author of several books for the young—thought it worth while attacking the system as subversive of religious education, a danger to the establishment, etc., and Sydney Smith thought her attack worth holding up to merciless ridicule in the pages of the *Edinburgh Review*. In 1806, George III. himself patronised Lancaster. Schools were started in Bristol, Canterbury, Windsor, Cambridge, etc., Lancaster always insisting that it was as easy to teach a thousand children as a hundred. In 1810, finally, came the Royal Lancastrian Association, founded by James Mill, Brougham, Samuel Rogers, Francis Place, and a number of Quaker philanthropists and Nonconformist clergymen; and, in the next year, we hear of Romilly becoming member of a committee for extending the Lancastrian schools to every part of the kingdom.[1]

**Telford's project.**

The *Scots Magazine* contains an account of a very interesting project of Telford—an iron railway across the whole breadth of the country, connecting Glasgow and Berwick. The traction, of course, was still to be by horse, and the increase of power gained was simply due to the diminution of the friction, experienced on a common road, where "iron is made to move upon iron." The line might be formed either with a continuous ascent or descent, or it might be made perfectly level, with inclined planes at certain distances—comparable to the locks of a canal—where, the strength of the horse being insufficient, the waggon would be drawn up by means of machinery. The kind of machinery, unfortunately, is not mentioned. The whole road, apparently, had been surveyed by Telford, and calculations were given showing that a return of 12 per cent. might be expected.[2]

***Lady of the Lake.***

Almost the only literary event of the year was the publication of the *Lady of the Lake*. It was received with a burst of enthusiasm —even the *Edinburgh Review* acknowledging that, as compared with its predecessors, it had fewer faults and greater beauties. The first quarto edition of 2,050 copies at two guineas disappeared instantly, and was followed in the course of the same year by four editions in octavo, one of 3,000, a second of 3,250, the third

[1] *Diary*, ii. 235. [2] pp. 329, 422.

and fourth of 6,000 each; thus, in the space of a few months, the extraordinary number of 20,000 copies were disposed of. For the copyright Scott received nominally £2,000, in addition to his profits with Ballantyne. "The whole country rang with the praises of the poet—crowds set off to view the scenery of Loch Katrine, till then comparatively unknown; and, as the book came out just before the season for excursions, every house and inn in that neighbourhood was crammed with a constant succession of visitors."[1]

*Edinburgh Annual Register.*

Another publication of the Ballantyne press was due to Scott's initiation. This was the *Edinburgh Annual Register*, which began in this year with two volumes dealing with 1808. "There is nothing even barely tolerable of this nature," wrote Scott, "though so obviously necessary to future history." It is to be wished, however, that the new *Register* had given more attention to Scottish affairs than it did. It might as well have been written—as probably most of it was—in the Strand. The historical part was contributed by Southey, the politics being "anti-Foxite."[2]

Windham.

The obituary of the year contains the name of the Right Hon. William Windham, who died during the recess: "a genuine patriot and a truly honest man," said George III.—a politician who did not rise to the position his abilities seemed to promise, because of certain peculiarities which made his alliance sometimes more dangerous than his hostility. Upright, independent, brave, generous, courteous, kind; as a speaker, eloquent and graceful; in conversation, unmatched—"decidedly the most agreeable scholar-like gentleman or gentleman-like scholar I ever remember to have seen," said Wilberforce, who "did not rate him so highly as some persons did"—he "moved in an orbit of his own." He opposed several of the measures about which serious men were thoroughly agreed, among them the abolition of the slave trade; spoke against popular education as a mighty national evil; stood up for bull baiting, and the use of the lash in the army; and poured contempt on the volunteers. Mackintosh subsequently accounted for this peculiarity as an infirmity of some noble minds—the love of distinction:—"He disdained a communion of opinion on subjects on which all the great men of his time concurred, and undertook, in the spirit of his character, a chivalrous defence of that which all men but himself abandoned."[3]

[1] Lockhart's *Scott*, iii. 215 *seq.*

[2] Lockhart's *Scott*, iii. *passim.*

[3] *Hansard*, 1820, i. 229.

# CHAPTER XIV

## 1810. THE REPORT OF THE BULLION COMMITTEE

THE year 1810 saw the publication of the great Enquiry by the Bullion Committee, which first brought Francis Horner into general notice as a member of the House of Commons.[1] In the previous September, as we saw, Ricardo had written a series of letters to the *Morning Chronicle*, which he republished in December under the suggestive title, *The High Price of Bullion a proof of the Depreciation of Bank notes*. Its chief thesis is that, so long as the currency of any particular country consists exclusively of gold and silver coins, or of paper immediately convertible into such coins, its value can neither rise above, nor fall below, the value of the metallic currencies of other countries, by a greater sum than will suffice to defray the expense of importing foreign coin or bullion, if the currency be deficient; or of exporting a portion of the existing supply, if it be redundant. But when a country issues inconvertible paper notes, they cannot be exported to other countries in event of their becoming redundant at home; and whenever, under such circumstances, the exchange with foreign states is depressed below, or the price of bullion rises above, its mint price, more than the cost of sending bullion abroad, it shows conclusively that too much paper

Ricardo.

[1] Francis Horner, member for Wendover, early known as "the economist"; born 1778, son of an Edinburgh merchant; educated at High School and University there; as the sound of his own voice seemed to have worried him not a little, he spent two years in England with a schoolmaster, "to be freed from the disadvantages of a provincial dialect," and left with a certificate that he had "acquired the English accent and pronunciation so completely as not to be distinguished from a native"; called to the Scots bar, 1800; a leading member of the brilliant group composed of Brougham, Jeffrey, Sydney Smith, Petty, Cockburn, Murray, and others, who imbibed Dugald Stewart and contributed to the *Edinburgh Review*; entered Parliament for St. Ives, 1806; perhaps accountable for Sydney Smith's conviction about the necessary surgical operation.

has been issued, and that its value is depreciated from excess.[1] And the tract concludes:—"The only legitimate security which the public can possess against the indiscretion of the Bank is to oblige them to pay their notes in specie; and this can only be effected by diminishing the amount of bank notes in circulation till the nominal price of gold be lowered to the mint price."

What follows will show that the principles of the tract and those of the Report are substantially the same, and, although the name of Ricardo is not mentioned by the Bullion Committee, there can be no doubt where it got its inspiration.

Horner's proposal.

On 1st February, Horner asked for various returns, with a view to an enquiry by a Select Committee into the causes of the existing high price of bullion and the consequent effect upon the value of the paper currency. Without committing himself, his present conjecture, he said, was that the high price of gold might be produced, partly by a larger circulation of Bank of England paper than was necessary, and partly by the new circumstances in which the foreign trade of the country was placed, *e.g.* the immense purchases of naval stores and grain from the Baltic, which had to be paid for in specie.[2] The enquiry, he said, would also have to look into the depreciation of our silver coin, as silver, which then stood in the proportion of 15½ to 1 of gold, still continued, according to the law of our mint, the standard measure of all commercial value. The proposal was received with much approval, and the returns were made.[3]

The Committee.

The Committee appointed consisted of 21 members, among them being Perceval, Tierney, Parnell, Giddy,[4] Henry Thornton,[5]

[1] The above is the excellent summary by M'Culloch in the preface to his edition of Ricardo.

[2] Creevey, on 26th January, affirmed that "it was a fact well known to every commercial man that, for all articles of foreign produce of late imported into this country for home consumption, we were obliged to make all our returns in actual specie, bought at a premium of 30 per cent., and not in produce or manufactures" (*Hansard*, xv. 157).

[3] *Hansard*, xv. 269.

[4] Giddy—better known by the name he subsequently took, Davies Gilbert—"one of the most assiduous members who ever sat in the House of Commons, and perhaps unequalled for his service on committees"; became President of the Royal Society in 1827.

[5] Henry Thornton (not to be confused with his elder brother, Samuel Thornton, who also was a Bank director, but always stood by the Bank), born 1760; a banker and director of the Bank of England; attached himself to no party; a man of great integrity and financial ability; in 1802, wrote the essay on the *Nature and Effects of Paper Credit*, of which Mill said that it

Baring,[1] Huskisson, with Horner himself as chairman. The remit was "to enquire into the cause of the High Price of Gold Bullion, and to take into consideration the state of the Circulating Medium, and of the Exchanges between Great Britain and Foreign Parts." The Committee sat 31 days and examined 29 witnesses. Horner was usually in the chair, but, when on circuit, his place was generally taken by Huskisson. The Report was issued just before the rising of Parliament.[2]

Price of gold bullion.

The Committee found that the price of gold bullion, which, by mint regulations, was £3 17/10½ per standard oz.,[3] had been as high in the market as £4 during 1806, 1807, and 1808; had advanced very rapidly towards the end of 1808; and had continued very high during the whole of the year 1809, the market price of standard gold in bars fluctuating from £4 9/- to £4 12/- per oz.[4] (The market price of £4 10/- would be about 15½ per cent. above the mint price.)

Price of silver.

Silver had moved in the same direction. As measured in Spanish dollars, during 1809 it was from 10 per cent. to 13 per cent. above the mint price of 5/2 per oz.[5]

Continental exchanges.

As to the continental exchanges, towards the end of 1808 they became very unfavourable to this country, and continued still more unfavourable throughout the whole of 1809. Hamburg, Amsterdam, and Paris were the principal places where the exchanges were established. The exchange with Holland and

was the clearest exposition of the subject in English, proving that, up till that year, the currency had not been materially depreciated, perhaps not at all; now Horner's chief supporter.

[1] Alexander Baring, member for Taunton since 1806; a member of the great house of Baring Bros.; afterwards first Lord Ashburton.

[2] The full text of the Report and of the Evidence is given in *Hansard*, xvii. Append. ccii.

[3] That is to say, as now, any person taking standard gold (*i.e.* gold eleven-twelfths fine), to the mint had the right of getting it stamped into coins at the rate of £3 17/10½ for every oz., without charge. As has often been pointed out since, under these conditions the expression "mint price" is not quite accurate.

[4] Two points had been brought out in evidence; (1) that the price of foreign gold coin was generally higher than that of bar gold, as "finding a more ready vent in foreign markets": *e.g.*, Spanish and Portuguese coin was about 2/- per oz. higher than gold in bars; (2) that, in England, bar gold which might be exported (*i.e.* gold "sworn off" for exportation as being foreign) was higher than bar gold which might not be exported, by 3/- to 4/-. On these accounts, the price of standard gold bars such as might be exported was the chief thing to keep in view.

[5] It should be remembered that at this time both silver and gold might be coined to any amount at the respective mint prices.

Amsterdam, during the latter half of 1809 and the first three months of 1810, was 16 per cent. to 20 per cent. below par, and that with Paris still lower (though there had been a gradual improvement since).

"So extraordinary a rise in the market price of gold in this country, coupled with so remarkable a depression of our exchanges with the continent," pointed, in the judgment of the Commissioners, to "something in the state of our own domestic currency as the cause of both appearances."

But, before adopting this conclusion, the Commissioners had thought it proper to enquire more particularly into the circumstances connected with each of those two facts, and accordingly took evidence from several merchants of extensive dealings and intelligence.

### I. THE HIGH PRICE OF GOLD.

Was the high price caused by exports of gold?

Most of these witnesses ascribed the high price of gold entirely to its alleged scarcity, arising out of an unusual demand for it upon the continent—chiefly for the use of the French armies, but also because gold was being hoarded owing to want of confidence.

To this the Committee answered that, in their opinion, when British currency, based on gold, was in its "sound and natural state," no increased demand whatever from other countries could, for any long period, occasion a material rise in its market price.

Reasons for doubting this.

But before explaining the grounds of this general opinion, they stated some other reasons which, quite independently, would have led them to doubt whether, in point of fact, such a demand for gold as was alleged had operated in the manner supposed.

(1) It would have influenced the price of gold bullion in the continental markets as well, as valued in their respective currencies. But there was no evidence to that effect. By some, indeed, it was denied—"the actual prices of gold in the foreign markets are just so much lower than its market price here as the difference of exchange amounts to." In Hamburg and Amsterdam (where the measure of value was silver), there was no considerable rise in the price of gold as valued in silver—what rise there was being, in the Committee's judgment, due to a change in the relative value of the precious metals all over the world, whereby silver had fallen in value relative to gold even in this country before the increase of our paper currency began to operate.

(2) If the wants of the French military chest had of late been much increased, it must be observed that the general gold supply of Europe had been augmented by all that quantity which England had spared in consequence of the substitution of another medium of circulation.

(3) Former wars had not produced this effect. In the Seven Years' War, and in the American War, there was no scarcity of bullion in this country, and, from 1773 till 1799, the market price of standard gold was never for any length of time above the mint price.

**But was bullion really scarce?**

But the evidence had led them to entertain much doubt of the alleged fact that bullion really was scarce in this country. That guineas had disappeared from circulation, there could be no question, but this "did not prove a scarcity of bullion any more than the high price proved that scarcity." If one was willing to pay the price, there seemed to be no difficulty in getting any quantity. There had, indeed, been large exportations of gold to the continent, but there had also been very considerable importations of it from South America, this country apparently being now the channel through which the produce of the mines of New Spain and the Brazils passed to the rest of the world. Such a fact gave us the opportunity of first supplying ourselves, and "must render this the last of the great markets in which a scarcity of that article would be felt."

Lastly, the nearly corresponding rise in the market price of silver could certainly not be ascribed to a scarcity of silver, the importation of which had been unusually large, while the usual drain to India and China had stopped.

**Not proven.**

For all these reasons, the Committee would be inclined to think that those who ascribed the high price of gold to an unusual demand for that article, and a consequent scarcity, assumed facts as certain for which there was no evidence. But, even if these assumptions were proved, to ascribe the high price of gold in this country to its scarcity seemed to the Committee to involve a misconception which they thought it important to explain.

**An increased demand for gold would mean lower prices of commodities.**

In this country, gold alone was the measure of value, silver being legal tender only to the amount of £25. A commodity was "dear" or "cheap" according as more or less gold was given in exchange for a given quantity of that commodity. But "a given quantity of gold itself would never be exchanged for a greater or a less quantity of gold of the same standard fineness," and,

generally speaking, "the price of gold, being itself measured and expressed in gold, could not be raised or lowered by an increased demand for it. An oz. of gold would exchange for neither more nor less than an oz. of gold of the same fineness, except so far as an allowance was to be made, if the one oz. was coined or otherwise manufactured and the other was not, for the expense of that coinage or manufacture. An oz. of standard gold bullion would not fetch more in our market than £3 17/10½, unless £3 17/10½ in our actual currency was equivalent to less than an oz. of gold. An increase or diminution in the demand for gold, or, what comes to the same thing, a diminution or increase in the general supply of gold would, no doubt, have a material effect upon the money prices of all other articles. An increased demand for gold, and a consequent scarcity of that article, would make it more valuable in proportion to all other articles—the same quantity of gold would purchase a greater quantity of any other article than it did before; in other words, the real price of gold would rise and the money prices of all commodities would fall. The money price of gold itself would remain unaltered, but the prices of all other commodities would fall."

"That this is not the present state of things is abundantly manifest; the prices of all commodities have risen,[1] and gold appears to have risen in its price only in common with them. If this common effect is to be ascribed to one and the same cause, that cause can only be found in the state of the currency of this country." **But prices of commodities had risen!**

The principles which govern the relative prices of gold in bullion and gold in coin, as well as of paper circulating in its place and exchangeable for it, might be introduced by adverting to the principles and regulations on which the coinage was founded. **Principles of coinage.**

"The object was to secure to the people a standard of a deter-

[1] It is curious that the statement was not seized on by the critics of the Bullion Committee's Report. The price of grain, indeed, had risen, but anyone who had read the accounts of the previous harvest would have had no difficulty in seeing that it could not but rise, and rise greatly, owing to the scarcity. But, on the other hand, all commodities were falling in price, and falling rapidly. It is true that they were falling from an extremely high level, but, again, the outside causes—independent of note depreciation—which had suddenly forced them up to that high level, were perfectly obvious. The only explanation suggested is that no evidence had been taken by the Committee as to prices, and that Horner and his friends were too busy proving their main point to enquire whether what seems to have been a current belief was well grounded. See *passim*, Tooke, vol. i.

minate value, by affixing a stamp, under the royal authority, to pieces of gold, which were thus certified to be of a given weight and fineness. Gold in bullion was the standard to which the legislature had intended that the coin should be conformed, and with which it should be identified as much as possible. And if that intention of the legislature were completely fulfilled, the coined gold would bear precisely the same price in exchange for all other commodities as it would have borne had it continued in the shape of bullion." [1]

But it was subject to some small fluctuations: (1) the loss of interest due to the detention of the gold in the mint—hitherto amounting to about 1 per cent.—and forming a limit to the possible rise of the value of coin above that of bullion: (2) the wear and tear of coin, which at present appeared to be nearly 1 per cent.: (3) the prohibition of melting down any but light coin, and of the exportation of gold coin and of any gold unless under oath that it had not been produced from the coin of this realm—which accounted for a difference amounting, it was said, on evidence, from 3/- to 4/- per oz.

**The utmost limit of difference between coin and bullion under specie payments.**

In the opinion of the Committee, the two latter circumstances constituted unquestionably the whole cause of that depression of the value of the gold coin of this country in exchange for commodities below the value of bullion in exchange for commodities which had occasionally arisen or could arise at those times when the Bank paid in specie. The utmost limit that could be ascribed to these causes was 5½ per cent.—most of this being due to the ancient but doubtful policy of prohibition of export—and, accordingly, it would be found that, "in all the periods preceding 1797, the difference between what is called the mint price and market price of gold never exceeded that limit."

**But, under the suspension, the limit was as indefinite as the excess of paper**

"Since the suspension of cash payments in 1797, however, it is certain that, even if gold is still our measure of value and standard of prices, it has been exposed to a new cause of variation, from

[1] The truth of this was illustrated by reference to Hamburg, where all large payments were effected in bank money, consisting of actual silver of a given fineness lodged in the Hamburg Bank by the merchants of that place, and transferred by medium merely of the bank-books. This silver being assayed and weighed with scarcely any loss of time, and the free right of withdrawal, melting, and exportation being given, silver was rendered an invariable measure, except in so far as its relative value itself varied with the varying supply from the mines. So, practically, *mutatis mutandis* it was with gold in this country, allowing for the limited variation described between the market and the mint price.

the possible excess of that paper which is not convertible into gold at will; and the limit of this new variation is as indefinite as the excess to which that paper may be issued. It may indeed be doubted whether, since the new system of Bank of England payments has been fully established, gold has in truth continued to be our measure of value; and whether we have any other standard prices than that circulating medium, issued primarily by the Bank of England and in a secondary manner by the country banks, the variations of which in relative value may be as indefinite as the possible excess of that circulating medium. But whether our present measure of value and standard of prices be this paper currency thus variable in its relative value, or continues still to be gold, but gold rendered more valuable than it was before in consequence of being interchangeable for a paper currency which is not at will convertible into gold, it is, in either case, most desirable for the public that our circulating medium should again be conformed, as speedily as circumstances will permit, to its real and legal standard, gold bullion."

—and the money price both of commodities and of bullion rose, while exchange fell.

"If the gold coin of the country were at any time to become very much worn and lessened in weight, or if it should suffer a debasement of its standard, it is evident that there would be a proportionable rise of the gold bullion above its mint price; for the mint price is the sum in coin, which is equivalent in intrinsic value to a given quantity, an ounce for example, of the metal in bullion; and if the intrinsic value of that sum of coin be lessened, it is equivalent to a less quantity of bullion than before. The same rise of the market price of gold above its mint price will take place if the local currency of this particular country, being no longer convertible into gold, should at any time be issued to excess. That excess cannot be exported to other countries, and, not being convertible into specie, it is not necessarily returned upon those who issued it; it remains in the channel of circulation, and is gradually absorbed by increasing the prices of all commodities. An increase in the quantity of the local currency of a particular country will raise prices in that country exactly in the same manner as an increase in the general supply of precious metals raises prices all over the world. By means of the increase of quantity, the value of a given portion of that circulating medium in exchange for other commodities is lowered; in other words, the money prices of all other commodities are raised, and that of bullion with the rest. In this manner, an excess of the

local currency of a particular country will occasion a rise of the market price of gold above its mint price. It is no less evident that, in the event of the prices of commodities being raised in one country by an augmentation of its circulating medium, while no similar augmentation in the circulating medium of a neighbouring country has led to a similar rise of prices, the currencies of those two countries will no longer continue to bear the same relative value to each other as before. The intrinsic value of a given portion of the one currency being lessened while that of the other remains unaltered, the exchange will be computed between those two countries to the disadvantage of the former.

"In this manner a general rise of all prices, a rise in the market price of gold, and a fall of the foreign exchanges, will be the effect of an excessive quantity of circulating medium in a country which has adopted a currency not exportable to other countries, or not convertible at will into a coin which is exportable."

## II. THE FOREIGN EXCHANGES.

Causes suggested for the fall.

Many of the witnesses ascribed the fall in the continental exchanges altogether to commercial causes, plus the foreign expenditure of government. For instance, in return for the large imports from the Baltic, and wines and brandies from France, no merchandise had been exported from this country. The exports of colonial produce to the continent had, indeed, increased, but not sufficiently to make up the deficiency. The total excess of imports from these and other parts of the world above exports would account, in their opinion, for the rate of exchange continuing as high as 16 per cent. against this country for a permanent period of time.

Sir Francis Baring, again, considered that the fall in the exchanges was due to two circumstances: the restrictions upon trade with the continent, and the increased circulation of this country in paper as productive of the scarcity of bullion. Another eminent witness ascribed the whole of the depreciation originally to the measures of the enemy, and its not having recovered to the circumstance of the paper of England not being exchangeable for cash.

These answers, however vague and contradictory they might be, all involved the principle, expressed more or less distinctly, that bullion was the true regulator both of the value of a local currency

and of the rate of foreign exchanges, and that the free convertibility of paper currency into the precious metals placed a limit to the fall of exchange, and not only checked the exchanges from falling below that limit, but recovered them by restoring the balance. Without pausing to criticise these opinions in detail, the Committee went on to explain what they considered the true causes of the present state of the exchanges.

The par exchange.

No point of trade, considered politically, was, they conceived, better settled than the subject of foreign exchanges. The par of exchange between two countries was that sum in the currency of the one which, in point of intrinsic value, was precisely equal to a given sum of the currency of the other; that is, contained precisely the equal weight of gold or silver of the same fineness.

The limit of difference

The difference of exchange resulting from the state of trade and payments between two countries was limited by the expense of conveying and of insuring the precious metals from one country to the other, and could not long exceed that limit.

—as affected by war charges

But it occurred to the Committee that the amount of these expenses might be very much increased above what they had been in ordinary periods, even of war, by the peculiar circumstances at present obstructing commercial intercourse, and they directed their enquiries to this point.

The whole cost, they found, of sending gold from London to Hamburg, including insurance, was variously calculated for the past fifteen months from 4 per cent. to 7 per cent., as compared with a little over 3½ per cent. in 1797. When the risk was greatest —in the last half of last year—the average did not exceed 7 per cent. To an inland market like Paris it would, of course, be higher.

—might be 7 per cent.

These figures disposed them to think that the circumstances of the trade of this country, in the course of the last year, were such as to occasion a real fall of our exchanges with the continent to a certain extent, and perhaps at one period almost as low as the limit fixed by the expense of remitting gold from hence to the respective markets.

They were further inclined to this opinion by what had been stated in evidence regarding the alleged excess of imports from the continent—"though this is a part of the subject which is most left in doubt"—and also by the mode in which payments had been latterly effected, viz. an advance on imports from the continent, and a long credit on exports to other parts of the world.

To check this, they obtained a special return from the

The balance of trade.

Inspector General of Customs for the past five years. From this it seemed that, when allowance was made for the produce of the fisheries, and for imports from the East and West Indies, which were of the nature of rents, profits, and capital remitted to this country, in return for which nothing was exported, there was regularly a balance in favour of this country, from six and a half millions, in 1805, to nearly fifteen millions in 1809.[1] So far therefore as any inference was to be drawn from the balance thus exhibited, the exchange during the present year ought to be peculiarly favourable. And the official value of our imports and exports with the continent alone showed a balance of exports over imports of over £14 millions in 1809—which might, indeed, be expected, as consequence of the large drafts on government for foreign expenditure, an augmentation of exports and a diminution of imports being promoted and even enforced by such drafts.

At least a great part of the fall due to the disturbance in our currency.

But, they explained,[2] they had enlarged on this to throw further light on the general question, and to dissipate some very prevalent errors. It made no change in their conviction that a portion at least of the great fall which the exchanges had lately suffered must have resulted, not from the state of trade, but from a change in the relative value of our domestic currency. When this deduction was joined to what the Committee had stated respecting the change in the market price of gold, the conviction appeared to be demonstrated.

### III. PRACTICE OF THE BANK OF ENGLAND.

The Bank's view

Holding the opinion they did that, in the present artificial condition of the circulating medium, it was most important to watch the foreign exchanges and the market price of gold, the

[1] The Committee were careful to say that little confidence could be placed in deductions even from such an "improved document," as it supplied no account of the amounts representing shipping freights ("forming an addition to the value of our exported articles"), interest on capital in England possessed by foreigners, and on capital abroad possessed by inhabitants of Great Britain; took no cognisance of contraband trade, etc.

[2] This was apparently in apology for the very incomplete and inconclusive discussion of the real balance of trade and its effects. The fact is that, up till then, the balance of trade had never been thoroughly studied, even by economists. Huskisson, in his subsequent pamphlet, *e.g.* said little more about it than :—"The vaunted balance of trade, or the excess of our exports above our imports, is not, as it has been represented and is generally believed, the *measure* and the *realisation* of the profit derived to us from our foreign trade, but is, in fact, only capital sent out of the country for which no capital is returned to it" (p. 100).

Committee were desirous to learn whether the directors of the Bank of England held the same opinion, and derived from it a practical rule for the control of their circulation; and particularly whether, in the course of the past year, the great depression of the exchanges, and the great rise in the price of gold, had suggested to the directors any suspicion of the currency of the country being excessive.

—that they need not regulate their issues by the exchanges or by the difference between market and mint price

As to this, the Committee found on evidence that the directors of the Bank of England, in regulating the amount of their issues, paid no attention either to the state of the foreign exchanges or to the difference between the market and the mint price of gold—they did not, in fact, consider that there was any necessary connection between them.

On this the Committee were very emphatic. "It is a great practical error," they said, "to suppose that the exchanges with foreign countries and the price of bullion are not liable to be affected by the amount of a paper currency which is issued without the condition of payment in specie at the will of the holder. That the exchanges will be lowered and the price of bullion raised by an issue of such paper to excess, is not only established as a principle by the most eminent authorities upon commerce and finance, but its practical truth has been illustrated by the history of almost every state in modern times; and, in all those countries, this principle has finally been resorted to by their statesmen as the best criterion to judge by, whether such currency was or was not excessive."

—was contrary to all authority,

Premising that, in the most familiar examples in foreign countries, the excess of paper had usually been accompanied by a circumstance which had no place in our situation at present, namely, want of confidence in the sufficiency of the fund upon which the paper had been issued, and noting that the same results were not to be expected where it was only a question of the excess of paper of perfectly good credit, reference was made to the paper currencies of the British colonies in North America in the early part of the eighteenth century, the French assignats, the money speculations of the Austrian government in the late campaign, and the existing state of Portugal; and three examples were given in detail, the Scots issues about the end of the Seven Years' War, the experience of the Bank of England itself shortly after its establishment, and the recent experience of the Irish exchanges in 1804.

–and to their own practice before 1797.

It was added that, before 1797, the state of the foreign exchanges and the price of gold did most materially affect the conduct of the Bank in their issue of notes—although they might not systematically watch these phenomena—inasmuch as the Bank were immediately apprised of any disturbance similar to the present by the return of the notes and the demand for specie, and contracted their discounts and issues accordingly. But, being now released from all fear of such drains, the Bank had lost this automatic check to over-issue.

The best criterion under the restriction.

As to the Bank's duty in the circumstances, the Committee were quite convinced. "Your Committee beg leave to report it to the House as their most clear opinion that, so long as the suspension of cash payments is permitted to subsist, the price of gold bullion and the general course of exchange with foreign countries, taken for any considerable period of time, form the best general criterion from which any inference can be drawn as to the sufficiency or excess of paper currency in circulation; and that the Bank of England cannot safely regulate the amount of its issues without having reference to the criterion presented by these two circumstances. And upon a review of all the facts and reasonings which have already been stated, your Committee are further of opinion that, although the commercial state of this country and the political state of the continent, may have had some influence on the high price of gold bullion and the unfavourable course of exchange with foreign countries, this price and this depreciation are also to be ascribed to the want of a permanent check and a sufficient limitation of the paper currency in this country."

The wholly erroneous view that there could be no over-issue so long as only good short bills were discounted.

In this connection, the Report went on to state and condemn a doctrine—"wholly erroneous in principle and pregnant with dangerous consequences in practice"—which the directors of the Bank put forward in evidence and were evidently most thoroughly convinced of, viz. that there could be no possible excess in the issue of Bank of England notes so long as they confined their discounts to paper of undoubted solidity, arising out of real commercial transactions, and payable at short and fixed periods.[1]

[1] Subsequently, in 1811, Huskisson moved for an account of the actual amount of the discounts of the Bank—not the precise amount, but a comparative scale of the commercial discounts from 1790 to 1811. The Bank, said Horner, had stated that it was impossible there should be any excess, the issues being always regulated by the discounts. The only way to show that their doctrine was true, was to produce an account of the amount of

So long as the notes were convertible, this indeed was true, for any excess at once returned upon themselves in demand for specie, and the necessity of being prepared to meet this demand was a sufficient check to overissue. But, now that this check was removed, it was possible that an excess might be issued even in the discount of perfectly good bills. The Bank, indeed, was scarcely to be blamed. It was natural for the directors to believe that nothing but benefit could accrue to the public at large while they saw the growth of Bank profits go hand in hand with the accommodations granted to the merchants. It was hardly to be expected that they should be fully aware of the consequences that might result from their pursuing, after the suspension of cash payments, the same system which they had found a safe one before. To watch the operation of so new a law, and to provide against the injury which might result from it to the public interests, was the province, not so much of the Bank as of the legislature; and, in the opinion of the Committee, there was room to regret that the House had not taken earlier notice of all the consequences of that law. The mistake lay in not seeing that a discount in notes was at once an advance of capital to merchants and an addition to the general mass of circulating medium. If there were no inducement to bring back what notes were in excess—as there was when they were convertible into specie—the notes would remain out till paid in discharge of the bills which were originally discounted. Each successive advance repeated the same process. "If the whole sum of discounts continues outstanding at a given amount, there will remain permanently out in circulation a corresponding amount of paper; and, if the amount of discounts is progressively increasing, the amount of paper which remains out in circulation over and above what is otherwise wanted for the occasions of the public will progressively increase also, and the money prices of commodities will progressively rise. This progress may be as indefinite as the range of speculation and adventure in a great commercial country."[1]

their issue and a scale of their discounts, and see whether they corresponded —the more necessary as it was affirmed that, though the discounts had been reduced, the issues had not. But the motion was rejected (*Hansard*, xix. 729).

[1] In other words, the increasing issue would be absorbed in the rising prices of commodities, and the community would never feel that there were more notes in circulation than were required for their ordinary currency needs.

The Bank should not be left to determine the amount of the country's currency.

Thus, they continued, "the suspension of cash payments has had the effect of committing into the hands of the Bank of England, to be exercised by their sole discretion, the important charge of supplying the country with that quantity of circulating medium which is exactly proportioned to the wants and occasions of the public. In the judgment of the Committee, that is a trust which it is unreasonable to expect that the directors of the Bank of England should ever be able to discharge. The most detailed knowledge of the actual trade of the country, combined with the most profound science in all the principles of money and circulation, would not enable any man or set of men to adjust and keep always adjusted the right proportion of circulating medium in a country to the wants of trade. When the currency consists entirely of the precious metals, or of paper convertible at will into the precious metals, the natural process of commerce, by establishing exchanges among all the different countries of the world, adjusts, in every particular country, the proportion of circulating medium to its actual occasions, according to that supply of the precious metals which the mines furnish to the general market of the world. The proportion which is thus adjusted and maintained by the natural operation of commerce, cannot be adjusted by any human wisdom or skill. If the natural system of currency and circulation be abandoned, and a discretionary issue of paper money substituted in its stead, it is vain to think that any rules can be devised for the exact exercise of such a discretion."[1]

For these reasons "your Committee cannot hesitate to say that these opinions of the Bank must be regarded as in a great measure the operative cause of the continuance of the present state of things."

### IV. THE PROGRESSIVE INCREASE OF NOTE ISSUES.

The actual increase

Before 1797, the average amount of Bank of England notes in circulation was between ten and eleven millions; hardly ever below nine and not often exceeding eleven. In 1798, it was

[1] In another part of the Report, the Committee were "only anxious to remark that the largest amount of mercantile discount by the Bank, if it could be considered by itself, ought never, in their judgment, to be regarded as any other than a great public benefit, and it is only the excess of paper currency thereby issued and kept out in circulation which is to be considered as the evil."

£13·3 millions; in 1802, £17·0; in 1809, £19·0—by far the most considerable part of the increase being in small notes. And, since 1796—though the absolute figures were not asked from the Bank—the amount of discounts had been progressively increasing.

But, of course, the mere numerical return of the amount of notes in circulation did not decide the question. While it might be supposed that the increase of trade since the suspension required an increase of currency, the improvements which had taken place of late years, especially in London, in the use and economy of money—such as the increased use of bankers' drafts, the clearing-house contrivance,[1] the intermediacy of bill brokers, etc.—must have had a great effect in rendering the same sum adequate to greater trade and payments. Within the London district, it would certainly appear that a smaller sum of money was required than formerly to perform the same number of exchanges and amount of payments, if the rate of prices had remained the same. And, again, both the policy of the Bank of England itself and the competition of the country bank paper, had tended to compress the paper of the Bank of England more and more within London and the adjacent district.

"All these circumstances must have co-operated to render a smaller augmentation of Bank of England paper necessary to supply the demands of our increased trade than might otherwise have been required; and show how impossible it is, from the numerical amount alone of that paper, to pronounce whether it is excessive or not; and such a criterion, your Committee have already shown, is only to be found in the state of the exchanges and the price of gold bullion."[2] —might or might not be necessary.

At the same time it was evident that the accustomed degree of accommodation to the merchants should not be suddenly and

[1] The clearing-house system had been established about thirty-five years before, and now embraced forty-six banks. The average amount of drafts cleared on normal days was about £4,700,000, and the average amount of bank notes necessary to pay the balances, £220,000 (*Evidence*, 22nd and 25th May, 1810).

[2] Incidentally, the Committee, glancing at the events of 1793 and 1797, thought that the former gave an important illustration of the principle that an enlarged accommodation was the true remedy for that occasional failure of confidence in the country districts to which our system of paper credit was unavoidably exposed, and said that, in the latter, the diminution of notes increased the public distress. But the distinction between such emergencies and that drain upon the bank which grew out of the unfavourable state of the foreign exchanges, should be carefully kept in mind.

materially reduced, and the Committee suggested that it might be practicable for the Bank rather to reduce their paper by a gradual reduction of the advances to the Government.

**Country bank issue**

Passing to the question of country bank issues, the Committee premised that, so long as cash payments were suspended, the whole paper of the country was a superstructure on the paper of the Bank of England. "The same check which the convertibility into specie, under a better system, provides against the excess of any part of the paper circulation, is, during the present system, provided against an excess of country bank paper, by its convertibility into Bank of England paper." An excess of country note issue, while the London circulation did not exceed its due proportion, would cause a local rise of prices. To secure the benefit of the lower London prices, those who had country bank paper would return it on the banks for conversion into Bank of England notes or bills upon London. Hence, if Bank of England paper during the suspension were issued in excess, the country bank paper would also be issued in excess—as the foundation, so the superstructure. Thus the excess of Bank of England paper would produce its effect upon prices not merely in the ratio of its own increase but in a much higher proportion.

**—its relation to Bank of England issue**

**—its increase.**

Although without positive information, they were led to infer that there had been a very considerable increase of issues, both from old banks and from a number of new banks established within the last two years,[1] at the same time as the high state of mercantile and public credit, and the confidence in well-established country banks, had probably not rendered it necessary for them to keep any large permanent deposits of Bank of England paper in their hands. And it seemed reasonable to believe that the total amount of specie and Bank of England notes together in the hands of the country banks was much less now, under a circulation vastly increased in extent, than it was before 1797. A calculation was given in support of these views, and the conclusion drawn that, between the Bank of England and the country banks, in the year 1809, there was an addition to the whole circulation of Great Britain alone of between four and five millions—an amount probably little short of the amount which, in almost any one year since the discovery of America, had been added to the circulating coin of the whole of Europe.

**A total addition of four to five millions.**

[1] The country banks numbered nearly 800, according to Huskisson.

All this addition of paper circulation had been made at a very small expense to the parties issuing it, and with small gain to the revenue—say £100,000 in stamps. If it were to continue, the Committee should recommend Parliament to devise some means whereby the State should participate much more largely in the profits; but, as they agreed with Adam Smith that a paper circulation constantly convertible into specie was one of the greatest practical improvements which could be made in the political and domestic economy of any state, they proposed to revert as speedily as possible to the former practice.

The State should have profited more largely.

Upon a review of all the facts and reasonings which had been submitted, the Committee had formed an opinion which they submitted to the House in the following terms:

"That there is at present an excess in the paper circulation of this country, of which the most unequivocal symptom is the very high price of bullion, and, next to that, the low state of the continental exchanges; that this excess is to be ascribed to the want of a sufficient check and control in the issues of paper from the Bank of England, and, originally, to the suspension of cash payments which removed the natural and true control. For, upon a general view of the subject, your Committee are of opinion that no safe, certain, and constantly adequate provision against an excess of paper currency, either occasional or permanent, can be found, except in the convertibility of all such paper into specie. Your Committee cannot, therefore, but see reason to regret that the suspension of cash payments, which, in the most favourable light in which it can be viewed, was only a temporary measure, has been continued so long; and, particularly, that, by the manner in which the present continuing act is framed, the character should have been given to it of a permanent war measure."

The Committee's finding:—an excess of paper.

The disadvantages of any such general excess of currency as lowered its relative value were briefly: the effect of such an augmentation of prices upon all money transactions for time; the unavoidable injury suffered by annuitants and by creditors of every description, both private and public; the unintended advantage gained by Government and all other debtors; most important of all, the effect on the wages of common country labour, "the rate of which, it is well known, adapts itself more slowly to the changes which happen in the value of money than the price of any other species of labour or commodity"; the rise

The disadvantages of such an excess.

in the wages of some classes of the public servants, whose pay, if once raised in consequence of a depreciation of money, cannot so conveniently be reduced again to its former rate, even after money shall have recovered its value.

They begged to advert, moreover, to the temptation to which Parliament might be subjected—a temptation to which many governments had yielded—by a great and long continued excess of paper, viz. to resort to a depreciation even of the value of the gold coin by an alteration of the standard, preferring the reduction of the coin down to the standard of the paper to the restoration of the paper to the legal standard of the coin.

The return to cash payments recommended.

Their final recommendation then was: "That the system of the circulating medium of this country ought to be brought back, with as much speed as is compatible with a wise and necessary caution, to the original principle of cash payments at the option of the holder of bank paper."

The difficulties and contingent dangers to the Bank in effecting such a change could be most effectually provided for by entrusting to the discretion of the Bank itself—as the discretion, experience, and integrity of the directors fully warranted—the charge of conducting and completing the operation, and by allowing to the Bank so ample a period of time for conducting it as would be more than sufficient to effect its completion. All Parliament need do was to fix definitely the time of removal of the restriction. This could not be safely done under two years from the present—even if peace were to be concluded within that period.

They conceived that it might be convenient for the bank to be permitted to issue notes under the value of £5 for some little time after it had resumed payments in specie; and that the chartered Banks of Ireland and Scotland, together with all the country banks, should not be compelled to pay in specie until some time after the resumption of payments in cash by the Bank of England,—that they should continue for a short period upon their present footing, of being liable to pay their own notes on demand in Bank of England paper.

Horner's own opinion of the Report.

Horner has left his own candid opinion of the Report. It was, he said, in truth, very clumsily and prolixly drawn; stating nothing but very old doctrines, and stating them in a more imperfect form than they had frequently appeared in before.[1] "It

[1] As the Report is not easily accessible, I have given a very full résumé of it, and, so far as possible, in the *ipsissima verba*. One may agree with Horner

is a motley composition by Huskisson, Thornton, and myself, each having written parts which are tacked together, without any care to give them a uniform style or a very exact connection." One great merit, however, it possessed; that it declared, in very plain and pointed terms, both the true doctrine, and the existence of a great evil growing out of the neglect of that doctrine. By keeping up the discussion, as he meant to do, and by forcing it again upon the attention of Parliament, he hoped in time to effect the restoration of the old and only safe system.[1]

Replies.

The Report was presented on the day previous to the prorogation of Parliament, and could not, of course, be discussed. Copies, in fact, were not in the hands of members till the middle of August (the number of tables in the appendix having delayed the printing), but the substance and the recommendation were circulated in the newspapers immediately after it was laid on the table. Its arguments were at once combated by a host of pamphlets; its conclusions said to be inconsistent with the evidence; and even the motives of its members questioned. In reply, Huskisson, who had been one of the most active members of the Committee, followed it up in October by an able pamphlet, entitled, *The Question concerning the Depreciation of our Currency stated and examined*—restating and expanding the Report—which ran through several editions in a few months and was reprinted in 1819.[2]

Huskisson's pamphlet.

Perceval on Huskisson's pamphlet.

In view of what followed, it is interesting to have Perceval's opinion of Huskisson's pamphlet, in a letter to Croker of 11th November: "It is in many parts very able—in all very specious; in many, however, I presume to think, very fallacious. . . . I should consider the measure proposed as tantamount to a Parliamentary declaration that we must submit to any terms of peace rather than continue the war." Suppose, he continued, the view to be correct respecting the depreciation of bank paper—a most exaggerated view, to say the least of it—how was gold to be got but by buying it, and how could that be done when the orders of the enemy impeded, if they did not absolutely prevent, the introduction of our goods into the continent? Till trade was

that the old doctrines are not stated in the most perfect way, but it is not for the historian to amend a great historical document.

[1] *Memoirs*, ii. 47.

[2] The pamphlet is printed along with Huskisson's *Speeches*, 1831.

again free, the only effectual measure would be one which would prevent our buying from the continent those articles which we indispensably *wanted*, and put an end to the immense foreign expenditure which would drain out of the country every new importation of gold.[1]

[1] *Croker*, i. 34.

# CHAPTER XV

## 1811. THE UNIVERSAL DISTRESS

The Regency.

In February, the actual reign of George III. came to an end. The shock of his favourite daughter's death confirmed his insanity, and he was kept in strict seclusion at Windsor till the close of his life. After prolonged debates, which take up a whole volume of *Hansard*, and occupied the attention of Parliament, to the exclusion of everything else, from 1st November, 1810, the necessary Bill was passed on 5th February, and the Prince of Wales became Regent—under restrictions as to patronage which he very much resented. Although his sympathies had hitherto been with the Opposition, he left—"from filial affection," he said[1]—the Government unchanged. One of his first acts was—amid considerable sensation—to reinstate the Duke of York, acknowledged to be a good administrator if a bad general, as Commander-in-Chief.

Speech from the Throne.

The Lords Commissioners' Speech in February said that discussions were pending between this country and the United States, and expressed the earnest wish of the Government that they should be brought to an amicable termination. Aberdeen, in moving the Address, confessed that, in Spain, "the appearance of matters was chequered; there were some dark clouds and obscurity, but still there were, notwithstanding, in that country many circumstances that kept hope alive": in Portugal, matters were "of a much sounder complexion"; we had withdrawn a numerous and powerful army from the country of Spain, baffled its first attack, and preserved the capital and a large portion of the country of Portugal. The revenue, it was added, was as a whole most flourishing and prosperous.

[1] "That any man in those high regions of life cares for his father, is what I cannot easily believe," said Sydney Smith cynically. "A whig king would be an unexampled thing," said Simond.

**Peninsular policy questioned.**

In the debates which followed, the wisdom of continuing our efforts in the Peninsula and the propriety of sending further reinforcements were still questioned;—"it was impossible to expect success from such a war," said Grosvenor; and Grenville protested against being pledged to give further aid by means of a British military force. Turton said he had always maintained that "it was idle to contend with France on the continent." Whitbread "most solemnly guarded himself against the imputation of having given any approbation, either of the plan, or of the execution of the campaign."[1]

**Ireland.**

There was much complaint from the Irish members that the speech made no reference to the internal state of Ireland. In the previous session, the Catholic claims had again been refused consideration, in the Commons by 213 to 109, and in the Lords by 154 to 168; and, in the end of the year, a great meeting had been held at Dublin which unanimously voted a strong petition asking for repeal of the Union. The country was now "in a ferment," said Grosvenor—families were emigrating to England and Wales from fear of a new rising. Parnell affirmed that he could not consider the subject without a degree of alarm which he could hardly find words to express. Newport asked if the Speech fairly represented the fact that there was a deficit in the Irish revenue of between two and three millions.[2]

**The lowest point.**

In the early part of 1811, indeed, the fortunes of England seemed to be at the lowest ebb. The turning-point, however, was near, although nobody perceived it at the time. In February, Badajoz, the other great frontier fortress besides Ciudad Rodrigo, fell into the hands of the French, and the Government at home had much to do to keep up the courage of the country and justify the vote of two millions for the maintenance of the Portuguese troops. In March, a bitter attack was made by General Tarleton, the member for Liverpool, on the conduct of the war—its plan "founded in error and mistake"—the "last disposable army of England" staked on a foreign shore instead of kept to defend our own. Canning delivered a magnificent reply, setting forth the policy of choosing a contest at the precise spot most unfavourable to the enemy, where France was exhausted by

[1] *Hansard*, xviii. 1148 *seq.* One notices with interest the first mention in Parliament of Napoleon as "the Emperor of France" (in Richard Wellesley's maiden speech in seconding the Address, *Hansard*, xviii. 1178).

[2] *Hansard*, xviii. 1157, 1185, 1208.

acting at one end of a long line of communication "extended, hazardous, constantly interrupted, and requiring scarcely less than another army dispersed along that line to keep up the means of feeding and recruiting," while to us the sea was open, and the distance and difficulty of communication were no more than the trifling length and risk of the voyage. But one would think that the opening words of his speech, with their suggestion of the dread which was oppressing England, must have weighed more heavily than what followed: "It is, in my opinion, not only true courage, but true wisdom in Great Britain to avail herself of all means and opportunities of encountering the enemy, which may defer to the last the occasion, if the occasion is to arrive, at which we shall have to fight the battle upon our own shores."[1]

Turn of the tide.

But, a few days later, all was changed. In the beginning of March, Masséna had begun his retreat, in one solid mass, closely pressed by the armies of the allies and by the dreaded guerillas, losing, it was said, 45,000 men by hunger and disease before he got out of Portugal. The march of the French, on Wellington's testimony, was marked by a barbarity seldom equalled and never surpassed—they burned every town and village on the way.[2] By the 6th April, Portugal was once more delivered from its invaders. When the news reached England, its reception by Parliament made ample amends to Wellington for the long neglect and hostility. The Vote of Thanks was passed in both Houses, on 26th April, without a single dissentient vote or voice, and speakers vied with each other to do him honour. Earl Grey said that, in proportion to the pain which he had felt in withholding his assent to the vote of thanks on a former occasion, was the pleasure with which he now contributed his mite of approbation. He had spoken before from the sincere and honest dictates of his mind, but he had now no hesitation in retracting the opinions he had formerly delivered, and expressing his feelings of gratitude and admiration towards that great commander. Grenville generously concurred, both in the vote of thanks and in every expression of admiration for the conduct of Lord Wellington and the army under his command. He mentioned with peculiar admiration the long abstinence from offensive operations—a policy "peculiarly difficult and trying to the actively enthusiastic mind we know that gallant officer to

[1] *Hansard*, xix. 195.

[2] *Annual Register*, 103.

possess." "And, what," he continued, "is the effect of that policy? The French army, broken in spirit and in resources, wasted by its own exertions, and unable to maintain the contest itself had begun; abandoning its high-blown hopes of the possession and plunder of Lisbon, its boastful pledge that the English should be driven, at the point of the bayonet, into the waves of the Tagus." And he ended by conjuring the House not to let its thanks be bestowed with a reluctant and niggardly consent; let them be, as they should be, unanimous. Liverpool added to the chorus of praise by disclaiming any share of the Government in regard to the plan of the campaign. "This plan of our general was an original one and entirely his own; it was formed upon no former plan for the defence of Portugal; it was the result of his own excellent judgment; and it was now sanctioned by the tribute paid to its merit by the conduct of the enemy himself." Testimony, at the same time, was paid to the excellent conduct of the Portuguese. Tarleton was "not surprised at anything that could be achieved by English courage, Irish spirit, and Scotch intrepidity." But the Portuguese contingent, said Grenville, was made out of "the worst materials that could be selected—of a peasantry debased by long subjection to a weak and tyrannical government, and weighed down by constitutional indolence; of an aristocracy long deservedly become the jest and bye-word of all Europe." But of such materials was the force which had, after two years' organisation, been opposed, and successfully opposed, to that force before which the well-disciplined troops of Austria, of Russia, and of Prussia, had been humbled to the dust.[1]

Fuentes d'Onoro.

On 5th May, came the victory of Fuentes d'Onoro—"it was the most difficult fight I was ever concerned in," wrote Wellington, "and against the greatest odds. We had very nearly three to one against us engaged; above four to one cavalry; and, moreover, our cavalry had not a gallop in them, while some of that of the enemy were fresh and in excellent order. If Boney had been there, we should have been beaten"[2]—and, on the 16th, the tremendous fight of Albuera, when it "was seen with what a strength and majesty the British soldier fights."[3] But, in face of two French armies, Wellington, in June, retired to the

Albuera.

[1] *Hansard*, xix. 762, 768.

[2] Wellington, *Supplementary Dispatches*, vii. 176.

[3] Napier, *Peninsular War*, iii.

Portuguese frontier, and the two forces stood watching each other till the end of the year.

Breach between Russia and France.

As the months went on, the position improved in other respects, although Whitbread, even yet, said that he saw no ground for confidently anticipating a favourable result to the war, and thought that it would be proper to try whether peace might not be obtained on honourable and reasonable terms.[1] The birth of a son and the prospect of a Napoleonic succession alarmed all Europe. The breach between Russia and France—signalised among other things by Russia, on 12th January, withdrawing from the Continental System and declaring her ports open to all vessels under a neutral flag—had become marked, and, although war did not break out for seventeen months thereafter, both sides began making gigantic preparations and arranging alliances. Napoleon withdrew his forces from the various storm centres of Europe—taking 60,000 of his best troops from Spain. Spain now began the guerilla warfare in which she excelled, and Wellington's policy of paying for everything, contrasted with Napoleon's method of "making war support war," ranged the country on our side. "Everything portable was snatched from the French who would not pay and brought to the British who did."[2]

Java and Sumatra.

In August and September, Java and Sumatra, which, like other Dutch colonies, had passed into the hands of France, were taken; and, by the capture of Bourbon and Mauritius, British supremacy in the East Indies became complete, and the colonial power of France entirely extinguished.

America.

But a new calamity was now threatening. The three months' notice served by America expired on 2nd February, and nine sections of the Non-Intercourse Act were renewed, prohibiting all entrance of British ships and goods. Relations became strained, and the American resident asked for his passports. War, however, did not break out at once.[3] The British Government appointed a Minister, who seems to have devoted most of his time to prove that the French Decrees

[1] *Hansard*, xx. 445 (3rd June).

[2] Harriet Martineau, *History*, 414.

[3] "America and the Americans," wrote Simond in July, "take up very little of the attention of Europe; and even here, where there are so many points of contact with the United States, they would be surprised to find their feelings of partiality or of hatred so faintly reciprocated" (*Journal*, ii. 268).

were not repealed,[1] as American vessels touching at British ports were still confiscated. Although this was true, and although Napoleon seemed in no hurry to restore the great amount of property seized in virtue of his edicts, Madison accepted his plausible explanations, and, at a special meeting of Congress in November, represented that, while France had given up her Decrees, Great Britain had not given up her Orders; that redress for the Chesapeake outrage was still withheld; and that the coasts and harbours of the United States were again being insulted.[2]

Napoleon's leisure.

In this year of comparative peace, Napoleon must have found time hang heavily on his hands, but the information we get about his movements is, of course, very scanty. His restless energy found occupation in making tours of inspection, especially to the sea-ports of France and Holland, and in enforcing and consolidating his schemes against English trade. In terms of the Fontainebleau Decree, British goods were very generally burned, although in Dantzig they were distributed among the charitable institutions, while Russia never enforced the burning order at all. The King of Prussia now solemnly adopted the Decrees in their most rigorous application. Switzerland passed a decree ordering all the Swiss in the service of England to return home by the end of the year, on pain of losing their citizenship and their property. Among other things Napoleon suppressed private dramatic societies in Holland, on suspicion of spreading dangerous opinions; to facilitate the conscription, he prohibited the Dutch from marrying under the age of thirty; and he ordered that, in no department of France, should a knowledge of Latin or Greek be deemed a qualification for degrees, ranks, or offices, whether political, legal, or clerical—even prescriptions were henceforth to be written in French only, and the services of the Church were no longer to be performed except in the vernacular.

Beetroot, woad, indigo.

His attempts to make France independent of colonial produce seemed at last to promise success. A decree was issued in March

[1] The wording was "that the decrees of Berlin and Milan are definitively, and from the 1st of November last, considered as never having taken place with regard to American vessels" (*Annual Register*, 1812, 167).

[2] *Cambridge Modern History*, vii. 333. The history of the Orders in Council as they affected America is given with admirable clearness by Professor M'Master in this volume.

ordering the planting of 32,000 hectares with beetroot,[1] and other areas with woad; experimental schools were founded for instruction in their culture and manufacture; cane sugar and indigo from the East and West Indies were to be entirely prohibited after the beginning of 1813. It was announced that the growing of cotton was a success—the quality was equal to the best from Berbice. Amid all these measures, it is curious to find Napoleon allowing the importation of 50,000 French books into London, including many valuable classics; but, it is added, "the principal are those intended to emblazon his own deeds." In December, he unfolded his new scheme for getting on equal terms with England, by ordering a marine conscription from the thirty maritime districts of the empire: "We shall be able to make peace in safety," says the official exposé, "when we shall have 150 ships of the line, and, in spite of the obstacles of the war, such is the state of the empire that we shall have that number of vessels."[2] This conscription, however, came to nothing; no sensible addition was made to the power and enterprise of his navy; for the most part, it lay quiet in port and offered very few opportunities to the British commanders.[3]

A marine conscription.

While hope was reviving as to the ultimate issue of the great struggle, England was passing through one of the worst years since the war began. The commercial distress, which had started in the autumn of 1810, continued to be so great that, on 1st March, a Select Committee on the State of Commercial Credit was appointed. The Committee, which included, among others, Perceval, Sinclair, Henry Thornton, Rose, Sir Thos. Baring, Alex. Baring, Marryat, Foster, and Newport, embraced the principal merchants from both sides of the House—Whitbread objecting that there were too many of this class, on the ground that they "must have a strong bias to recommend the granting of relief"[4]—and broke the record as regards time by reporting on 7th March.

Committee on Commercial Credit.

Memorials, they said, had been presented towards the end of 1810 and the beginning of the present year, stating that great embarrassments and distress were felt among the cotton

Cotton manufacturing distress

[1] A Parisian caricature of the day represented the young King of Rome with a large beetroot in his mouth, encouraged by his nurse with the words: "Suck, dear, suck; your father *says* it's sugar."

[2] *Annual Register*, 131. The British ships of the line in commission in this year numbered 155 (*ibid.* 50).

[3] *Annual Register*, 1812, 136.

[4] *Hansard*, xix. 123.

manufacturers in Glasgow and Paisley, and the assertion of general distress in the industry was supported by a deputation from the City of London. The evidence of witnesses examined[1] bore out those statements. The principal part of the distress had arisen out of great and extensive speculations commenced upon the opening of the South American markets in the Brazils and elsewhere. A long statement, put in by the Chairman of the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, was quoted to the following effect.

—in Glasgow.

The distress began among the manufacturers in October and November. Merchants in London, Liverpool, and Glasgow, conceiving that the South American markets would consume a vast quantity of our manufactures, had bought very largely from the Scottish manufacturers for export, and had given them bills at six or nine months, but, in some cases, twelve months—the interval from shipping the goods till the reception of payment being usually about twelve or fifteen months. The goods not finding a ready sale in South America, the exporters were unable to meet the bills when due, and went into bankruptcy, and the bills were returned on the manufacturers. The bankers, unable to get payment from the manufacturers, found their capital locked up in an immense number of bills, the payment of which was suspended, and had to curtail their regular accommodation, while the manufacturers, with their property locked up in bankrupt estates (of which no doubt a part would be saved in nine to fifteen months' time), had either to shut down altogether or curtail their production. Thus the banks losing confidence and unwilling to face fresh risks, the distress was carried to the merchants who were deprived of their usual accommodation; the manufacturers lost their staff of workpeople, and the operatives lost their employment. The demand would, no doubt, come round again, and the glut—as always happened—be succeeded by brisk demand, but this would not be till six or twelve months, and meantime there was great suffering. This was the immediate and the first occasion of the distress, but, at the same time, the want of a market was certainly part of the cause. The South American markets were overstocked; even, however, if there was a demand, considering the want of confidence and the want of credit, there would be difficulty for the manufacturers to know to whom to sell with safety. The crisis was attended by a great fall in the price of

[1] The evidence, however, was not printed (*Hansard*, xix. 422).

manufactures—in some articles 40 to 50 per cent. and more. There were mercantile failures in Glasgow to the amount of one to two millions—one house had come down for half a million; many of these would pay very large dividends in time and some had undertaken to pay in full, but, meantime, the manufacturers could not command a shilling of the money.

This evidence from Glasgow was confirmed by J. & R. Mackerrell and by Henry Fulton, muslin manufacturers at Paisley. Similar evidence was given as regards Lancashire by Sir Robert Peel, who said that, although there had not been any failures among the larger manufacturers there, the prices of goods had fallen 40, 50 and 60 per cent.; the greatest manufacturers had curtailed production by one-third and one-half, and others been obliged to discharge their workpeople altogether; those continued in employment were being paid not more than one-half the ordinary wages.[1] —in Lancashire.

Great distress was felt also among the importers of produce from the foreign West Indies and from South America. Large part of the returns against British exports to these places came home in sugars and coffee, for which there was no immediate outlet in the home market.

A connected and aggravating cause was the extent to which, within the last two years, the system of warehousing the goods of foreigners as well as of native merchants had been carried. Since the opening of the West India and London Docks, London had become the emporium of many countries—a free port into which foreign goods of all kinds were brought for safety and for free exportation. Even Spain had sent wine here for export into Portugal. The new markets in South America, which formerly sent bullion only, now filled these warehouses with goods. Our new conquests did the same; so did those ports in Europe from which the British flag was excluded. The consequence was that the goods had become a burden, exhausting the capital of the merchants by advances to owners on account and by payment of freight and insurance. All these causes co-operated at a time when American ships were prevented from carrying West Indian and South American produce into Europe. Warehousing an aggravating cause.

[1] Incidentally the following figures were given to show the state and progress of the cotton trade: for 1807, the official value of the exports was £9,846,000; for 1808, £12,835,000; for 1809, £18,616,000; and for the nine months ending 10th October, 1810, £13,761,000.

The Committee recommends advance of exchequer bills.

The Committee, however, reported with satisfaction that these difficulties and embarrassments did not appear to be felt in the woollen trade.

As to a remedy, the general concurrence of opinion among the witnesses had been that parliamentary relief might be afforded, as it had been in 1793,[1] by an issue of Exchequer Bills. On this, the Committee gave it as their decided opinion that, although there was in many respects a great difference between the circumstances of 1793 and those of the present, yet such parliamentary relief was "highly expedient and necessary," as affording time gradually to contract operations, to call in means, to withdraw from immediate sale articles which at the moment would fetch only ruinous prices, and to keep up the employment of machinery and workpeople; and they recommended that an issue of Exchequer Bills should be made, not less and not more than £6 millions, the first quarter's repayment to be made in January following, and the remainder from three months to three months, so that the whole should be discharged in nine months from the first payment.

Criticism of the Report

When the Report was submitted on 11th March, it met, on the whole, with acceptance. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that it appeared pretty plainly that the whole of the evil had originated from over-extensive speculations to the ports of South America, and he expressed his opinion with great reluctance. "Over-speculation was not a good ground for the measure proposed—such a provision against misfortunes to which incautious adventurers might have exposed themselves had a tendency to diminish the caution which was the best check on rash and ill-advised adventures. What weighed with him was, that it was not to those who had so speculated that the relief would extend—they had gone into bankruptcy long ago." The circumstances of 1793 were considerably different. On the whole, he thought that Parliament ought at least to make the attempt to relieve the distress. "No one could say that the attempt might not be completely successful. At any rate it could not make

[1] This was on the outbreak of the war, when, of some 350 country banks, more than 100 stopped payment. Pitt then recommended the issue of exchequer bills to the extent of £5,000,000, against a deposit of mercantile securities. This stopped the panic. Less than £4,000,000 were issued and taken up; the greater part was repaid before the expiration of the period fixed by the Act, and no loss whatever was sustained by the public funds. Massey, *History*, iv. 71; Macpherson, *Annals*, iv. 266.

matters worse." With these tepid arguments, he moved that Exchequer Bills be issued by commissioners, to be advanced, under certain regulations and restrictions, for the assistance and accommodation of such persons as should be desirous of receiving the same, on due security being given for the repayment of the sums so advanced within a time to be limited.

—by Ponsonby,

Ponsonby contended that there was no similarity between the present distress and that of 1793. The origin of the evils was the exaggerations, the falsehoods, the misrepresentations in the House itself as to South America affording a market that would take all our merchandise. He could not agree that the stagnation of trade was due principally to the state of the South American market: it was rather the state of the European markets that was the operating cause, and these were not likely to be opened soon again. The measure might make matters very much worse, and should they, in the present circumstances, countenance the issue of six millions more of paper money? But, he owned, he "had not resolution enough to oppose that which afforded anything like a chance of alleviating the distress of those who claimed their assistance."

Huskisson,

Huskisson took the same line. As he felt doubts, but only doubts, as to the efficacy of the measure, he would not oppose it. His principal doubt was whether any case had been made out such as was proved in 1793. Then the phenomena were: deficiency in the circulating medium; deficiency of good bills to discount; depreciation of the public securities; fall in all prices; general depression over all classes; no glut or stagnation of trade, and no failures. In all these respects, the present case was dissimilar, and the question was if the remedy resorted to in the one case was appropriate in the other. In his opinion, the present evil arose from too great a facility of procuring credit. "Did gentlemen not see that the race of old English merchants, who never could persuade themselves to go beyond their capital, was superseded by a set of mad and extravagant speculators, who never stopped so long as they could get credit, and that persons of notoriously small capital had now eclipsed those of the greatest consequence; so that speculations now took place even in the lowest articles of commerce?" In this way commerce had become a sort of wholesale gambling, such as had never before been seen in this country. "If the relief given was used for further speculation, it would only aggravate the evil, and he feared that this

might be done—in which case, the present measure would go only to add six millions to the circulation and to raise the price of all our commodities."

Thornton, Henry Thornton said that he had been much indisposed to the loan, and that nothing could have compelled him to yield his original opinion but consideration for the distressed state of the manufacturers in Paisley and Glasgow, and in other manufacturing districts. But he wished the loan to be applied "on a charitable and humane principle, and afforded to those persons and places only where the distress was greatest"—not to those who could give security and in proportion to the security. Curwen said that, even though the whole money were to be ultimately lost, Parliament, for the support of our commercial

Baring, interests, was bound to hazard the experiment. Alexander Baring affirmed that the great and immediate cause of the evil was the want of a market. All ports were closed to us. And there was one consequence of the present system which they would do well to look at; if America could not trade with us, she must proceed to manufacture for herself (a thing, if possible, to be avoided), so that, in this point of view, the political question was in reality very greatly involved. Subsequent speakers emphasised the contention that the real evil was the want of a market, and asked how the measure was to remedy that. No one was in the least sanguine of success. But no one ventured to oppose the grant, and the Resolution was agreed to without a division. Even Whitbread "would not say that he was courageous enough to resist the vote at present."[1]

and others. When the Bill appeared in committee, however, the opposition found voice. Folkestone contended that they had no right to grant the public money on a claim of humanity rather than on a claim of justice. He could not conceive that we could count on any sale for our goods either in North America, Europe, or South America. Even if purchasers were found in South America, what would be the return but precisely that produce of which our merchants had more than they knew what to do with? Newport said that the measure would be highly injurious to the community. He had no doubt that, when the period of repayment arrived, the parties, finding markets still closed, would come to the House for an extension of time, and that the operation would be repeated till the whole sum was lost, and thus Parliament

[1] *Hansard*, xix. 328.

would have visited on the entire public the errors of a few inordinate speculators. Sixteen voted against the motion, but it was passed by a majority of 113.

Extension of the relief.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer then announced that he would extend the advantages of the Bill, not only to the manufacturers, but "to all places where the warehousing system was carried on," on the ground that the manufacturers would not get relief unless means were afforded to the merchants to discharge their debts to them. Huskisson asked that preference in the allocation of the loan should be given to "those who were particularly oppressed"; and that priority should be given to goods as a security over personal security, and to British manufactures over others; he thought the public would run no risk by advancing 75 per cent. upon goods instead of 50 per cent.[1]

Whitbread.

On the third reading, Whitbread made a strong appeal that not only Commissioners but all members of the House should be precluded from participating in the benefits—otherwise it would be a "new way of creating influence for the Crown"—and that, in the interests of the smaller manufacturers, who had already parted with their goods and lost them, the provision prohibiting the Commissioners to grant sums under £4,000, unless on a deposit of goods to twice the amount of the loan, should be deleted. Of the measure itself he affirmed that "no one man liked it; it had no favourer, not even in the person by whom it was introduced"; and he expressed his belief that the commercial credit of the country could not be extricated out of the difficulties in which it was involved but by a settlement of our dispute with America and by a peace in Europe. But still only four voted against, and the Bill was passed.[2]

Criticism in the Lords.

In the Lords, the mistrust of the measure was more marked. When Bathurst moved the second reading, he defended it on the ground that the commercial embarrassments were due, partly at least, to the fact that the returns made from South America were in produce which, normally, would have found a sale in the Baltic and in Europe, but was, in the circumstances, warehoused here, and could not be sold at the moment except at a ruinous loss. King said that, if the evil was want of a market, it did not appear to him that the measure could remedy that. But if the evil was over-trading, it appeared to him that one of the causes of the over-trading was the late excessive issue of bank paper.

[1] *Hansard*, xix. 416. [2] *Ibid.* 494.

Lansdowne[1] urged that the Government could not interfere in the present difficulties without violating all the general and recognised rules of political economy. The evil, as stated, was the accumulation of produce and the total want of an outlet. Now nothing could establish more clearly than this fact the impolicy of the Government, which had prevented the only nation that could carry that superfluity to the continent of Europe, namely America, from doing so, whereby the commodities of our merchants were a drug in our own market. Harrowby did not approve of the violation of the general principles of political economy, yet pleaded that the emergency was urgent. Lauderdale too saw no ground for departing from the acknowledged grounds of political economy, but, curiously, added that the man must be bold indeed who, in the present circumstances, durst oppose the measure.

**Grenville's strong opposition.**

Grenville, however, was found bold enough to do so. He taunted his colleagues with timidity and inconsistency. "It seemed the growing habit of the noble lords opposite to admit every wise and just principle in their speeches, and that seemed in their minds to authorise a decided departure from everything just and wise in their conduct." He for one was prepared to give his opposition most decidedly to this Bill, as calculated to aggravate all our commercial calamities. He confessed that he had been one of those who devised the relief of 1793, but he was now satisfied that that measure had been unwise and impolitic. It induced the trading world to look continually towards Parliament for relief from every misfortune which might arise. And, again, was it to be believed that even the total loss of all our exports to South America could account for the magnitude and extent of the evil which existed? It could have only a comparatively small influence upon the rest of our immense trade. Were not the shutting of the continental ports, and our own policy in destroying the amity of the United States, much more considerable causes of distress—and those of a permanent description? But there was yet another material source of our calamities—the great facility of obtaining fictitious capital through the extended issue of bank paper. "As that commerce became extended, still more paper was unavoidably issued to supply the want of fresh capital. Thus, then, paper and over-trading reciprocally acted upon each other—the issue of bank paper produced a spirit of

[1] Known hitherto as Lord Henry Petty. He had become a peer by the death of his father in 1809.

over-trading—the effects of over-trading rendered a still further issue of paper indispensable—and the consequences of both had been the depreciation of the circulating medium and the commercial distresses now proposed to be relieved." And this would now be aggravated, for "it was provided, by a particular clause in the Bill, that the Exchequer Bills to be issued should pass into the hands of the bank, which would cause a correspondent issue of bank paper, and enable new speculators to adventure still more upon such fictitious capital." He ended, of course, by denouncing in strong terms the Orders in Council.

The Bill, however, went through committee and was reported without amendments, and finally passed the third reading on 1st April.[1]

"Something must be done."

Neither the report nor the debates seem to do much credit to Parliament. The Report, as Whitbread said, was one of the most loose and ill-digested that ever was presented. Nothing better, indeed, could be expected from a Committee appointed on the 1st of March and reporting on the 7th, and the two Houses acted on it without conviction and without improving its logic. It was the old cry—"the distress is urgent; something must be done"—and the something was done with no clear realisation of the evil to be remedied, or its cause, and with little consideration of the ulterior consequences.

Disposal of the relief.

The way in which the grant was disposed of is not mentioned in the Parliamentary debates, but it appears that only some two millions were advanced. Not many of those who were in embarrassed circumstances were able to furnish the desired security, and it is difficult to see what remedy there was in being enabled, by advances, to produce more goods when the radical evil was that there was no market for them. "The commercial distresses," says the *Annual Register*, "went on increasing during the whole year, displaying themselves by frightful lists of bankruptcies in every gazette, amounting to an aggregate to which no former year exhibits a parallel."[2]

Manufacturing distress grows more acute.

As the months went on, the manufacturing distress grew even more acute. In May, petitions were presented from Paisley and suburbs, and from Lanark, Ayr, and Renfrewshire,[3] giving

[1] *Hansard*, xix. 529, 662.

[2] P. 24. The bankruptcies of the year amounted to from 1,500 to 2,000, said Whitbread (*Hansard*, xxi. 1160).

[3] *Ibid.* 1018.

depressing accounts of the stagnation of industry, originating with the cotton trade, but spreading all over—"exceeding in extent and severity anything of the kind ever known in this part of the kingdom"—of bankruptcy succeeding bankruptcy, of wages reduced two-thirds, of unemployment everywhere.[1] In the same month, a petition was presented from 40,000 distressed manufacturers of Manchester,[2] saying that, in the various mechanical branches in general, the majority were not employed more than three days a week. Another petition, signed by six or seven thousand of the cotton weavers and spinners of Bolton,[3] said that, at "this very awful juncture," not more than two-thirds of their looms were working, and those employed could not earn more than 5/- a week. Sir Robert Peel said that never, he believed, was there an instance in which the labourers of this country suffered such distress.

**Petitions referred to a Committee.**

On a proposal that these petitions should be referred to a Select Committee, Perceval, while sympathetic, apprehended that it was impossible to hold out to the petitioners any expectations of a favourable nature, without exposing them to the certainty of disappointment. He had ascertained that the remedy the petitioners favoured was regulation of admittance to the trade and limitation of the number of apprentices, and this could not be acceded to. Rose said that the similar Committee of three years before had considered such things as a minimum wage, regulation of apprentices, etc., and were unanimously of opinion that nothing could be done for the persons aggrieved. Giddy had attended all the Committees on the subject since he entered the House, and his conviction was that no human ingenuity could devise the relief required. Sir Robert Peel strongly favoured the appointment of a Committee, conceiving it "possible that such a Committee might discover some mode of affording relief," and declared that the happiest day of his life would be that in which he should join in such a labour, hinting that Buonaparte would do all he could to induce the distressed manufacturers to emigrate to those countries which were anxious to emulate Great Britain in manufactures. Wilberforce and others were of opinion that the appointment of such a Committee was necessary at least to show

[1] "The wages of weavers at Glasgow," said Simond, quoting from evidence adduced before the Committee, "are now reduced to one fourth of what they were nineteen years ago, although the price of provisions and other necessaries has doubled in the meantime." *Journal*, ii. 214.

[2] *Hansard*, xx. 339. [3] *Ibid.* 340.

the sufferers that, if no practicable mode of relief was devised, it would be because it was beyond the power of the House to remedy the evil. Some advocated a grant of money; others earnestly deprecated it. Baring said that, if the Committee were appointed at all, it should be appointed to examine into the general system of the commerce of the country; and, of course, the Orders in Council were dragged in as the cause of all the evil. In the end, the Committee was appointed, among its members being Lord Archibald Hamilton, Sir Robert Peel, Rose, Wilberforce, Whitbread, Ponsonby, and Giddy.[1]

Its Report.

The Committee reported, on 13th June, that the suggestions submitted for consideration by the petitioners were exposed to insuperable objections; that no interference of the legislature with the freedom of trade, or with the perfect liberty of every individual to dispose of his time and of his labour in the way, and on the terms, which he might judge most conducive to his own interest, could take place without violating general principles of the first importance to the prosperity and happiness of the community; and that, above all, grants of money would be utterly inefficacious and most objectionable in all points of view.[2]

The Regent's fête.

In the same month, with the ostensible purpose of giving employment to the manufacturers, the Regent gave a fête—the most splendid and most expensive ever seen in the country. About 3,000 guests were entertained at supper, and it was desired that their dresses should be of British manufacture. "It does not seem likely," said Romilly, "to gain the Regent much popularity. The great expense of the entertainment has been contrasted with the misery of the starving weavers of Lancashire and Glasgow."[3]

Frame-breaking.

In Nottingham, in November, began the mysterious mania of frame-breaking, which was to spread like an epidemic and keep the country in a ferment for two years to come. The cause of these Luddite riots—the name came from an imaginary Captain Ludd, who was supposed to plan and organise the outrages—is even yet a little obscure. The weaving of stockings and gaiters was at that time conducted on a developed form of the domestic system. The frames were owned by masters who hired them out to operatives working for wages in their own cottages. Four years before, when the South American markets were opened, there was great activity in this industry, and, indeed, a considerable amount of capital was invested by a middle class

Its origin

[1] *Hansard*, xx. 431. [2] *Ibid.* 608. [3] Romilly, *Diary*, ii. 409.

(who otherwise had no direct interest in the trade), in the purchase of such frames. Two years later the market failed, a number of persons employed were discharged by the manufacturers, and there was much distress. At the same time came the introduction of a new frame, whereby a considerable saving of manual labour was effected, and women were employed instead of men, at a reduced rate of wages. The hosiers—at first, those thrown out of work or those who refused to work at the new rates—began the frame-breaking.

and methods.

"The depredations," said the Home Secretary, "had been carried on with a greater degree of secrecy and management than had ever been known in any similar proceedings; so much so that the magistrates could not take upon themselves to apprehend the persons whom they suspected of having committed the outrages. It was peculiarly easy for parties who were ill-disposed to perpetrate these illegal acts, for, in many instances, the machinery was used in isolated houses, which were far from any neighbourhood, and persons having secreted themselves about the premises felt no difficulty in destroying the frames, which could be performed with very little noise. In one instance, the mischief had been done actually in sight of the military; and, in another, they were not more than a hundred yards from the premises. The rioters had also occasionally gone to the villages in bodies of about fifty men, and, having stationed sentinels at the different avenues, the remainder employed themselves in destroying the frames; and this was executed with so much secrecy, that not a trace of the parties was left in the course of a few minutes."[1]

Strong measures taken.

Very vigorous measures were taken. Between the 14th November and the 9th December, no less than 900 cavalry and 1,000 infantry were sent to Nottingham—a larger force, it was said, than had ever been found necessary, in any period of our history, to be employed in the quelling of any local disturbance—and rewards were offered for discovery of the offenders. But the measures were all in vain, and, before the close of the year, the epidemic had spread into the neighbouring counties of Derby and Leicester, while the centre remained in Nottingham.[2]

Jealousy of imported labour.

Harriet Martineau speaks of the extreme jealousy of imported labour at this time among the people. In a Boston newspaper she found Irish reapers referred to as a sort of novelty, and the

[1] *Hansard*, xxi. 807. [2] *Annual Register*, 1812, 835.

native labourers, who expected to make their half guinea a day during the harvest, were severely rebuked for maltreating the strangers. In contrast to this, we read, in August, that upwards of 800 Dutch fishermen, deprived of the means of pursuing their occupation by the disturbed state of the continent, had recently made application to the British Government to be allowed to settle on some part of the east coast—a great number of them had already arrived from Heligoland—and that the Government was devising measures to meet their wishes.

**Agriculture.**

While manufacture and trade, in so many branches, were thus suffering, the position of agriculture was no better. The early months of the year saw in turn frost, snow, and rain—in northern districts the roads were blocked with snow. As consequence of the stagnation of trade and the reduction of consumption, corn markets were dull, and cattle and sheep sold at unremunerative prices—"scarcely a single beast purchased in Glasgow." A favourable spring was succeeded by a capricious summer and autumn. Of the harvest, any general statement seems impossible except that it was defective—and this was the case all over Europe. The results varied from district to district and from crop to crop. In some places it was said to be the worst harvest since 1799 and 1800. While oats, peas, and beans were fair, the wheat crop in every district was not above five-eighths of an average. The prices of cattle and sheep were low, and wool sales—particularly the sales of fine wool—were poor.

**A defective harvest.**

**Rise in price**

Reflecting this course of events, the price of wheat, which was 96/- in January, fell to 86/8 in June,[1] and then steadily rose till it was 106/8 in December.[2] The Board of Agriculture average for the year was 95/3. The average price of the quartern loaf in London was 15¾d. for the year, and in December, the price was 17¼d. The importation of wheat and wheat flour was only 336,000 quarters. In some favoured trades, wages were raised on account of the dearness of food—the men employed at Greenwich Hospital, for instance, were paid 30/- to 35/- per week—but, of course, there was no rise in the wages of the ordinary trades.

[1] At this figure there were loud complaints of the "low prices," and bitter reviling of a Government which allowed millions to be paid on foreign importations when the same money might so well be spent in encouraging agriculture at home! It is only another example of how quickly a high level of prices is accepted as normal when there have been one or two bad harvests.

[2] These monthly prices are taken from the *Annual Register*, where the average for the year is 94/7.

Fall of rent in Scotland.

In Scotland, there was at last a fall in rent as regards new leases. "Our ideas," says one, "seem to have lowered something like 20 per cent. from the standard of last year." Hardly an offer is being made for farms where the leases have expired, said another, adding savagely—"proprietors will now have an opportunity afforded them of learning the intrinsic worth of their lands, which will, in time, qualify them for becoming Commissioners under the Property Tax Act."[1]

Distress in Highlands.

A debate on the Caledonian Canal in May throws a sidelight on the distress in the Highlands. When £40,000 were asked, following a grant of £50,000 in the previous year, the question was put whether this was to be an annual thing, and whether there was any likelihood of the Canal soon being completed. The answer was that the undertaking was undoubtedly a useful one for commercial purposes, but that one object of its initiation was to give employment to the Highlanders who threatened to emigrate to other countries. A thousand persons were on the average employed, but, six months before, that number had been reduced, lest the employment of so many labourers on such an undertaking should have the effect of raising the price of labour in the neighbourhood. But, owing to the pressure of the times, great numbers had been thrown wholly out of employment, and, within the last six weeks, about 500 persons, who otherwise would have been destitute, had obtained employment there. The Canal, however, it was said, was now more than half finished.

Foreign trade.

The severity of the crisis was amply reflected in the figures of foreign trade. The Official values were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports - - - - - - - - - - | £26,510,186 |
| Exports of produce and manufactures of the United Kingdom - - - - - - - | 22,681,400 |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise - | 6,222,769 |

The Real value of the United Kingdom exports was £32,890,712.

This showed a fall in imports of nearly £13 millions; in exports, of nearly £12 millions; in re-exports, of over £3 millions; and, in real value of exports, of £15½ millions. The import of coffee fell from £5,312,000 to £3,646,000; of cotton, from £3,882,000 to £2,990,000; and of sugar, from £6,499,000 to £5,324,000. The export of cotton goods fell from £18,033,000 to £11,715,000; and, of woollen goods, from £5,773,000 to £4,376,000.[2]

[1] *Farmer's Magazine, passim.* [2] *Annual Register* of 1813, p. 328.

But the ships built and registered during the year in the several ports of the empire (excluding Ireland) numbered 870, representing 115,630 tons (as compared with 685 and 84,891 respectively in the previous year).

Proposed equalisation of spirit duties.

In anticipation of the Budget, the taxation of liquor was brought up in two interesting connections. In March, the Chancellor of the Exchequer introduced a measure relating to the distilleries, designed to do justice to both interests concerned, the colonial planters and the home cultivator. The principle he proposed to act upon was to produce such an equalisation of the duties on spirits, whether distilled from malt or from sugar, that, when malt and sugar were at reasonable prices, it might be at the option of the distillers which material to employ. This would involve the placing of an additional duty on malt spirits, and would increase the revenue by £380,000. But it would equalise the competition, in bringing to market either of these commodities. The agricultural interest, however, objected quite undisguisedly to any such equal competition between sugar and barley, and desired a preference or monopoly for the barley, arguing that it was unfair that, of all the community, the growers of barley alone should be subject to the burden of relieving the West Indian planters. The measure, after passing the lower House, was thrown out by the Lords.[1]

Petition of Irish brewers.

In April, a suggestive—if naive—petition was presented by several brewers of Dublin, Cork, and Waterford, setting forth, "That the petitioners are engaged in a manufacture the prosperity of which is universally allowed to be intimately connected with the health and morals of the people; that the petitioners had, for many years previous to the late session of Parliament, witnessed a desire on the part of the legislature to encourage the use of malt liquor in Ireland, manifested not only by repeated declarations of Parliament to that effect, but by a progressive increase to the duties on spirituous liquors; that, under the encouragement so held out to the petitioners, and the growing demand for malt liquor resulting therefrom, they were led to entertain a confidence that the brewing trade was considered as an object of national importance, and would consequently continue to experience the kind protection of the legislature; that, influenced by these motives, they have been induced to expend large sums in extending and improving their works, and in

[1] *Hansard*, xix. 321, 357, 687, 753, 789.

making every other necessary preparation for supplying the extending demand; that they were naturally led to hope that the legislature would have been greatly strengthened in its opinion of the high importance of the Irish brewery, not only as connected with public health and public morals, but as an object of revenue through the medium of the duties on malt, from two facts which occurred during the temporary suspension of distillation from grain in Ireland, namely, that habits of sobriety and good order, with their happy effects, became conspicuously disseminated among the lower classes of the people, and that, within the same short period, the consumption of malt liquor in Ireland had been proportionably increased." But, during the last session, "the duty on Irish made spirits was reduced to the extremely low rate of 2/6 per gallon, whilst the malt duty, which principally affects the breweries, remained undiminished; in consequence of this measure, the price of spirituous liquors has become so extremely cheap that the lower classes of the people have returned with unexampled avidity to the excessive use of those liquors, and the consumption of malt liquor has declined to such a degree as to cause great alarm to the petitioners, whose establishments are so extensive as to bear with insupportable weight upon a declining trade." They therefore prayed the House to take their case into consideration, and to extend to their declining trade such relief as to them should seem meet.[1]

In May, Grattan[2] asked that this petition—"praying that the duty of 2/6 upon spirits should be restored to the former rate of 5/8 per gallon"—be referred to a Committee of the whole House; reading extracts from several papers to prove the growing dissoluteness of the lower orders in consequence of the cheapness of ardent spirits. Newport confirmed the statement, saying that, in county Cavan, where "a man could get completely drunk for 4d.," drunkenness had increased to such a degree that no workman would work more than two days in the week. Even Castlereagh thought that no revenue consideration ought to interfere with the morals of the people: "there was a time, perhaps, when spirits might be more suitable to the people of

[1] *Hansard*, xix. 760.

[2] Simond, who heard Grattan in 1810, describes him as "a veteran member, old and toothless, and speaking like a Jew, uncouthly and carelessly, but ardently, and with that seeming self-conviction which is among the very first requisites of eloquence—using animated gestures, a little à la Françoise, or at least very different from the English mode of oratory" (*Journal*, i. 55).

Ireland than malt liquor, but now, when they were better clothed, lodged, and fed, they did not require spirits to warm them." The Committee was appointed and subsequently reported that the first opportunity should be made use of to lay an additional duty on spirits in order to render their consumption less general.[1]

The Budget was opened on 20th May.[2] The total Supply (already voted) was £56,021,869, including the Irish proportion of £6,569,000. The items were: Budget.

| | |
|---|---|
| Navy | £20,276,000 |
| Army | 21,269,000 |
| Ordnance | 5,612,000 |
| Miscellaneous | 2,050,000 |
| Vote of Credit | 3,200,000 |
| Sicily | 400,000 |
| Portugal | 2,100,000 |

Of the Ways and Means, the chief items were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Annual duties | £3,000,000 |
| Surplus Consolidated Fund, 1810 | 1,353,715 |
| Surplus Consolidated Fund, 1811 | 5,000,000 |
| War taxes | 20,000,000 |
| Lottery | 300,000 |
| Exchequer Bills | 4,000,000 |
| Vote of Credit | 3,000,000 |
| Loan | 12,481,000 |

For once, the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave a detailed estimate of all the items in the Consolidated Fund, on which he based his surplus of £5,000,000. The figures were as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Customs | £5,134,000 |
| Excise | 17,167,000 |
| Assessed taxes | 5,800,000 |
| Stamp duties | 5,300,000 |
| Post Office | 1,280,000 |
| Hawkers and other small branches of the revenue | 106,000 |
| Personal estates and pensions | 156,000 |
| Land tax | 1,038,000 |
| Surplus exchequer fees | 54,000 |
| Tontine | 24,000 |
| Crown lands, etc. | 66,000 |
| Imprest monies | 200,000 |
| Proportion of war taxes appropriated | 2,240,000 |
| | £38,562,000 |

[1] *Hansard*, xx. 177; xxii. 243. [2] *Ibid.* xx. 210.

As regards the War Taxes, he estimated Customs and Excise at £9,296,000, and the Property Tax at £11,800,000. Taking arrears, etc., and deducting £2,240,000 pledged for the interest of the debt, he estimated the yield at £20,354,805.[1]

Rise in the revenue.

Looking over the figures of the previous year, he stated that the Revenue had exceeded the estimates in customs and excise, in stamp duties, and in the post office. This last showed a steady increase, over the past three years, of about £90,000 a year, due not to additional duties on postage, but simply to the augmented commercial correspondence of the country: this would give him the opportunity to relieve Scotland and other distant parts of the empire without any danger to the estimated revenue.

The charges created by the loan were £1,215,819. These would be met by the new duties already imposed in the course of the session; namely, on spirits—this being the principal one—on timber, an additional penny a lb. on all cotton wool brought from the United States and other parts (inclusive of British and Portuguese colonies), on pearl and pot ashes imported (except from the British colonies), and on foreign linen. In fact, the sum voted was much larger than was wanted, and it would not be necessary to impose a single new tax. At the same time, he proposed to repeal Pitt's duty on hats, which, when first levied, produced £60,000 to £70,000, but now brought in less than £30,000. The duty on gloves had already been repealed (in 1794), and, for once allowing himself a little levity, he begged leave to say that if it should happen that any person might be led to imagine that, although the duties on hats and gloves were abandoned, it might be expedient to impose others on coats, waistcoats, shoes, or leather breeches, and in consequence to suggest such new duties to Government, it might be a relief, both to those persons who were so kindly ready to furnish the Chancellor of the Exchequer with

[1] It seems impossible to check these estimates by the amounts actually realised, as the estimates were made up from April to April, while the accounts were made up from December to December,—to say nothing of the fact that the estimates are lumped in solid and simple categories, while the accounts are subdivided, and, so far as I can make out, the same imposts are sometimes put under different names. I have done the best I could to understand and translate these old finance accounts, and have generally ventured no statement of which I was not sure; but I heartily agree with what Mr. Buxton said, in 1888: our public accounts "are, and especially were, fearfully and wonderfully made; if words are given to conceal thoughts, figures may be said to be there given to conceal facts" (*Finance and Politics*, ii. 323).

the Ways and Means of the year, and to that individual himself, to state that he did not consider it expedient to tax articles of dress. This notice would not appear superfluous if the House were aware how many letters he was constantly receiving, in which not only every habiliment which could be named, but even the bolts, handles, latches, and other appendages of doors and windows were recommended by well-intentioned persons as fit objects of taxation.

Perceval's optimism.

He concluded "a most perspicuous statement" by mentioning "a few circumstances to show the great increase of the revenue and the affluence of the country," viz. the increasing produce of customs and excise during the past five years, of the duties on cotton wool, imported deals and timber, tea—of which the increased consumption was most extraordinary, as it was heavily taxed, while the coffee duty was reduced—wines, tallow, and tobacco.

Withdrawal of proposed duty on cotton.

The only change made in the Budget proposals was the withdrawal of the additional penny per lb. on cotton wool imported from America. Baring and Sir Robert Peel strongly opposed such a tax. It was impolitic—in fact, "a direct affront," said Whitbread—to tax the raw material when the cotton manufacturers were starving. The imports of cotton from our own colonies were extremely limited—40,000 bags out of a total of 1,450,000—and our manufacturers could not well do without the fine cotton of America. It was questionable, besides, if we should further tax our best customers. Baring reminded the House that the cotton manufactory was a very growing one in the United States; that a great number of cotton mills had been established in the neighbourhood of Boston; and that the United States already exported a large quantity of cotton twist; and he intimated his opinion that sheep's wool was a much better article of taxation—if the prejudices of the country gentlemen would allow it—as our cotton manufactures might be undersold or excluded, while our woollens could not be rivalled. The only argument on the other side was the smallness of the proposed impost—the price of cotton wool had varied from 12d. to 2/6 per lb., and the additional penny would have no effect.[1]

[1] *Hansard*, xx. 222, 274, 305. We learn from the debates that, at this time, East India cotton was inferior to that of America, while the American was said to be inferior to that of Brazil. Indian cotton was selling at 8d., American at 12d. *Ibid.* 222, 276.

Exemption of aliens from Property Tax.

The old question of exempting foreigners from the payment of the Property Tax on funded property was brought up by Howarth. He contended that the argument advanced in 1806, that the exemption would encourage foreigners to place their money in the British funds, had no foundation, as foreigners became fundholders only by purchase of a stock already subscribed and on the market; that the number of foreign fundholders was insignificant and had not increased; and that, as no pledge had been given to put them on a different footing from the general mass of stockholders, there could be no breach of faith in imposing the same taxation. The Chancellor of the Exchequer opposed, somewhat vaguely, on the ground that the honour of the country was implicated; that it was the great object of the enemy to embarrass our finances; and that, in the state of the world, the House must be very circumspect in such a proceeding. It was due, he said, to the British character to show that this country would not resort to any mean shifts. The motion was withdrawn without a division.[1]

Inequalities of the Tax.

Later on, in June, Turton brought up the inequalities of the Property Tax, particularly the taxing of annuity incomes at the same rate as incomes from land that would sell, say, at thirty years' purchase, and of small incomes at the same rate as large. "It was on the principle of contributing according to ability" that he wished to protest against this. The Chancellor of the Exchequer answered that he must oppose a proposal which involved a material diminution of the revenue. "As for laying a higher income tax upon the richer classes, it would be a complete subversion of all the principles of justice, by which the property of all men should be equally protected by the law." Wm. Smith, the member for Norwich, on the other hand, maintained that the principle adopted ought to be "to leave the persons of small income the means of decent living in the first place, and then to tax incomes beyond this in nearly an equal degree." This motion also was negatived without a division.[2]

Irish Budget.

The Irish Budget seemed to justify the gloomy view taken of affairs in the sister isle. There was a deficiency in the estimates of no less than £1,866,000. A loan was needed of £7,000,000. Of this, £2½ millions were raised in Ireland, and £4½ millions in England. In consideration of "the depressed state of the Irish finances," Great Britain had taken upon herself the interest

[1] *Hansard*, xx. 202. [2] *Ibid.* 747.

on those £4½ millions, "for one year at least," to be paid out of the Consolidated Fund. The new taxes, which consisted principally in raising the tobacco duty and the hemp duty to the same figure as in England, required, therefore, to cover only the interest on the £2½ millions. As for the state of the country, it was not so bad, said Foster, as had been represented.[1] The exports, though short of the previous year, were fair on the average. The chief falling off was in imports.[2] Exchange had been steady for the last four or five years. In agriculture, there was a great increase of tillage; the country had never exported so much corn as during the past two years, and an unusual quantity of live cattle had been sent to England; in the number of hogs exported, the increase had been prodigious—within a few years, not less than from five thousand to thirty thousand head. The linen trade had declined everywhere, but less in Ireland than anywhere else.

In the debate which followed, there was considerable criticism as to the rapid increase of the Irish debt, from £33 millions at the Union to £89 millions, while the revenue had made no proportional progress, and as to the impropriety of estimating the revenue for the coming year at the same figure as the estimate of the previous year, which had fallen so far short. On the whole, the growing prosperity of Ireland was not denied, but it was affirmed that she had advanced more rapidly before the Union, and would have gone on doing so but for the Union.[3]

**Romilly continues his crusade.**

Not discouraged by the consideration that he "had hitherto spent a good deal of time on the subject without doing much good," Romilly continued his attempts to reform the Criminal Law. As we have seen, his "Dwelling House Robbery Bill," repealing so much of the Act as took away the benefit of clergy from persons stealing to the value of 40/- in any dwelling house, passed the lower House in the previous session, but was thrown out in the Lords. In February, he reintroduced it unchanged, contending

[1] In March, Newport, who had been Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1806, had brought forward the state of the public income and expenditure, and given a very pessimistic account of the Irish finances. The cause, he affirmed, was not the commercial depression of the empire, but over-taxation. Articles of consumption had been so heavily taxed that consumption was checked; by imposing new taxes, the previous ones were lost, while the expense of collection and management had increased in a most striking degree (*Hansard*, xix. 423).

[2] "If there was a failure in the imports," said Foster in March, "it was rather a symptom that Ireland kept her money at home than that she had none to send abroad" (*ibid.* 431).

[3] *Hansard*, xx. 223, and *Annual Register*, 68.

that the reform of 1808, by which privately stealing from the person was removed from the list of capital punishments, had been attended by an increase in the number both of trials and of convictions, and that this was a decisive proof of its beneficial effects.[1] This Bill, as well as the bill to prevent privately stealing in shops, warehouses, coach-houses, and stables, to the amount of 5/-, the Navigable Rivers Robbery Bill, and a new one, the Bleaching Grounds Robbery Bill, passed the Commons in April. Nothing new was presented in the debates. The anomalous nature of the existing laws, however, was well illustrated by a story of Lord Kenyon. On one occasion, when he proceeded to pass the death-sentence upon a woman—convicted of a first offence, with many extenuating circumstances—the prisoner fell senseless. Lord Kenyon, in great distress, cried out in court: "Good woman, I don't mean to hang you, I don't mean to hang you—will nobody in the court tell her I don't mean to hang her?"[2]

In May, Lord Holland brought up all these Bills in the Lords for the second reading. The subject, he said, resolved itself into the question whether the terror of punishment or the certainty of punishment was the more likely to deter from the commission of crimes. Lord Ellenborough, as usual, opposed, and the Bills against Stealing in Dwelling Houses, Shops, and Navigable Rivers were thrown out by 27 to 10. As the English and Irish Bleaching Grounds Robbery Bills, however, were supported by petitions from almost all the bleachers in the north of Ireland, and from calico printers in the vicinity of London, these two Bills passed the second reading.[3]

**Penitentiaries.**

On the motion of the Secretary for State (who now took the matter out of Romilly's hands), a Select Committee on the Laws relating to Penitentiary Houses was appointed on 4th March. It reported, on 31st May, that the system of penitentiary imprisonment was calculated to reform offenders and ought to be pursued, and recommended that a separate Penitentiary House, or Penitentiary Houses, should be erected, in the first instance, for the counties of London and Middlesex, and that measures should be taken for carrying on the penitentiary system, as soon as might be practicable, in different parts of the country. The Report is interesting,

[1] *Hansard*, xviii. 1261. [2] *Ibid.* xix. 654.

[3] *Ibid.* xx. 296. The interesting debates on these were reported more fully in a pamphlet edited by Basil Montagu, and appear, in later editions of *Hansard*, in an Appendix to vol. xix.

besides, because of its discussion of Jeremy Bentham's ideas, and its description of the Panopticon—"the building circular—an iron cage glazed—a glass lantern, about the size of Ranelagh—the prisoners, in their cells, occupying the circumference—the officers, governors, chaplain, surgeon, etc., the centre: by blinds and other contrivances, the inspectors concealed (except in as far as they think fit to show themselves) from the observation of the prisoners; hence the sentiment of a sort of invisible omnipresence—the whole circuit reviewable with little, or, if necessary, without any change of place—one station in the inspection part affording the most perfect view of every cell, and every part of every cell, unless where a screen is thought fit occasionally and purposely to be interposed."[1]

Flogging.

In another direction, attention was being drawn to the extreme severity of punishments. In 1808, Burdett had raised the question of flogging in the army, a mode of punishment, he said, unknown in any other army in Europe except Russia. On that occasion, although all he asked was a return of the sentences and number of lashes inflicted at a time, he got only three members to support him.[2] In this year he brought forward a motion on the subject, in the course of which he said that "he really did not believe that, in the description the poets gave of hell, there were any tortures equal to what was called a military punishment . . . there was nothing so trivial, either in dress or equipment, for which a soldier might not be flogged." In spite of the support of Brougham and Whitbread, he received only 10 votes against 94.[3]

Abolition of crimpage.

In the other service, one reform was made by the Government itself. Before this time, when a seaman was permitted to procure a substitute, his only recourse was to apply to "crimps," who charged at the rate of a hundred guineas for an able-bodied seamen, and fifty for a landsman. The Admiralty now undertook to give a discharge for eighty and forty guineas respectively, the money going to a fund for raising volunteer seamen, and the iniquitous trade of crimpage was abolished.[4]

[1] *Hansard*, xx. Append. lxxxix. [2] *Ibid.* xi. 1117.

[3] *Hansard*, xx. 698. Lord Hutchinson told Romilly of a case where a man in the Guards, of irreproachable character, on being transferred into the veteran battalion in the Tower, had, at the age of sixty, received three hundred lashes for being absent one day. *Diary*, ii. 368.

[4] *Hansard*, xx. 307.

**Slave Trade**

Following up the resolution of 1810, as regards the Slave Trade, Brougham gave instances of evasion by English owners, under the guise of trading in wood and ivory, and brought in a Bill to render the Abolition Act more effectual, making the dealing in slaves, or fitting out vessels for that purpose, a felony punishable by transportation or imprisonment. The Bill, backed by Wilberforce and Whitbread, was received with much favour, and passed both Houses without opposition, under the title of the Slave Trade Felony Bill, 51 Geo. III. c. 33.[1]

**Parish apprentices.**

The case of parish apprentices was brought forward in April by Wilbraham Bootle. It was, he said, the duty of overseers to act in some measure *in loco parentis*. But the great populous parishes were binding children and sending them 200 miles away to the Midlands, to manufacturers who took 200 or 300 of them as apprentices, and neither parties could give any parental care in such cases. His wish was to limit the distance to which they might be sent to 40 miles from the place of settlement, and to put a limit on the number that could be taken by one manufacturer. A Bill was brought in on those terms.[2] But, in June, Bootle, in view of the extraordinary opposition threatened by the Vestries, deferred his Bill, and obtained instead a Committee "to examine and state the Account of Parish Apprentices within the Bills of Mortality."[3]

**Proposal of a new theatre.**

The curious jealousy of allowing competition in theatres appears in the treatment of the proposal to build a new house. Covent Garden and Drury Lane had been burned down in 1808 and 1809, within seven months of each other, and, for legal reasons, the rebuilding of the latter had not been started. A Bill was now brought forward for erecting and maintaining a new theatre "for dramatic entertainments" in the cities of London and Westminster, and read a second time. But, on Sheridan's assurance that Drury Lane would be rebuilt, the Bill was lost, in spite of the extreme inconvenience to which, as Marryat said, the public was put by having only one theatre. Introduced again, in the next year, it was again thrown out.[4]

[1] *Hansard*, xix. 233; Romilly, *Diary*, ii. 367.

[2] *Hansard*, xix. 748.

[3] *Hansard*, xx. 517. "If Mr. Bootle does not bring in the Bill next session, I think that I shall," writes Romilly (*Diary*, ii. 399). But Bootle did not bring it in till 1815.

[4] *Hansard*, xix. 496, 1140; xxii. 96.

Macadam.

In June, 1811, Macadam submitted a paper to a Committee of the House of Commons, putting forth the views upon road-making which were afterwards to enshrine his name in the language. The badness of the roads, he showed, was not due to the materials of which they were composed, but to the impossibility of these materials being consolidated. Gravels and flint in their natural state, with no point of contact, were thrown down on the surface, and the only action of the traffic was to shove them aside.[1] The stones, he contended, should be broken, and no piece of stone put on a road which exceeded an inch in any of its dimensions. By laying a bed of such broken stones to a depth of ten inches, without earth, and filling up inequalities during the process of consolidation, a hard level surface would be obtained which would last for years without further attention.[2] It was these principles he put in practice when appointed surveyor in general of the Bristol roads in 1815.

Combinations.

That the drastic Combination Act of 1800 had not succeeded in putting down all concerted action on the part of workers, is abundantly evident from incidental references in current literature. As Mr. and Mrs. Webb say: "It must not be supposed that every combination was made the subject of prosecution, or that the Trade Union leader of the period passed his whole life in gaol." For one thing, there were many trade friendly societies, and such societies were very likely to furnish the organisation necessary for ulterior trade purposes. But actual combinations were by no means extinct. "Owing to the extremely inefficient organisation of the English police, and the absence of any public prosecutor, a combination was usually let alone until some employer was sufficiently inconvenienced by its operations to be willing himself to set the law in motion. In many cases, we find employers apparently accepting or conniving at their men's combinations."[3] The uncertainty of the law itself is illustrated in the following case which appears in the *Scots Magazine*. Four journeymen shoemakers in Glasgow were prosecuted for

[1] The *Farmer's Magazine* of 1814 gives the following description of the Drem or North Toll road: "the materials, which no weight or time can reduce to a moderate size, appear to be tumbled out of carts at the trot, and, as they fall by accident, they generally lie one stone thick. . . . In that situation, they are jerked out to the footpath by every cart or carriage whose drivers dare to travel on them," p. 30.

[2] Quoted in *Scots Magazine*, 1811, 754.

[3] *History of Trade Unionism*, 63.

illegal combination and conspiracy to obtain a rise of wages. The defence was, that they had made use of no force to compel the masters to give the rise, but had only left their work when their demands were not complied with, which was a common practice when masters and servants disagreed respecting wages; and the recent case of the papermakers was adduced, where the court had held the indictment irrelevant. The prosecution contended that all this in turn was irrelevant; that similar indictments had been sustained by the court; that the crime of combination was punishable by law; and that the present was a very aggravated case. On account of its great importance, the case was adjourned, and we know no more of the matter.[1]

In June, a motion was made for the appointment of a Select Committee to take into consideration the laws regulating the wages of journeymen in the tailors' trade within the city of London, the state of the said trade generally, the combinations entered into by journeymen therein, and the effects thereof on other branches of industry. It was stated that combinations in this trade were of very old standing, and had called, even in ancient times, for penal acts. Of late, not only had they increased, but they were conducted on a scale of great magnitude, and with such peculiar sagacity as to defeat the object of every penal statute. Out of 24,000 tailors, 4,000 had been proved to be in a regular combination, provided not only with counsel but with funds, and they had even aided the combinations of other trades, particularly those of the calico weavers. The motion was agreed to,[2] but there is no more about the matter in *Hansard*. Harriet Martineau says that the journeymen tailors were in an opulent state, supporting four strikes for an increase of wages within four years, and succeeding in them all.[3]

Popular education.

The success of the Royal Lancastrian Association was now so great that a number of churchmen formed a rival society, called the "National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church," with the avowed object of bringing the growing movement of popular education under safe control. It was by these two organisations that elementary education in England was carried on till the introduction of the national system in 1870.

Second census.

The second census of Great Britain was taken on 27th May, 1811, and presented to Parliament on 18th January of the

[1] *Scots Magazine*, p. 74. [2] *Hansard*, xx. 589. [3] *History*, 391.

following year. It showed a total population of 12,552,144, as against 10,942,646 at the previous census of 1801, an increase of more than 1½ millions.[1] The separate increase was: England, 14 per cent., Wales, 12 per cent., Scotland, 13 per cent. This increase, said Rose in introducing it, "exhibited an extent and duration unexampled in the history of this country, and what rendered it still more surprising was that the increase of the males was as great as that of the females."[2]

The separate totals were:

| | |
|---|---|
| England | 9,499,400 |
| Wales | 607,380 |
| Scotland | 1,804,864 |
| Army, Navy, etc. | 640,500 |

The most densely populated counties were:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| In England— | Middlesex | 950,042 |
| | Lancaster | 828,309 |
| | West Riding | 653,002 |
| In Scotland— | Lanark | 191,752 |
| | Edinburgh | 148,444 |
| | Aberdeen | 136,903 |
| | Perth | 135,093 |

The populations of the chief cities were:

| | |
|---|---|
| London | 1,009,546 |
| (an increase in two years of over 140,000) | |
| Edinburgh and Leith | 103,000 |
| Glasgow | 100,750 |
| Manchester and Salford | 98,573 |

[1] *Hansard*, xxi. 177. About the same time, the Parisian Board of Longitude gave the population of the French Empire (excluding the military) at 42½ millions, made up as follows: French speaking, 28,000,000; Italian, 5,000,000; Flemish or Dutch, 4,400,000; German, 4,000,000; Breton, 1,075,000. The total population of the United States, in 1810, was 7,238,000. *Annual Register*, 1811.

[2] Rose seemed a little alarmed at the increase of population. He gave figures to prove that "the increased consumption of wheat was greater than that of all other grain, and that those who did not heretofore make use of wheat now made it a principal part of their food." Means should accordingly be devised to enable the country to supply itself. But, personally, he was persuaded that there was no way in which the country could effectually supply its population except by encouraging and extending the planting of potatoes, and potatoes, happily, would grow in those soils that were unfit for the cultivation of grain. The fisheries, too, were a neglected source of food supply—"It was strange that, in a maritime country like this, fish were rarely to be seen except at the tables of the rich" (*Hansard*, xxi. 177).

| | |
|---|---|
| Liverpool | 94,376 |
| Birmingham | 85,700 |
| Bristol | 76,500 |
| Leeds | 62,500[1] |

Doubts about increase of population.

In the debate which followed, Brougham doubted whether the apparent increase could be substantiated, considering the necessary inaccuracies of the previous census and the prejudices of the people at that time. Newport affirmed that "it never could be credited that the immense apparent increase of a million and a half was owing to natural causes; it was only to be accounted for by supposing that the people in 1801 thought that the census was required for purposes of taxation, and therefore designedly omitted a great number of persons whose names were inserted in the census of 1811."

No Irish census.

Some criticism was made of the non-inclusion of Ireland in the census—"were the six millions of Ireland to be forgotten?" asked one member—and a tendency was shown to make it a grievance. Newport, for instance, hinted that the reason for not taking it was "a species of timidity on the part of certain persons, who were afraid even of letting themselves know the real amount of the inhabitants of the sister kingdom." A Bill was, accordingly, brought in to make provision for ascertaining the population of Ireland.[2]

Literature.

The only noteworthy literary events were the publication of Jane Austen's first novel *Sense and Sensibility*, and of Scott's *Vision of Don Roderick*,—the profits of which he gave to the committee then collecting subscriptions for the relief of the Portuguese who had suffered so much from Masséna's campaign.

[1] With this may be compared the populations of French towns, from a list "published under the authority of government":

| | |
|---|---|
| Paris | 548,000 |
| Marseilles | 97,000 |
| Bourdeaux | 90,000 |
| Lyons | 89,000 |
| Rouen | 87,000 |
| Nantes | 77,000 |
| Brussels | 66,000 |
| Anvers | 56,000 |
| Gand | 55,000 |
| Lille | 54,000 |

(*Annual Register*, 1811, Chron. 144.)

[2] *Hansard*, xxi. 399. The next mention of the matter is in April, 1814, when Peel reported that the returns were so imperfect that they were utterly unfit to be laid on the table. Many of the counties had sent in no returns whatever (*Hansard*, xxvii. 430).

MISCELLANEA.

Croker notices the enterprise of the *Times* in securing early news from the continent. The difficulty of obtaining French papers had increased to an extraordinary degree. "It is pretty certain," said John Walter, "that no French journals whatsoever can be procured but by the means of smugglers." The *Times* had its special packet-boats running, but they were "frequently interfered with under one pretext or another, and the Government officials did not scruple by every means in their power to enable their own organisations to leave the independent journals far behind in the race." On at least one occasion, the Government and the *Times* co-operated in helping a French smuggler to earn a more honest living by smuggling only French journals.[1]

[1] *Croker Papers*, i. 36.

# CHAPTER XVI

## 1811. DEBATES ON THE BULLION COMMITTEE REPORT

Horner's Resolutions.

ON 6th May, the House resolved itself into a Committee to consider the Bullion Report, and Horner, after a long and closely reasoned speech, moved the sixteen Resolutions.[1] His object, he said, was to impress the House with "the propriety of reverting to the doctrines and opinions of the ablest and most practical statesmen of this country previous to the period of the Bank Restriction." The principle of these doctrines was, that the circulation of paper was in itself beneficial and sufficiently guarded against possible excess when constantly liable to conversion into gold. Since the publication of the Report, the evil had greatly increased. The price of gold was now as high as £4 14/- (20 per cent. above the mint price), which meant that the real quantity of precious metal which a one pound note would purchase was 15/10. But it was not alone from the extraordinary rise in the market price of the precious metals in this country that the depreciation of the currency was demonstrable. The equally extraordinary rise in the prices of the necessaries of life, not as compared with the precious metals, but as compared with the actual circulation, afforded a clear and convincing proof of its depreciation. The great and paramount standard of all value was corn. Now, from 1771 to 1785 inclusive, the average price of wheat was 46/- per quarter. From 1786 to 1797 inclusive, it was 52/-. From 1797 to 1808 inclusive, omitting altogether the two years of scarcity 1800 and 1801, the average price was 71/-. What could better prove the depreciation of the currency? Or, again; in 1791, the price of 54/- was fixed as that under which no grain should be imported: in 1804, it became necessary to

[1] *Hansard*, xix. 799.

raise that protecting price to 66/-; and, if it were intended to carry on the system of protection, it would now be necessary to raise the protecting price to above 70/-. And, while the price of gold had risen since the publication of the Report, the note issue of the Bank of England had increased by two millions—"one of the most wanton and unjustifiable acts that could be conceived." He was "free to confess that, if Parliament were to stop short, even with a simple declaration of the existence and nature of the evil, such a declaration would have a powerful effect upon the conduct of the Bank of England, and consequently in checking the progress of the excessive issue and the increase of the depreciation"; but he "was not the less persuaded that the remedy pointed out by the Bullion Committee was the only measure that could be successful."

Text of the resolutions.

The first resolution ran: That the only money which can be legally tendered in Great Britain, for any sum above twelve pence on the whole, is made either of gold or silver; and that the weight, standard, and denomination, at which any such money is authorised to pass current, is fixed, under his Majesty's prerogative, according to law.

The next six resolutions dealt successively with the constitution of standard silver and of standard gold coins, the rating of guineas, etc., with silver coins, the limitation of the legal tender of silver to £25, the definition of light (non-legal tender) gold coins. These seven resolutions, it will be seen, related to the standard of value. The remainder dealt with the problem immediately under discussion.

(8) That the promissory notes of the Bank of England are stipulations to pay on demand the sum in pounds sterling respectively specified in each of the said notes.

(9) That when it was enacted, by the authority of Parliament, that the payment of the promissory notes of the Bank of England in cash should for a time be suspended, it was not the intention of Parliament that any alteration whatsoever should take place in the value of such promissory notes.

(10) That it appears that the actual value of the promissory notes of the Bank of England (measuring such value by weight of standard gold and silver as aforesaid) has been, for a considerable period of time, and still is, considerably less than what is established by the laws of the realm to be the legal tender in payment of any money contract or stipulation.

(11) That the fall which has thus taken place in the value of the promissory notes of the Bank of England, and in that of the country bank paper which is exchangeable for it, has been occasioned by too abundant issue of paper currency, both by the Bank of England, and by the country banks; and that this excess has originated from the want of that check and control on the issues of the Bank of England, which existed before the suspension of cash payments.

(12) That it appears, that the exchanges with foreign parts have for a considerable period of time been unfavourable to this country, in an extraordinary degree.

(13) That, although the adverse circumstances of our trade, together with the large amount of our military expenditure abroad, may have contributed to render our exchanges with the continent of Europe unfavourable; yet the extraordinary degree in which the exchanges have been depressed for so long a period, has been, in a great measure, occasioned by the depreciation which has taken place in the relative value of the currency of this country, as compared with the money of foreign countries.

(14) That during the continuance of the suspension of cash payments, it is the duty of the directors of the Bank of England *to advert to the state of the foreign exchanges*, as well as to the price of bullion, with a view to regulate the amount of their issues.

(15) That the only certain and adequate security to be provided, against an excess of paper currency and for maintaining the relative value of the circulating medium of the realm, is the legal convertibility, upon demand, of all paper currency into lawful coin of the realm.

(16) That, in order to revert gradually to this security, and to enforce meanwhile a due limitation of the paper of the Bank of England, as well as of all the other bank paper of the country, it is expedient to amend the Act which suspends the cash payments of the bank, by altering the time, till which the suspension shall continue, from six months after the ratification of a definitive treaty of peace, to that of two years from the present time.

Opposition. The opposition began with a speech of portentous length by Rose,[1] based very largely on the text that "the Bank notes were

[1] *Hansard*, xix. 833-895. Rose committed himself to the theory that the great and sudden rise in the price of corn had been the cause of the advance

equivalent to money for every common and legitimate transaction in life except for foreign remittances," and was continued by Vansittart,[1] by Castlereagh,[2]—who said that the Report was in direct contradiction to the evidence of every witness examined—and by Perceval.[3]

Horner, on the other hand, was supported by Henry Thornton,[4] Huskisson,[5] Parnell,[6] and Canning.[7] Huskisson affirmed that, in every part of the country, there were already two prices, and that, in Ireland, there were clauses in many of the leases for payment in gold, and that guineas were bought at a premium for the rent. Parnell said, *inter alia*, that no one could prove that notes were "held in public estimation to be equivalent to the legal coin of the realm," inasmuch as legal coin did not continue to form a part of the circulating medium; of the £400,000 collected in taxes for one county, only 118 guineas were received. Canning's was "the best speech," said Whitbread, "which I have ever heard him make in the House." Support.

The debates on the first resolution alone (although the whole ground, indeed, was covered by every speaker) continued over four nights, and ended then by the throwing out of the entire resolutions—the first by 151 to 75, the 16th by 180 Horner's Resolutions thrown out.

in other articles, the rise itself being attributable to the advance of the importation prices in 1804, which, "of course, enabled the landed proprietors to advance their rents."

[1] *Hansard*, xix. 919-967. [2] *Ibid.* 986-1012. [3] *Ibid.* 1063.

[4] *Ibid.* 895. Thornton's speech proceeded on the assumption that prices generally had risen since 1800, and that this rise was due to the depreciation of the current money, the notes; and it is remarkable that he took no notice of the fact that, since the publication of the Report, the prices of commodities had fallen very heavily, and that even grain was coming back to its old level. Land, ships, and house property, indeed, were very high—for reasons which were not difficult to find—and wages were high, due to the frequent recurrence of periods of dearth giving them a character of permanence. But "nearly all other objects of exchange were lower in price in 1810 and 1811 than in 1800; in few instances less than 20 per cent., and, in some instances, upwards of 50 per cent., as measured in paper; while gold had risen 25 per cent." Tooke suggests that Thornton, though profoundly and accurately acquainted with the principles and details of banking, had not necessarily, from his occupation as a banker, any knowledge of markets. Of course, all this did not disprove the main contention of the Report, but it threw doubt upon its scientific knowledge and impartiality. All the same, says Tooke after dwelling upon these shortcomings, Thornton's exposition of the general principles of currency was full and clear, and indeed, the best that had then been given; and his exposure of the inconsistencies and fallacies involved in the maxims avowed by the Bank directors, and supported by the Government, was unanswered and unanswerable (*History of Prices*, i. *passim*).

[5] *Ibid.* 967. [6] *Ibid.* 1020. [7] *Ibid.* 1076-1128.

to 45, while the other fourteen were negatived without a division. As the *Annual Register* said: "To give any adequate idea of the arguments employed would require the compass of a pamphlet; in general terms, it may be observed that principle was opposed to principle and fact to fact; and that the very opposite lights in which the subject was viewed by men of great ability and information seemed to prove that the theory of this important part of political economy is yet crude and undetermined."[1]

Vansittart's resolutions.

Three days afterwards, on 13th May, Vansittart[2] introduced his seventeen rival resolutions,[3] prefacing his speech by saying that the publication of the Bullion Committee Report had of itself produced injurious effects on the country—one of the ablest men on the continent had said to him that, if the opinions of the Committee were well founded, all his ideas of the resources and prosperity of England would be overturned.[4]

Of the resolutions the following are the most notable:[5]

(1) That the right of establishing and regulating the legal money of this kingdom hath at all times been a royal prerogative, vested

[1] P. 43.

[2] Nicholas Vansittart, member for Old Sarum; son of a Governor of Bengal; born, 1766; educated at Oxford; called to the bar, but did not pursue his profession; wrote several pamphlets before becoming member for Hastings in 1796; the life-long friend of Addington, and in his administration as joint-secretary to the treasury, 1801; secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, 1805; retired with Addington, 1805; again joint-secretary of treasury under Grenville; retired with Sidmouth, 1807; on account of his established reputation as a financier, offered the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer by Perceval in 1809, but declined.

[3] *Hansard*, xx. 1.

[4] Vansittart naively informed the House that his answer had been that "the Committee had fallen into great errors chiefly by applying sound and just principles of political economy to facts which did not support them"—a deliverance perhaps explained by his subsequent statement, that "what are called principles of political economy are no more than maxims of prudence"!

[5] The full text of the resolutions is given in the *Annual Register*, 44, and in *Hansard*, xx. 69. The resolutions did not deny the "high price of bullion," but pointed out that, in previous periods of war and high price of corn, the price of bullion had been high, while the amount of bank notes in circulation was low. They argued that the currency of a country must increase as the need for it increased—that is, as imports, exports, revenue, and national expenditure increased, and, presumably, in times of high prices. They connected foreign exchanges with the price of gold in a peculiarly close relation as if an unfavourable rate of exchange and a high price of gold went together. In short, they accounted for the acknowledged high price of bullion by the interruption to foreign trade, excessive freights, great expenditure in foreign parts, and the high price of wheat. They seemed to say that, gold being scarce, the notes had only supplied the necessary expansion.

in the sovereigns thereof, who have, from time to time, exercised the same as they have seen fit, in changing such legal money, or altering and varying the value, and enforcing or restraining the circulation thereof, by proclamation, or in concurrence with the estates of the realm by Act of Parliament; and that such legal money cannot lawfully be defaced, melted down, or exported.

(3) That the promissory notes of the Bank of England have hitherto been, and are, at this time, held in public estimation to be equivalent to the legal coin of the realm, and generally accepted as such in all pecuniary transactions to which such coin is lawfully applicable.

(15) That the situation of this kingdom, in respect of its political and commercial relations with foreign countries, as above stated, is sufficient, without any change in the internal value of its currency, to account for the unfavourable state of the foreign exchanges, and for the high price of bullion.

(16) That it is highly important that the restriction on the payments in cash of the Bank of England should be removed, whenever the political and commercial relations of the country shall render it compatible with the public interest.

(17) That, under the circumstances affecting the political and commercial relations of this kingdom with foreign countries, it would be highly inexpedient and dangerous now to fix a definite period for the removal of the restriction of cash payments at the Bank of England, prior to the term already fixed by the Act 44 Geo. III. c. 1, of six months after the conclusion of a definitive treaty of peace.

Canning's opposition.

Of the 3rd resolution, Canning said that it contained the sum and substance of all Vansittart's arguments and doctrines. Of the other resolutions, the 1st and 15th were the only two which appeared to require particular observation. "The remainder, from the 4th to the 14th inclusive, contain a vast variety of statements, historical, political, commercial, financial, and agricultural; some accurate, some inaccurate;[1] but all valuable rather from

[1] Cf. Tooke's estimate: "While Vansittart's arguments in support of the views of the government, and of the doctrine of the Bank directors, and of the proposition embodied in his unfortunate resolution, form a model of ingeniously perplexed, and elaborately unintelligible, general reasoning, his statements of fact indicate extensive and accurate information as to the nature and extent of the disturbing causes which were operating upon the exchanges and upon prices, and which accounted for them independently of any supposed influence upon them by the state of circulation" (*History of Prices*, i. 314).

their intrinsic erudition than from any very near connexion with the subject before us."

But on the famous 3rd, he poured all the vials of his scorn. "I cannot believe it possible, until the vote shall actually have passed, that any assembly of reasonable men can be persuaded to give their concurrence." It reminded him of Buonaparte's edict:—"whereas sugar made from beetroot or the maple tree is infinitely preferable to that of the sugar cane," or of the declaration of the holy office in Galileo's time, "pledging itself to believe" that the earth was stationary and the sun moveable—"the sun and the earth continued, in spite of it, to preserve their accustomed relations to each other, just as the coin and the bank note will, in spite of the right honourable gentleman's resolution."[1]

Vansittart's resolutions agreed to.

But, on 15th May, the whole of Vansittart's resolutions were agreed to.[2]

The trade of purchasing guineas at a higher price in notes was now openly carried on, and the question of the difference between gold and notes, which was beginning to cause general alarm, was brought to an issue by Lord King,[3] a great land-owner, in the following letter to his tenants:

Lord King's letter.

[1] "Is the purchase of gold bullion a legal transaction? I presume it is. A lb. of gold bullion is at this moment worth about £58 16/- in bank notes: £58 16/- in bank notes, according to their current value, makes 56 guineas. Now 44½ of these guineas, we know, weigh exactly 1 lb. The right honourable gentleman, therefore, means gravely to affirm that there exist persons who will with equal readiness give £58 16/- in bank notes, or 56 golden guineas, in payment for a commodity which is intrinsically worth exactly forty-four guineas and a half" (*Hansard*, xx. 110).

[2] *Hansard*, xx. 176. Simond was present at this debate, and gives some lively impressions of the chief speakers. Wilberforce—"a little man, as thin as a shadow, and drawing one side of his body after him as if paralytic"—"hurried across the floor with a tottering brisk step, and awkward bow"—his few words "extremely well spoken, with peculiar energy of feeling, and in a manner graceful and impressive. . . . Nothing can surpass the meanness of his appearance, and he seems half blind." The Chancellor of the Exchequer he describes as a man with "very small features and sallow complexion, his voice low but distinct, and flowing smoothly on without hesitation and without warmth." Tierney "spoke most, in an easy fluent manner, with a slight degree of irony, mixed with good humour." Huskisson, "who has written a very good pamphlet on the subject, went through the arguments of his book. He spoke at great length and much in the drawling tone and manner of our yankee orators." Whitbread, "one of the most formidable champions of liberty in the British senate," he found much as he expected—"a stout man, brisk, rather rough, with more force than taste. His irony borders on invective" (*Journal*, ii. 161).

[3] Peter, seventh Lord King, great-grandson of the Lord Chancellor of that name; born 1775; educated Eton and Cambridge; friend and follower of

"By lease, dated 1802, you have agreed to pay the usual rent of ——, in good and lawful money of Great Britain. In consequence of the late depreciation of paper money, I can no longer accept of any bank notes at their nominal value in payment for satisfaction of an old contract. I must, therefore, desire you to provide for the payment of your rent in the legal coin of the realm: at the same time, having no other object than to receive payment of the real intrinsic value of the sum stipulated by agreement, and being desirous to avoid giving you unnecessary trouble, I shall be willing to receive payment in either of the following manners, according to your option.

1st. By payment in guineas.

2nd. If guineas cannot be procured, by a payment in Portugal gold coin, equal in weight to the number of guineas requisite to discharge the debt.

3rd. By a payment in bank-paper of a sum sufficient to purchase (at the present market price) the weight of standard gold requisite to discharge the rent. The alteration of the value of paper-money is estimated in this manner.

The price of gold in 1802, the year of your agreement, was £4 per oz.; the present market-price is £4 14/-, arising from the diminished value of paper—in that proportion an addition of £17 10/- per cent. in paper-money will be required as the equivalent for the payment of rent in paper.

(Signed) King.

*N.B.*—A power of re-entry and ejectment is reserved by deed in the case of non-payment of rent due.—No draft will be received."

Stanhope's Gold Coin Bill.

As King probably intended, the matter was brought up in Parliament. Stanhope, who "considered that something was necessary to be done in consequence," introduced a Bill on 27th June, the object of which was "to render it illegal for any person to pay a larger sum than 21/- for a guinea, and for any person to receive a less sum in the case of a bank note than the value therein expressed as payable to bearer"—a measure which, he was careful to point out, was not the same as declaring the

Fox and Holland; a frequent speaker in the House of Lords; a man of great serenity, reasonableness, and sweetness of temper—"pride of every kind was as alien to his nature as vanity"; subsequently (1829) wrote the life of his ancestor, John Locke.

note legal tender:[1] and King, on 2nd July, defended his action.[2]

Lord King's defence.

Since the late decision in the House of Commons, he said, it appeared to be the declared intention of the Government that the restriction should continue to the end of the war, however distant that period might be. The subject was thus brought home to the individual interest of every man whose property was yearly, even monthly, deteriorated in consequence of the unnatural state of the currency of the country. In these circumstances, he had thought this the proper time to make a stand in defence of his property, and to endeavour to protect himself from further spoliation and injury. He had taken this action as regards his tenants holding land under old leases, and under old leases only, and he was prepared to assert not only the legality—which was unquestionable—but the equity of the course. The principle he had acted upon was "to require payment in a currency of the same intrinsic value which the currency possessed at the date of each respective agreement." On every sound principle of law and equity, a landlord was entitled to the legal gold coin of the realm if such was the condition and obligation of the contract. As a matter of favour and concession, he might consent to receive his payment in any other shape. "But a payment in a debased paper currency is a payment in name only, and not in reality." Suppose, as had happened in another country, a note of one pound were to be worth or pass current only for a shilling, and consequently all commodities were to be advanced to twenty times their former value, it would be impossible for anyone to imagine that a payment in such a debased currency could be a proper satisfaction for a contract concluded before the depreciation had taken place.

Again, the effect of the depreciation was to augment the price of the gross produce of the farm, and the tenant suffered no loss if he was required to pay his fourth share of the produce thus augmented.[3]

[1] Technically, and in all respects, it was not; but the practical difference between this and a proclamation of legal tender was evidently perilously thin. Stanhope, indeed, asked if there was no difference between a man being compelled to take a bank note and his having a right to refuse it; but the question remained of what was to happen if the creditor did refuse it while distraint was stayed by the tender thus made. Stanhope seemed to think that the chief hardship of notes being legal tender was that counterfeit notes might be forced on acceptance!

[2] *Hansard*, xx. 790.

[3] The rough and ready estimate for rent in these days is worth quoting.

He went on to say that he would not be deterred by clamour, or by any imputation whatever, from insisting, with firmness and moderation, on a just and legal demand[1]—the same intimidation had been tried in France on those who preferred the good metallic money to worthless assignats by branding them with "incivism." As the present public expenditure of ninety millions was equivalent to seventy-four millions only of the currency of the former standard, he affirmed that the interest due to the public creditor, being a fixed sum, was a manifest injury, and warned the House that it would be found impossible to avoid augmenting the pay of the army, navy, and all the servants of the Government. He recalled instructively the history of the assignats and mandats in France,[2] and said that the remembrance of them had, in a great degree, put an end to leases in France—or, if ever made, the rent was stipulated to be paid in certain measures of corn. It might shortly be found necessary to have recourse to the same precaution in England. Stanhope's proposal he regarded as "feeling the way" to a declaration of legal tender. "By such an act, you at once declare bank notes to be a forced paper currency, no longer resting on the basis of voluntary circulation; you will declare to the world that your bank notes are assignats to all intents and purposes, differing in degree only and not in kind."

"Rent is generally defined to be the value of that part of the gross produce of a farm which remains, after making full allowance for all expenses, taxes, and profit of capital employed by the farmer in the cultivation. The gross produce is generally supposed to be divided into four shares, three of which are allotted for the above purposes, and one for the rent; this last portion is then estimated at the average price of the produce during some preceding years, and thus converted into a money price for the mutual convenience of both landlord and tenant" (*Hansard*, xx. 795).

[1] In a postscript to the separate edition of the speech, King added that, in regard to those who had demands on him under old contracts, he not only held himself bound and was ready to satisfy all such demands by payment of the same intrinsic value which the currency had at the date of each respective contract, but had already acted on this principle in a payment of considerable amount.

[2] As the accusation is still made, it may be as well to recall the fact that, during these debates, Grenville replied to a charge in general circulation that the British Government had assisted the depreciation of the assignats by counterfeiting and pouring them into France. The charge was "most grossly calumnious"—"one of the most unfounded aspersions that was ever advanced." Nothing of such a nature could have been done by the King's ministers without his being privy to it, and he most solemnly protested his innocence in the name of Almighty God, and his firm persuasion that every man who served the King during the whole course of these two calamitous wars was equally innocent with himself (*Hansard*, xx. 867).

Discussion of depreciation.

Lord Holland, in strong support of King, put the matter of depreciation in a nutshell thus: "Bank notes were either depreciated or they were not; if there was no depreciation, then his noble friend's demand could do no harm, and gold could, of course, be obtained; if there was a depreciation, then he must contend that his noble friend was giving the country a warning in time, by which they might profit."[1] Grenville, who considered that the subject was "by far the most important question in the whole circle of the political interests of the empire," spoke in almost unmeasured terms of Lord King, as the last man in the country likely to commit an act of injustice and oppression. His definition of depreciation was simple: "I consider a paper currency to be depreciated when, in the transactions between man and man, less gold is given for the paper than that paper promises to pay, and that, in proportion to the difference between the sum promised and the sum thus paid, is the extent of that depreciation." He declared himself ready to establish the fact that there never was a time when there was more gold in the country than now, or even so much.[2] The Earl of Rosse, on the other hand, said that there was one decisive argument that no depreciation had taken place: it was that "there was every reason to believe that the amount of notes of the Bank of England now in circulation did not exceed the mass of circulating medium compounded of notes and gold in 1798."[3] He was, however, reminded by Lauderdale that there were now 720 private banks, all issuing as much paper as they could possibly circulate.[4] Stanhope maintained that, at the moment, a pound sterling and a bank note of £1 were at par, and thought the matter settled by the following case: "Suppose he were to go to a banker's, and lay down 21 one pound notes on one hand and 20 guineas on the other, desiring that two separate accounts might be opened in his books for these two sums, he would find that they were both to the same amount, namely twenty-one pounds";[5] to which Lord Holland shortly answered that "no man would ever think of going to a banker with guineas when he knew that, by so doing, he would be robbed of one-fifth of their value—for that very reason guineas would never appear at all, but would uniformly be lodged in the hands of Jews or foreigners."[6]

[1] *Hansard*, xx. 814. [2] *Ibid.* 821. [3] *Ibid.* 817.
[4] *Ibid.* 818. [5] *Ibid.* 787. [6] *Ibid.* 870.

As may be inferred, the discussion of the Bill reopened all the questions presumably settled by the passing of Vansittart's resolutions. The same ground was covered again, with the same cogency on the one side and the same perverse ingenuity on the other.[1] On the second reading, Stanhope took occasion to ventilate a scheme of his own for establishing some legal tender throughout the country by book entries (credits) and transfers in the Bank of England,[2] but contented himself meanwhile by bringing forward his Bill. The Government, which had at first stood aside, now took up the Bill and gave him all their support. It

Stanhope's Gold Coin Bill passed

[1] The extraordinary puzzlement—if one may use the expression about so many eminent men—of those who denied depreciation may be illustrated by the following. It was the case of a man who bought an estate in Hampshire for £400, paying down £100 at once, and proceeded to erect thereon buildings at an expense of several hundreds. When the time of payment of the remainder came, the vendor demanded specie. "The buyer could not get guineas, and notes were refused by the vendor, who would have his payment in guineas, or his land back again. The buyer was actually trying to raise money by mortgage on his improvements. The only consolation left to the buyer was an intimation from a friend of the vendor that he could inform him where he might obtain the guineas he wanted by paying 27/- a piece for them." It is difficult to believe that this was brought forward by Stanhope, who, a few minutes before, was maintaining that, "at the moment a pound sterling and a bank note of £1 are at par," and that it was received with cries of "Hear! hear!" from both sides of the House! *Hansard*, xx. 789.

[2] Stanhope, who, according to the *Annual Register* (p. 80), was "a person who, perhaps more than any other individual of his rank, had habitually acted according to his own ideas, and formed plans for the public independent of party consideration," often spoiled his case by introducing hastily accepted ideas and by irrelevance. The Ministry must have felt him a dangerous ally when he supported the Bill they had fathered by saying that there might soon, perhaps, be no gold in the country, and, he would say, so much the better—all the mischief of the present moment arose from falsely considering gold as the proper or only circulating medium (*Hansard*, xx. 769). Again, he quoted a conversation he once had with Sir George Saville, in which "that good and wise man" observed that the circulating medium was "the measure or scale of different things; thus ten pounds were the measure of a certain number of guineas, a certain number of loaves of bread, a certain number of tickets to the Opera, or a certain number of miles travelling in a hackney coach." One might surmise that what Saville had in his mind was the idea of a Standard for Deferred Payments, afterwards known as the Tabular Standard. But Stanhope took it up as meaning that "the price of every necessary, or enjoyment, might be regulated by the value of a bank note." On the present occasion, he ingenuously described himself as "always a speculative man and very little given to views of self-interest." He had "always thought that the man who was in possession of a large property, not gained by his own talents and industry, but derived from the mere accident of birth, was in fact but a trustee for the public," and he announced that he had, "after many years of application, at much expense, and with the assistance of the ablest artists discovered an effectual mode of preventing the forgery of bank notes": when it was complete, he would give the invention gratis to the Bank for the public good. *Hansard*, xx. 769, 785, 830.

was argued at enormous length in both Houses. In the Commons, it finally passed the first reading by 64 to 19, the second by 133 to 35, and the third by 95 to 20. Ireland—most illogically, as did not fail to be pointed out—was excluded from its operation.

—under protest.

A protest was entered on the Journals of the House of Lords, "to mark in the first instance, with the most decided reprobation, a Bill which manifestly leads to the introduction of laws imposing upon the country the compulsory circulation of a Paper Currency; a measure fraught with injustice, destructive of all confidence in the legal security of contracts, and, as invariable experience has shown, necessarily productive of the most fatal calamities." [1]

The title of the Bill, as finally passed, was: "For making more effectual provision for preventing the current gold coin of the realm from being paid or accepted for a greater value than the current value of such coin; for preventing any note or bill of the governor and company of the Bank of England from being received for any smaller sum than the sum therein specified; and for staying proceedings upon any distress by tender of such notes." [2]

[1] *Hansard*, xx. 831.

[2] *Ibid.* Append. cxlviii. The full text of Stanhope's Bill is given, *ibid.* 1115. As Marryat acutely pointed out, it was really a recantation of Vansittart's third resolution, lately accepted by the House, that bank notes were equivalent in value to the current coin of the realm. "So far from that being the case, he thought that the ground of bringing in the Bill was that tenants would, if the law was not declared otherwise, be compelled to purchase guineas at the rate of 27/- each to pay their landlords." *Ibid.* 973.

# CHAPTER XVII

## 1810-11. A STRANGER'S IMPRESSIONS

In 1815, was published anonymously, in two volumes, the *Journal of a Tour and Residence in Great Britain during 1810 and 1811, by a French Traveller.* Louis Simond—the author's name came out subsequently—was a Frenchman, who, however, had spent the previous twenty years in the United States. Simond was not only an "intelligent foreigner" but an unusually observant one, and the *Journal* was accepted at the time as being the fullest and most impartial account that any foreigner up till then had given of England. He had two rather uncommon advantages. One was that his wife, who accompanied him, was an Englishwoman; the other was that he had perfect command of the language—the *Journal* in fact was written in English, and sent from the beginning to his friends in America. To me, its interest seems both negative and positive. What a stranger always dwells on is the unfamiliar; and, from what Simond sees to wonder at in England, one may infer a good deal as to the conditions of life in the two countries with which he was familiar, France and America, even when he does not make the comparison. Louis Simond.

In January of 1810, after a passage of twenty-one days from America to Falmouth, and a leisurely journey of twelve days to London along roads which did not allow of a greater pace than four to six miles an hour, he settled down in furnished lodgings near Portman Square; mastered, with the aid of a map, the two principal avenues uniting at St. Paul's; and prepared to study London. Then, for three weeks, there is a gap in the *Journal.* Simond was down with "the malady peculiar to the climate of England known as the catch-cold," or, as it was even then called, the influenza, listening helplessly, as he says, to the roar of the city beating in measured time outside. Influenza.

When he got about again, the first thing that struck him was the difference between the two ends of London, or rather the two cities. In the west—and to have the right to emigrate from east to west, one must have at least £3,000 a year—not a mouse is stirring before ten o'clock—not a single carriage or cart passes. The shops then begin to open. Women deliver the milk from door to door—"not a food, or drink, but a tincture," a measure as big as an egg being the allowance for a family—an elixir administered in drops, five or six to a cup of tea—difficult to say what taste or quality the drops impart, but nobody thinks of questioning the propriety of the custom. The first stir is when the guards march from their barracks to Hyde Park—"at their head three or four negro giants, striking high and gracefully the resounding cymbal." About three or four, the fashionable world gives signs of life, issuing forth to leave cards or lounge along Bond Street—"an ugly, inconvenient street, the attractions of which it is difficult to understand." From six to eight, the noise of wheels increases; it is the dinner hour. Carriages, with eyes of flame staring on the dark, drive at full speed. Stopping suddenly, a footman jumps down, runs to the door, lifts the heavy knocker—gives a great knock—then several smaller ones in quick succession, with an art, and an air, and a delicacy of touch which denote the quality, the rank, and the fortune of his master. For two hours, there is a pause. At ten, comes a *redoublement*—a universal hubbub, a sort of uniform grinding of wheels, undiminished till twelve or one, then less and less; till, at the approach of day, only a single carriage is heard now and then at a great distance.

The west end.

But, in the east—the line of demarcation running through Soho Square—everything is different. All is motion and activity as early as ten in the morning. As one walks to Cornhill, by a maze of busy, smoky, dirty streets, with their high narrow houses, somewhat oppressed by the "uniform dinginess" of everything—even of the inhabitants, for their garments are dull and harmonise with the mud and the smoke—the crowd, the carriages, and the mud increase rapidly. The elevated pavement on either side is full of pedestrians—not of the *Jacques Roast-beef* type, but of rather mean stature—passing swiftly in two lines, each taking to the left. The hackney coaches form two uninterrupted files moving opposite ways. All is hurry but all is order. No armed watch is met; no appearance of police, and yet no apparent want of

The east end.

police; no cries in the streets, few beggars, no obstruction or stoppage of carriages, everybody civil and willing to stop and answer questions—just as if they were Frenchmen.

East of east.

There are few carts or waggons, for this, indeed, is the counting-house of London. One sees no goods. But, east of east, there is another city, where are the warehouses and the docks; where the products of all the world pour into the great storehouses by the Thames, and the Thames pours out its cargoes to the four quarters of the world again. Everywhere the smoke of fossil coals forms an atmosphere, perceivable some miles away, like a great round cloud attached to the earth, every street ending in a grey mist which recedes as you advance; the air loaded with small flakes of flour of soot, floating without falling; when some rays of sun fall on it, it becomes a pale orange tint.

The sights.

For some weeks, Simond devoted himself to the sights: St. Paul's—that magnificent temple, "very black and white in patches, as if there had been a fall of snow which adhered unevenly"; the British Museum, where a German *cicerone* took parties of fifteen round the room *au pas de charge*; the Tower; Chelsea, and Greenwich, and the great hospitals supported by voluntary subscriptions; Strawberry Hill and Richmond Park. He attended the Royal Society, where Sir Joseph Banks presided; the Royal Institution, which filled up only when Mr. Davy was lecturing, one-half his audience, and the most attentive, being women—"it keeps them out of harm's way"—and wrote pages on pages of impressions of the galleries, for "London is full of pictures."[1] He heard Catalani sing at the Opera, and was much surprised to see sentinels with fixed bayonets at all the avenues—why bayonets? he enquires: is it to accustom the people to the sight of the thing before it is used? He saw Mrs. Siddons and the Kembles at Covent Garden, where the O.P. riots, a few months before, had shaken the foundations of the playhouse; plunged, like a good Frenchman, into acrid criticism of Shakespeare—of Macbeth, in which "the rules of Aristotle are not so outrageously violated as in other plays of

[1] "It is amusing to sit in a corner, and observe as they pass the countenances of the visitors" (at Lord Grosvenor's collection, thrown open to the public in the season), "staring round with a total absence of all pleasure and all feeling. Nine-tenths of them know and care absolutely nothing about the pictures they look at, particularly the men. Why then do they come? Because it is fashionable and because it is dear; you give gold at the door. The English appear to me to have more esteem than liking for the fine arts."

the great dramatist," and of Hamlet, "the most ill-conceived and inexplicable of all his plays": for the rest, he saw some "crude trash" of plays which gave him a very poor opinion of the English critical faculty. "For myself," he concludes, "I must confess that I have hitherto seen no very bad morals on the stage but a great deal of very bad taste."

Cookery.

Of English cookery he had, of course, much to say; it was better than he expected, being, indeed, half French, but he was shocked at the vegetables, "exhibited in all the simplicity of nature, like hay to horses, only boiled instead of dried—an English cook only boils and roasts." He was much interested in the composition of the national dish celebrated by Voltaire,[1] the plum-pudding, and found it excellent. And he returned to the subject later to protest that Frenchmen did not eat frogs—as a fact, not one in a hundred Frenchmen knew that frogs were ever eaten. Finally, he completed his education in the habits of the English by witnessing the popular amusement of the prize-ring—a regular science in England as fencing is in France—fighting for amusement called sparring, in good earnest, boxing.

House of Commons.

He visited the House of Commons, going through the usual "humiliations" to get admission to the gallery; was much interested in so many of the legislators intrepidly taking a nap in full view; heard several young members speaking "with a sort of schoolboy oratory"; wondered at the reporters, crowded with the public in the gallery, writing notes on their knees, "to all appearance very carelessly, one word or two to mark the leading points," laughing and whispering jokes among themselves; and noted that the legislators seemed perpetually on the watch for a joke, and, if it could be introduced in the most serious debate, it succeeded so much the better—"the French are trifling and decorous—the English grave and farcical."

Disquisitions.

This naturally leads him into long and always acute disquisitions on the subjects he hears discussed, such as "the palladium of national liberty," the freedom of the press, or, as others called it, "the unbridled licence of the press"—the only plague that Moses forgot to inflict on Egypt; Sir Francis Burdett and the reform of Parliament—a subject hardly ever introduced without producing heat; Romilly's attack on the penal code—"instead of English law being positive and unbending, it is arbitrary, and

[1] Voltaire, he does not fail to remind us, discovered the Britannic Isles, sixty years before.

hardly under any other rule than the common-sense of mankind"; Malthus and the poor laws; the Bank Restriction; the finances; the tangle of the Sinking Fund; the heavy taxes—"these people are well-broken to taxation—they complain indeed, but it is just as they complain of their climate, from habit, or as we see children continue crying long after they have forgotten the cause of their tears"; and, finally, the mysterious entity called the British Constitution, and the curious idea of liberty—"they seem to think that liberty consists full as much in having made, or assisted to make the laws as in enjoying their protection"—as if the citizen of Manchester or Birmingham, sure of his property, his life, all that the Englishman calls his birthright, were not freer than the Roman citizen although he has no vote.

Violence of politics.

At first the violence of the sentiments expressed alarmed him. Everybody talked politics, even the women, and everybody seemed to belong to the Opposition. "There is not another government in Europe," he says, "which could long withstand the attacks to which this is continually exposed: the things published here would set on fire any other heads in the world." It was not only that the majority disapproved of the measures of the Government; they seemed to him to disapprove of the form and constitution of the Government itself. Disclaiming a revolution *à la Francaise*, they seemed to be making for it, and lived in avowed expectation of some dreadful crisis. All the same they acted just as if they had nothing to fear, amused themselves, and attended to their business in perfect security. "And yet," says Simond, "they appear so much in earnest that I do not know what to think." It was some time before he recognised that strong language was the Englishman's safety valve, and that the nation no more thought itself on the brink of national disaster than the artisan who replied to the tyrant: "thou canst not ruin me; I am a carpenter."

Journey through west of England.

But Simond, having come to see England, had begun to suspect the provincialism of London, and, after a short round by Norfolk, Bury St. Edmunds, and Cambridge, he started on a six weeks' journey to Scotland by Salisbury, Bristol, Newport, Swansea, Aberystwith, Dolgelly, Bangor, Denbigh, Chester, Liverpool, Ormskirk, Lancaster, Kendal, Penrith, and Carlisle.

The roads.

Of the state of the roads, Simond gives us a much better impression than we should expect. Sometimes, indeed, they are very narrow, and crooked, and dirty, continually up and down,

just wide enough for two carriages. But very often they are made of pounded flints, hard and smooth, and, on two occasions at least, he speaks of travelling along a road of small broken stones, consolidated into an even surface, on which the wheels made no impression, evidently constructed on Macadam's principle, although the great roadmaker did not get to work till after Waterloo. But he did not think much of the general method of travel, the stage coach—a monstrous carriage, resting on four high slender wheels, crammed inside and *hérissé* outside with passengers, as many as seventeen people on the top, consequently top-heavy and dangerous. Very different, however, was the travelling carriage, light and easy, and large enough for three persons, the postboy sitting on a cross-bar of wood between the front springs.

Inns.

His constant themes are the comfort of the inns, the beauty of the country, and the prosperity of the people. In Falmouth, his first experience was of a strange, old, low building, extremely neat inside, with a tempting larder full in view, attractive table linen and glass, servants civil and attentive. At Bath, in less than half-an-hour after their arrival, "five powdered *gentlemen* burst into the room with three dishes and two of them remained to wait"—they got no wages, he understood, but did very well on travellers' tips. "The house superlatively comfortable," he writes at another place; "such *empressement* to receive you—such readiness to fulfil every wish as soon as expressed—such good rooms and so well furnished—such good things to eat and so well dressed. This is really the land of conveniences." "There is no need whatever for thought or foresight in travelling in England —no care necessary but that of keeping your purse well furnished; everything is done and arranged for you in the most convenient manner beforehand." "The comfort of the inns is our incessant theme at night." Even at Barnsley, where he put up in the worst inn he had met with, he had not the least doubt, he said, that it would be deemed excellent in the interior of France.[1]

Beauty of England.

Of the beauty of England, he is never tired of speaking. The climate is never extreme, either in winter or summer. Its mildness is shown by the trees being covered with moss even to the smallest branches—he finds the wallflower in full bloom in January —but it is never depressing and always admirably fitted to promote

[1] The inns of France, indeed, were characterised, by a Scots traveller in 1801, as "either intolerably dirty or splendidly uncomfortable" (*Annual Register*, 1804, 195).

healthy bodily exercise—"we think nothing or five or six miles a day on foot." He drives through miles of "a continual garden." Strangely, as it seems to him, it is a garden without fruit. The apples are no bigger than walnuts and are without taste, but they are said to be the best the country produces—"scarce, knotty, and stunted, people in America would not think it worth while to gather them." To make up for this deficiency, the English have raised to the rank of a fruit that wild berry known in France by the name of *groseille à masquereau*, and have, in fact, so improved it by cultivation as to bring it to a quite respectable size and taste. But strawberries, he confesses, are better than in America, and, perhaps, than in France.

Agriculture.

The hierarchy of English agriculture is a perpetual puzzle to him. "Gentlemen's houses everywhere"—he uses the expression again and again. Agriculture is a universal pursuit, and either a passion or a fashion with all country gentlemen; everyone talks of turnips, clover, drains, and enclosures. In France, the landed proprietors have their houses in the nearest little towns; here they live on the land and among their fields.

Farmers.

The farming is, of course, superb, judged by the standard of other countries. The farmhouses and steadings are large and comfortable; stackyards huge; "industry, method, and good order conspicuous everywhere." The cultivation is on a very extensive scale—ten ploughs, for instance, at work in one field, and always drawn by horses, never by oxen. Immense fields are laid down wholly in turnips—"as large as a man's head"—and in potatoes, although nowhere does he see "these boundless fields of waving corn so common in the north of France." As to the farmers, "this is probably the only country in the world where people make fortunes by agriculture. A farmer who understands his business becomes rich in England with the same degree of certainty as in other professions; while, in most countries, a farmer is condemned, by the nature of his trade, to be a mere labourer all his life." The rent has trebled within fifty years, but no sooner does a lease expire than ten offer to take it. The farmers ride about the fields overlooking the labourers, "like rich manufacturers," not at all like peasants. He is told that they keep books, and make their payments on the appointed day—that they even "have a banker" who makes them advances. Nay, most incredible of all, they sometimes go bankrupt. "Now the bankruptcy of a farmer would appear in France just as

ridiculous as the bankruptcy of an apple-woman or a chimney-sweep." Two things, however, he never gets to understand. The
Waste lands. one is that, in such a small, densely populated country, "depending for food on the granaries of its enemies," and with 50,000 or 60,000 prisoners of war to feed, there should be such an extent of waste land. Even near London, that colossus of cities, with its 800,000 mouths to feed, he sees meadows of finest green, and great heathy commons, but little arable land and few enclosures—"all this is very beautiful, and pleases me extremely, but surprises me
The poor. equally." The other is the poor. He drives through villages, as a rule not beautiful, but almost always neat, "the windows generally whole and clean—no old hats or bundles of rags stuck in," as in America, "where people build but do not repair." But, he complains, "I do not know how and where the common labourers live." There is no appearance of poverty anywhere—no rags, no famished looks, few robberies. When he finds beggars at all, it is at show places, "attracted, and, in fact, created by the alms of travellers." Surely, he bursts out, "it is impossible to look round without the conviction that this country is upon the whole one of the happiest, if not the happiest, in the world" When he sees every cottage with its roses, and honeysuckle, and vines, and a neat walk to the door, he finds "this attention bestowed on mere pleasureable comforts the surest indication of minds at ease, and not under the immediate pressure of poverty." He is almost driven to conclude that there is no poverty in England—"everybody in it seems rich"—till, in one place, he is struck with the scarcity of cottages. Why do you not build cottages for your labourers? he asked the proprietors, and was met by the reply that such houses were nests of vermin, pilferers, and poachers; far from building, they would rather pull them down. The labourers, he is told, reside in some small town or village in the neighbourhood, and walk several miles to and from their work. "This, I own, has lowered a little my ideas of universal felicity. There are, then, it seems, obscure corners where the poor are swept out of the way. To judge properly of this general prosperity, it would be necessary to see what passes in these abodes of the labouring classes."[1] At any rate, he concludes, "what I can say is that

[1] Here Simond pauses a moment to tell how the poor of England are under certain regulations called poor laws, their object half police, half charity, their utility very questionable. "Foreign readers will hear with surprise that the tax raised for this purpose, on the rental of the kingdom, exceeds seven millions sterling, and is imposed in some parishes at the rate of 4/- or

the poor do not look so poor here as in other countries; poverty does not intrude on your sight, and it is necessary to seek it. All human societies of course, are full of it; but here it doos not overflow."

Drinking habits.

Of the drinking habits, Simond does not say much. Indeed, nearly all he does say is to make a very favourable comparison with America. "I am pleased to find that ardent spirits have not superseded malt liquors to the degree I had been led to expect. There are certainly fewer rum drinkers here than in America. Working people are not saturated with alcohol; and have not here that spirituous atmosphere constantly emanating from the pores of one half of the males and a considerable portion of the females of that class in America, which assails your nose two or three steps off whenever you approach them." If the vice was one that pervaded all human societies, as perhaps he thought, probably he would have said of it also, "here it does not overflow."

Across the border

When, however, leaving Carlisle, he crosses the border into Scotland, he finds himself in a tract of country very different—a succession of steep hills, with intervening valleys, all uniformly covered with fine green turf, unbroken by a single tree, bush, weed or stone; sheep hanging along the hillsides—nothing to interrupt the stillness but the bustle of little streams.[1] As he approaches Edinburgh, he finds "all very flourishing," but the cottages miserably dirty and a sad contrast to those of Wales. The Scotch cannot afford leisure, he supposes, to be comfortable; certainly they do not ruin themselves by luxuries. "Children in health and in rags, with fair hair and dirty faces, swarm round every door." An old barrel stuck through the thatch serves for a chimney. The stable and dwelling are under the same roof; one door serves for both. The climate must be healthy, indeed, he thinks, where all this does not breed infection. The men he meets have generally the plaid thrown across their shoulder and over one arm; some wear it like a Spanish cloak or an antique

5/- in the pound," while the income tax itself, raised on all sorts of property, produces only from ten to twelve millions. "The 4/- or 5/- in the pound of the poor rates are not paid for nothing; yet, I do not know how it is these poor are not seen."

[1] Simond, who did not think very much of the size of our rivers, gives a story which is too good to be lost. A French lady, pointing out the beauties of the Seine to an Englishman, asked, "Have you any rivers like this in England?" but interrupted herself in confusion: "Mon Dieu, how can I be so silly; it is an island; you have no rivers of course."

drapery, and might be mistaken for Roman soldiers, with their short petticoat and naked knees, if the hats and shoes did not betray them. The women go barefooted and bareheaded.

Edinburgh. Edinburgh he finds, "in every respect, a singular town": on one side the valley is the new part, placed in the middle of a beautiful and fertile country, without suburbs or shabby approaches, the principal street a long line of quay or terrace, with neat modern houses ranged in square battalions, covered with the buckler of their roofs *en tortue*; on the other side the valley is "the venerable uncleanliness of the old town, a labyrinth of crooked lanes and steep narrow closes"—a "confused heap of ancient houses, one over the other, very dingy and high, with towers of eight or ten stories, and windows innumerable."

The sights. There he stayed nine days—"not a single one without a shower of rain," although it was August—exhausting the sights: the Castle on its rocky pedestal, Holyroodhouse, "a dismal monastic-looking castle," with its gallery of kings and queens, like a pack of cards painted by an unknown artist not inferior to Holbein,[1] the Penitentiary House with all its cells overlooked from one bow window, etc. "It is strange to see the women going about the streets barefooted, on the pavement, which is very smooth but continually wet; in other respects, cleanly dressed, even with gloves on and an umbrella." The Newhaven fishwives, of course, catch his eye—"strong, healthy, and very cheerful, singing along the road, but in general remarkably ugly; among the lower people in Scotland, the sex is certainly not beautiful." (In Wales, he found the women were "uncommonly good-looking.")

New Lanark. From Edinburgh he went, by Hamilton, to Lanark and the Falls of Clyde, commenting on the mills:—"certainly a prodigious establishment. We saw four stone buildings, 150 feet front, each four stories high, of 20 windows, and several other buildings less considerable—2,500 workmen, mostly children, who work from six in the morning till seven in the evening with an hour and a quarter for meals—eleven hours of confinement and labour, with the schooling, thirteen hours, is undoubtedly too much for children. I think the laws should interfere." But the little creatures did not look ill.

Glasgow. Glasgow—where he was well looked after by friends at the

[1] This striking criticism, however, is not altogether complimentary. Simond thought that Holbein was much over-rated.

University—does not seem to have struck him by its beauty, as it did earlier travellers, but by its industries;—carding mills, spinning mills, weaving mills, mills for everything—many of them requiring an even temperature, secured by keeping the windows constantly shut; indeed, they are often constructed so as not to open at all. Yet, he says, the men do not seem to suffer from it. In Glasgow, as might be expected of a manufacturing town, the dense population was a hot-bed of liberty, and more of the reforming spirit was observable than in Edinburgh. But, he comments, the morals of these reformers are more immediately in need of amendment than the government. Still Scotland on the whole was very loyal—in fact, the most loyal part of Great Britain. Staying in Glasgow over a Sunday, he saw what was always commented on by strangers in these days, from Saint Fond down;—many women in and near town, walking to church in their best apparel, and really very neatly dressed—white gowns, shawl, black velvet bonnet, gloves, and an umbrella—walking absolutely barefooted in the mud, very composedly, with their shoes and stockings in their hands, and putting them on as they came to the churchyard. "This custom is defended as clean, for they must wash their feet; as wholesome, for they are sure of having dry shoes and stockings—and it is certainly saving."

From Glasgow, he drove along the Clyde by Dumbarton to Garelochhead, noticing "gentlemen's houses full as numerous as in England," and a great number of watering and sea-bathing places where people resorted in summer. From Whistlefield, he looked down on the two lochs; the one, "a lively inhabited pretty scene, with gentle hills, trees and fields; the other, sunk in a deep frame of rugged rocks, rising abruptly from the water. The steep ascent of the mountains above was clothed with purple heath, terminating in irregular jagged summits, hung with heavy clouds. The unruffled surface of the water reflected every object, and, doubling round projecting points, formed deep bays, and was lost among the mountains it penetrated. No habitations, no trees, no cultivation, no sound. A few sheep in the distance were the only objects that had motion or life." Loch Lomond, shrouded in mist and rain, did not impress him much, but Loch Katrine was "indeed glorious," and Simond breaks into quotation from the poet who had just made it famous. Going by Glencroe to Inverary, and returning by Lochawe and Lochearn, he

The Highlands.

evidently felt that he had reached the confines of civilisation. After miles of deep glens and rugged mountains, at last some traces of habitations animated this beautiful desert. He saw houses of stones put together without mortar; the floors, earth; all around, black peat and dirt, with their usual draining; women and children barefoot, yet healthy and strong; the bodies of the men wrapped in the national plaid, thighs and knees naked, legs in the antique looking tartan hose. "In their looks, they recall the idea of Roman soldiers—in habits, that of American savages; the same proud indolence—the same carelessness—the same superiority to want—the same courage—the same hospitality—unfortunately, I hear, the same liking for spirituous liquors." ("I must own, however," he adds, "that we have not yet met with a drunken man.") All the same, he says, "notwithstanding the apparent poverty of the country, it is very remarkable that the inns of these mountains have hardly any fastening, and the heavier baggage of travellers remains on the carriage out of doors all night—for there are, of course, no coach-houses; yet all the treasures contained in a trunk of clothes do not tempt people, who have scarce a shirt, to steal it." In the midst of all this wildness, troops in quarters! Indeed, "there is hardly any part of Great Britain without them; this country is becoming military very fast—a necessity very much to be regretted."

Sunday. At Taymouth, the day being Sunday, the road was full of country people going to church in their best clothes; all clean and decent; about half the men wearing the kilt and tartan hose and plaid over their shoulders, touching their Highland bonnets as they passed. "We were rather ashamed," says Simond, "of our Sunday travelling."

Rents. But the economic feature which, perhaps, struck him most in Scotland was the rents. Land in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh was rented at £10 the Scots acre (one-fourth more than the English). All the arable land between Edinburgh and Berwick was let at between £5 and £6. In the Atholl country, the rents were £3 and £4, sometimes £6. Near the Esk, he was shown meadows not ploughed for forty years where the rent was £10 and £11. Lord Breadalbane's nineteen years' leases were near expiring; "his tenants, who speak of him with affection, hope that he may *only* double his rents." And the farmers who paid these monstrous rents gave higher wages than in England—18/- to 25/- a week; the price of labour generally being somewhat more than in

England. "I do not understand how these farmers can live; yet they pay their rents as exactly as in England, and farms are in great request. The national habits of industry and frugality can alone account for their success."

Cumberland Lakes.

From Edinburgh, before settling down, he made a tour to the Cumberland Lakes, which drew from him the remark: "There are no retired places in England, no place where you see only the country and the countrymen; everywhere town people elegantly dressed and lodged, having a number of servants, and exchanging invitations. England, in short, seems to be the country-house of London, cultivated for amusement only, and where all is subservient to picturesque luxury and ostentation. Here we are, in a remote corner of the country, among mountains, 278 miles from the capital—a place without commerce or manufactures, not on any high road; yet everything is much the same as in the neighbourhood of London. Land, half rock, is bought up at any price, merely on account of the beauty of the spot."

Residence in Edinburgh.

Returning to Edinburgh, he lived there for three months from the middle of November, and left it with regret and gratitude. "Taken altogether, I do not know any town where it would be pleasanter to live. It is in a great degree the Geneva of Britain." The way of life there he found "as close an imitation of the customs and fashions of London as relative circumstances of wealth, numbers, etc., could admit." But there was a marked difference in politics. His past experience had been that, the further he left London behind, the more moderate were the people. "The party of which Cobbett is the mouth-piece does not appear numerous out of the capital." At Chepstow, indeed, on sending for Cobbett's paper, he was surprised to find that nobody knew anything about the *Register*. But not only was Edinburgh a stranger to trade and money matters; its only political party was the party of obedience and loyalty. "You meet with few of the downright reformers among the good company of Edinburgh, and none among the lower people"—even the common folk were Tories. "You hear as little here about political traffic as about commercial traffic." The result of all this was "a certain general impression of peace and tranquillity, very striking to strangers." But the repose was not slumber; literature and the sciences were cultivated with zeal and success. Edinburgh, he says, is the Birmingham of literature—a new place which has its fortune to make. Oxford

and Cambridge rest on their laurels, while Edinburgh cultivates hers. The professors are soldiers of fortune who live by their sword—that is to say, by their talents and reputation, depending for their income on the number of students they attract. Among the audiences he noticed grown men, even old men, inhabitants of the place and strangers; and half the audience of the Professor of Agriculture was composed of farmers. He discusses at length the position of the *Edinburgh Review*—the Whig organ, published in this hot-bed of Toryism; and shows the adaptability of his nature by getting not a little infected with the metaphysic natural to the Scot, arguing of free-will and necessity, and devoting some twenty pages to the Huttonian theory—"a short and simple account," which, he thinks, must be acceptable to foreign readers. Among others, he saw Scott—"a tall and stout man, thirty-five or forty years of age—very lame from some accident in his youth; his countenance not particularly poetical—complexion fair with a coarse skin, little beard, sandy hair, light eyes and eyebrows—the *tout ensemble* rather dull and heavy. Yet when he speaks—which he is not always disposed to do—his eye lightens up with all a poet's ecstasy."

**Journey through east of England.**

Starting from Edinburgh on 24th February, 1811, he left Scotland by way of Dunbar, Alnwick, and Berwick, finding again large farms, high rents, all the cultivation in the best possible order and on a great scale, immense stacks of hay and straw, windmills innumerable—"most of the large farms have one." At Newcastle he gladly took the chance to go down a coal pit—not in a cage but with one leg in the loop of a rope; some of the mines, he says, are more extensive than the city of Philadelphia. Passing by Sunderland through York—"an old town, and, of course, very ugly," where he met Sydney Smith whom he describes as "very like the unfortunate Louis XVI. but with more vivacity in his eye"—he saw Leeds—where the wool-combers were watching, "with an evil eye," a machine about to be set up to do their work by means of steam, and disturbances were apprehended, and Sheffield—"another steam engine town, all iron and steel and smoke." At Chatsworth, in a romantic glen pierced by a rapid clear stream, he was startled to come across a huge cotton factory, six stories high, presenting nearly 200 windows, and he reflected with pleasure that "the steam engine is a good security against similar profanation in future." In Birmingham, he spent two days seeing the hardware and glass factories, less unhealthy although more

dirty than those of Manchester and Glasgow, and was so moved by the marvels of machinery that he wondered if a time might not come when even ships would be built entirely of iron.

Passing on through Warwick and Woodstock—where he saw for the first time houses built of hardened earth—Blenheim and Oxford, he arrived, on 25th March, in London again, finding it now "altogether without great faults and without great beauties." He had seen reason, meantime, to conclude that, to know London, was not to know England. Before passing sentence on the anti-social manners of the English, he said, one should see them at home in the country; for London is not their home—it is an encampment for business or pleasure. "I am inclined to think English society pleasantest out of London. There is more leisure—as much information, and manners equally good, for nobody is provincial in this country. You meet nowhere with those persons who never were out of their native place and whose habits are wholly local—nobody above poverty who has not visited London once; and most of those who can visit it once a year. . . . In France, the people of the provinces used to make their will before they undertook such an expedition." Cultivation of mind and elegance of manners he found more conspicuous among women than among men. "The men appear to me less universal than they were in France, but they know better what they do know. They are less apt to say everything which comes into their heads—they think before they speak—they have less vanity and more pride. This is wise and respectable, but does not form perhaps a state of society very amusing. The women are no less remarkable for their discretion and reserve; but it is the reserve of modesty instead of that of pride." Science, anecdotes, politics, fashions, everything that can interest the mind, circulates day by day to the remotest corner of the country. Everybody reads the newspapers, the journals, the reviews—knows exactly what is going on everywhere. They read books on all sorts of subjects—novels in shoals—poetry is familiar.[1] "England, of all countries in the world, shows the least signs of mental feebleness and enervation."

London again.

English society.

Here he finished his sight-seeing—Lancaster schools, the Guild-hall, more galleries, the Elgin marbles, the Regent's fête in June,

More sights

[1] Of the other classes, he says: "In England the lower people hold other nations in thorough contempt. The same rank in France, in the interior of the country at least, scarcely know there are other nations—their geography is that of the Chinese."

the East India Docks; witnessed the wooden water pipes being taken up in the main streets to be replaced by iron; and, not least, visited Newgate, where he saw the prisoners—even those under sentence of death—at their favourite amusement of fives, and peeped into Cobbett's apartments, where he lived with his family and edited the *Register*, "pouring out his torrent of abuse as freely as ever, on everything and everybody in turn." The *Journal* now contains further disquisitions, on popular education, the prize-ring, the Indian Empire, Rose's pamphlet, and the Bullion Report.

and disquisitions.

The unemployed.

Perhaps the most interesting thing in the latter part of the *Journal* is his explanation of the "50,000 unemployed men-servants in London." They are the result of the division of labour, the improvements in machinery—he was seeing through Barclay & Co.'s brewery, which paid £400,000 annually to the excise—and particularly the steam engine. It is the saving of money, and still more "the economy of men," which gives England a disposable force so much greater than its nominal population seems capable of affording. The reason of so much unemployment, in short, is the displacement of men by machinery —"this is not among the best results of the steam engine."

Liverpool.

Before sailing on 25th September, he visited Liverpool again, finding on this occasion visibly less bustle of trade and less display of wealth than when he first saw it; few carriages, hardly any parties, but no perceivable gloom and despondency. A general calamity, he reflects, which does not threaten life or health is scarcely a calamity; "it is of very little consequence whether a man keeps his carriage, or is waited on by one servant or ten, provided his neighbours are not better off than himself."

Summary opinion.

"If I was asked at this moment," he concludes, after a judicious and frank comparison of the two great rival peoples with whom he now felt at home, "for a summary opinion of what I have seen in England, I might probably say that its political institutions present a detail of corrupt practices,—of profusion,—and of personal ambition, under the mask of public spirit very carelessly put on, more disgusting than I should have expected; the workings of the selfish passions are exhibited in all their nakedness and deformity. On the other hand, I should admit very readily that I have found the great mass of the people richer, happier, and more respectable than any other with which I am acquainted. I have seen prevailing among all ranks of people that emulation of industry and independence which characterise

a state of advancing civilisation properly directed. The manners and the whole deportment of superiors to inferiors are marked with that just regard and circumspection which announce the presence of laws equal for all. By such signs, I know this to be the best government that ever existed."

# CHAPTER XVIII

## 1812. THE TURN OF THE TIDE

Lord Liverpool's Ministry.

IN political history, the chief interest of the year—graphically reflected with all its intrigues and heartburnings in the pages of Creevey—was the change in administration which was to confirm the Tories in power for fifteen years to come. Wellesley had resigned in February, to some extent as a protest against the lukewarm support given to his brother—"impeded in every movement, and checked in the midst of every enterprise, by the apathy, or ill-will, or helplessness, or whatever it was that prevented his own government sending him men, money, stores, and cheering words"—but chiefly because the Regent would not hear of any concession to the Roman Catholic claims; and Grey and Grenville had refused to join the Cabinet for the same reason. After the assassination of Perceval, on 15th May,[1] it was difficult to persuade any leading man to take the chief responsibility, when there was so much distress at home and when Napoleon's star was still in the ascendent. When five attempts had been made, Lord Liverpool formed an administration;[2] Vansittart succeeded Perceval as Chancellor of the Exchequer; Sidmouth became Home Secretary in place of Ryder; and Castlereagh retained the place, to which he had succeeded on Wellesley's resignation, of Secretary for Foreign Affairs. It was

[1] The act of a madman called Bellingham. In private life, as Romilly said, no man could be more generous, more kind, or more friendly than Perceval, and no man had a keener sense of honour. But, of his unpopularity as a statesman, it is some indication that, when the news was received by the multitude which collected in the streets and about the avenues of the House, it was met with "most savage expressions of joy and exultation, and regret that others had not shared the same fate"—"the English character," muses Romilly, "seems to have undergone some unaccountable and portentous change." *Diary*, iii. 34.

[2] "Well, this is beyond anything!" wrote Creevey. i. 165.

in 1812 that Brougham, who had entered Parliament in 1810, began his striking career. Creevey, who did not like him, wrote in October: "I have been perfectly amazed during this campaign at the marvellous talent of Brougham in his addresses to the people."[1]

Catholic Disabilities.

During the session, the usual debates took place on the Catholic Disabilities, and great numbers of petitions were presented; in fact, the pages of *Hansard* for the year are filled with petitions on the three subjects,—the Orders in Council, the East India Company charter, and Catholic Emancipation. Opinion was gradually coming round to the side of the complainants; and, on 22nd June, Canning moved that in next session the House should take into serious consideration the state of the laws affecting Roman Catholics, and the resolution was passed by a majority of 129. A similar resolution moved by Wellesley in the Lords was lost, but only by 1—even the bench of bishops being divided. But, as a general election took place in November, the subject was still postponed.[2]

Sinecures.

The Sinecure Offices Bill, the object of which was stated to be the abolition of all offices which had revenue without employment, and the regulation of those whose revenue was extremely disproportionate to employment, passed the Commons in May by 134 to 123.[3] Perceval, confessing to a personal bias against it, argued that it went to say that the Crown should not have the power of securing for its service men whom it might judge to be the most capable, if those men happened not to be in a position to resign all other professions or pursuits in order to enter the public service. In the Lords, however, on the lead of Lord Eldon's contemptuous dismissal of it as "scarcely intelligible," it

[1] Henry Peter Brougham; born, 1778: educated at University of Edinburgh; at Scots bar, 1800; coming to London, supported himself for several years by his contributions to the *Edinburgh Review*—80 articles in the first 20 numbers; "a scatter-brained fellow, one Brougham . . . has got a sort of philosophical cant about him, and a way of putting obscure sentences together, which seem to fools to contain deep meaning, especially as an air of consummate petulance and confidence runs through the whole," was Creevey's opinion in 1804. *Creevey Papers*, i. 30.

[2] *Hansard*, xxiii. 667, 814. Lord Liverpool, however, on the reassembling of Parliament in November, said that he had resisted and would resist any proposition for entering into the consideration of the Catholic claims, because he could not see his way to any adjustment of them likely to satisfy the Catholics. But he stated this as his individual intention, without meaning to sway the judgment of any of his friends. *Ibid.* xxiv. 43.

[3] *Hansard*, xxii. 162, 440, 1156, 1159.

was thrown out by 35 to 8: and thus, says the *Annual Register*, "the Bill was lost and with it all hopes of alleviation of the public burdens which it might have raised."[1]

America and the Orders.

In the Speech from the Throne, in January, the Regent had regretted that, although the affair of the *Chesapeake* was settled, various important subjects of difference remained unadjusted with the United States; he would, however, continue to employ such measures of conciliation as might be consistent with the honour and dignity of the Crown.[2] The anxiety of the Opposition as to the risk of a conflict produced debate after debate on the Orders in Council; the Opposition ascribed to them everything that was evil, not only the general depression, but even the frame-breaking in particular counties, while the Government, with equal exaggeration, maintained that they were the system which had saved, and the only one which could have saved the country. The number of licenses had increased from 4,000 to 16,000, and, with them, had grown up a system of universal fraud and perjury on the part of all concerned to which it was impossible to shut one's eyes. In a special debate on the subject, on 3rd March, Brougham, asking for a Select Committee, brought forward all the arguments, which were to prevail later, against the Orders and the licensing system, and ended by saying that, if any man was desirous of preserving peace with America, he would vote for the enquiry.[3] Petitions poured in from the industrial classes asking for their repeal.[4] But, up till his death, Perceval stood firm, entreating the House to consider the effect of repealing them: "America would be able to supply France with all colonial produce, and the Americans would in return take away her manufactures; in fact, France would be in a more favourable situation than she would be in a time of peace, and the trade of Great Britain would be annihilated."[5]

[1] P. 55. [2] *Hansard*, xxi. 4. [3] *Ibid.* 1092.

[4] There were, however, many petitions on the opposite side. As Rose pointed out in the June debate, four-fifths of the merchants of Glasgow had petitioned in support of the Orders; those of Bristol were unanimous in the same opinion; so were the majority of the Liverpool merchants; there was no petition from London against them—on the contrary, a large number of London merchants had petitioned in their favour. The great body of merchants, in fact, were, he said, on the side of the Orders, and, in addition to them, there was the great body representing the shipping interests. *Hansard*, xxiii. 529.

[5] *Hansard*, xxi. 1158. In the same strain, said Lord Bathurst:—"The cotton manufactures of France were now in the lowest state; we had cut off the chief transit of the material, and they could not now get any except

Brougham on the Orders.

The situation was changed when Lord Liverpool formed the new administration. During the negotiations over the new Government, the enquiries as to the effects of the Orders in Council upon the commercial and manufacturing interests of the kingdom were going on in both Houses with little interruption, and, on 16th June, Brougham, in one of his most splendid speeches, brought the matter for final decision before the Commons. He spoke in moving terms of the great distress in the manufacturing districts—of 100 witnesses from the great industrial districts, there was "only one single person who hesitated in admitting the dreadful amount of the present distress"; maintained that every right, maritime or otherwise, might safely be waived or abandoned for reasons of expediency,[1] and resumed when these reasons ceased; dwelt on the importance of the American market to England[2] and the danger of driving the United States to rely on their own resources and start manufacturing for themselves;[3] and ended with the proposal of an address to the Regent asking him "to recall or

a coarse and rude material from Turkey. Let the Orders of 1809 be repealed and they might have cotton from America in any quantity they pleased; the ports of France, from which every article of British produce was excluded, would be at once opened to the whole trade of America. If the Order in Council of 1807 were to be repealed, and it must be repealed to conciliate America, France would be permitted to carry on a trade with every part of the world." *Ibid.* 1054.

[1] "As you ought not to go to war for a profitable wrong, so neither ought you to go to war for an unprofitable right," said a member of the House in 1801.

[2] "It is a market which, in ordinary years, may take off about £13,000,000 worth of our manufactures, and, in steadiness and regularity, it is unrivalled. . . . Circumstanced as the two countries are, I use no figure of speech, but speak the simple fact when I say that not an axe falls in the woods of America which does not put in motion some shuttle, or hammer, or wheel in England. . . . Only conceive any event which should give an opening in the north of Europe, or in the Mediterranean, for but a small part of this vast bulk—some change or accident by which a thirteenth, aye, or a thirtieth of this enormous value of British goods could be thrown into the enemy's countries, all Downing Street would be in an uproar of joy" (*Hansard*, xxiii. 486).

[3] "There is not one branch of the many in which we used, quietly and without the least fear of competition, to supply them, that is not now to a certain degree cultivated by themselves; many have wholly taken rise since 1807—all have rapidly sprung up to a formidable maturity. In New York there are now 40,000 looms going—glass is made—wool cards are now made there which used regularly to be imported from hence—and there is a considerable exportation of cotton twist to the south of Europe, from the country which possesses most abundantly the raw material. I say nothing of their wool and the excellent Merino breed they have obtained from Spain. Look only at one striking fact. Pittsburgh is a town remotely situated in

suspend the said Orders, and adopt such measures as might tend to conciliate neutral powers, without sacrificing the rights and dignity of His Majesty's Crown."

War. Before the close of the debate, however, it was evident that the Government were prepared to surrender their policy, and, on 23rd June, the Orders were revoked—just five days too late, for America had declared war on the 18th.

England taken aback. It does not seem too much to say that the country was completely taken aback by the declaration,[1] and fully believed that, when it was known that the Orders had been withdrawn, hostilities would cease. On 30th July, indeed, on the rising of the House, the Regent, deeply regretting the hostile measures taken, was "nevertheless willing to hope that the accustomed relations of peace and amity might yet be restored."[2]

The reason and justification of America's action formed the subject of long discussion in the next session of Parliament, when the Regent's Declaration relative to the Causes and Origin of the War, dated 9th January, was read. To many, it seemed no less than a stab in the back. No doubt America, for some years past, had shown considerable leanings towards France, if not partiality for her—as one often tolerates from a stranger what one would not put up with for a moment from a near relation. But, as Canning said, "who would have expected to

the most western part of the Union. Eighteen years ago, it was a hamlet so feeble and insecure that the inhabitants could scarcely defend themselves from their Indian neighbours, and durst hardly quit the place for fear of being scalped. Now there are steam engines and a large glass work in the same town, and you saw the product of its furnaces—it stands on a stratum of coal, fifteen feet thick and within a few inches of the surface, which extends over all the country west of the Alleghany chain– coal there sells for six shillings the chaldron, and the same precious mineral is to be found in the Atlantic States, at Richmond, and elsewhere accessible by sea. . . . And the price of land in some places, is as high as in England" (*Hansard*, xxiii. 517). Lansdowne, on another occasion, said that 100,000 bales of cotton were exported in the previous year into the eastern states; that a large export of cotton twist had been sent to the Baltic; and that they were manufacturing considerable quantities of coarser articles of woollen (*ibid.* xxi. 1044).

[1] "We cannot," said the *Annual Register*, "refrain from expressing our astonishment that, during the debates, there appeared so little consciousness that the question of repealing or continuing the Orders in Council was a real question of peace or war with America; and that deferring the decision so long, was rendering it altogether unimportant. In fact, before the news of the repeal reached the United States, they were actually at war with Great Britain," p. 94.

[2] *Hansard*, xxiii. 1286.

see the favourite child of freedom leagued with the oppressor of the world?"[1]

What was the war about?

The question raised, and incessantly argued all through the war, was what it was all about. That America might be expected to declare war over the Orders in Council, had, of course, been the constant dread of many from conviction and the constant assumption of the Opposition from policy. But the first thing to catch general attention was that war was not declared over the Orders. They were mentioned, indeed, but the grievance put in the forefront of the Message to Congress was the search for British seamen—many, presumably, deserters—in American ships.

—the Right of Search?

Here there was a fundamental difference between the two nations as to what constituted a "British seaman." American law granted letters of naturalisation after five years' residence. British law regarded all British born as British subjects "unless absolved from their allegiance by the act of the mother country," and, in this principle, continental law agreed. England asserted that American captains bribed British sailors to desert by offering higher pay, and maintained that the Right of Search was not one claimed exclusively by her, or denied by her to other nations in similar circumstances. In any case, said Castlereagh, what had previously been "only an angry point of discussion," was now put in the forefront of the battle. Ponsonby,[2] the leader of the Opposition, admitted that "from everything he could collect, we were at war on a subject wholly distinct from and unconnected with the Orders in Council," and Whitbread, always the apostle of peace, said that, "if truth must be spoken, he would say that America had always been in the right, until, by the declaration of war, she had changed her situation."

—or the Orders in Council?

But, supposing the Orders in Council to be the real reason of the Declaration, America did not manifest any great desire to reconsider her decision when she found that the Orders had been revoked before the Declaration reached England. The question now, Lansdowne said, was whether, when at last the Orders had

[1] *Hansard*, xxiv. 641.

[2] George Ponsonby; born 1755; educated Trinity College, Cambridge; called to the Irish bar, 1780; entered Parliament for Wicklow Borough, 1776; led the Opposition to the Union with Ireland; sat in the Imperial Parliament, 1801; in 1808, member for Tavistock, and thereafter, till his death, leader of the Opposition.

been revoked, America had met us with a corresponding disposition to come to an amicable arrangement; for, though the Orders were not the sole ground of complaint with America, yet he did not find that there appeared to be any other bar to a friendly accommodation. He had, therefore, certainly expected that, when this was removed, America would have returned to such a pacific disposition as would have paved the way for adjustment of differences.

Ulterior motives.

It is not to be wondered at, then, that some thought that no one of the reasons alleged in the Message to Congress was the real one. "If America," said Canning, "had ever intended to close with us on the Orders in Council, she had evidently reviewed that intention, and had come to a deliberate intention to go to war with us unless we should make every other concession that she demanded." "The desire entertained by the American government to possess Canada," he hinted, "is not much frowned on, even by those Americans who are the best disposed to this country," and those who looked for ulterior motives did not scruple to assert that the Southern States expected to reap a rich harvest in privateering among the West Indies.

The maritime states against the war.

One thing which seems to have some significance is that the majority for war in the House of Representatives—the resolution was carried by 79 to 49—represented mainly the agricultural Southern States, while the minority represented chiefly the Eastern and Northern States; that is to say, the maritime States, which might be supposed to resent most keenly the right of search, were against the war. In Boston harbour, on the day of the Declaration, all the ships displayed flags half-mast high, and the Federalists held a Convention in Connecticut to protest against the continuance of the war. It was "a war of passion, of party spirit," said Lord Liverpool, "not a war of policy, of interest, or of necessity." And what subsequently threw still greater suspicion on its motives was that, when peace was made in 1815, the Right of Search was not even mentioned in the articles. The general feeling of this country was, one has little doubt, reflected in the Regent's Proclamation in January of the following year:[1]—"While contending against France, in defence, not only of the liberties of Great Britain but of the world, his Royal

[1] The Proclamation (given in *Annual Register*, 1813, 330), gave a full statement of the causes and origin of the war from the British point of view.

Highness was entitled to look for a far different result. From their common origin—from their common interest—from their professed principles of freedom and independence—the United States were the last power in which Great Britain could have expected to find a willing instrument and abettor of French tyranny."[1]

Hostilities began with the invasion of Canada by the American forces, but, up till the end of the year, the frontier was not crossed. At sea, the war was little more than fights between individual frigates, in which the balance of success usually lay with the Americans—the British Government, acting on the principle of conciliating rather than of irritating America, adopted a defensive rather than an aggressive attitude. The new war, indeed, excited very little interest in England—an enemy more or less did not seem to matter!

Hostilities commence.

In the beginning of the year, Wellington began to develop his brilliant plan, and, moving out of his winter quarters, assumed the offensive. Although Valentia fell before the French in January, Ciudad Rodrigo was taken by assault in the same month, and Badajoz fell after nineteen days' siege in April—the glory of those tremendous efforts sullied by the horrible excesses of our soldiery in the hour of victory. By the capture of these fortresses, the safety of Portugal was completely secured, and, at the same time, a way was opened into the centre of Spain.[2]

Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz.

The reaction in Parliament was now complete. The votes of thanks were carried *nem. con.* "It was impossible," said Tarleton in generous contrast to his former utterances, "for the genius, the eloquence, the research, or the memory of all the members of the House to produce an achievement whose glory at all equalled the splendour of the capture of Ciudad Rodrigo."[3] Wellington was now made a Spanish grandee of the first class, with the title of Duke

Reaction in Parliament.

[1] *Hansard*, xxiv. 70, 72, 367, 377, 578, 581, 584, 586, 604, 608, 613, 632, 641. "It is impossible to deny," said Simond in 1810, "that France, by her cruisers, and in her ports, that is to say, in all the ports of the continent, has seized and destroyed all that she could reach; while, with the exception of certain branches of trade interdicted by England (unjustly it may be), the commerce of America, everywhere in contact with her navy or in her ports, was not only suffered but protected—was immense and increasing" (*Journal*, i. 248).

[2] *Hansard*, xxi. 704.

[3] *Ibid.* 707. Only a month before, Tarleton had asked in Parliament what attempts Wellington had made in which he had not been baffled; in what our armies had succeeded; while Ponsonby had said that there might be doubts as to the expediency of proceeding in this great contest at the vast expense which it still involved. *Ibid.* 64.

of Ciudad Rodrigo, and, later, was appointed by the Cortes Commander-in-Chief of all the armies in Spain. A message from the Prince Regent proposed that he should be created Earl of Wellington, with a net annuity of £2,000, in addition to that already granted—the first exercise of the Regent's unrestrained prerogative—and the motion was carried unanimously but for one vote, that of Burdett.[1]

Salamanca.

In July, was fought the battle of Salamanca—the most decisive and glorious victory yet won in the Peninsula—and this was followed in August by Wellington's entrance in triumph into Madrid. Unable to hold the capital, however, (for still he got neither money nor reinforcements), he retired on Salamanca—the conduct of his soldiers on the retreat as shameful as in their triumph. By the middle of November, he was back within the frontiers of Portugal. In December, he was voted by Parliament —Burdett alone again dissenting—a grant of £100,000 to be laid out in land.

Invasion of Russia.

The beginning of 1812 witnessed the completion of Napoleon's gigantic preparations for the invasion of Russia. All through the spring, troops of all nations, under French command, were marching steadily towards the Russian frontier: among others, the Imperial Guard and some Polish regiments were recalled from Spain, and raw levies put in their place. By the 20th of April, 80,000 troops had crossed the Vistula.[2] Swedish Pomerania had

[1] *Hansard*, xxi. 842, 869. It was mentioned that, when Wellington received the highest honour which the crown of Portugal could bestow, he had refused the accompanying pension of 20,000 crowns, and, when made Captain General of Spain, had also refused the pay usually attached to the position.

[2] It is one of the puzzles of history that Napoleon, who did not leave Paris till 9th May, should have chosen this moment to make another overture of peace with England. In a letter dated 17th April, his Secretary for State wrote to Castlereagh, proposing an arrangement on the basis of guaranteeing the independence and integrity of Portugal, guaranteeing the existing family of Sicily, declaring independent the actual dynasty of Spain, and evacuating these countries by the French and English land and naval forces. Castlereagh answered at once, and perfectly courteously, that, before the Regent explained himself upon this basis, he felt it necessary to ascertain the precise meaning of "la dynastie actuelle de l'Espagne"—in fact, was it Ferdinand or was it Joseph Buonaparte?—and to this Napoleon gave no reply. It is questionable if anybody in England but Whitbread thought this letter an honest one, or anything but another pretext for saying that he had again offered peace and been refused. But the clumsiness of it strikes one. It may be noted that Lord Holland, in asking for explanations, said that he could not but protest against the difficulty which appeared to be felt in designating the Emperor of France as Emperor! The letter and the reply are given in *Hansard*, xxiii. 1156.

been occupied since January by an army of 20,000 men. Prussia had bound herself by treaty to hold another 20,000 in readiness, and to give free passage, food, and forage, while Austria provided 30,000 men to cover Napoleon's flank. On the other hand, Russia and Sweden had opened negotiations with Great Britain. The whole naval force of Russia was sent for safety into English ports, and British troops entered Riga to assist in its defence.

But, owing to the long preparations necessary for a campaign so far from home and in a country too poor for "war to support war," it was not till 24th June that the Grand Army—the greatest Europe had ever seen[1]—began its three days' passage of the Nieman, and crossed into the arid plains and great forests of old Russia. The Russian policy was gradually to retreat fighting, drawing the invader further and further from his base as the winter drew on. On 7th September, the stand was made at Borodino, when between 70,000 and 80,000 men lost their lives.[2] On the 15th, Napoleon made his entry into Moscow; to find the city in flames, all the valuables, arsenal stores, and private property carried away, and scarcely a single individual remaining. Moscow.

This balked Napoleon's intention of establishing himself in winter quarters there, and, on 18th October, the retreat began—the Russians, in striking nemesis, compelling Napoleon to retire along the route he had devastated on his approach. The winter that year came late. On 4th November, it began to snow, and it needs little imagination to picture the horror of such a march, with enemies haunting every halt. An intercepted letter of Eugene Napoleon gives some indication of it. "These three last days have cost us two-thirds of the artillery of this corps. Yesterday, about 400 horses died, and, to-day, perhaps double that number have perished, exclusive of the great number which I have caused to be put on for the military baggage and for that of individuals. Whole trains of horses at once have perished in the harness. I must not conceal from your highness that these three days of suffering have so dispirited the soldier that I believe him at this moment very little capable of making The retreat.

[1] Its total strength, with baggage trains, has been computed at 680,000 men, including 500,000 foot and 100,000 horse—rather less than half being French (*Cambridge Modern History*, ix. 488).

[2] On the morning of Borodino, the Russian commander Kotusoff animated his troops by telling them of the glory gained by the English on the plains of Salamanca (*Hansard*, xxiv. 158).

any effort. Numbers of men are dead of hunger or cold, and others in despair have suffered themselves to be taken by the enemy."[1]

The Beresina.

The Beresina was crossed on 26th-29th November with frightful loss, and "for some time nothing was heard of the Grand Army."[2] Of the 680,000 who had crossed the Nieman in June, only some 60,000 recrossed it. The imagination is caught by the famous picture of the Emperor riding moodily in the midst of his "sacred squadron," where "generals performed the functions of captains, and colonels of subalterns." As a fact, he left his army on the 5th December, performed the journey from Wilna in a single sledge, and, on the 18th, was in Paris again—a month before the broken fragments of his army appeared—boastful as ever, offering his sympathy to the Americans and assuring them that they were "supported by the enmity of all Europe."

Napoleon back in Paris.

Effect on trade.

The effect on the industries of Great Britain was at once felt. The treaties with Russia and Sweden—formally concluded on 1st August—practically put an end to the Continental System. The Regent's Speech, on the opening of Parliament in the following January, spoke of peace and friendship with Russia, "by which the Continental markets were again opened to our traders," and Parliament did not grudge the £200,000 voted for the relief of the inhabitants of Moscow.

A year of scarcity.

At home, 1812 was emphatically a year of scarcity. Both spring and summer promised well for the farmer. But the preceding harvest had failed all over Europe; there was little import; and meantime the country had to live upon its scanty supplies of the previous year. Prices of grain went up by leaps and bounds. Wheat was 105/11 in January; it was 155/- in August, while the loaf rose to 1/8.

Stoppage of the distilleries.

The remedy proposed was the old one of stopping the consumption of grain in the making of spirits. In former years, as we have seen, this course was adopted as a means of forcing a demand for colonial sugar,[3] and, to some extent, the same motive

[1] *Annual Register*, 179.

[2] "At this moment," wrote Mackintosh in December, "the fate of Buonaparte is unascertained; rumours, though unauthorised, of his death are prevalent; his army is annihilated. It is the most memorable reverse in history" (*Life*, ii. 255).

[3] "There is reason to believe," said the *Farmer's Magazine*, p. 117, "that this temporary measure, so often resorted to, will, at no distant period, be converted into a permanent one, at least when corn is above, and sugar below,

prevailed now. The West India colonies seem to have been passing through bad times. In January, Barbadoes petitioned, setting forth "the unexampled distresses of the West India planters," and reminding the House that the use of sugar in the distilleries would give a vent to 770,000 cwts. of an inferior and middling quality now only vendible at the most ruinous prices.[1] In March, the Tobago planters petitioned in similar terms, saying that the depreciation in the price of sugar must soon bring general ruin on the colony.[2] But, if this motive did enter, it was quite overshadowed by the more urgent one. The comparative failure of the crops, said the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had rendered it necessary to resort to the old expedient; and, in January, he submitted a set of resolutions to that effect, accompanied, of course, by the suspension of the trade in home-made spirits between Ireland and Great Britain. To save the revenue, he proposed that the duties on spirits distilled from grain should be transferred to spirits distilled from sugar. The resolutions were agreed to without discussion, Ponsonby only complaining "of the change that had been wrought in the constitution of the country by the usage that had silently grown up among the people, of looking for the relief of the respective grievances of different trades and interests to the executive government, and not to the constitutional source of appeal and redress, the Parliament."

Opposition from Ireland and Scotland.

On the report stage of the Bill, however, Newport, on behalf of Ireland, entreated the House to weigh well the nature of the measure, which—in face of the Act of Union—went to prohibit the intercourse between the two islands. Sinclair, again, called attention to the injurious effect on the agriculture of Scotland. The lamentable deficiency of the crops everywhere was not the only evil; a great deal of barley and oats was so much damaged by the incessant rains which ensued about the time of harvest as to be unfit for any other purpose except that of distillation. Besides, no less than 6,000 head of cattle were annually fattened for the market from the offals of the grain used in the distilleries, and the withdrawal of this food would be most serious. To this Perceval replied that he had received more applications for the adoption of the measure from Scotland than from any other

a certain price; and we think it our duty to put our readers on their guard, and to request them to keep this probability, as well as the property tax, in view, in offering rents upon new leases."

[1] *Hansard*, xxi. 278. [2] *Ibid.* 1213.

part of the kingdom. Beyond this, the Bill did not meet with much opposition. Those who criticised did so on general grounds of the discouragement given to agriculture, and, in the circumstances of the case, did not think it right to oppose.

Act extended to Ireland.

In April, in consequence of the high price of provisions in Ireland, and with a view to "stopping the exuberant grain of the country from being converted into spirits to be sent abroad" to Portugal and other places, the exportation of grain spirit from Ireland was prohibited—the exportation, it was stated, being from one-fourth to one-fifth of all the spirits distilled in Ireland—and, in conformity with the finding of the Committee of the previous year, an additional duty of 2/6—thus doubling the tax—was imposed on Irish-made spirits, for the relief of the brewing trade, and for the sake of the health, morals, and industry of the people. Later on, as the price of grain continued very high, the Act prohibiting the distillation of spirits from grain was extended to Ireland also.[1]

Bread riots.

As a result of the scarcity, the country was distracted by another form of disturbance, namely bread riots. In Macclesfield, Bristol, and Carlisle, we hear of outbreaks due to the dearness of provisions. In Glasgow, in January, there was much uneasiness on account of the distress of the operative weavers. For about a year they had been without full employment—wages reduced so much that "few of them had been able to earn more than 7/- a week." A mass meeting, called on Glasgow Green, was prohibited from fear of the consequences. The magistrates, instead, requested the master manufacturers to hold a meeting upon the matter, "and we doubt not," said the *Chronicle*, "that they will see the propriety of giving an increase of wages to those they employ." With the same loose ideas about economic laws, the Stockport magistrates, after a bread riot, begged the people, by placard, to desist from outrages, saying that no means would be left untried to reduce the price of provisions by the next market day. The Sheffield rioters, however, took the matter into their own hands: they forced the flour dealers, on threat of destroying their property, to sign a paper that they would sell flour at 3/- per stone, and made them keep their promise too.[2]

Harvest scarcely an average.

The harvest was extraordinarily late—"I ate abundance of gooseberries," wrote one, "on the 2nd of November"—but, on the

[1] *Hansard*, xxi. 146, 286, 490; xxii. 243, 708, 857.

[2] *Annual Register*, 55-58, 104.

whole, it was fair, and would, indeed, have been abundant, if the crops could have been gathered before the weather broke. As it was, wheat was an average, oats were below the average, peas and beans deficient, potatoes plentiful—in some places, almost a double crop.[1] All the same, the prices did not fall much. The total import of wheat and wheat flour during the year was only 290,000 quarters, owing to the extensive demands on the continent for the French armies, the levying of an export duty at Dantzig, and the great cost of licenses, freights, and insurance. In December, the price of wheat was 121/-, while the Board of Agriculture average for the year was 126/6. By an Act—of which, however, there is no mention in the published debates—the making of starch, hair powder, and blue, from wheat and other articles of food, was prohibited till November,[2] and we gather from subsequent debates that this Act was still in force in February of the next year.[3]

South American trade reviving.

As to the foreign commerce of the country, we learn, from a speech in the House on 28th February, that the trade in South America was fast recovering; that remittances long withheld were now pouring in; and that the effect was the revival of many of our manufactures. By the exchequer bills of 1811, issued for the support of commercial credit, manufacturers had been enabled to keep goods in hand which they must otherwise have sold at a great loss, and to retain workmen whom they would otherwise have had no means of paying. Although it had been predicted that these exchequer bills would be fatal to the country, the benefits expected from this politic measure, it was said, were fully experienced and acknowledged, and the manufacturers were now disposing of their stocks to considerable advantage.[4]

East India Co.'s Charter.

The approaching expiry of the East India Company's charter in 1814 gave rise to petitions from every seaport and commercial town of the least importance in Great Britain, urging the justice of throwing open the vast countries under the company's monopoly

[1] This was the account given at the end of the year. But it was much too roseate if a correspondent of the *Farmer's Magazine*, in February of the next year, is to be believed. A third of the barley, he said, had been left in the ground, and a third of the oats was not gathered into the corn-yard. "It is cruel to deceive the country by deluding reports of a plenty which does not exist. . . . Nothing but the most rigid economy will save the country from the greatest distress." The writer, however, does not say whether these "general remarks" applied to the whole kingdom or to Scotland only.

[2] *Hansard*, xxiii. Append. liv. [3] *Ibid.* xxiv. 457.

[4] Earl Bathurst, in February, xxi. 1057.

to free exportation,[1] and a Select Committee was appointed to enquire,[2] but the pressure of other business prevented the subject from being brought under discussion of Parliament before the close of the session.

Foreign trade.

Of foreign trade, the Official values were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports - - - - - - - - - - | £26,163,431 |
| Exports of produce and manufactures of the United Kingdom - - - - - - | 29,508,508 |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise - | 9,717,775 |

The Real value of the United Kingdom exports was £41,716,964.

The vessels built and registered numbered 760, representing 94,198 tons.

In particular items, the import of coffee fell from £3,646,000 to £2,573,000; of sugar, from £5,324,000 to £5,000,000; of cotton, from £2,990,000 to £2,168,000. But the export of cotton goods rose from £11,715,000 to £15,972,000, and, of woollens, from £4,376,000 to £5,024,000.[3]

Custom House figures challenged.

The encouraging nature of the foreign trade returns was dwelt on by Rose, in the June debate, as showing that the distress was by no means so bad as had been painted. On the other hand, Brougham trusted to the evidence of his own senses as to the universal distress, and roundly challenged the custom house statistics, quoting the inspector that the method of making up the account of exports could not be safely relied on in those instances where no payment was made. Of £27,000,000 of exports, about £8 millions neither paid duty nor received drawback, and to this sum at least all the inaccuracy indicated must attach. "The managing clerk of one of the greatest mercantile houses in the city tells you that he has known packages entered

[1] There were, however, some petitions on the other side, from manufacturers connected with the Company, from the East Indian Dock Co., and, notably, from the Common Council of London; and some of the popular agitation seems to have been manufactured. Brougham, who characterised the movement as one of the symptoms of the restlessness of suffering—the tendency of distressed classes to blame something or somebody for evils they felt but did not understand—said that one district which, to his knowledge, raised no earthly produce but black-horned cattle had petitioned for free exportation to the East Indies; the potteries had demanded permission to send freely their porcelain to China; and the ancient and respectable city of Newcastle, which grew nothing but pit coal, had earnestly entreated that it might be allowed to ship that useful article to supply the stoves and hothouses of Calcutta! *Hansard*, xxiii. 490.

[2] *Ibid.* xxi. 672.

[3] State Paper, quoted in *Annual Register*, 1813, 328.

at £5,000 which were not worth £50—that those sums are entered at random and cannot be at all relied upon." He ended by saying that he had said enough to destroy their credit as documents. Rose, in reply, contended that the insinuation was most unworthy and most untrue, and would repeat that the figures of export and import formed as fair a criterion of the actual value of goods exported as it was possible to produce. Indeed, they were likely to be under the truth. And he quoted the statement of one witness before the Select Committee to the effect that hardware manufactures to the amount of £1,200,000 used to be sent from Birmingham to America, while, according to the custom house entries, the exports of hardware from the whole of Great Britain did not, during the periods alluded to, amount to more than £750,000.[1]

Frame-breaking.

But if there was a certain amount of trade revival, there was much unrest in some of the manufacturing districts. The frame-breaking disturbances in the neighbourhood of Nottingham showed no sign of abatement, and the matter came up before Parliament on 4th February, on a request from Lord Holland for a formal enquiry. Lauderdale then took occasion to say that the riots might all be traced to the system and conduct of His Majesty's Ministers in reducing the commerce of the country to a gambling speculation, causing violent fluctuations of demand—"was it not to be expected that men thus reduced from high wage to a state of poverty should become discontented and riotous?"[2] On the 14th February, the Home Secretary adverted to the "system of riot which had existed for the last three months—a system bordering almost on insurrection," and gave an account of its phenomena and of the measures taken to cope with it. He then introduced two Bills, the one for "the more exemplary punishment of persons destroying or injuring any stocking or lace frames, or other machines or engines used in the frame-work knitted manufactory, or any articles or goods in such frames or machines"—making frame-breaking a capital offence, instead of a minor felony punishable by fourteen years' transportation; the other, for the more effectual preservation of the peace within the county of Nottingham by establishing a system of watch and ward throughout the disturbed districts.[3]

New penal provisions.

Truck.

In the debate which followed, it was said by the member for Nottingham that, while the real and primary cause was the

[1] *Hansard*, xxiii. 499, 524. [2] *Ibid.*, xxi. 602. [3] *Ibid.* 807.

great decay of trade, there was another thing tending to those disturbances, namely the illegal custom pursued by some manufacturers of paying their workmen in goods instead of cash. "He had heard of workmen being paid in linen drapery, in shoes, in provisions—things always charged above their value—and thus, instead of receiving 20/- per week, the workman in consequence had probably 5/- less."[1]

The new penal provision naturally gave rise to great discussion. Not a single conviction, it was argued, had taken place under the existing law; evidently what was wanted was not more severe punishments—it was the immunity from punishment which should be redressed. As Romilly said, if there was already a conspiracy to suppress evidence and shield the offenders, it would be much worse if the punishment were merely made more drastic.

Byron's first speech.

When the Bill came to the Lords, it gave occasion to Byron's first speech in Parliament.[2] Never under the most despotic of infidel governments, he said, had he beheld such squalid wretchedness as he had seen since his return in the very heart of a Christian country. Nothing but absolute want could have driven a large and once honest and industrious body of the people into the commission of excesses, so hazardous to themselves, their families, and the community. These men convicted of "the capital crime of poverty"—"men nefariously guilty of lawfully begetting several children, whom, thanks to the times, they were unable to maintain"—considered themselves sacrificed to improvements in mechanism. And what were the remedies? After months of inaction, and months of action worse than inactivity, at length comes forth the grand specific, the never-failing nostrum of all state physicians from the days of Draco, capital punishment.[3]

[1] It is notable that the Chancellor of the Exchequer defended this truck system, by saying that "the master and his workmen, in making their agreement, were the best judges of their own interests, and that it would be highly impolitic in the House to interfere, since the effect of fixing the mode of payment would frequently be the rendering it impossible for many of the employers to pay their men at all. This mode of dealing had existed, not only at Nottingham but in other places, beyond the memory of the most experienced, and any interference might be attended with the most dangerous consequences." *Hansard*, xxi. 821. The member for Nottingham afterwards explained that the practice was adopted by the lower classes of masters, but was not a general one. *Ibid.* 962.

[2] This was just before the publication of *Childe Harold*, when Byron "awoke one morning and found himself famous."

[3] *Hansard*, xxi. 966.

The Bill, however, passed on 5th March, and later on, the same penalty was attached to the taking or administering of an oath binding the party to the commission of an illegal offence.[1] When the Bill came back from the Lords with certain amendments, it was found that the clause enacting the punishment of fine *and* imprisonment had been changed into fine *or* imprisonment. They had, in fact, declared that, in some cases, at the discretion of the judge, there should be no fine, whereas the Commons had decided that, in every case, there should be a fine. The Speaker stated that the constant practice of the House was the rejection of any amendment from the Lords which interfered with any branch of public revenue; the amendment was rejected; and a Committee was appointed to communicate to the Lords the grounds on which the Commons had rejected their amendment.[2]

Committee of Secrecy's Report.

On 29th June, a Committee of Secrecy was appointed to examine as to the disturbed state of certain counties, and, in ten days, reported that, in a very extensive populous manufacturing district, comprising certain parts of Lancashire and the West Riding, and certain parts of Cheshire bordering upon Lancashire, for some months past very serious and alarming disturbances, destructive to property and highly dangerous to public safety and the public peace, had prevailed. "During this period, rioters in large numbers have assembled in the night time; some of them disguised by blackened faces, some armed with guns and pistols, and others with the implements of their trade, to be used as offensive weapons, have broken into various houses, particularly those of the manufacturers who made use of shearing frames, have destroyed the machinery, sometimes plundered the inhabitants and burned their houses and factories, exciting and keeping up perpetual terror in the country by threatening letters and other means of intimidation, occasionally executing their threats against proprietors and others, not only by the destruction of the property but by firing into the houses. It appears also that in some instances attempts have been made on the lives of those who had been actively employed in endeavouring to suppress the tumults. . . . It may be proper to add that parties of the rioters assembled have, in several instances, demanded and obtained money from individuals by threats and terror."

Objects of the rioters.

"The object of these lawless proceedings, at the commencement of them, appears to have been the destruction of machinery—but

[1] *Hansard*, xxiii. 31. [2] *Ibid.* xxi. 1216.

very early in their progress another object, still more formidable to the public security, has been developed; large bodies of men having assembled in the night, breaking open houses, and demanding arms with threats and violence. This practice has been universally persevered in; and though, in some cases, the plunder of property has accompanied both the destruction of machinery and the demanding of arms, yet it is material to observe that, in general, these two objects seem exclusively to have been aimed at; and, when these had been attained, every other species of property, though within their reach, has, in most instances, remained untouched. It is stated that, in the neighbourhood of Huddersfield, all the arms have been taken; and that in other parts the seizure of them has been considerable; and there is reason to apprehend that the rioters have different sorts of arms concealed. It appears evident to your Committee that these outrages have not been committed from any sudden impulse of unconnected individuals, but have been the result of organised systems of unlawful violence; that language of the most mischievous nature has been used among the rioters, and a sort of military training and discipline has been established."

Rioters' oath.

The following oath had been extensively administered: "I, A.B., of my own voluntary will, do declare and solemnly swear, that I will never reveal to any person or persons, in any place or places under the canopy of heaven, the names of the persons who compose the secret committee, either by word, deed or sign; their proceedings, meeting-place, abode, dress, features, marks, complexion, connections, or anything else that may lead to the discovery of the same; on the penalty of being put out of the world by the first brother that shall meet me, my name and character blotted out of existence, and never be remembered but with contempt and abhorrence. I further swear that I will use my best endeavours to punish by death any traitor or traitors, should any rise up amongst us, he or them; and though he should fly to the verge of nature, I will pursue him with unceasing vengeance. So help me God to keep this Oath inviolable."

The Report ended by expressing a strong sense of the danger arising from such combinations.[1]

Coercive measures adopted.

Based on this Report, the "Preservation of the Public Peace Act" was passed, *inter alia* giving any magistrate of the disturbed

[1] *Hansard*, xxiii. 951. A similar but fuller Report was presented to the Lords on 14th July (*ibid.* 1029).

districts the power to search for arms; to immediately disperse a tumultuous body and arrest those who refused to disperse; magistrates in neighbouring counties to have a concurrent jurisdiction.[1] For the moment, these measures were effectual, and tranquillity was in great measure re-established before the close of the year.

At the same time, the grievances of the frame-work knitters were recognised by the introduction of a Bill, "For preventing Fraud and Abuses in the Frame-work Knitting Manufacture, and in the payment of persons employed therein." Unfortunately, the Bill mixed up the payment by truck with more questionable matters, and, although it apparently passed the Commons without discussion, in the Lords it was thrown out without a voice being raised in its favour.[2]

Budget. The Budget of 17th June,[3] although introduced by the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, had been drawn up by Perceval before his death. "Considering in whose place he stood," said Vansittart, "whose papers he held in his hand, and whose plans he was about to state to the House, he felt rather that he was executing the last of the official duties of his lamented friend, than the first of his own." Happy would he think himself if he could, at the close of the day, resign those papers again into his hands; happier still if he could inherit his talents and virtues, and close a life of public service with the same testimonies of public approbation, and equal consciousness of unblemished rectitude.

The total Supply for the United Kingdom amounted to £62,376,000, of which the charge to be borne by Great Britain alone was £55,350,000. The chief items of the total were as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Navy | £19,702,000 |
| Army | 17,756,000 |
| Extraordinaries | 5,200,000 |
| Unprovided extraordinaries of last year | 2,300,000 |
| Ordnance | 5,279,000 |
| Miscellaneous | 2,350,000 |
| Vote of Credit | 3,200,000 |
| Sicily | 400,000 |
| Portugal | 2,000,000 |

[1] *Hansard*, xxiii. 962.

[2] *Ibid.* 1190, 1248.

[3] *Hansard*, xxiii. 559.

Of the Ways and Means, the items were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Annual duties | £3,000,000 |
| Surplus of Consolidated Fund[1] | 3,600,000 |
| War taxes | 20,400,000 |
| Lottery | 300,000 |
| Exchequer Bills funded | 6,789,000 |
| Vote of Credit | 3,000,000 |
| Naval stores | 441,000 |
| Surplus Ways and Means, 1811, created by funding part of the Exchequer Bills charged on the Aids of that year | 2,210,000 |
| Loan | 15,650,000 |
| | £55,390,000 |

For the loan a capital was created, on account of this sum, of £27,540,000 in three per cent. stock, representing a rate of interest to the subscribers of £5 5/7 per cent., and a total charge to the public of £7 1/10¾. The amount to be provided for by new taxes was £1,906,000, and "certainly the most painful part of his duty was that of proposing taxes by which so large a sum was to be defrayed." First came a tax "that would fall upon nobody," the discontinuance of the bounty

New taxes.

[1] This Budget is exceptional in that the new Chancellor of the Exchequer—possibly as reflecting his own difficulties when suddenly called on to understand the accounts before presenting them—gave a detailed calculation of how he made up this estimated surplus. It is most welcome as a simple, straight-forward account of the composition of the Consolidated Fund, very different from the tangled figures of the Finance Accounts presented at the end of the year:

| | |
|---|---|
| Customs | £5,106,000 |
| Excise | 18,188,000 |
| Assessed taxes | 5,999,000 |
| Stamps | 5,191,000 |
| Post Office | 1,240,000 |
| Land tax still unredeemed | 1,035,000 |
| Pensions and personal estates | 141,000 |
| Surplus of exchequer fees | 60,000 |
| Crown lands | 50,000 |
| Small branches of revenue | 240,000 |
| | £37,250,000 |

To this was to be added £2,706,000 of war taxes appropriated to the Consolidated Fund. The charge on the Fund would be £34,504,000, which would show a surplus of about £5½ millions. Deducting the new charge of the loan, and other small items, he made out his estimate for the coming year, as above, at £3,600,000. If the items thus covered by the "surplus" are counted in with the Ways and Means, it will be found that the estimated revenue was altogether over £91 millions.

on the exportation of printed goods, which had grown from a small charge to £308,000—a sum which showed that the necessity of encouraging this export had ceased. His other proposals were: doubling the duties on hides and skins—about the only article in the long list of our taxes on which nothing additional had been laid since 1709 and 1711; doubling the excise duty on glass; an addition of 10 per cent. to the duty on tobacco—"an article of extensive yet of luxurious rather than necessary use, and one which afforded the best criterion of its ability to bear an additional tax, namely, that the consumption of it went on progressively increasing under the present duties"; imposing the auction duty on all property put up whether sold or bought in; an addition of a penny on every single letter carried more than 20 miles from the metropolis or the provincial post offices—a necessity which he regretted; a moderate addition on the scale of several of the assessed taxes, "which had an operation similar to that of sumptuary laws," such as those on male servants, carriages, horses, dogs, and a higher duty on greyhounds and game certificates. He ended by congratulating the House that, after the country had so often seemed to be on the very point of having exhausted its resources, it still appeared practicable to provide so large a sum with so little pressure on the people and especially on the lower classes of the community.

These proposals, with the exception of the auction duty on goods bought in, were all carried, in spite of strong opposition to the leather duty—a poll tax on the feet, as Brougham called it.

Income Tax.

In the debates on the Budget nothing was said about the Income Tax, except that Lord Archibald Hamilton[1] recommended that it should be extended to Ireland, and that Newport deprecated this for the singular reason that, owing to the non-residence of the gentry of the country, the assessment might be entrusted to improper hands. The apathy of the House in regard to the tax seems evidenced by the reception which Sir Thomas Turton got in May, when he moved for an enquiry with a view to making it more equal in its operation. Admitting the justice of the

[1] Lord Archibald Hamilton, younger son of the ninth Duke of Hamilton; born 1770; educated Eton and Christ Church, Oxford; called to the bar, 1799, but did not practise; in 1802, member for Lanarkshire, which he represented till his death in 1827; in 1804, published *Thoughts on the formation of the late and present administration*, directed against Pitt and Addington; an independent Whig, never in office, constantly advocating parliamentary and other reforms; a fine character, if one may judge from his speeches and the company he kept.

principle and the necessity of the tax, his objections were the old ones: the injustice of imposing equal sums on those whose income was an annuity, and on those who had freehold property yielding the same amount; the exemption of foreigners, by which £63,000 was lost annually to the state; and the vexatious use of their unlimited powers too often made by collectors and assessors. Not a member was found to second the enquiry, and the motion fell to the ground.[1]

Bank Notes legal tender;

In currency matters, the chief feature was the stubborn persistence of the Government in the policy adopted in opposition to the Bullion Committee Report. In spring, the Gold Coin and Bank Note Amendment Bill was introduced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, its object being to continue, until three months after the commencement of the next session of Parliament, the Act of the previous session making bank notes a legal tender in certain cases and under certain amendments, and to extend the same to Ireland. Under this law, he said "the payment of bank notes into court, out of court, and in process of law, would be deemed legal payments." This, of course, gave rise to acrimonious discussion of the old question in what respects such a measure fell short of declaring Bank of England notes full legal tender, and Castlereagh did not throw much light on the subject by asserting that there was a substantial distinction between compelling acceptance of notes as a legal tender and making them legal tender into court. (As Tierney said: "What law was there which could compel any man to part with his goods or property contrary to his inclination?") The extension to Ireland was strongly opposed. The consideration which had prevented such an extension in the previous year was that, in the north of that country, there were long standing leases providing for the payment of rent in gold, and this fact remained unaltered. "Thus a tenant, now bound to pay £122 by virtue of a special contract, would be authorised by Parliament to pay only £100." All that Castlereagh—who had formerly opposed the extension—could reply was that such conditions existed only in three or four counties; that, in any case, "whatever measure the House thought fit to adopt he was sure that it must be attended with some sacrifice of individual interest"; and he enlarged on the hardship to tenants who could not procure guineas but with the utmost difficulty and by paying a discount of 25 per

—extension to Ireland.

[1] *Hansard*, xxiii. 56.

cent. for them. Before the final passing of the Bill, the Chancellor of the Exchequer carried an amendment "taking away from the landlord the right of ejectment after a tender of bank notes in payment of his rent by the tenant"—another step, if any was necessary, as was pointed out by Horner and Brougham, towards making the notes a complete legal tender.[1]

Ridicule of Vansittart's resolution

In the end of the year, the subject came up again when the continuation of the Act for another twelve months was moved, and the wording of a clause was changed to "for preventing any note or bill of the governor and company of the Bank of England, or of the governor and company of the Bank of Ireland from being received for any smaller sum than the sum therein specified." This time, the hostility was more outspoken and the ridicule thrown on Vansittart's famous resolution more unsparing. Creevey said that, when the Bullion Committee reported, the market price of gold was £4 10/-, a depreciation of 15 per cent., and the Chancellor of the Exchequer then laid down the monstrous proposition that a pound note and a shilling were equal to one pound one in gold; since that, it had been £4 14/-, a depreciation of 20 per cent.; now it was £5 5/-, a depreciation of 35 per cent. He asked if the Chancellor still believed that paper and gold were of the same value, or that law had succeeded in making them so. A friend of his, in his presence, was offered in a shop 27/2 for light guineas: was the owner of good guineas not injured when he took them to the market and lost 7/- on the sale of them? But, supposing he did not, what was he to do with the gold? If he hoarded it, it became unproductive; if he clipped it, he became subject to the penalties of the Clipping Act; if he came forward and demanded face value, the Chancellor would come down upon him with the terrors of fine and imprisonment. Who gained by this? So far as he could see, only the bank directors who had divided £6 millions in bonuses, and increased their dividend from 7 per cent. to 11 per cent.

—by Creevey,

Ponsonby was even more scathing. He expressed surprise at the conduct of the House, which, "in direct contradiction to its own Resolution, had passed the present Bill, to prevent the effect of that inequality which the Resolution of the House went to deny. The Resolution asserted that bank notes and guineas were in equal public estimation, and perfectly equivalent; but, if so, why did landlords demand payment of their rents in gold, and, if

—Ponsonby,

[1] *Hansard*, xxii. 4, 196, 495.

the pretended equivalence did exist, why pass an Act to force the landlord to receive paper? . . . Did that equivalence exist when the bank note was at what he called a depreciation of 5 per cent., and did that equivalence remain unaltered notwithstanding that the depreciation had increased to 15, 20, and even 30 per cent?" If the present scarcity of gold was due to the non-importation of bullion from America, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer said, would this apply to England alone? Would it not affect France and all Europe? But would it be asserted that French paper was circulating at 35 per cent. discount? . . . "Fire would prove the value of a guinea; when melted, it was even more valuable than before. But burn a bank note, and it produced only ashes."

—Whitbread,

Whitbread thought that both the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the House must be somewhat ashamed of first resolving that gold and paper were equal in public estimation, and then passing

—Canning,

a law to force the public to act as if they were. Canning said that the general principle of the Bill was, "without qualification, in direct opposition to all those long-established maxims of political economy, the soundness of which, until the last few years, no man in the House or in the country had ventured to question," and reminded the House of Colbert's saying that, if a wall of brass were built round a country, the precious metals would find some chink through which to escape, if it were the interest of any of the community that they should do so.

—Huskisson.

Huskisson said that, last year, the Treasury had sent out a quantity of bank notes to Canada to pay the army and establishment in that country; the Canadians, not being liable to any penalty for the act, at once set their own estimation on the notes, and disposed of them at a discount of about 30 per cent. He would ask if these notes, on being returned to this country, by the operation of the Bill before them would be immediately restored to par.

Vansittart, however, was unmoved. In spite of everything, he said that "the paper of the Bank of England was, for all legal purposes, equivalent to coin"—melting down and exporting being both, of course, illegal—and the Bill was passed.[1]

Metropolitan Police.

In 1812, we have the beginnings of the movement for a Metropolitan Police. In 1805, Edinburgh had obtained an Act,

[1] *Hansard*, xxiv. 224, 279. On 11th December, Whitbread, "having failed to make the Chancellor of the Exchequer ashamed of the third Resolution," moved that the resolution be rescinded; *ibid.* 278.

applying to the whole city, and providing, *inter alia*, for the establishment of a more regular police for apprehending vagrants, suppressing begging, removing nuisances, lighting and cleansing the streets.[1] Glasgow already had a police which was "confessedly excellent"—although one may doubt if it would satisfy modern requirements.[2] But, up till now, the only thing corresponding to police, outside the small force of the Bow Street Runners, was the Parish Watch.

Towards the end of the previous year, there had been several peculiarly horrible murders in the Metropolis, and, in consequence of the general feeling of insecurity and dissatisfaction with existing arrangements, a Committee was asked for in January by the Government, to "enquire into the state of the Nightly Watch of the Metropolis and the Parishes adjacent."[3] Up till 1774, the Home Secretary explained, "each parish provided for itself." In that year, Parliament passed an Act applying to fifteen of the most populous parishes, putting the Watch under directors and trustees, with power of assessing the rates upon each parish. Such an arrangement was clearly insufficient now considering the enormous increase of the Metropolis. Moreover, the provisions of the Act were evaded and neglected: for instance, none but able-bodied men were to be appointed to the Watch, but, in many cases, those who were too old to earn their bread were appointed, to prevent them becoming a burden on the parish. For his part, he would rather have enforced the present system by adequate provisions than have recourse to any new Act; but where, as in the parish of St. Pancras, there were seven districts, each district under its own local Acts, there was nothing but confusion.

Romilly's views.

Romilly was surprised at the confined terms of the motion, and asked for a more extended remit, viz. to enquire into the causes of the alarming increase of felonies and crimes in London and Westminster within the last five or six years and during a

[1] An abstract of the Act is given in the *Scots Magazine*, 1805, 377.

[2] The watchmen attached themselves to stations throughout the city. On any tumult arising, the nearest watchman rang his bell; this was heard at the next station, where the watchman rang his bell to signal to another station, and so on. Presently, police officers from every quarter poured on to the scene, in sufficient number to overthrow any body of rioters. By this means the whole city was kept under the eye of the police, and, "from this brief statement," says the *Scots Magazine* of 1817 complacently, "it must be evident that the Glasgow system affords the inhabitants every degree of security which a police could afford."

[3] *Hansard*, xxi. 196.

time of war, "for it was a received maxim that fewer offences were committed in a period of war than in a period of peace, seeing that many bold and daring characters were embarked in the service of their country, and rendered useful against her enemies instead of becoming dangerous at home." One of the causes, he affirmed, was the system of punishment—above all, promiscuous imprisonment in the hulks. Another was the rewards continually offered, which made the police officers delay capture till the reward was high enough. A third was the depravation of morals by the encouragement of lotteries. As to the necessity of something being done, he had never heard any instances of such boundless confidence and such progressive insolence in guilt, as had been recently manifested in the British metropolis.

Lord Cochrane, with some ingenuity, traced the evil complained of to the Pension List, "by which individuals of the higher classes partook of the public money without performing any public service"; and Burdett, not to be outdone, said that, "if the morals of the higher classes were depraved, the general morals would be depraved also." But Burdett was happy to find that no advantage would be taken of the alarm of the public mind to extend the police of the Metropolis, and proposed to revive the old law of Edward I., by which every householder was compelled to take his turn in the watch.

Report of Committee.

The Committee was appointed, Burdett and Cochrane being among its members; a Report was presented,[1] containing much curious historical matter, but little of the lurid evidence brought out by the subsequent Reports of 1816; and a Bill was brought in framed on its suggestions. But objections were made to the expense, and to the new and what were then considered to be the extraordinary powers created, and the matter went to sleep again.

Penitentiary Houses.

During the session, Romilly made further progress in his crusade. In January, leave was given to bring in a Bill for the erection of a Penitentiary House for the confinement of offenders, male and female, who had received sentence of transportation within the city of London and county of Middlesex; but, in February, the expediency of the movement was again remitted for consideration to a Committee, with an instruction to enquire into

Transportation.

the effects produced by transportation to Botany Bay. The Committee, however, found that they would not have time to

[1] The Report is given in *Hansard*, xxii. Append. lxv.

examine into this, and Romilly then obtained a special committee to enquire into the nature of the punishment and the effects produced by such transportation. The Report of this Committee was ordered to be printed 10th July. In February, too, he obtained leave to bring in a Bill to repeal the 39 Eliz. which constituted it a capital offence in soldiers and sailors found begging in the streets without a pass from a magistrate or their commanding officer, and the Bill passed in March.[1]

Committee on transportation.

Begging.

Romilly had a hand also in a measure, passed during this year, for preventing some of the abuses connected with public charities. In 1811, Lockhart had got leave to introduce a Charitable Donations Bill, for registering and securing of charitable donations for the benefit of poor persons in England. Its purpose was to check the notorious abuses connected with the administration of many charities, by giving these charities the publicity of registration. Wilberforce then seconded, but Romilly, while professing himself a warm friend of the object, doubted if the Bill would do much good. The real evil, he said, was the expense of the remedy provided by law, which deterred men from having recourse to it. The Bill went no further in 1811, but, meantime, Lockhart took counsel with Romilly, and in January brought in a Bill "for the Registry of Charitable Donations, and providing a more summary remedy for the Correction of Abuses therein," by petition to the Lord Chancellor, or the Master of the Rolls, or the Barons of the Exchequer. Subsequently, the Bill was divided into two, one for registering and securing of charitable donations, the other for affording a summary remedy in cases of abuses of trusts (52 Geo. III. 102, 101).[2]

Charitable Donations Bill.

The subject of Flogging in the Army was brought up, during the passing of the Mutiny Bill, by Burdett. The practice was condemned by Romilly among others; but the support on the whole was so small, that Palmerston, now Secretary at War, could say, at the end, that it was avowed, on all sides of the House, with scarcely any exceptions, that the abolition of flogging was quite impracticable. The matter again came up in a special debate on Corporal Punishment in the Army. But, although the motion in this case was the very moderate one of asking for returns of the number of such punishments inflicted in the army,

Flogging.

[1] *Hansard*, xxi. 235, 603, 701, 703, 761; Romilly, *Diary*, iii. 19.

[2] *Hansard*, xix. 515; xxi. 108; xxii. 1119. Romilly, *Diary*, ii. 385; iii. 20.

militia, and local militia for seven years back, specifying the offences and the number of lashes, it got only 17 votes against 49.[1]

Iron trade.

We get some interesting information as to the progress of the Iron Trade in a petition from the family of Henry Cort, of Gosport, who represented themselves as "not undeserving of some parliamentary remuneration." Cort was the inventor of the process of making iron in a reverbatory furnace heated by common pit coal, and of the manufacture of bars, bolts, etc., by passing the iron at a welding heat through rollers instead of working it under forge hammers. These patent methods, by which, said the petition, about 250,000 tons of wrought iron were manufactured, and about 150,000 tons of them rolled into bars, were now exclusively and universally adopted throughout Great Britain. Meanwhile the patents taken out in 1783 and 1784 had expired, and Cort was wholly deprived of the means of participating in the benefits of his discoveries.[2] No grant seems to have been made.

Grant to Crompton.

A similar request was made by Samuel Crompton, the inventor of "the machine now called a mule," by which, he claimed, the cotton manufacture had been extended to more than double the amount. Crompton had been induced, he said, at the solicitation of a great number of very respectable merchants and manufacturers, to give his discovery to the public, and had consequently received no adequate reward for it. The petition was referred to a committee, which subsequently recommended that a sum not exceeding £5,000 should be granted to Crompton as a remuneration for his invention.[3]

Sea water baths.

A Bill was brought in for the erection of Sea Water Baths in the vicinity of the Metropolis. Petitions in its favour were presented from the Royal College of Physicians, and from the cities of London and Westminster. Not a single argument was presented against it except that "some of the landed proprietors in Essex either were against it or at least remained neutral," and it was found that, of 209 persons stated to be interested in opposing its progress, only 19 actually dissented. On the second reading, however, it was thrown out by 29 to 17.[4]

The "Comet."

In December, Mackintosh, writing of how he had spent the summer, says: "We had a singular navigation of two miles on the

[1] *Hansard*, xxi. 1263; xxii. 374.
[2] *Ibid.* xxi. 329.
[3] *Hansard*, xxi. 1173; xxiii. 747.
[4] *Ibid.* xxii. 251.

firth of Clyde in a steam boat, the first vessel navigated on that principle on the eastern side of the Atlantic."[1] This was Henry Bell's *Comet*, described as "a passage boat of about 40 feet keel and 10¾ feet beam, having a steam engine of 3 horse power." It conveyed passengers from Glasgow to Greenock, a distance of 26 miles, in four hours—sometimes, indeed, in less than three and a half. At first, it appears, "owing to the novelty and apparent danger of the conveyance," the number of passengers was so very small that it hardly paid its expenses. But, in the next year, we find it so popular that four coaches between these two places had been discontinued.[2] By 1815, six steamers were plying on the river—"one of the boats alone has been known to carry 247 at a time."[3]

[1] *Life*, ii. 252. [2] *Scots Magazine*, 1813, 475.

[3] *Tilloch's Philosophical Magazine* of year.

# CHAPTER XIX

## 1813. THE ALLIANCE OF EUROPE

New alliances.

ONCE the tide had turned against the "ruler of France," as England still persisted in calling him, it ran full and fast. In the early part of the year, the victorious Russians swept over North Germany. In February, Prussia rushed to arms,[1] and made alliance with them. In March, Sweden entered into treaty with the court of London; Hamburg freed itself from the yoke; the allies formally decreed the abolition of "the so-called Continental System"; and Germany again was opened to British commerce. In England now there was no talk of peace. The nation for once was unanimous that the hour and the chance had come. The unprecedented sums asked for subsidies and other military purposes were voted with scarcely a dissentient voice. The armaments of Great Britain rose to their maximum, and the national expenditure of the year touched £109,000,000, the highest point yet reached—£74 millions raised by taxation and £35 millions by loans.[2]

Great Britain and Russia signed a convention in June, at "a period when Providence had manifestly favoured their arms," to "adjust the nature and extent of the pecuniary succours, and the assistance which the two crowns should mutually afford to each other during the war." Russia undertook to employ 160,000 effective troops of every description, exclusive of fortress

[1] It was then that Arndt wrote the lyric of the German faith, "*Was ist der Deutschen Vaterland?*"

[2] Table of Public Income, Expenditure, etc., for year ending 5th January, 1814, in *Annual Register* for 1814, p. 365, and *Hansard*, xxviii. Append. i. The Ordinary Revenue (permanent and annual duties), consisting of Customs, Excise, Stamps, Land and Assessed Taxes, Post Office, etc., amounted to over £41 millions net; the War Taxes (Customs, Excise and Property Tax) to £24 millions; and other extraordinary resources, to £9 millions.

garrisons, and England agreed to place at the disposal of Russia, for the service of the year 1813, £1,333,334, and to take upon herself the maintenance of the Russian fleet and crews in the ports of Great Britain—an expense estimated at half a million. A similar convention was signed on the same date between Great Britain and Prussia, by which Prussia engaged to maintain in the field an army of 80,000 men, exclusive of fortress garrisons, and Great Britain, to place at the disposal of Prussia, for 1813, £66,666, and to co-operate with her navy, wherever practicable, "in aid of the common cause."

**Federative Paper.**

In these two conventions, in order to supply the deficiency of specie, the want of which was very severely felt in the circulation of the continent, the three contracting powers agreed to issue notes, payable to bearer, for the expenses of the war and the maintenance of arms in activity, under the name of Federative Paper, not to exceed a total sum of £5 millions. For this the three parties became conjointly guarantors in the proportion of three-sixths by Great Britain, two-sixths by Russia, and one-sixth by Prussia; and two-thirds and one-third of the issue were placed at the disposal of Russia and Prussia respectively, to be reimbursed six months after the conclusion of a definitive peace. These Federative Notes, or Bills of Credit—of which no bill was to be of lower denomination than 100 Prussian thalers, of the denomination and weight of 1764 (3/4)—did not bear interest, but could be funded, on the conclusion of peace, at general offices in certain North German towns, at 6 per cent. (*i.e.* converted into a 6 per cent. stock, the registry of which should be kept in the same manner as the British National Debt).[1]

**Napoleon takes the field again.**

In April, however, the French conscription of 1814 was anticipated; 350,000 men were put at the disposal of the Government; universal service was enforced by abolishing the permission of subsidies; and Napoleon took the field again with 200,000 men—most of them, rather, boys under twenty—and, to the astonishment of Europe, drove back the allies in a series of hard-fought battles, and re-entered Dresden and Berlin. Warned, perhaps, by the difficulty he had experienced, for the first time, of doing more than barely win battles, Napoleon proposed an armistice for the negotiation of a peace. It is suggestive of his state of mind that he seemed disinclined to take any serious step towards

[1] A *fac-simile* of one of these Bills is given in the *Scots Magazine*, 1813, p. 888. *Annual Register*, State Papers, 354 *seq.*

coming to terms. But, before the armistice ended, news came that changed the situation.

Vittoria.

Since the middle of the past November, Wellington had been reorganising the Spanish army now under his command, and, in May, whenever the rains ceased and the roads became practicable, he bade adieu to Portugal, and led some 90,000 British, Portuguese, and Spanish, to drive the French out of Spain. At last, the allies in the Peninsula had been receiving hearty support both in men and money.[1] The 21st June saw the greatest battle of the war—at Vittoria a victory "as decisive in itself, and as gigantic in its results, as any which had graced the military annals of England"—when the French armies under Jourdan and Joseph were completely routed, with the loss of all their artillery, ammunition, stores, baggage, treasure-chests, and the booty of five years, and all Spain south of the Ebro was cleared of its French invaders.

Austria declares war against Napoleon.

It was this news that decided Austria. Since December, the Emperor Francis had been trying to induce his son-in-law towards peace; always met by Napoleon's answer that he would listen to no proposal which violated "the integrity of the French empire in the French sense of the word"—"as if it were not possible to declare in terms sufficiently distinct his resolution not to make to the repose of the world even one single nominal sacrifice."[2] Now, "called by the urgent necessity of self-preservation, by an anxiety for the fate of contiguous states, inseparable from his own, and by the danger of beholding the entire social system of Europe a prey to a lawless and absolute power," the Emperor declared that there was no remedy but the recourse to arms, and, on 12th August, declared war.[3]

Wellington invades France.

Thereafter events moved fast. The appointment of Soult as Commander-in-chief of the French armies in Spain was followed

[1] As late as 12th March, Wellesley had delivered a dramatic speech in the House, asking for a Committee to examine into the circumstances and result of the last campaign in Spain, saying that, after Salamanca, his brother's advance had been changed into a "plain and real retreat, rendered necessary by the overwhelming and increasing pressure of the enemy," and ascribing it all to the insufficiency of men afforded him—15,000 more troops would have made all the difference between retreat and complete victory. But, on the occasion of the Vote of Thanks for Vittoria, Wellesley acknowledged that Wellington's exertions for the past six months had been well seconded by the Government at home (*Hansard*, xxv. 24; xxvi. 1123).

[2] Manifesto of Austria on declaring war, *Annual Register*, 428.

[3] *Ibid.* 422.

by his defeat at Pamplona, and by the taking of Saint Sebastian on 31st August, with its horrible carnage and subsequent outrage. By the 8th of October, Wellington, with 80,000 men, at the order of the Government crossed the shifting sands of the Bidassoa, and invaded France. Thus ended the great diversion which, for six years, had kept some 200,000 of Napoleon's veterans from assisting him in Central Europe.

The cockpit of Europe.

In the heart of the continent, the last chapter was opening. The end of August saw Napoleon's last great victory, at Dresden, over the main body of the allies, but, in the same week, his generals sustained three great defeats—Macdonald at Katzbach in Silesia, Oudinot at Gross-beeren, and Vandamme, who capitulated with 10,000 men at Culm. In the middle of October, was fought the tremendous three days' Battle of the Nations at Leipsic.

The record of victories.

When Parliament reassembled on 4th November, the changed situation was reflected in the jubilation of the Regent's Speech. Seldom, indeed, has a Speech from the Throne had to recount a more splendid record of victories. It spoke of Vittoria, followed by the advance of the allied forces to the Pyrenees, by the repulse of the enemy in every attempt to regain the ground he had been compelled to abandon, by the reduction of Saint Sebastian, and, finally, by the establishment of the allied army on the frontier of Spain; of the complete frustration of the enemy's attempt at the heart of Austrian and Prussian territory; of the splendid victories in Saxony; and expressed "the decided conviction, which now happily prevailed throughout so large a part of Europe, that the war in which the allied powers were engaged against the Ruler of France was a war of necessity."[1]

Grenville's congratulations.

It is pleasant to note, too, that for the moment party spirit disappeared in a great deep feeling of thankfulness. Grenville, in a glowing speech, offered to Parliament his warm congratulations upon the success which had attended the efforts of the country. "Upon this grand question all party conflicts must be swallowed up and lost; it is the cause of no party, of no set of individuals, but of the whole nation, joined in sentiment and in action to effect a great and glorious purpose. . . . My lords, we may triumphantly ask, is this the peculiar and separate cause of Great Britain? No. Is this a contest merely respecting commercial prosperity and the comparatively inferior concerns of

[1] *Hansard*, xxvi. 1.

trade? No. We fight for that for which we have always professed that we fought; we arm for that for which we always boasted that we armed; we have maintained the contest for those objects for which we always declared that we maintained it;—namely, as the only possible mode of asserting the independence of other states, and, through their independence, of supporting our own. The period has now arrived when all Europe, with one voice, assents to the truth of our assertion; and though it be indeed late, yet, with the blessing of Heaven, it will not be too late for the full accomplishment of our great and benevolent design." . . . The time had come, he said, when the walls of a British Parliament might again re-echo a sound formerly held sacred in this country—the old-fashioned term now almost forgotten—of a Balance of Power in Europe—the only legitimate object of foreign policy.[1]

Collapse of Napoleon's Empire.

The closing months of the year saw the same rapid march of events. After the decisive struggle at Leipsic, the French were expelled from Holland, and that country now proclaimed its independence under the Prince of Orange. Switzerland got back her old constitution. Hanover was recovered to the electorate. The Confederation of the Rhine was dissolved.

France without an ally.

On 9th November, Napoleon was in Paris again, boasting of bringing back 100,000 of his army. Early in the month, the allies offered him peace, on the basis of France returning to her "natural boundaries" or "ancient limits." He temporised, and, a fortnight later, accepted the terms which the allies had by that time withdrawn. Before the end of the year, Denmark, his last remaining friend, made peace with England and Sweden; and, by Christmas Day, Napoleon found himself, not only without an ally in Europe, but with all his former allies, except Denmark, arrayed against him. On New Year's Eve, Blucher crossed the Rhine at Coblenz and invaded France.

American War.

Meanwhile, in the other contest with America, both parties were becoming more exasperated, and the principles advanced on either side more irreconcilable. On land, the honours of war were divided. At sea, British sailors had now become aware of the fighting quality of their kinsmen, and the naval warfare of 1813 was less rich in individual encounters than that of 1812. A new feature of the war was the appearance of American privateers in British waters—even in the Channel—using French

[1] *Hansard*, xxvii. 11.

ports as base. On the whole, the fortunes of war inclined to the side of our enemies. But this success was a poor compensation for the almost complete cessation of their foreign trade. It was some justification of the obnoxious Right of Search that thirty-two British deserters were found on board the captured *Chesapeake*.[1]

The Regent's Speech, however, spoke in guarded and even conciliatory terms of the new war. "It must be a matter of deep regret to find an additional enemy in the Government of a country whose real interest in the issue of this great contest must be the same as our own. It is known to the world that this country was not the aggressor in this war." But, it concluded, "I have not hitherto seen any disposition on the part of the Government of the United States to close it."

The parliamentary records of the early part of the year are mainly occupied with two matters, the East India Company's Charter and the Roman Catholic claims.

East India Company's monopoly curtailed.

After a huge amount of discussion both within and without the House, and the presentation of innumerable petitions—most of them against the renewal—which amply testified to the importance now attached to the trade with India, the Charter was renewed, but with considerable restrictions on its former monopoly. Henceforth the territorial and commercial accounts were to be kept separate. Generally speaking, the administrative privileges were continued, but British subjects were now allowed to trade to India and the ports formerly within the Company's limits, with one exception—the Company's exclusive right of trading to China, and of importing tea from any place whatsoever, was continued. And the important alteration was made that ships in private trade to the Company's limits should clear out from or import into only certain ports in the United Kingdom declared fit for the purpose.[2] "The changes introduced," said the *Annual Register*, "will render the present year an era in the history of British commerce."[3]

In pursuance of the decision arrived at in the previous session,

[1] Brodrick, *Political History of England* (1801-1837), 138, 142.

[2] The far-reaching importance of this change is suggested by a petition presented on 19th March from the various London operatives connected with the building and equipment of ships and from freeholders in Deptford, praying that the trade to India might be confined to the port of London. *Hansard*, xxv. 200.

[3] *Annual Register*, p. 103. An abstract of the Bill is given on p. 315.

Roman Catholic claims.

when the House of Commons, by two to one, agreed to take into serious consideration the Roman Catholic Claims, Grattan, in February, moved for a Committee of the House. The great debate lasted over four days; all the arguments, for and against, were repeated and restated. In the end, the Committee was granted by a majority of 40, and the Resolution carried, that it was "highly advisable to provide for the removal of the civil and military disqualifications under which His Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects now labour, with such exceptions and under such regulations as may be found necessary for preserving unalterably the Protestant succession to the Crown."[1] The Bill embodying this reached the committee stage, when the Speaker secured the deletion of the clause empowering Roman Catholics to sit and vote in either House of Parliament. As this was considered by its friends to render the measure useless, the Bill was abandoned.[2] The *Annual Register* notes with satisfaction that, although the opposition to the Catholic claims came from the greater part of the Protestant population, and much zeal and activity were displayed in promoting these petitions, yet "the whole was conducted with perfect order and quiet, unattended with any riotous disposition toward the persons or worship of the Catholics; affording a demonstration that the question was become in the public mind rather one of political expediency than of religious controversy. Security to the Church establishment against, not the Catholics only, but all those subjected to the operation of the test laws, was obviously the consideration which actuated the great body of the petitioners."[3]

Sinecures.

The Sinecure Offices Bill—the same Bill as had been rejected by the Lords in 1812—again passed the Commons. As Bankes, who introduced it, explained, it was a wholly prospective measure

[1] The real advance in public opinion, marked by the appointment of the Committee, is seen in one of Horner's letters to Hallam: "When we recollect the diffident language that we held about the Catholic cause before the debate came on, the advantages secured by the late vote seem immense. . . . What an illustration of the benefits of continued discussion, through Parliament and the press, where the great interests of justice and liberty are the subject of controversy; and what a pride it is for England to have such a controversy leading slowly but surely to the truth, and to one of the most signal ameliorations of Government in favour of civil freedom, during the darkness and terror in which the rest of the world is involved" (*Memoirs*, ii. 140).

[2] *Hansard*, xxiv. 747, 849, 879, 985, 1194; xxv. 1107; xxvi. 1, 111, 312.

[3] *Annual Register*, 99.

involving no injury to vested interests. Its essence was the gradual abolition of offices to which no duty attached as they fell vacant, and the establishment instead of a permanent and certain fund for those meritorious servants of the public who otherwise might have derived reward from such sinecures. The Bill, moved by Earl Grosvenor, was, however, negatived in the Lords without a division.[1]

New Plan of Finance.

It had been acknowledged for some time now that the enormous pressure on the income of the year would necessitate new financial measures; and, in preparation for the Budget, Vansittart, encouraged, he said, by the changed state of affairs within the last six months, which had "placed our public credit and our national security on a basis of solidity," introduced, on 3rd March, a New Plan of Finance, the most important feature of which was the breaking in on the sanctity of the Sinking Fund. This Fund, he showed, had accomplished its primary purpose; it had already redeemed the entire debt as it existed at the time of its establishment in 1786, namely, £240,000,000. But the rapid accumulation of a Sinking Fund at compound interest presented certain dangers and was of doubtful expediency. When it should roll up to 30 or 40 millions, its sudden reduction would have a disastrous effect, and it was questionable if the present generation should bear so heavy a share of the common burden. His Resolutions,[2] which are much too complicated to be summarised here, amounted to this. He proposed, as regarded new loans, that there should be an increased sinking fund on that part of the loan of every year which exceeded the amount of the Sinking Fund already existing at the time, namely, one-half of the interest of such excess of the loan; while, as regarded the existing debt, he proposed the repeal of so much of the Sinking Fund of 1802 as directed that the whole Fund then existing should continue to accumulate at compound interest till the total redemption of the whole funded debt then remaining unredeemed.

The immediate result of this modification of the Sinking Fund would be "equal to a subsidy of above a hundred millions"; so that, for four years to come, new taxation would be largely

[1] *Hansard*, xxiv. 506; xxvi. 220.

[2] The resolutions are given in full in *Hansard*, xxiv. 1091, and in the *Annual Register*, 43.

unnecessary, and, at the same time, the final extinction of the debt would be materially accelerated.[1]

Huskisson, hinting that the escape from new taxes for four years was "an irresistible bait," likely to have an important effect on the popular judgment, considered the whole scheme an entire and dangerous deviation from Pitt's system and a breach of faith with the public creditor: Baring and Tierney[2] followed, and opposed the resolutions at great length. But, in the end, the New Plan passed into law.[3]

New permanent taxes.

While the discussion was proceeding, Vansittart, on 31st March,[4] indicated the sums which would be necessary to carry out the new proposal, namely, £870,000 to supply the drain on the Sinking Fund, besides £100,000 to replace the auction duty abandoned in the previous year. The latter would be met by another additional duty of 2d. per lb. on tobacco. For the former, he proposed a general increase of 25 per cent. in the customs duties, with certain exceptions, viz. tea, sugar, wine, raw silk, and cotton wool. No such general augmentation had occurred since 1804. He thought it would be comparatively little felt, as, in the new circumstances, the articles, even with the increased tax, would be cheaper to the consumer than they had been in the past year. In addition, there would be a slight increase of the excise on French wines—an article of luxury entirely confined to the higher classes—of 13d. per bottle. If such wines were checked in the importation, or wholly shut out, he would consider it a national advantage.

This was the scheme for the permanent taxes. Under the

[1] Tierney's account of this in 1819 was as follows:—"When the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in 1813, took £5½ millions from the Sinking Fund, he assured the House that, if his plan were only allowed to operate for ten years, it would effect so great a reduction of the public debt that the fall of interest, in consequence of that reduction, would be so very rapid that God only knew what would happen to this devoted country. The only danger which we had to apprehend would arise from too rapid an accumulation of the Sinking Fund" (*Hansard*, xl. 929).

[2] One who reads *Hansard* carefully, and notices the distinguished appearances of Tierney in all the debates of importance, cannot but wonder that his name has been almost forgotten. He was born 1761, the son of a wealthy merchant; educated Eton and Cambridge; called to the bar but did not practise; entered Parliament first for Colchester, 1789; a constant and vigorous opponent of Pitt—with whom he fought a duel in 1798—but disliked by Fox; Treasurer of the Navy in Addington's administration; President of the Board of Control in the brief ministry of All the Talents; a formidable and sarcastic debater; held office for three years only in his whole life.

[3] *Hansard*, xxiv. 1078; xxv. 284, 537, 635, 765. [4] *Ibid.* xxv. 473.

head of war taxes, he proposed to double the duty on the importation of all goods which were the manufacture of the French empire and of all countries dependent on France. It was true that trade licenses to France and her dependencies were not now granted, but it might be politic to renew them. The present export duties he would increase by one-half per cent.—no material increase, as "the trade about to open would in all probability be so great." He would levy, besides, 1d. per lb. on the exportation of foreign hides, "which would operate very advantageously on our leather manufactures in foreign markets." The last item was one he was induced to adopt on political as well as on financial principles—"1½d. per lb. on all American cotton imported in British ships, and 6d. in foreign bottoms." The object of this was to give sufficient encouragement to the growing of fine cotton in the East Indies, which might take the place of Sea Island cotton imported from America. This tax would raise the price on the consumer, but it would hardly be felt, while, with regard to the export trade, he thought there was no reason to apprehend any rivalry. The whole consumption of cotton, in our manufactures, he said, was 80 million lbs., of which over 30 millions came from America; the deficiency, even if none were to come from America, would be made up from the West Indies and Brazil. New war taxes.

The opposition to the cotton duty found expression at once. Baring said that, if American cotton came in at all, it must come in neutral ships, and would thus pay a total duty of 9d., while the prime cost in America was about 4d. This would ensure competition both in America and on the continent. Besides, India did not produce the cotton wanted here. Sea Island cotton was selling at 20d.; the best East Indian cotton did not bring half that price. Sir Robert Peel strongly deprecated the "absurd measure." Now that the favourable moment had come, were we to burden our £18 millions of cotton exports? If, on the contrary, the raw material were to be admitted free, the produce from the export of manufactured goods would be three times that of the duty now proposed. With regard to the encouragement of the East Indies, he asked if we were always to be at war with America, and if the Indians would wear our manufactures in return. Others followed in the same strain, Newport and Ponsonby deprecating a measure which would tend to widen the breach with America. The tax met with no support whatever; Cotton duty.

it was deferred to a future discussion; and, in deference to the many petitions presented against it, was ultimately abandoned.[1]

Budget.

In consequence of these preliminaries, the Budget was not brought in till 11th June.[2] As might be expected, it showed a large increase in naval and military expenditure, in the extraordinaries, and in the vote of credit; but the Chancellor of the Exchequer was sure that, in the present state of Europe, the House would feel the necessity of arming the Government with sufficient means to enable them to take advantage of the favourable military and political circumstances which might present themselves. The total Supply granted for the United Kingdom was £77,337,000; deducting the Irish proportion of £8,651,000, the Supply on account of Great Britain was £68,686,000. The chief items were:

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|---|---|
| Navy | £20,575,000 |
| Army | 18,926,000 |
| Extraordinaries | 9,700,000 |
| Unprovided extraordinaries last year | 4,663,000 |
| Ordnance | 3,101,000 |
| Miscellaneous | 2,500,000 |
| Vote of Credit | 6,200,000 |
| Sicily | 400,000 |
| Portugal | 2,000,000 |
| India Company | 2,000,000 |
| Vote of credit, 1812 | 3,000,000 |

Of the Ways and Means, the items were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Annual duties | £3,000,000 |
| Surplus of Consolidated Fund[3] | 500,000 |
| War taxes | 21,000,000 |
| Lottery | 200,000 |
| Exchequer Bills funded | 15,775,000 |
| Debentures | 799,300 |
| Vote of Credit | 6,000,000 |
| Naval stores | 531,000 |
| Loan | 21,000,000 |

[1] *Hansard*, xxv. 473. In a petition from Paisley against the cotton duty, we learn that fine and fancy muslins were nowhere else manufactured in similar perfection, or to the same extent, as in Paisley (*Hansard*, xxvi. 249).

[2] *Hansard*, xxvi. 574.

[3] This low estimate was due to the deficiency in the past year's revenue of £1½ millions—mostly in malt and excise, arising from diminished consumption in a year of deep depression—which, with additional charges laid on the fund last session, had occasioned a total deficit of £3,281,000 as compared with the estimate: this deficit had, of course, to be covered from the revenue of the coming year. In the Budget statement, he continued the practice of giving a detailed estimate of the various items of revenue and charge of the Consolidated Fund.

Illicit distillation in Ireland.

The continuance, in spite of all measures taken, of illicit distilling in Ireland, called forth the recourse to a very old remedy. A Bill was brought in, and supported by nearly the whole of the representatives of Ireland, for more effectually preventing illicit distillation in that country by making the vicinage (all the inhabitants of the town-lands or parish) responsible for a proportion of any fines levied upon that district for an illegal still. Wellesley-Pole[1] opposed the Bill, "with that warmth which distinguished his speeches on this subject, and, indeed, on almost every other." He himself had got such an Act repealed, amid universal applause, when he came into office. It had led to all kinds of vice, perjury, fraud, collusion, theft, and to every species of wickedness, crime, enormity, iniquity, and abomination. Whole parishes had been frequently depopulated because the natives were unable to pay the enormous fines levied upon them. Newport,[2] on the other hand, pointed out that the law making the vicinage responsible for offences committed within it was as old as Alfred, and the Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer maintained that it was the only way to put down the evil. Wellesley-Pole got almost no support, and the Bill was passed.[3]

Irish Budget.

In bringing in the Irish Budget to raise £16½ millions, the Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer had the unpleasant task of providing for a demand far beyond that of former years, and of making up the deficiencies of a year of unexampled expenditure. The feeling was gathering strength that Ireland was not rich enough to pay her share of the war expenses. At the Union, when the expenditure of the empire was but £25 millions, she might have been able to pay the two-seventeenths, but, to pay the same proportion of £72 millions, seemed beyond her strength. Meanwhile, the most interesting thing connected with the new Budget was the cutting down of the proposed additional malt tax, from 5/- a barrel to 3/-, in the interests of beer and temperance, and the imposition of an additional 6d. per gallon on spirits.[4]

Depreciation of notes.

Apart from some discussion regarding the silver local tokens and the copper coinage, the subject of the Bank Restriction

[1] William Wellesley-Pole was brother of the Duke of Wellington, and subsequently (1842) Earl of Mornington. He succeeded Wellington in 1809 as Chief Secretary for Ireland, but resigned the office in 1812.

[2] Sir John Newport; a staunch Whig; Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer under the Grenville ministry of 1806; a man of considerable ability and great industry, but "lacking in judgment."

[3] *Hansard*, xxvi. 701. [4] *Ibid.* 253, 580.

did not come up this session except in the shape of a resolution moved by Lauderdale, as he said, "to keep alive the attention of the House and of the public to the state of the currency"—the state of the paper "depreciated in that proportion in which it was pretended that gold had risen in value, or at the rate of 35 per cent."[1] Liverpool took the old ground, that there was no proof whatever of any such depreciation; that there never had been a paper price and a gold price, etc., and the previous question was carried without a division.[2]

Local Tokens.

From a short debate on the "Local Tokens Bill," one gathers that £1,700,000 of Bank tokens had been issued; that a time limit was placed on their circulation; and that, "such was the improved state of the currency that they might be dispensed with" sooner than the time limit. A question was put whether the Chancellor had any plan for "keeping his new tokens, when issued, in circulation"—the assertion being made that those of the Bank were largely melted down. On the other hand, Sir Robert Peel spoke of the local tokens as "so inferior to the coin of the realm that they were limited in circulation."[3]

Agriculture.

In the first half of the year, the price of wheat remained very high. It was 122/8 in March, and no lower than 112/- in August. But the end of the year saw a wonderful harvest—the greatest he had ever known, said an expert before the Agricultural Committee in 1821. The crop over the whole of the island was

A wonderful harvest.

abundant in quantity and excellent in quality; wheat everywhere above an average, barley at any rate not below an average, oats an abundant return, peas and beans good, potatoes fully equal to an average and everywhere of good quality. Cattle were in great demand at high prices; sheep prices were better than in the previous year. Wheat fell rapidly, till, in December, it was 73/6, the greater quantity of disposable produce, however, amply compensating for the reduced price. The quartern loaf, which, from January to July, was 18½d., now fell below the shilling; bread had not been so cheap since May of 1808. The prohibition of the making of starch, etc, and of the distillation of spirits from

[1] In his speech Lauderdale was understood—in fact, was reported—as having said that the precious metals, from their nature, could not rise in value, and was severely criticised on that assumption. It turned out, however, that what he did say was that "the metals could not rise much in any particular country above their value in other countries" (*Hansard*, xxvi. 1175, 1184).

[2] *Hansard*, xxvi. 1175. [3] *Ibid.* xxiv. 508.

grain was removed. The Board of Agriculture average for the year was 109/9. The importation of wheat and wheat flour was 559,000 quarters.

In the midst of all this prosperity, the bad effect of the Corn Law Committee's Report and of Parnell's resolutions—treated of in next chapter—is seen in the remark of the *Farmer's Magazine* in November: "There is reason to fear that one or two seasons of uncommon cheapness may be followed by a diminution of production, and a renewed dependence on foreign supplies"—possibly the first time it had been suggested that the result of one fine harvest in five would be a curtailment of the acreage sown. "Without *universal ruin*," said a correspondent, "the price of *corn must be kept up*."[1]

Industry.

Of the condition of industry generally in 1813, we have not much information, except scattered statements that manufactures were flourishing, and that great things were expected now that so many markets were open. There are no records of the imports and exports: very unfortunately, the London Custom House was burned down in February of the next year, and with it was lost not only an untold amount of property, but the accounts of the year and many valuable records relating to the commerce of past centuries.[2]

Revival of trade.

The outrage and disturbance of the preceding year was succeeded by a remarkable state of tranquillity[3]—no doubt due, partly, to the severe measures taken in the disturbed districts, but much more to the turn of the industrial tide. We are told that there was a greatly increased demand for manufactures, and that wages rose to their old level.

Romilly's crusade.

In February, Romilly reintroduced that one of his three Bills, rejected by the Lords in 1811, which seemed to be considered least objectionable, proposing to repeal the Act of King William which rendered it a capital offence to steal property to the amount of five shillings privately in a shop, warehouse, or stable. His principle was, as before stated—"the inexpediency of penal laws

[1] Pp. 482, 515.

[2] This was the second Custom House, the first being built in 1559 and also burned down in 1718.

[3] "Few years," says the *Annual Register*, p. 98, "have passed in which more internal public tranquillity has been enjoyed by the people of these islands than the present." A largely signed petition from Nottingham in April, however, tells us that, in one parish of 27,000 persons, one-third of them were in receipt of poor relief, and that the rates were 25/- in the pound (*Hansard*, xxv. 598).

existing which were not intended to be executed." According to returns of the criminal courts of London and Middlesex between 1805 and 1809, 188 persons were committed for this offence, of whom 18 only had been convicted, and not one executed. The consequence was that, where some punishment was deserved, no punishment at all was inflicted—an evil which could not exist if the laws were less severe and a certain but mild punishment was substituted. He quoted Burke as to the inevitable relaxation of such laws from motives of humanity: "Our passions ought not to be right, and our reason, of which law is the organ, wrong."

The Solicitor-General, Sir Wm. Garrow, saying that he did not mean to oppose the motion, urged that it was safer and more merciful to allow to a judge the relaxation of a too severe sentence than to compel him always to carry out a less severe one—to which Romilly's reply simply was that, if the Solicitor-General had ever listened to his speeches, or read his Bills, he would never have said that he was disposed to take away all discretion from the judges. The present being a new Parliament, although the Bill had been so fully discussed and had twice passed in the Commons, the old ground was covered at length. Finally, it passed by a majority of 38. But, when it came to the second reading in the Lords, although defended by Lord Grenville in one of the finest speeches ever heard in the House,[1] it was attacked by Sidmouth, Eldon, Ellenborough, and others—Ellenborough making the absurd statement that, "on the existence of the law as it now stood depended the security of all the retail trade of the country" —and was lost by 11 votes, the five bishops present and two princes of the blood being among the majority.[2]

During the session, Romilly brought in two other Bills, for taking away corruption of blood as a consequence of attainder of treason or felony, and for altering the punishment of high treason by omitting the barbarous disembowelling and quartering. The Bills passed through the Committee stage in the Commons, but got no further.[3]

**Romilly and Horner.**

At the end of the session, Horner and Romilly co-operated in removing the death penalty in another case. Two years before, as we saw, an Act was passed punishing with death the offence of maliciously breaking stocking or lace-frames—at which time,

[1] Romilly, iii, 95. Mackintosh, ii. 261.

[2] *Hansard*, xxiv. 562; xxv. 370, 524. Romilly, *Diary*, iii. 79 *seq.*

[3] Romilly, *Diary*, iii. 80 *seq.*

argued Horner, it might be deemed a capital offence as it was the work of a dangerous combination. But now a Bill was brought in for continuing the Act when the combination had ceased to exist, and when, as Romilly pointed out, the most perfect tranquillity prevailed in every part of the country, and manufactures were very flourishing. In point of fact, the Act had never been enforced. In the end the Attorney-General, while pointing out that the diminution of the punishment was at the discretion of the judges,[1] accepted an amendment to make the punishment fourteen years' transportation.[2]

Flogging.

Corporal punishment in the army was brought up again in passing the Mutiny Bill, when Burdett was backed by Whitbread. Nothing came of it, of course, and Whitbread did not press the matter as he considered it not yet ripe for discussion. He noted with satisfaction, however, that great progress had been made in educating public opinion on the matter. Twenty years before, when he had for the first time mentioned the practice, so much to be reprobated, of bringing men out twice to receive one sentence, he had been told that it was most horrible to mention anything of that kind in the House—that the soldiers had by no means too much flogging—that not a lash could be spared. Now, however, thanks in great measure to Burdett and Manners Sutton, the punishment was to a large extent got rid of, and he was convinced that its gradual abolition would follow the recognition of the injurious tendency of this kind of punishment.[3]

Resolution as to local poor bills.

One learns from a debate in December that a Committee had been sitting on the subject of the Poor Laws, and that a Bill (Onslow's) was before the House. Horner now secured parliamentary expression for a principle which Romilly had often tried to get laid down. Every year or so, some local poor law bill was brought in and passed without notice, with the result that pauper maintenance, apprenticeship, and punishment varied from place to place; the poor law system and the criminal law were being made parochial instead of national. Horner, on 13th December, proposed

[1] Horner trenchantly said: "The House knew but too well the practice which had prevailed on this subject. . . . Was it to be endured, in passing a new penal law, that Parliament should be told, 'Make the punishment as severe as you can; the judges will take care that it shall seldom be inflicted?' In the best works on jurisprudence, it had always been laid down as a principle that, although the quantum of punishment might sometimes be left to the discretion of the judges, the description of it should always be regulated by the law." *Memoirs*, ii. 162.

[2] *Hansard*, xxvii. 208, 218, 238, 246, 266.

[3] *Ibid.* xxv. 125.

a set of resolutions to prevent the introduction into local bills for the relief of the poor of any clause contrary to and inconsistent with the law of the land. He instanced bills altering the law in the mode of assessments and rating, changing the law of settlement in certain parishes, giving power of inflicting corporal punishment on the poor to persons quite unfit for such an authority. Onslow and Romilly approved; the Chancellor of the Exchequer expressed his entire concurrence; and the resolutions were passed unanimously.[1]

**Justices and wages.**

A somewhat important Act was passed in April, "to repeal so much of several Acts, passed in England and Scotland respectively, as empowers justices of the peace to rate wages, or set prices of work, for artificers, labourers, or craftsmen" (53 Geo. III. c. 40). This referred chiefly to the Act of Elizabeth, of 1563, which had fallen into desuetude and the very existence of which was unknown to the magistrates and even to high authorities in the law. But, in some instances recently, it was explained, it had been vexatiously attempted to carry the Act into effect, and it became necessary formally to repeal it. This was done without comment.[2]

**Petitions regarding apprenticeship.**

The coming struggle over the Apprenticeship system was foreshadowed by two petitions presented to Parliament during the year. The one, signed by over 800 masters and 13,000 journeymen in London, and by 1,154 masters and 17,517 journeymen in the country—32,000 signatures in all—asked that the 5th of Elizabeth, which required a seven years' apprenticeship as a condition of exercising any trade, should be explained, amended, and rendered more effectual. It met with little sympathy in the House. Onslow said that the preamble of the Act bore that it was intended to "prevent the introduction of unskilful workmen," but he had never known an indictment brought under it except against a person of great skill and acquirements; Giddy said he would vote that it be remitted to a Committee, because he was assured that the resolution they would come to would be directly contrary to that expected by the petitioners; and instances were, of course, given where workmen had combined against men of great skill who had not served the regular apprenticeship and secured their discharge.

[1] *Hansard*, xxvii. 278. Horner, ii. 164. See also *Hansard*, xxi. 1260. Romilly, ii. 375; iii. 17.

[2] *Hansard*, xxv. 594.

The other came from master fellmongers of Bermondsey, and asked for the total repeal of the Act. They represented that, being a small trade, their workers had often combined for advances of wage at a critical time of the process, and, on a recent occasion, when the advance was not granted, had left their employ; that they had been compelled to enter into contracts with young men from other trades for short terms of three, four, and five years—which was ample time for a fellmonger to become a thorough workman;—and that recurrence to the old system would be a great hardship as well to such workers as to themselves. Both petitions were referred to a Committee.[1]

Trial for combination.

The possibilities and limits of concerted action among workmen under the Combination Act are witnessed in a trial before the High Court of Justiciary in March, when several Glasgow weavers were indicted for illegal combination or conspiracy. In 1809, it appears, combination commenced among the operative weavers of Glasgow, and spread to Lanark, Paisley, and other places. Associations were formed to the number of nearly 70, some of them with as many as 500 members. These associations raised a process before the Justices of Lanarkshire, praying for a rise of wages, which was adjudged them in November of 1812. The masters, however, refused to comply with the decision, alleging inability to pay higher rates. Thereupon the weavers struck, raised funds for strike aliment, seized revels and beaming machines to prevent other weavers from working at the low rates, and intimidated with violence those who would not join them. This went on for several weeks until the Sheriff broke up the organisation, and arrested several of the members. The prisoners were found guilty, and sentences varying from four to eighteen months' imprisonment were pronounced.[2]

Insolvent Debtors' Bill passed.

On 20th July, a Bill "for the Relief of Insolvent Debtors" received the royal assent. Up till this time, a creditor had power to keep his debtor in prison for life, notwithstanding that the latter might be willing to give up everything he had in the world for the satisfaction of his debts. According to the new Act, debtors who had been three months confined in execution, might, on giving up all their property on oath, claim their discharge, any subsequently acquired property, however, being still subject to the payment of their debts. A clause, says Romilly, was added in Committee, punishing with death all insolvent debtors who should

[1] *Hansard*, xxv. 1129; xxvi. 213. [2] *Scots Magazine*, 311.

give in a false account of their property, without the knowledge of anyone in the House except the mover of it—"so little account in these matters is made of human life." Happily, it was struck out, at Romilly's objection, "as quietly as it had been inserted."[1] Owing to the slow progress of the consideration of such cases—by November, we hear of 1,350 debtors who intended to claim under the Act—a temporary Act was passed by Lord Ellenborough to accelerate their release.

Copyright Acts.

In consequence of petitions presented by the various booksellers and publishers of the kingdom, setting forth the grievance of being compelled, under the Copyright Acts, to present to the universities, etc., eleven copies of copyright works on the best paper (including subsequent editions),[2] a Committee was appointed, on 11th March, to examine into the subject. The Report, which was brought up on 18th June, said that "the substance of these laws is proper to be retained," and, in particular, that the delivery of all new works, and, in certain cases, of subsequent editions, to the libraries now entitled to receive them, should be continued, substituting, however, ordinary for fine paper copies except in the case of the British Museum. The Report added that the copyright, at present extending to fourteen years certain, with a second period of equal duration should the author survive the first fourteen, should be changed to "a fixed term" beyond the first period. Meantime the Report was laid on the table.[3]

Proposal of another theatre.

The dislike of competition in theatres was again strikingly manifested on the second reading of a Bill for erecting a new theatre for dramatic entertainments within the Metropolis.[4] Whitbread was this time the exponent. If another theatre were built, he said, the interest of the Drury Lane shareholders would be "materially deteriorated," and the Metropolis would gain nothing by an additional theatre. There were no less than seven theatres already; at four of them, regular dramas were performed. Not one of them was full above one night out of seven. If another theatre were built, he would like to know whence the audiences were to be obtained to fill it? And where could it be built? Some said Leicester Square—the inhabitants of that

[1] Romilly, *Diary*, iii. 109.

[2] This grievance was fully discussed when the Act was first brought in in 1808, but without effect (*Hansard*, xi. 988).

[3] *Hansard*, xxv. 12; xxvi. 708. The Act of 1814 for the most part carried out these recommendations.

[4] *Supra*, p. 286.

square would not be very cordial to such a proposal. In every direction, the population was already more than adequately provided with theatrical entertainments. All this reads very curiously to us, but the Bill was lost without a division.[1]

This year was said by contemporaries to be strongly characterised by religious zeal. The activity of Bible Societies was peculiarly noticeable; scarcely a town or village of any consequence in the kingdom but had its Bible Society, the various sects for once uniting to put the Scriptures within reach of the poor. More doubtful was the extraordinary outbreak of credulity and fanaticism regarding Joanna Southcote and the expectation of another Messiah. Perhaps it was also a manifestation of religious zeal that the Orange Society was now adopted in England, and numbered its members even among the highest ranks of society. Parliament, however, while considering it an illegal danger, was content to signify its strong disapprobation.[2] It was in this year, too, that Elizabeth Fry paid her first visit to Newgate and took up the work of Howard.[3]

Bible Societies.

Joanna Southcote.

Orange Society.

Mrs. Fry.

In general literature, Shelley's *Queen Mab* appeared, and Scott's *Rokeby*. "Lord Byron is the author of the day," wrote Mackintosh in December; "6000 copies of his *Bride of Abydos* have been sold within a month." Southey, who had just published his *Life of Nelson*, accepted the laureateship, in succession to Pye, on condition that he should not be called upon to "furnish odes on demand, but be free to write upon great events or be silent as the spirit moved." Happily, this did not prevent him raising the exultant hymn for victory in the *Carmen Triomphale* at the opening of 1814.

Literature.

[1] *Hansard*, xxv. 1096. [2] *Hansard*, xxvi. 974; *Annual Register*, chap. x.

[3] John Howard, born 1726, died 1790. Elizabeth Gurney, in 1800, married Joseph Fry, a Quaker.

# CHAPTER XX

## 1813. THE COMING OF THE CORN LAWS

The usual assumption.

THE "famous victory" of 1846, when the Corn Laws were swept away by Sir Robert Peel, is well known. Not so their first imposition in 1815, when "young Mr. Peel" gave his vote for them. It has often been assumed that the coming of these laws was due to the apprehension of the landed classes that the end of the war was in sight, and that, with peace, would come large importations from abroad and a heavy fall in prices and rents at home—that, in fact, as was freely said at the time, the Corn Law was carried by a combination of the landed interests against the rest of the community. An examination of the parliamentary history of 1813-1815 will show that the explanation is by no means so simple.

The Corn Law of 1804.

The Corn Law in force in 1813 was that passed in 1804. In view of the later developments, it is well to recollect that the change made in 1804, in the direction of protection, was carried on account of the panic caused by the unparalleled fall in the price of wheat, from 155/- in 1801 to under 50/- in 1804. After 1804, the "high duty" of 24/3 was payable on imports so long as the home price was under 63/-, falling to 2/6 between 63/- and 65/-, and to 6d. at and above 66/-. The old bounty of 5/- per quarter was given on exportation when the home price was at or under 48/-, and export was prohibited when at or above 54/-. As the home price ever since had been much above these figures, the import duty and the export bounty were both entirely inoperative: corn came in free, and there was no export. In 1808, as we saw, the average price of the year was 81/4; in 1809, it was 97/4; in 1810, 106/5; in 1811, 95/3; in 1812, 126/6; till August of 1813, it did not fall below 116/-. "From Michaelmas, 1808, to Michaelmas, 1813, neither the Michaelmas nor the

Ladyday price ever fell below 96/-."[1] It would be difficult to find any connection between a regulative price of 63/- and actual prices like these. Thus far, it may be granted, the Corn Laws were not to blame for the rise. Bad seasons and the restraints of war were quite sufficient explanation.

The Committee on the Corn Trade

It was in these circumstances—when, as yet, there was no prospect of relief from scarcity and famine prices—that a Select Committee of the House of Commons, appointed to "enquire into the Corn Trade of the United Kingdom," issued its Report on 11th May, 1813. The genesis of this Committee has long been forgotten, and, as no mention is made of it even in contemporary history, it deserves examination. Indeed, the subsequent course of the movement is almost unintelligible without a knowledge of its origin.

—orginally on the Irish Corn Trade.

In the Parliamentary Debates, there is no record of its appointment, or of any debate in which it might have originated. In the Journals of the House of Commons,[2] however, we find that, on 22nd March, 1813, a Select Committee was proposed "to enquire into the Corn Trade of Ireland," and that an amendment was carried substituting the words "United Kingdom" for the word "Ireland." Twenty-seven members were appointed on that date, and six names were added subsequently. Among these, in addition to Sir Henry Parnell, the Chairman,[3] the best known names are Castlereagh, Vansittart, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Peel, then Chief Secretary for Ireland, Grattan, Canning, Western, Baring, Huskisson, Newport, Wellesley-Pole, Giddy, and Thornton —most of the others have not attained the immortality of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. In the first debate of the year, Lord Archibald Hamilton spoke of the Committee as "composed of a description of persons, who, from their ordinary pursuits and habits, could not be supposed to have the most accurate knowledge of the subject."[4]

What one might infer from all this is confirmed by a remark of Parnell in the opening debate of the following year: "When the Committee was first appointed, its only object was to examine the corn laws of Ireland; and, when it was afterwards suddenly proposed to extend its investigations to the corn laws

[1] Tooke, *History of Prices*, ii. 382-9. [2] Vol. 68.

[3] Henry Brooke Parnell, born 1776; became Lord Congleton in 1841; granduncle of Charles Stewart Parnell.

[4] *Hansard*, xxvi. 662.

of this country, those members who were added to it were perhaps selected without due consideration."[1] Evidently the Committee was planned in the interests of Ireland, but what the particular object aimed at was, is so far obscure.

The Irish grievance was the prohibition of export.

An indication, however, seems given in the debates of 1814 over the exportation resolution. Parnell then alluded to the Irish merchants, who, if the liberty were granted them, would open markets for the produce of Ireland in every quarter of the world, and were most anxious to embark in a trade from which they had long been debarred—a privation from which they had lost considerably. "Last autumn," he said, "orders could have been taken to any amount from the Brazils, but the existing system prevented it. Corn was a mere drug in Ireland, while, in Jamaica, they were so much in want of it that the inhabitants had petitioned the Prince Regent on the subject."[2]

The return of grain imports

From this, perhaps, one might not be very far out in suspecting that the prohibition of export was a grievance to which the Irish members—and Parnell himself was an Irish landlord—wanted to draw attention. If so, the issue was quite successful. But, meantime, the attention of the House was drawn to quite another matter. On 20th July of 1812, a motion had been made for a return of the quantity of grain imported into and exported from Great Britain from 1792 till 1811 inclusive, distinguishing each species, the price of the quarter, etc., and this Return (printed afterwards as an Appendix to the Report) was presented on 17th March—that is, just five days before the Committee to examine the Corn Trade of Ireland was moved. The striking things in this Return were: the large total of the imports of foreign grain in the twenty-one years, particularly the great imports of 1810 (over £7,000,000, including more than 1¼ million quarters of wheat), and the progressive rise up to famine price;[3] and it may well be the case that members generally thought that the examination of this might be tacked on to the purely Irish question.

[1] *Hansard*, xxvii. 708. [2] *Ibid.* xxvii. 716.

[3] There is a curious anticipation of the whole controversy in the *Farmer's Magazine* of 15th February (that is, before either the Report or the Return was published), in a letter from Sir John Sinclair, dated 12th September, 1812. In it, he gives a table of imports from 1792 to 1811, substantially the same as that afterwards published in the Return—"an authentic document," he calls it, from which we may infer that he had access to the figures long before they were presented to Parliament. On this table he bases the thesis that "the principal source of all the financial difficulties of the country is the enormous import of foreign corn and the immense sums we have paid for

What "first attracted the attention of your Committee," the Report[1] began, "was that the value of foreign corn imported into Great Britain during that period amounted to £58,634,135; that the average price of the quarter of wheat for the same period has been 77/3; and that the average price of it for the last four years has been 105/5. Your Committee are of opinion that so great a degree of dependence on foreign countries for a sufficient supply of food, and so great an advance in the price of wheat as is hereby proved, require the interposition of Parliament without further delay. Under this impression, and with a view of ascertaining what measures it would become your Committee to propose, as best calculated to induce our own people to raise a sufficient supply for themselves from their own soil, and at the same time to reduce the price of corn, they have examined into the means which the United Kingdom possesses of growing more corn, and into those laws which from time to time have been made for regulating the corn trade." —raised the question of dependence on foreign supply.

In Great Britain, they found that a great increase of tillage had taken place during the last ten years; that the land under tillage was capable of being made much more productive; and that much land still in grass was fit to be converted into tillage. The same was true of Ireland; so much so that, from that country alone, much more than the average deficiency (calculated on the import of the past ten years) might be supplied. The increase of corn growing in Ireland, indeed, was astonishing: in the previous five years, it had sent into Great Britain £6½ millions worth—more than one-third of the total importation—as compared with about one-seventh for the preceding sixteen years. The great increase in home supply

The Committee thus considered it a "fair practical inference" that the United Kingdom was "able to produce as much more corn, in addition to that already grown, as would relieve it from the necessity of continuing in any degree dependent for a supply on foreign countries." Moreover, they said, "the great supply of Irish corn will not only lower its price, but contribute to the —suggested the possibility of independence.

obtaining that supply"—£57½ millions in twenty years—"above one-half of the amount probably paid for in specie . . . the more to be lamented because there never could have been any occasion to have sent any considerable portion of that immense treasure to foreign and to hostile nations had adequa . encouragement been given to agricultural exertion within our own territory."

[1] Report from the Select Committee appointed to enquire into the Corn Trade of the United Kingdom; ordered to be printed 11th May, 1813, p. 184.

conversion of much land in England now under corn, into cultivation for food for sheep and cattle and thus allow of milk and butcher's meat being sold at much lower prices than they can be sold for, while the quantity of land applicable to this sort of produce is limited, as it now is, by the scanty supply, and consequently high price, of corn."

Free and restricted trade contrasted.

Turning to the laws regulating the corn trade, they showed that, from 1670 to 1765, "the several laws together formed a system for regulating the corn trade upon the principles of restraining importation and encouraging exportation." Since 1765, the system had been on the opposite principle of encouraging importation, and discouraging exportation by prohibition or limitation of the bounties. Under the former system, from 1701 to 1764 "the prices were steady and moderate," the average price being 33/3; under the latter, from 1769 to 1794, the price was 44/7; and, in the nine years from 1804 to 1812, both inclusive, 88/11. Under the former, Great Britain not only supplied herself, but exported a considerable quantity of corn: under the latter, she not only had not supplied herself, but had imported vast quantities from foreign countries.

"The various evils which belong to so great an importation from foreign countries, to so great an expenditure of our money, in promoting the improvement and cultivation of those countries at the loss of a similar extent of improvement and cultivation of our own, and to the established high prices of corn, are so numerous and so mischievous, that every one will readily allow they are deserving of the serious attention of Parliament."

They pointed to the "strong coincidence of plenty and low prices with a system of restricted importation, and of scanty supply and high prices with the contrary system," and said that this forcibly pointed to the expediency of recurring to the principles abandoned in 1765. This view was further borne out by the consideration that, for many years previous to the Continental System, the trade in grain with the continent was virtually a free trade, the laws for regulating and restricting it being wholly inoperative on account of the high prices. Yet the imports of grain, as well as the prices of it, went on gradually increasing—contrary to the result which those "who advocate the principle of a free trade assume to belong to it." When, again, the Continental System stopped all commercial intercourse with the corn producing countries except by means of licenses, "though (sic) the prices

continued to advance, the quantity of corn grown in consequence of this advance in price, and of the steadiness of the price, particularly in Ireland, had been so much greater than it was before, for many years, that the supply in the last year was equal to the consumption for the first time since 1764"—the value of the corn exported in 1812 being £1,498,229, and of the corn imported, £1,213,830.

and the restricted preferred.

"This circumstance, which can only be fairly traced to the restricted importation, seems to your Committee to place the question beyond all doubt of which of the two systems, a free or restricted trade, is the best."

Recommendation of the high duty till 105/2.

Conceiving, then, that if the regulating price for allowing importation were made a very high one, it would be the "best possible protection the grower could have," they did not consider that continuation of bounties was expedient. At the same time, they recommended most strongly free exportation till wheat rose to what might be considered a very high price, namely 90/2. As regards importation, the nominal duty of 6d. should be charged only when the home price had risen to 135/2; between 105/2 and 135/2, the duty should be 2/6; and, below 105/2, the "high duty" of 24/3.

And, in the interests of the millers—"who are deserving of every protection, as being that class of persons engaged in the corn trade, whose capital and intelligence are of the greatest service in all scarce years, in so regulating the consumption that it shall approach to the true proportion to the supply"—no foreign flour or meal should be allowed to be imported into Great Britain.

A disingenuous report,

The most charitable judgment that could be passed on such a Report is that it was disingenuous. The millions paid to foreigners to bring what England might have grown; dependence on foreigners associated with scarcity; the better cultivation of England and, specially, of Ireland, associated with abundance; a stringent protective period associated with moderate and steady prices; a less stringent, with high and fluctuating prices; the suggestion that the evil of war restriction might be replaced by the good of legislative restriction—all these thrown together to support protection up till famine prices!

based on very flimsy evidence.

One's astonishment at this Report and its singular arguments is not lessened on analysing the evidence on which it was, presumably, based. The Committee sent a set of five questions

to the Board of Agriculture and to the Farming Society of Ireland; printed the petitions from the Millers and Corn Mill Proprietors in Liverpool (in 1807) and Lancaster; and, besides, took evidence, at four short sittings, from five witnesses. Of these witnesses—who were very perfunctorily and uncritically examined—Edward Wakefield was the only person of any importance; of the rest, one was an Irish civil engineer and corn miller, one an Irish corn merchant and distiller, one an Irish farmer; while the fourth was examined solely on the rates of freight between Ireland and Great Britain. What is more, the evidence —which covers only 14 pages—relates entirely to Ireland, and consists mainly of speculative opinions as to how much Ireland could grow if she got sufficient encouragement!

Parnell's speech

The Report was presented on 15th June by Sir Henry Parnell, the Chairman of the Committee.[1] He began by stating that the object and intention of the proposed alteration of the Corn Laws was to secure "a sufficient supply of corn of our growth at steady and moderate prices." It was not its object, he said emphatically, to increase the profits of farmers or landlords—their situation required no such aid; their affairs had long been and still were in a very prosperous condition;[2] they were no parties to this proceeding; no petitions had been presented to the House by them; they had made no complaint of the existing regulations. Indeed, so far from wishing high prices for agricultural produce, the Committee had proposed the abolition of the bounties on exportation, which "had at all times been considered (by the landed interest) as of essential importance to farming profits." The Committee had been influenced by "no other motive than that of a strong sense of the danger of continuing to depend upon our enemies for a sufficient supply of food, and of the impolicy of sending our money to improve other countries while we had so much of our own lands that stood in need of the same kind of improvement." The end aimed at, in short, was to grow more corn by increasing the capital now vested in agriculture. "For, if the agricultural capital is considerably increased, its effects on the quantity produced, and the expense of production, and also in lowering prices, will be just the same as when employed in manufactures," where the

The Committee's motive.

[1] *Hansard*, xxvi. 644.

[2] As he said on another occasion, he personally had no interest in the matter, "all his farms being let at long leases."

reduction of cost and price consequent on large production is notorious.[1]

That great evils belonged to the present system was undeniable. The average price of wheat for the last four years had been 105/-, and, for the last year, 125/-. A very considerable proportion of this rise was owing, no doubt, to the depreciation of money. But no small part of it was due to the system of importing corn from foreign countries. The high price of wheat

There could be no greater error than that of supposing that the prices of corn were kept down by foreign importation. This might be the immediate effect, and for a short time. But, in the long run, "the effect of it was to diminish the profit of the British farmer," by diminishing his capital, and making him apprehensive about keeping the whole of his capital invested in land. —due to importation as curtailing home growth.

But, it might be said, this diminution in the production of home grown corn would be made good by an increased supply of imported corn. So it might, but how did this increasing importation operate on prices?

It was clearly the interest of the importing merchant to have as high a price as possible, and, to secure this, he allowed the home deficiency to run up the price exceedingly high before he came forward to provide for it, and price was not at all lowered by importation till the established importers became apprehensive that the excessive prices would tempt new competition into the trade. "And then, when they do bring their foreign corn into market, they give it out in such quantities as shall not much lower the prices, and always very carefully prevent anything like a competition of foreign corn against foreign corn; but, on the contrary, being well aware that a very high price on a small quantity will pay them much better, and with infinitely less trouble and risk, than a moderate price on a larger quantity, they feed the market by little and little, and thus render the deficiency of home growth a perpetual source of great profit to themselves and of high prices to the consumer." The proof was the immense fortunes made of late years by the importers; and, so long as we are "in any degree deficient in supplying ourselves with corn of our own growth, there must be a degree of advanced price of corn which would otherwise never exist."

[1] Parnell evidently, with all his parade of knowledge of Adam Smith, was unaware that this was in direct contradiction of one of the most striking demonstrations in the first chapter of the *Wealth of Nations*.

Dependence on our enemies.

But the "great practical evil" of the existing system was the dependence on our enemies which this induced. In the last twenty-one years, we had paid them over £58 millions. Had not Napoleon, in 1810, quelled a very serious insurrection that had commenced in consequence of the very low price of corn in the south of France, and collected a very large revenue from us by allowing the export at a high duty? If circumstances had shut off the import, as might well have been the case, what extreme misery must have been the consequence to the lower orders of the community! And to such dangers we should always be exposed if we did not secure a sufficiency of corn of our own growth for our consumption.

Such being the evils, in looking for a remedy the first thing to be ascertained was whether the United Kingdom possessed the means of growing a sufficiency of corn for its own consumption. That the average acreable produce of England, Wales, and Scotland could be greatly increased by the general introduction of the improved system of husbandry, was so well known that the Committee had not thought it necessary to take any evidence on that head. Every one knew, too, what resources of additional production the waste lands afforded. But it was from Ireland that the greatest additional growth might be obtained, and the evidence submitted to the Committee showed that Ireland was not only adequate to supply the deficiency of Great Britain, but to provide for a great exportation to our colonies and foreign countries.

The resources of Ireland.

Had there ever been an instance in history of "a large nation continuing with undiminished vigour to support four or five millions of its people on imported corn?" Was it not another evil that we were so largely contributing to the improvement of the lands of foreign countries and to their national wealth and prosperity, while our own lands stood in such need of improvement, and the lower orders in Ireland, who might have supplied us, were in the greatest poverty and misery? More than that, "it should be observed that the system of importing foreign corn was going directly to increase the naval strength of our enemies, as the trade was entirely carried on in foreign ships."

Adam Smith

Turning now to general principles, those who advocated a free trade in grain founded their opinions on the authority of Adam Smith. But a careful examination would show that his

recommendation was conditional—founded only on "the supposition that all the nations of Europe should adopt the same common policy." It was, then, a fair inference that he would not have advised a free trade in the actual state of things. Besides, his general principles and the reason of his objection to protective duties were that government interference was bad because it diverted capital from its natural into less productive channels. This certainly could not be said of a law which tended to vest more capital in agriculture than would have been vested if no such law had existed; for, on his own showing, capital could not be employed in a way more beneficial to the community than in agriculture.

quoted in support

We had Adam Smith's own authority for saying that the nature of things had stamped upon corn a peculiar value, and that, accordingly, the trade in corn formed an exception to all trades. We might do without cotton or sugar or tea, or we might obtain them cheaper from our enemies, but enough corn to keep the people from famine could not be dispensed with, and, if an independent supply was obviously and necessarily an essential object of national concern, Adam Smith's writings were most exactly and forcibly in point to show the necessity of restriction on foreign importation. "So far therefore as the doctrines of political economy bore on the trade in corn, it might be said that the very peculiar character of the trade took it out of the general rule, and that the superior advantages which flowed from a capital vested in agriculture to the general wealth and improvement of the community, when coupled with the vital exigency of securing an independent supply of corn, justified those legislative measures which had for their object the investment of as much capital in tillage as should be adequate to the end of rendering us completely free from the aid of foreign and hostile nations."

—capital being diverted from agriculture.

But, as things were in England, capital was actually being encouraged to divert itself into other channels than agriculture—into every species of manufacture and every branch of trade. It was to counteract the perpetual operation of the system of bounties, monopolies, and protecting duties in taking capital *from* agriculture that legislation was now required in favour of the corn trade.

Agriculture alone could not be free.

"If every kind of trade were perfectly free, agriculture would not require any protection." But "the whole commercial system of this country—the Navigation Act—the Colonial Monopolies—

every bounty and protecting and prohibitory duty, each and all of them operate as a constant encouragement to the investment of capital in trade and manufactures in preference to agriculture." "If all those who are concerned in manufactures and commerce will consent to adopt the system of a perfect free trade, those who are now advocates for restraints on the importation of corn will willingly abandon on their part all claim to any such protection . . . but, as every kind of trade is supported by some sort of legislative aid, it is folly to refuse it to that trade which is the main support of all others."

Advantage of late war restrictions.

The late course of events had amply illustrated the expediency of restraining the importation of foreign corn. In the last few years, owing to the Continental System, the quantity imported had been much diminished, and the home growth greatly increased. "To these restraints are to be attributed the high and steady prices which corn has brought during the last four years; the consequent increased production of it at home;[1] and the very satisfactory result of our having exported more than we imported in each of the last two years."[2] But if peace returned, "these restraints would be removed; the existing law would afford no obstacle in the way of importation; so much corn would come in as would deprive the growers of it of a fair return for the labour and capital they had applied in extending tillage"; and further progress on the way to complete independence would be totally stopped. The people of Ireland in particular, where the advance in tillage of the last four years had been peculiarly striking, enabling them to export corn to the value of £3 millions in the last year—a state of things "wholly new"—would suffer, and one of the best results—"the attaching of them to the English connection"—would be lost.

Return to the principles of 1670 recommended.

Every one was agreed that the existing law must be amended; it was neither restriction nor free trade—for, in point of practice, exportation was prohibited and importation was free; "a free trade would be in every respect preferable to such a system."

[1] It is quite true that, "when the price of corn went up, up went also the number of Enclosure Acts." See a comparative diagram in Cannan, *Theories of Production and Distribution*, 150. In 1812, no less than 133 enclosure bills were passed—the largest number recorded in any one year.

[2] Rose subsequently pointed out the fallacy of this. The export was for our armies in the Peninsula. Wheat was 128/- in 1812—"to what part of the world (except to Iceland and Norway in small quantities) could it be sent at that price?" (*Hansard*, xxvii. 687).

The experience of more than a century pointed out the safest course, and, accordingly, the Committee had recommended to the House to return to the principles of the law of 1670. If there had been no alteration in the value of money since that period, they might have recommended the same prices and duties; as it was, they proposed to follow the same proportions.

A graduated duty from 1/- at 95/-

At that date, the average price of wheat for the twenty years previous had been 42/4; one-third added to this made 56/-, "a little more than the price (53/-) fixed in that year for regulating importation." "This regulation was in fact a prohibition of importation, for the price of 53/- in these days was a famine price." Taking the average price for the past twenty years as 78/11, a third added would make 105/2, the regulating price recommended by the Committee. This would be a much more moderate measure than the law of 1670, for no one could say that 105/2 was a scarcity price now, whereas 53/-, as was said, was a famine price in the circumstances of 1670. But, as it appeared to many persons that 105/- was too high a price, the Resolution to be submitted would propose the addition of one-fifth to the average price, instead of one-third, which would make the regulating price 95/. But even this would not be the actual protecting price against importation. It was proposed to impose a graduated duty instead of a prohibitory duty. At 95/- the duty would be a shilling, increasing by a shilling per quarter for every shilling of fall below 95/-, so that "85/- would, in point of fact, be about the protecting price, when the duty per quarter would be 11/-." But this price would again be a more effectual protecting price than at first it would appear to be, because it was further proposed to take the price of corn, for regulating the duty, on the average of the United Kingdom instead of the average of the twelve maritime districts, which would make a difference of 6/- per quarter when the average price of the twelve maritime districts was 100/-. The regulations would be applied to each sort of grain—barley, oats, rye, peas, and beans on similar calculations.

Annual revision.

It was further proposed that, after 1st February, 1814, and in each successive year, the price at which the duty of 1/- per quarter and upwards should be paid would consist of the average price of the last twenty years, with one-fifth added to it; this would provide against future fluctuations in the value of money.

"The probable operation of these regulations might be known by reference to a table framed on the supposition that the principle of them had been adopted in 1791," which showed that "the importation of corn would have been free in all those years in which the harvests were bad, and where a supply of foreign corn was really necessary. These regulations could not justify any apprehension of their being productive of any advance in the present price of corn, as the present price in the twelve maritime districts was 115/- and must therefore fall 30/-, that is to 85/-, on an average of the United Kingdom, before they could produce any efficient interruption to the importation of corn."

Export to be free.

With respect to the exportation of corn, it was proposed to make it free at all times, and the policy of this was justified by a simple quotation from Adam Smith, to the effect that the prohibition of export limited both the home growth and the import to the bare consumption of the home market, and prevented the extension of cultivation.[1]

Advantages

If these proposals were adopted, the most salutary consequences might be expected. Security against scarcity would be secured; the prices of corn would be rendered steady; and, in the end, prices would be in reality lower than they yet had been.

—steadiness of price

"If steadiness of price shall be alone the result," he concluded, "a most valuable object will be acquired, because it is not a high price which injures the poor man, but a price that fluctuates; for, as the wages of labour are regulated by the general average price of corn, in those years in which it is very high the wages of labour do not rise proportionally to the price, and the pressure of the advance in price falls entirely on the poor. But the most substantial benefit which the public will derive from a wise revision of the corn laws will be, its independence of foreign countries; for, if we can once establish an average production of corn sufficient for the average consumption of the people, whenever a harvest may fall short the deficiency can never be so great but that we shall be able in all probability to obviate the distress of scarcity by a suitable economy; and, even if this

—independence of foreign supply.

[1] It is remarkable that no argument was given in the speech for abandoning the bounty, and that no explanation was given why the Committee's recommendation, of free exportation only "till the price becomes what may be considered a high one," was departed from. The only reason given by the Committee for abandoning the bounty was that they did not conceive it expedient to continue it, as a high regulative import price was "the best possible protection of the home grower"—which seems a rather summary dismissal of a policy which had been so strenuously debated for 120 years.

resource were to fail, the quantity of corn which might be necessary to be imported would be so small, as to be obtained with a certainty from some part of Europe or America."

He then moved for a Committee of the whole House to consider of the Report.

The cleverness of the speech.

The speech was amazingly clever. Every interest in turn was appealed to. It was affirmed that those most interested had had nothing to do with the measure—were in fact making a sacrifice of the bounty for the common good—but the landowners were offered a monopoly and high prices. The farmers were told that they need have no fear of their capital so deeply invested in reclamation and improvements. The labourers were tempted with steady prices, and assured, quite truly, that fluctuating prices were a worse evil to them than high ones. The manufacturing classes, who thought high price of food the greatest of evils, were shown that this was the true way to bring down prices without injuring the prosperity of their best customers, the agricultural classes. Those who dreaded dependence on other countries were told that this was the only way to secure independence. Ireland was to be "attached to the English connection." All interests in fact were to be not so much conciliated as harmonised. High prices were dangled before one class and low prices before another; fluctuations of price were to cease; England and Ireland were to be cultivated from one end to the other; and all at the expense only of the natural enemy. So it is that, in the debates which followed, as single aspects of the proposals were dwelt on to the exclusion of others, the most contradictory arguments were used; strong passions were roused; and the country was completely befogged.

Opposition.

Meanwhile it was evident that the proposals would meet with strenuous opposition. Lord Archibald Hamilton said that he would prefer partial dependence with low prices to absolute independence and bread at a high price; that the high price of grain was considered to justify parliamentary interference, and yet these resolutions would raise it still higher; that every person conversant with the subject would oppose free exportation till prices were very high; that the proposed changes would have the effect of rendering the high prices permanent, and would not benefit the agricultural interest, as the farmer's rent would be raised at the expiry of his lease.

The Resolutions proposed went somewhat beyond the compass

Increase in preference.

of the speech. There was to be a great increase in preference to the colonies in one respect; corn grown in British North America was to be imported into any part of the United Kingdom, whatever the price might be, without the payment of any duty whatever. But, for protection of the millers, the import of flour and meal from all quarters was to be prohibited, except that wheaten flour and meal were allowed, into Great Britain alone, on payment of a duty per cwt. equal to one-third the duty on the quarter of wheat.[1]

Rose.

Rose entirely disagreed with the principles laid down. To allow the exportation of grain without any limit, was to overturn the custom of five hundred years. To alter the scale every year according to the average price of the preceding twenty years, would occasion constant fluctuation of price. To prohibit flour and meal, would be to render the Canadian flour-mills useless. If 95/- were the importing price, all experience showed that the home price would never be lower—when the importing price was last fixed at 66/-, the home price never afterwards fell below that.

Western

Western, the typical champion of the landed classes, said that, at the present very high price of corn, many thousands could hardly purchase bread at all; by way of consolation, the House was asked to tell them that they could never hope to have bread cheaper. There never was a time when this subject was likely to excite more popular clamour. He objected to go on with the measure, adding, however, that his great objection was to the particular time of doing it.

Horner.

After the Chancellor of the Exchequer had argued that the measure would ensure a greater steadiness of prices, and that people had for several years been suffering under a certain feverish apprehension of a scarcity which was almost as great a punishment as the highest prices could possibly be, Horner replied that he was astonished that the Chancellor of the Exchequer should lend his authority to the proposals. At the present prices, we had actually free trade; tillage had never increased so much; and prices had never been so regular. As to the alleged dependence on the foreigner, the late imports showed that, in spite of all the regulations of the enemy, whenever this country was in want of foreign grain it could get it. Personally, he agreed to free exportation and the abolition of the bounty, but the discussion had convinced him that these proposals

[1] *Hansard*, xxvi. 660.

were merely thrown out by way of conciliation, and that the main object of the measure was to prevent importation except when prices rose to the enormous figures stated in the Report.

Fitzgerald denied that the object of the motion was, or could be, to raise the price of grain. But if, in making the country independent, prices should increase, then they would have the satisfaction of knowing that the high prices were given to their own subjects and not to foreigners. Fitzgerald.

Huskisson, who had been a member of the Select Committee, in supporting the motion, said that he was actuated by no solicitude for corn growers or landlords, or for Ireland, but he considered that the general interests of the empire were best consulted by securing to all classes an adequate supply of corn. Huskisson.

The House went into committee on the motion on 21st June, but, later in the month, Parnell announced that it was impossible to get a bill through during the session, and consideration was postponed till 1814.[1] Consideration postponed.

It is not, perhaps, until one has studied the further progress of the measure in 1814 and 1815 that the strangeness of these proposals, in the circumstances of the time, reveals itself.

They did not come from the landed classes: the landlords were content—as well they might be, with wheat at 125/-, old rents risen to an undreamt of height, and new rents emerging where rent had never been paid before.[2] On the face of it, The strangeness of the proposal.

[1] *Hansard*, xxvi. 812, 986.

[2] Of the actual rise in rents, it would be impossible to name a reliable average. The statement was very generally made in Parliament that they had nearly trebled. The rental of Scotland, where the improvements in farming had been most marked, was computed in 1815 to have risen from £2 millions in 1795 to £5¼ millions. Majoribanks, member for Buteshire, said, in 1815, that, in his part of Scotland, rents have risen from 10/- or 15/- per acre to 28/- and thence to 40/-: "this increase had arisen from the increased industry and skill of the farmers; the leases were granted for 19 and 21 years, which gave the farmers confidence, so that, on a farm of £500 a year, £2,000 capital was frequently employed" (*Hansard*, xxx. 68). Marryat, in the same year, when protesting against the measure on the ground that the landlords should be satisfied with what they had, said that an estate in Sussex, owned by himself, had lately been valued by a surveyor, on the expiry of the leases, at considerably more than double; that another estate in his family, rented at £300 eighteen years before, was now let for £850; and that similar increases had been pretty general throughout the kingdom (*Hansard*, xxix. 836). Porter says that, in Essex, many farms had risen from less than 10/- per acre to 45/- and 50/- in 1812; in Berkshire and Wiltshire, from 14/- to 70/- in 1810; in Staffordshire, from 8/- to 35/- (*Progress of the Nation*, 151). Obviously, the rise would be very different on farms long ago enclosed, from what it was on lands lately passing from common and waste to arable and several meadow land.

indeed, it seems safe to say that no time could well have been more inappropriate to demand further protection. The country was suffering from its fourth bad harvest in succession. Grain was literally at famine prices. The labouring classes could hardly buy bread at all. Almost no foreign grain was coming in. If anything, one would have expected a universal demand for the reimposition of the measures of 1800 and 1801, namely, a positive encouragement of importation by way of bounty. It is almost incredible that anyone should choose such a moment to propose that it be made impossible that actual dearth should be relieved by foreign importation, and to tell the poorer classes that they need never hope to have bread cheaper.

**The motive.**

One must, then, in reason, look below the surface for a motive, and the motive seems to be found in the interests of Ireland. By 1808, it had been noticed that the tillage of that country was increasing at a very rapid rate, while the export of the pasture products had remained undiminished, and the consumption of them been daily augmented. "There can be little doubt," said the *Edinburgh Review*, in April, 1809, "from the progressive state of the Irish exports of corn that, if things remain quiet for some years, the empire will be entirely independent of foreign supplies, except in times of scarcity." What more did the Irishmen want?

**Ireland wanted freedom of export.**

It is quite clear that they wanted freedom of export. There had been occasions of late years when they could have exported largely to the colonies, and, although they had the English market, it might be argued that the price which famished colonies would pay would be even higher than England was paying. As it turned out, England was ready to grant this; practically, there was no opposition to it, and it seems reasonable to infer that Parnell had chosen his Committee from those most favourable to Irish demands.

**If she could, in addition, secure the monopoly of the English market!**

But just before the Committee was formally appointed, it will be noticed that a new prospect burst upon the Irish members. A return was presented which, no doubt, seemed to them one that might be manipulated to secure far more than freedom of export—namely, the monopoly of the English market. If they could persuade England to shut out foreign corn altogether, Ireland would have the free run of it at famine prices!

The difference between Ireland and England as regards dear corn should be noted. At the high prices, the English consumers, as wheat eaters, suffered badly, particularly the manufacturing

classes. But in Ireland, wheat was grown for export, not for consumption, and, with the exception of those in the linen trade, there were no manufacturing classes. The small Irish proprietor, living on potatoes as his staple food, was growing for sale an article which he was selling at famine prices in England. If England, then, could be persuaded to keep up these famine prices, and to give the monopoly of sale to Ireland, the prospect was dazzling.

But how to persuade England to do this? There came in the art of Parnell. First, he pointed to the huge sum of £56½ millions sent abroad for corn in twenty-one years. Would not a fraction of this sum have brought the waste lands of England into cultivation? And, second, he made play with the dependence of this country upon our hated rival, France. Had there ever been an instance in history of "a large nation continuing with undiminished vigour to support four or five millions of its people on imported corn?"—to say nothing of the fact that this corn came in foreign ships and that the carrying was adding to the naval strength of the enemy.

**But how persuade England?**

But, from the scanty support he got thus far, it looked as if Parnell's scheme had miscarried. Meanwhile, however, one notes, from the general discussion which followed throughout the country, that the idea of high protection and of giving the monopoly of home supply to home producers had "caught on" among the farmers; that the argument that all was "lost" which was paid to the foreigner in exchange would be worked for all it was worth; and that the new catchword—instantly adopted by the protectionists—was "steady prices"—as if the sunshine and climate of our northern fields could be regulated like the atmosphere of a cotton mill.[1]

**The new catchword, "steady prices."**

[1] "So far as the Corn Law was successful in making this country rely mainly on its own supplies, so far it made it also rely on its own seasons" (Nicholson, *The English Corn Laws*, 49).

# CHAPTER XXI

## 1814. THE PASSING OF THE GREAT SHADOW

Invasion of France.

THE New Year dawned with prospects such as Europe had not seen for many a year. Four great armies had invaded the soil of France, and were closing in on its heart. Public expectation was raised to the highest pitch. The British fleet had reached its greatest strength, and represented a "force more than equivalent to the navies of all the other European powers combined." The end was evidently not far off.

Treaty of Chaumont.

After some fruitless negotiation with Napoleon at Chatillon-sur-Seine, during an armistice, a permanent basis was given to the alliance by the Treaty of Chaumont, signed on 1st March —"the most important contract that perhaps the history of European diplomacy could furnish," said Castlereagh—by which the four powers bound themselves, by a twenty years' treaty, not to lay down their arms till the object of the war was attained, and engaged, each of them, to keep 150,000 effective men in the field, independent of garrisons, Great Britain besides guaranteeing £5,000,000 a year for every subsequent year of the war, to be divided equally among the other three powers.

The Allies enter Paris.

On 31st March, the allied powers entered Paris with much ceremonial, amid acclamations of the crowd, and a proclamation was issued saying that they would not treat with Napoleon or his family; that they would respect the integrity of ancient France as it existed under its legitimate kings; and that they would recognise and guarantee the constitution which the French people might adopt. On 2nd April, the French Senate formally announced that Napoleon Buonaparte had forfeited the throne, and that the hereditary right established in his family was abolished. When Napoleon arrived at Fontainebleau with the wreck of his army, the Allies were in possession of Paris, and, after a long hesitation, he abdicated on the 7th.

Abdication of Napoleon.

Meanwhile, in the Peninsula, the struggle with Soult on the Nive in December had been succeeded by a breathing space of two months, during which Wellington had much difficulty in paying his troops the necessary £100,000 a month owing to the drain of specie to the continent. When hostilities commenced again in the middle of February, Soult was overthrown, first at Orthez when Bordeaux was occupied, then at Toulouse on 10th April—a useless victory, by which the lives of some 8,000 men were thrown away, as Napoleon had already fallen.

Louis l'inévitable.

On 20th April, the fallen Emperor left Fontainebleau for Elba, where he was to hold mimic court for the next ten months. Acting on Talleyrand's advice, Louis XVIII. entered Paris on 3rd May, "amid perfect order and tranquillity." On 31st May, a treaty was signed between France and the Allied Powers which, *inter alia*, assured to France the integrity of her boundaries as they existed in 1792, with certain augmentations of territory, amounting to about 150 square miles, on the north and east frontiers.[1]

Return of the Pope.

The very first act of the provisional government had been to order that all obstacles to the return of the Pope, whom Napoleon had brought to Fontainebleau at the end of 1812, should be instantly removed and every honour paid him on his journey to his own territories. In August, the order of the Jesuits, put down in 1773, was publicly restored, and, adds the *Annual Register* as further proof of the disastrous re-establishment of everything ancient, the street lamps introduced by the late government in Rome were suppressed![2]

Return to absolutism in Spain.

On 14th May, Ferdinand entered Madrid. His first acts were, by proclamation, to overturn the Cortes and the constitution sworn to by it in 1812—which, said the king, "copied the revolutionary and democratic principle of the French Constitution of 1793"—to re-establish the absolute monarchy, and to bring back the Inquisition.[3] A treaty of alliance was made during the year

[1] Even to the last, England was faithful to her tradition. Castlereagh's adherence to the Treaty of Fontainebleau, he explained, could not be unconditional, as Great Britain had never acknowledged Napoleon as Emperor of the French; "we therefore did not accede to such parts of the treaty as contained the title of Emperor" (*Hansard*, xxx. 359).

[2] Pp. 81-2.

[3] The proclamation is noteworthy in that it made no reference whatever to the part played by England in freeing Spain. All this was a bad beginning, and, in 1815, we find Horner speaking of Ferdinand as hated and despised throughout the Spanish nation, and expressing a hope that the people might

which restored the commercial relations with Spain to what they had been before 1796.

Rejoicings and congratulations.

On 29th June, Castlereagh in Parliament congratulated the nation that, "if no other blessing had been derived from all that had happened, it would be no unsatisfactory one to feel that the spell was dissolved by which Great Britain and France were supposed to be naturally enemies," and received the compliment from Whitbread that, in every respect save the Slave Trade clause, he had fully and completely deserved that confidence which he had reposed in him. London was illuminated for three successive nights, and 7th July was appointed a General Thanksgiving. In May, Wellington had been raised to the dignity of a Duke and Marquis of the United Kingdom, and voted a capital sum of £400,000, for the purpose of enabling him to purchase an estate fitted to support the position; and, on 1st July, the great captain received the thanks of Parliament in person. On 14th July, a grant of £100,000 was voted for the sufferers round about Dresden—"that part of Europe which had been, with very little interval, engaged in a state of desolating and destructive warfare for the last twenty years." The motion was agreed to *nem. con.* in both Houses—Lauderdale, however, grumbling that Spitalfields, where "many had died through absolute want," had more need of the money.[1]

State of France.

The economic results of the war to France were summarised in an *exposé* of July—a very different document from what Napoleon had served up annually. Agriculture, it said, had made real progress since the Revolution, though the Continental System had been ruinous to the vineyard in many parts, and the forced attempt to introduce the merino breed had rather tended to the deterioration of flocks. A sensible increase had taken place in the working of the mines. Manufactures had suffered by the stoppage of imported raw materials and the loss of foreign demand: at Lyons, *e.g.* where there had been 15,000 looms in 1787, there were now only 8,000. Commerce had been reduced to narrow speculations with small gains, and the system of licenses had proved the ruin of many. Great public works had been under-

be excited to reassert their rights and depose him—on which the Spanish ambassador applied to the British Government to have Horner punished for speaking of his Majesty in such terms. In 1816, Brougham denounced Ferdinand as "the contemptible tyrant whose slightest crime was the usurpation of his father's crown."

[1] *Hansard*, xxviii. 465, 706.

taken—some from motives of utility, others for ostentation. Magnificent roads had been opened on the frontiers, while those of the interior were neglected. The canals were in a better state, although far from completion. The improvements in Paris had been particularly attended to. The arsenals were completely dilapidated, and the immense naval stores collected by Louis XVI. frittered away—seamen being of late regarded as only eventual recruits for the land forces. The public debt had increased by 4,645,469,000 francs in 13 years. All this was exclusive of the "moral mischiefs"—the annihilation of public spirit, the suppression of noble and generous sentiments, the "conversion of religion and systems of education into mere tools of power."[1]

America: end of the war.

In America, for which some of Wellington's veterans were embarked at Bordeaux on the termination of the Peninsular Campaign, the unhappy war—an epithet, says the *Annual Register*, which it peculiarly deserved, as having no great object on either side the attainment of which could in the least compensate for its evils—was conducted with more vigour but with no more marked success for either side. The Embargo and the Non-Intercourse Acts were repealed in April. Negotiations were begun in October, and the Treaty of Ghent, on 24th December, ended a war of which, it was said, the Canadians alone had any reason to be proud.

Regrets as to the Slave Trade clause in the French treaty.

When the Treaty of Peace and Amity between England and France was submitted to Parliament on 23rd June, almost the only matter which caused heartburnings was the Slave Trade clause. Thanks to English diplomacy, Sweden and Holland had consented to the abolition, and Portugal consented to relinquish it north of the equator if the other powers did the same. And now France, from whom nothing had been asked by right of victory, would promise to join in abolishing the trade only in five years. It was, with some reason, suspected that there could have been no object in France refusing to renew the traffic, now that she had lost her colonies, unless she meant to revive it when she got them back. Wilberforce, who had in May carried an Address to the Regent asking him to employ all proper means to obtain a convention of the powers of Europe with a view to the immediate and universal abolition of the trade,[2] in an impassioned speech,

[1] *Annual Register*, 59. The finance of France during the war is discussed by Professor Pariset in *Cambridge Modern History*, ix. 118.

[2] *Hansard*, xxvii. 637.

said that, in the clause, he could see only "the death warrant of a multitude of innocent victims whom he had fondly indulged the hope of having rescued from destruction": we should never have surrendered the French colonies without an express stipulation that no more slaves would be imported into them. Castlereagh, somewhat ineffectively, replied that, if he had given way in this, it was because that, to give way, would be serviceable to the cause itself, and that, to attempt to dictate to a great nation like France, would be the most injurious course that could be pursued with respect to it.[1] Before the year ended, more than 800 petitions were presented on the matter, signed by more than 750,000 persons.[2]

**Budget.** The Budget was taken on 13th June.[3] The total Supply granted for the three kingdoms was £75,624,000, of which the amount for Great Britain was £67,517,000. The chief items were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Navy | £18,786,000 |
| Army | 18,121,000 |
| Extraordinaries | 9,200,000 |
| Extraordinaries unprovided for last year | 6,350,000 |
| Ordnance | 3,955,000 |
| Miscellaneous | 2,500,000 |
| Vote of credit | 3,200,000 |
| Subsidies voted | 3,000,000 |
| Subsidies to be voted | 1,200,000 |
| Bills of credit already voted, to pay the bills issued, according to agreement, to our Allies and guaranteed by us | 1,000,000 |

Of Ways and Means, the chief items were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Annual duties | £3,000,000 |
| War taxes | 20,500,000 |
| Lottery | 200,000 |
| Vote of credit | 3,000,000 |
| First loan | 22,000,000 |
| Second loan | 18,500,000 |

For the first time, no credit was taken for a surplus in the Consolidated Fund; even the last year's modest estimate of half a million had not been realised; and the Chancellor of the Exchequer thought it wise to "permit its growing profits to accumulate for some future time rather than make any further charge on a fund which had disappointed their expectations." The Customs also had fallen short by about £2,000,000. The produce of the Excise,

[1] *Hansard*, xxvii. 1078. [2] *Romilly*, iii. 140.
[3] *Hansard*, xxviii. 63.

however, was considerably greater, and all other branches were comparatively flourishing. Compared with the previous year, the Assessed Taxes showed an increase of half a million, and the Property Tax of a million and a half.[1]

The fire in the Custom House in February had prevented the Chancellor giving the figures of the increase of our trade, but he could state with confidence that the actual exports had largely exceeded those of any preceding year. The loan, which was raised on favourable terms, was made on the old principle, as all those bidding for it were averse to appropriate any part of the growing produce of the Sinking Fund for the service of the year.

In conformity with the Act, the Property Tax would be continued till 5th April, 1815.[2]

The public accounts show that the sums raised during 1814 were even greater than those raised in 1813. The net ordinary revenue was £43,600,000; the war taxes, £24,500,000; other extraordinary resources, £6,200,000; and the loans £36,000,000; making a total of over £111,000,000.[3]

Cotton duties.

In July, there was a rather important debate on the Cotton Duties. The occasion was the presentation of a petition from merchants, manufacturers, spinners, and others connected with the cotton trade of Manchester and neighbourhood, complaining of the duty on cotton wool of 2d. per lb. if imported in British ships and of 3d. if in foreign bottoms, and of the fact that no duty was payable if the cotton was bonded and exported. This, they said, both gave a preference to linen and other rival textiles, and handicapped British cotton goods in comparison with continental makes. Baring and others spoke strongly against the continuance of a duty which amounted to one-fifth of the value of the raw material, and that in a country where living was twice as dear as and taxes so much higher than on the continent. The Chancellor of the Exchequer replied that he saw no reason why a change should be made "in a duty which produced so great a revenue" before its natural expiry in July of the coming year.[4] As to the prophecy that manufacturers would be forced to emigrate, it had been repeated, he said, year after year, for the last hundred and twenty years.

[1] The produce of the Property Tax in 1812 was £12,868,000: in 1813, it was £14,485,000.

[2] *Hansard*, xxviii. 63.

[3] *Ibid.* xxx. Append. i.

[4] *Hansard*, xxviii. 613.

Decrease in cotton taken into consumption.

One is struck, however, in looking at the quantity of raw cotton taken into consumption, to notice that the figures are actually less for 1813 and 1814 than for 1801. There was a sudden and enormous expansion in 1810 when the quantity was over 123 million lbs., while, in 1813, it was under 51 millions, and, in 1814, under 54 millions. Porter's explanation is that, while the general adoption of Arkwright's invention trebled the manufacture in fifteen years, the advance might almost be said to have stopped at that point.[1]

Cash payments to be resumed.

It will be remembered that the Bank Restriction was by law to come to an end six months after the signature of a definitive treaty of peace. But there was no great misgiving as to the keeping of the promise when the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in July, proposed that the date for the resumption of cash payments be filled in as 25th of the following March.[2] The Government, in the person of Lord Liverpool, still made strong assertions about the Restriction—not only had the measures not produced any injurious effect or any depreciation, but "they had been the means of bringing us through the great contest with triumphant success, and had worked the salvation of the country."[3] Meantime, the Gold Coin Bill—to prevent the gold coin of the realm being sold at a price beyond its nominal value—was continued. They must have such a Bill, said Liverpool, for a short time at least.[4]

Agriculture.

The beginning of the year was exceptional for terrible frost and snow all over the country. The Severn and the Tyne were frozen over. The Solway Firth from shore to shore was a field of ice—a vast plain covered with frozen snow like the banks of Newfoundland. Crowds of passengers crossed and recrossed the Thames, and a fair was held for several days on the ice; no coals could get to London by water. The spring continued cold and ungenial, and, although the climatic conditions afterwards were normal, the crop on the whole would seem to have been rather under the average. Thanks to fine harvest weather, what there was was got in in the best possible condition; and, generally speaking, if the quantity was not abundant, the quality was good. In Scotland, indeed, the quantity was pronounced very little, if at all, below the average. But, in England and Wales, the wheat crop in particular was represented to be very deficient both in quantity and quality. The prices of

Crop rather under average.

[1] *Progress of the Nation*, 179.
[2] *Hansard*, xxviii. 628.
[3] *Hansard*, xxix. 630.
[4] xxvii. 393, 543.

cattle and sheep, however, remained very high. But what most affected the farmer was that the great crop of 1813 was not yet cleared off; that immense quantities were being imported; and that the price did not rise. From January to March it was above 78/-, in July 67/8, in October 75/-, and, by December, it was 70/9. The Board of Agriculture average for the year was 74/4. The importations of wheat and wheat flour rose to 852,000 qrs. The price of the loaf over the twelve months kept round 1/-. In the early part of the year, there were some new outbreaks of frame-breaking and incendiarism, Nottingham again being the centre of violence.

Frame-breaking.

In the spring, says Tooke, the speculation in exportable commodities, which began with the anticipation of peace at the close of 1812 and beginning of 1813, reached its height. "The prices of all colonial produce, and of other articles of export, including native productions such as alum, lead, and tin, and of many descriptions of manufactures which had long been waiting a market, advanced very considerably, some beyond all precedent.[1] The extraordinary demand arising out of that speculation for the manufactures of the country occasioned such an extra employment of workmen in the manufacturing districts as entitled and enabled them to command a considerable advance of wages. And as, while wages were thus advanced, there had been a considerable fall in the price of provisions, the manufacturing population, by the end of the year, were in a more satisfactory state than they had been during any part of the twenty years preceding."[2]

Great speculation

How much of the renewed activity took place in 1813 and how much in 1814, is impossible to say, the records of 1813 being lost in the fire. But, comparing 1814 with 1812, there is a very large increase in all branches of foreign trade: imports are higher by £7½ millions; exports, by £4¾ millions; and re-exports by close on £10 millions.

Foreign trade.

The Official values were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports | £33,755,000 |
| Export of produce and manufactures of the United Kingdom | 34,207,000 |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise | 19,366,000 |

The Real value of the exports was £45,494,000.

[1] The great rise in prices he ascribes altogether to "the extravagance of the spirit of speculation which prevailed on the opening of the markets of the continent of Europe by the peace."

[2] *History of Prices*, ii. 6.

The vessels built and registered in the several ports of the empire during the year (except Ireland) were 818, representing 95,976 tons.[1]

**Misgivings as to the economic effects of peace,**

But, after a few months' experience of the new conditions, it began to be suspected that the restoration of peace was not going to be an unmixed blessing to the industry of the country. It had brought anything but prosperity to agriculture: as one writer put it frankly, "the dark threatening cloud, which has cast a gloom over the British agriculturists, has now, in all its horrors, burst over their heads."[2] To the commercial interests, the end of the war promised not peace but a sword.

True, shipping had revived with the opening of the continental ports. In 1793, 1,963 ships, besides coasters, had entered the Maese; in 1808, only 63; after that period, thanks to the French occupation of Holland, only a vessel entered now and then under license. In 1814, 1,284 were registered. The trade of Lubeck, stagnant since 1806, recovered rapidly.[3] In manufactures, however, it began to be realised that the rivalry of peace might be as serious as the rivalry of war. Even in 1802, we find mention of the cotton manufacture as having taken root in France, and, every now and then during the war, we hear rumours of its progress. But now, in the Corn Law debates, it was asserted that Arkwright's frames had been set up in France "in the highest degree of perfection;" that mills had been started in all the different branches of cotton manufacture, and a large body of labourers and skilled mechanics trained; that the machinery was, on the average, better than the machinery of this country, inasmuch as France, starting later, had got the advantage of all the new improvements.[4] Altogether, sums up the *Annual Register*, "the close of the year has not gratified the country with those anticipations of increased prosperity which a state of general peace might have been hoped to justify."[5]

**—and as to taxation.**

When Parliament re-assembled in November, the main question in everybody's mind was "What is going to be done about the taxes?" But, of the Regent's Speech on that occasion, it was said, "Never was there a speech so remarkable for giving little information." The revenue and commerce were announced to be in a most flourishing condition. The circumstances of the long war, however, had "unavoidably led to large arrears," which must be

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiv. Append. xxi.
[2] *Farmer's Magazine*, 1815, 128.
[3] *Annual Register*, 1815, Chron. 2.
[4] *Hansard*, xxix. 837, 1066.
[5] P. 219.

provided for, and "the war still subsisting with America rendered the continuance of great exertions indispensable." No diminution of burdens was mentioned. It was more than suspected that, in spite of the six months' provision, "the most odious of all our burdens, the Income Tax," was to be continued, and the old feeling about the tax was expressed in the strongest terms. Ponsonby was convinced that any other tax would be preferable; "it was a tax which, in its own nature, was abhorrent to the principles of the constitution. Its provisions were completely hostile to the principles of freedom and the inquisitorial power which it recognised was horrible. Instead of paying 10 per cent. under that Act, he would willingly pay 15 per cent. under any other which did not grant such disgusting powers."[1] "The return of peace," said the *Annual Register*, "has hitherto been more efficacious in reviving the spirits than in alleviating the burdens of the inhabitants of these islands."[2]

Apprenticeship Laws.

The agitation regarding the Apprenticeship Laws, begun in 1813, now came to a head. In the early part of the year, several petitions were presented relative to the seven years regulations still in force under the 5th of Elizabeth, cap. 4—*e.g.* one, from certain master manufacturers of Bristol, asking for the repeal of so much of that statute as inflicted penalties on persons exercising trades to which they had not served regular apprenticeships; another from the manufacturers of Coventry, "alarmed lest they should be deprived of a right they had long enjoyed," asking that the Act should be "rendered efficient."[3]

Onslow's Repeal Bill.

A Bill was accordingly brought in by Serjeant Onslow for the repeal of that part of the 5th of Elizabeth which related to the matter.[4] From a very early period after it was passed, he said, the policy adopted by the Act had been condemned. Only with extreme reluctance did juries ever find verdicts in favour of prosecutors. It had been early determined that a person who had served an apprenticeship of seven years to one trade might legally work at any other, but this determination was too violent

[1] *Hansard*, xxix. 167. So strong, in fact, was the suspicion that it would be renewed in some form, that Grenfell made suggestions for its improvement. "If there was any intention to renew it," he said, "he trusted it would contain a provision to make it less unequal. Persons in the middle classes of life, who possessed an income of from £200 to £500, should not be subject to the same percentage as persons who had ten, twenty, or fifty thousand a year" (*Hansard*, xxix. 338).

[2] Preface, v.

[3] *Hansard*, xxvii. 423. See also 545.

[4] *Hansard*, xxvii. 563.

an infringement of the plain words of the statute and had been abandoned. The decisions under the Act were very extraordinary; *e.g.* a gardener did not come within the statute "because it was not an occupation requiring skill," but a fruiterer did; so did a pippin maker; so even did a cook. The Act only continued on the statute book because it had been "frittered away." It was passed in an age when sound principles of commerce were not known—indeed, the statute was not passed in the interests of manufacturers but "from a most mistaken notion of favour to the landed interest." Personally, indeed, he was very far from wishing to discourage apprenticeships, but he did not wish them to be an indispensable qualification for legally carrying on trades. As a fact, apprenticeship was as common in trades outside the statute as within it. "By far the greater part of the working manufacturers had not served a legal apprenticeship to the trades they exercised; it was their protection he aimed at." "It was remarkable that all the witnesses, whatever was their occupation, thought seven years were hardly sufficient to acquire a due knowledge of their trade; even the pipe makers stated seven years to be barely sufficient; what then had the petitioners to dread? they did not want the aid of the statute to prevent others interfering with them." The law, again, applied only to trades which were in existence at the time of the passing of the statute. But the trades which had flourished most had arisen since. It was unequal, too, in its operation, as it did not extend to Ireland or Scotland, and yet if, at an adult age, artisans came to England from these countries, they were affected by it. He could not, he said, go into a tenth of the topics which presented themselves to his mind; he would confine himself to one or two. First was the case of women, "numbers of whom were now employed in trades to which they certainly never served an apprenticeship; and these were affected by the statute." The second was the fact that trade was now so fluctuating that men had to turn from one trade to another, and yet the statute made it penal to do so.

**Discussion on apprenticeship.**

The debate raised most of the points which even yet make the subject a difficult one. Lockhart, while agreeing with most of the propositions, contended that the mover had "not touched upon the general necessity of apprenticeship." He thought a committee should be appointed to examine whether apprenticeships were not beneficial to the morals of the community, and useful to the commerce and manufactures of the country. Again,

he called attention to the fact that, in corporate towns, many obtained a vote only in virtue of having served an apprenticeship. And he suggested that it might be proper "to affix some rate of wages for those who were advanced in their apprenticeships."

Rose said that, although he had a bias in favour of the repeal, yet he must admit that the petitioners had made out a very strong case to the Committee of 1813, proving, indeed, that there were certain trades which would be greatly deteriorated without such regulations.

Philips said that the regulations went to place the trading classes of the country on a level with the Indian castes, and prevent the mobility of labour; and he emphasised the evil effects of combinations among workers—"the journeymen drove the reluctant into combinations through terror, and the apprehensive through the hope of protection and security which their great numbers held out." Atkins held that "we had no means of compelling young minds to pursue a trade except by holding forth motives of encouragement, in showing that they would thereby have advantage over their fellows." Moore said that, according to the petitions, "there were not less than 300,000 in favour of the established law,[1] while the illegitimate, unapprenticed, and itinerant counter petitioners, coming forward against an established right, did not exceed 2,000," and went on to say that, if the repeal were claimed for certain classes, it might be followed by a question as to the practice in the learned professions.

Against the repeal.

The arguments raised at the second reading[2] against the repeal of the Apprenticeship Laws may be summarised thus:

(1) It would be destructive of the interests of those who had served their terms.

(2) It would be ruinous to the morals of youth.[3]

(3) It would injure the revenue by abolishing the fees.

(4) It proposed no efficient substitute for apprenticeship.

[1] "As, in Bristol and other large towns, a very large proportion of the voters are freemen, entitled to their freedom by having served apprenticeships, it is not surprising that the opposition of those petitioners should be earnestly supported in the House." *Romilly*, iii. 135.

[2] *Hansard*, xxvii. 879.

[3] "If the House were to lower its attention down to the humble cottage, they would there see the advantages of this system, in beholding careful masters provided for the youths, who, in addition, were provided with food and clothing, while their morals were protected." Protheroe, *ibid.*

(5) It would put an end to apprenticeship altogether.

(6) The laws had lasted 200 years.

For the repeal.

In favour of the repeal, the arguments were:

(1) The Act confined artisans to one trade, when it was more and more the case that all trades were subject to change and decay; *e.g.* button makers and gunmakers at the end of a war.

(2) It was the offspring of an age of monopoly.

(3) It was none the better for its age; the world was younger when it was passed, though our ancestors were older than us.

(4) It was being broken every day, and the judges always wished to evade it when they could.

(5) It had never been law in Ireland, yet the apprenticeship system was freely and voluntarily adopted there.

(6) There were reasons sufficiently strong to support the apprenticeship system without the assistance of law.

(7) It was the right of every man to employ his energies as he pleased.

But, as Canning said, the difficulty would be to find the means of doing away with the abuses without doing away with the system. The Bill got to the committee stage in the Lords in June, but apparently was dropped.

Bill dropped.

Romilly carries two bills.

During the year, Romilly carried through two more of his reforms. His Bill to take away Corruption of Blood in case of attainder for treason or felony, was introduced as before. This time, although supported by the powerful advocacy of Mackintosh, it encountered considerable opposition from many of the legal members, to whom the antiquity of the existing law was more sacred than its justice,[1] but in the end it passed, although with an amendment excepting both high treason and petty treason from its operation.[2]

The other Bill, to alter to simple hanging the punishment of high treason, with its revolting provisions of disembowelling while

[1] "It was a most extraordinary circumstance in the present day," said Whitbread, "that there was no gentleman who wanted to obtain a correct opinion on a point of law, however complicated, and how dear soever the interests which it involved, who would not cheerfully appeal to his learned friend (Romilly), whose theoretical knowledge was fortified and sustained by the greatest experience; he would not hesitate to put his estate, his character, his life, into the hands of his learned friend; and yet, when he proposed to alter that law of which he was the best judge in the kingdom, he was regarded with jealousy and suspicion—he was looked upon as a man who wished to do mischief to the country." *Hansard*, xxvii. 540.

[2] *Hansard*, xxvii. 342, 360, 527; xxviii. 747.

alive and quartering, was passed with the amendment that the body of the criminal thereafter be beheaded.[1]

But his Bill to make freehold estates of persons dying indebted liable for the payment of simple contract debts—in the same terms as the measure proposed by him seven years before[2]—was not so successful. He argued that while by law the non-payment of debt was visited with great severity—a bankrupt, for instance, was punished as severely as if he had committed a capital offence—the property of a debtor might, without any difficulty, be subtracted from his creditor. The freehold estates of persons engaged in trade were indeed subjected to the payment of debts: he proposed to extend this to persons not in trade. As the law stood, "a man might owe debts to any amount, and leave considerable property behind him at his death to his heir, with his debts unpaid; and the law would suffer the heir to enjoy the property, and to revel in all the luxuries of life, while those very persons whose credulity, perhaps, contributed to the acquisition of that property, might be sent to prison for want of power to recover their debt, and see their wives and children doomed to a workhouse." As usual, the change was strenuously opposed by the legal members as a class. Again one is struck by the argument that the mere antiquity of an Act is a reason for retaining it. "The object of the Bill," said the Solicitor-General in all solemnity, "is to remove one of those landmarks by which the descent of real property from ancestors to their posterity has been guarded from a very ancient period." The modern reader feels, with Sir Arthur Piggott, "lost in surprise that, in the year 1814, a man could have the power of disposing of his property in such a way as to avoid the payment of his just debts."[3]

Freehold Estates Bill

When the Bill was brought into the House of Lords by Lord Erskine, it was objected to on the grounds that it would unsettle the law regarding landed property; that it would do away with all that caution with which it had been the policy of our institutions to fence round such property; that it would lead to an extension of the credit which was already too great in this country; that the ancient law of the land had cautiously abstained from the sale of real property for the payment of debts; and it was negatived without a division.[4]

—again lost.

[1] *Hansard*, xxviii. 538. *Hansard*, xxvii. 397, 592.

[2] P. 149.

[4] *Ibid.* xxviii. 748.

**Poor Law Bills.**

Poor Law matters came before parliament in two connections. One was that, in spite of Horner's Resolutions adopted in the last session, another local bill of the old objectionable character was brought up in March, the Hackney Poor Bill. It was intended, indeed, to assimilate the administration in Hackney to that of sixteen or seventeen adjoining parishes, but this was, as Romilly said, to make it different from the other 10,000 parishes in the kingdom. Happily the Bill was rejected, and the process of parochialising the Poor Law for the time checked.[1]

The other was the passing of a Bill "to repeal certain provisions in local acts for the maintenance and regulation of the poor." The necessity for it came from the confusion which had arisen out of enactments in statutes lately passed, conflicting with each other and with the general law. Among other things, it prohibited corporal punishment in workhouses and confinement for longer than twenty-four hours.[2] It may be noted that Rose now calculated the whole charge incurred for the poor as not less than £6 millions.[3]

**London gaols.**

In this year, the work of Howard and of Mrs. Fry began to bear fruit. On 28th March, in spite of considerable opposition, a Committee was appointed to enquire into the state of the gaols in London and Southwark. The Report, presented on 9th May, was not pleasant reading. There was great overcrowding; liquor was sold as in public houses; no bedding was provided; the food allowance was barely sufficient to support life; petty fees were extorted by the jailers; improper conduct was prevalent: with gratuitous cruelty, a black coffin was placed in the chapel in front of condemned prisoners previous to their execution, etc. The Report was discussed in June, and a Bill to remedy some of the abuses was read a second time, but it was finally lost—it would seem because it was a reflection on the magistrates of the city of London![4]

**Altering bequests.**

The right of Parliament to alter the conditions of an old bequest was raised by the Dulwich College Bill. The statutes made by its founder for the regulation of the College contained the provision that the Master must not be a married man. The object of the present Bill was merely to enable the Master to marry. Several speakers strongly opposed for the sake of the

[1] *Hansard*, xxvii. 385; xxviii. 31.
[2] *Hansard*, xxviii. 95, 677; *Nicholls*, ii. 158.
[3] *Hansard*, xxvii. 701.
[4] *Hansard*, xxvii. 372, 748; xxviii. 70, 529, 674.

principle, and this drew out a strong protest from Lord Grenville. "These foundations," he claimed, "were in fact the creatures of the legislature, and the founder was only permitted by the act of the legislature to make statutes for the time to regulate his college. There must be in every society a supreme power to alter and regulate whatever in its actual situation appeared to be adverse to the public interest. To say that any founder of any institution could make statutes unalterable by the legislature, was as absurd as to say that the present parliament could make laws unalterable by any future parliament." [1]

Decay of London shipbuilding.

From a petition, presented 23rd March, signed by 2,000 artisan shipbuilders of the Port of London, we learn that shipbuilding in the private yards of the Thames had of late "not only sunk into decay, but had been totally annihilated." In 41 slips, only one ship was building: in 62 repairing docks, only eighteen vessels were under repair. The causes assigned were "the arrangements which had been made for building ships in India, whither a great number of the artisans heretofore employed had been constrained to fly." [2]

Steamboats.

The steamboat, one notices, was still something to wonder at. We read of one put on the canal near Limehouse, the Lord Mayor being on board to celebrate the occasion. It was about 40 tons, built to carry between 200 and 300 passengers, and ran two miles in 16 minutes. We are told of another—"a beautiful substantial Steam Packet"—of 200 tons, building on the Thames, to run between London and Calais, carrying 400 to 500 passengers—"calculated to be impelled through the water at the rate of 12 miles an hour against wind and tide." [3]

Stephenson.

It was on 25th July of this year that George Stephenson, then an engine-wright at Killingworth colliery, made his first trip on a "travelling engine" on the tramroads between Killingworth and the port nine miles away. Priority in the invention, however, has been claimed for Hedley in 1813.

The *Times*.

In November, the *Times* announced that its issue of the day had been printed by steam. Instead of 450 copies, 1,100 were now struck off in an hour.

An old story.

An old sumptuary history is recalled by a title among the Acts passed during the year:—"To repeal the Acts of the 30th and 32nd years of King Charles II. for burying in woollen."

[1] *Hansard*, xxvii. 588. [2] *Ibid.* xxvii. 341.
[3] *Annual Register*, 106, 115.

Literature. In literature, the event of the year was the appearance of *Waverley* anonymously—"report assigns it to the most admired poet of the age." Wordsworth published the *Excursion*—"This will never do," began Jeffrey's critique in the *Edinburgh Review*—and Byron, *Lara* and the *Corsair*.

# CHAPTER XXII

## 1814. THE BATTLE OF THE CORN LAWS

In May, the debates on the proposed alteration of the Corn Laws were resumed, but in curiously altered circumstances. During the discussion of 1813, the price of wheat was 117/10 and the quartern loaf 1/6½. But, scarcely had Parliament risen, when the harvest prospects began to tell on prices, and by December, thanks to "an unusually and universally productive harvest," the price of wheat was 73/6 and the quartern loaf 11¼d. Peace had come, and the war restraints had lapsed. But, though the importation of wheat was considerable it was not excessive, and it must have become apparent to everybody that the bounty of God was likely to do more harm to the landed classes than foreign corn could do. **Resumption of debates**

To the impartial observer, it may well have appeared impossible to revive the proposals of the last year, or to defend them, when the price was 73/-, by arguments used when the price was 125/-. During the continuance of a war, when people had long known nothing else than high prices, it might have been possible to persuade an unwilling country to put up with such prices for some time longer, if the public benefit was to be great, and an ultimate fall assured. It was a very different thing to persuade men, now rejoicing in the peace and low prices, to stop the importation of foreign corn, and, when future harvests should be only average ones, to go back to the dear loaf from which they had just escaped. The argument for "independence of the foreigner," too, seemed to lose its force when three of the great powers of Europe were our close allies, and when our great enemy had, with some appearance of relief, got rid of the chief troubler of the peace, and accepted a new king who had long enjoyed our hospitality. **—in very different circumstances.**

Low prices.

Parnell, however, did not flinch. It was impossible, of course, to think now of defending the Select Committee's recommendation of 105/2, but it was clear that he could count on the undivided support of the landed classes to as high a regulative import price as could be secured. When the subject came up in May, wheat had fallen to 73/-, and still the foreign supply was coming in free—it would not be stopped till the price fell to 63/-. The landlords were "caught," as it were, on a vast speculation on high and higher prices. To take advantage of the war prices, they had enclosed greedily, and begun to cultivate land that would pay at those high prices but not at any ordinary ones. They had, moreover, launched out into extravagant living, and burdened their estates with settlements. And the farmers were in the same boat. Presuming on the continuance of the high prices, they had sunk their capital in new lands and improvements, and renewed their leases at high rents which they would not be able to pay if prices came down. And they also had raised their standard of living.

Panic among agricultural classes.

Indeed, something like panic had seized hold of the agricultural classes. For four years, they had lamented over bad seasons. But their lamentations then were nothing to what they were now with a fine harvest. At the same time as a great proportion of the abundant crop of the past year was unsold, the foreign importation was in full flow; if it should continue, they saw no limit to the fall till the regulative price was reached. From every correspondent of the *Farmer's Magazine* came a passionate appeal to the legislature to avert the coming ruin, generally coupled with the assertion that theirs was the cause of the community, while nobody wanted low prices but "a few commercial men" whose interests were opposed to those of all the others. The landed classes, they said, did not claim relief because of the abundant harvest, but they were entitled to expect that prices should not be further reduced by the competition of the foreign farmer. "While foreign grain is poured into the country at the rate of *a hundred thousand quarters per week*, it will soon be indifferent to all but farmers whether the Carse of Gowrie be sown in wheat or planted with Scots fir." To add to their woes, farm labour had not fallen,[1] nor had the prices of horses, stock, and implements, and the occupier of a ploughgate of land now used more manure than used to serve for two or three parishes.

[1] The old maxim in Scotland was that the daily wages of a labourer should correspond to the price of a peck of oatmeal. Now an ordinary workman

With the farmers, it is impossible not to have some sympathy. For four years, they had enjoyed very high prices but had little to sell. Then came a very abundant harvest—about a quarter above the average—and they could get nothing but a very low price. The dispassionate outsider might point out that the low price was only comparative—that it would have been called a high price up till 1800—that it had at least been lower in 1802, 1803, and 1804. The farmer's invariable reply was that the old prices would not pay at the present high rents, and that, on many farms, these prices would not pay even if there were no rent. If the outsider had ventured to suggest that, in economic theory, rent did not enter into costs of production, he would have been thought a fool —and with some reason, for, where the farmer had bound himself by a 19 years' lease, the rent he had contracted to pay for 19 years was, of course, one of *his* costs of production. If he had suggested that cold clays should not be expected to grow wheat, he would have been asked if he wanted this newly reclaimed arable land to relapse into pasture or waste, and all the capital sunk in it to be lost.

Position of the farmers.

The debates began with an elaborate attack on the Report by Rose—in which, however, he laid perhaps greatest stress on a provision which was not in the Report but in the Resolutions, the unlimited permission of export—charging it both with slip-shod history and with inaccurate statistics. Then Parnell moved a new set of Resolutions.[1] They were, he said, "in consequence of the alterations which had taken place in the price of grain,"[2] essentially different from those proposed in 1813, but he "stood forward, boldly and fearlessly, to defend the Report." He repeated that he did not propose his Resolutions with a view to any permanent increase in the price of corn. Though, in the first instance, it was intended to maintain the prices of grain for a time at what they now were, and so far to keep up the price of bread, yet, as the effect of the measure would be to encourage tillage and to promote the growth of corn, by which means a greater supply would be obtained, it must finally occasion a reduction of the price.

Parnell's new Resolutions.

But there was no proposition, he said, before the House for

received the price of two, and a good workman, the price of three pecks. With some reason, this was noticed by many as a complete refutation of the doctrine, generally supposed to be a doctrine of political economy, that the wages of labour were regulated by the prices of provisions.

[1] *Hansard*, xxvii. 665. [2] *Ibid.* 524.

A reasonable protecting price.

continuing the price of corn at any particular standard. With great ingenuity, he contended that the Committee had merely said that, *if* the House considered it right to adopt the principle of the Act of 1670, which had operated so beneficially for the public, the same calculation as fixed the regulating price of that time at 53/4, would fix it at 105/2 now; but "no member of the Committee intended to give an opinion on that matter." For himself, all he wanted was a "reasonable price—one that would secure to the consumer an efficient supply of grain, and afford such a proper remuneration to the grower as would prevent him from sustaining injury." He for one was willing to take it at 84/-, and, "if that was still found too high, he was ready to concur in whatever the House might consider proper." He demurred altogether to the statement that the price at home would necessarily come up to the importing price. Wheat was now 73/-, as the result of last year's abundant harvest, and the quantity of corn throughout the country was so great that a further reduction might be expected. Would any one say that the fixing of the regulative price now at 84/- would raise the home price to that figure?

Why he was now a Protectionist.

As to the propriety of a free exportation, he thought that Rose was the only person he had ever heard speak against it. But, as regards importation, "as he had always avowed himself the friend to a free trade,[1] he now wished to state the reasons which induced him, by placing certain restrictions on the importations of corn, to deviate from that principle. If the corn and commodities of this country were on a level with those of the rest of Europe, he should then think it unnecessary to introduce an artificial system. But the price of corn in England had risen higher than in any other country in Europe, in consequence of the interruption of late years in our communication with the continent, and formed an exception to the general rule."

Adam Smith

The advocates of a free importation of corn rested their arguments on the authority of Adam Smith. "But if that learned man could now give an opinion on the subject, it would, he was convinced, be extremely different from that to be found in his works." He had said that corn, being a very bulky article as compared with manufactures, had a natural pro-

[1] This was quite true. He strongly opposed the bounty on flax seed and the timber duties in 1809 and 1810, and had hitherto preached that "the trade of a country should always be left free."

tection, and was not likely to be imported in such quantities as to operate prejudicially to our growers. But corn could now be brought from Poland and other countries so cheaply, that, notwithstanding the freight, it could be sold at a lower rate in our market than that produced by the English farmer. In Adam Smith's time, besides, the proportion of foreign corn imported was only a five hundred and seventy-first part of the whole consumption: now it was a twenty-fifth.

—quoted in support.

"Buy in the cheapest market," again, was a good rule for nations as for individuals. "If you buy an article from a foreign country which can be made and brought from that country cheaper than you can afford to make it," said Adam Smith, "you will apply your capital to greater advantage if you employ it on some object of industry which you can make cheaper than foreign countries, than if you entered into competition with them where they have great natural advantages over you—you will add more to your industry, to your annual produce, to the sum of your national wealth." The reason and the defence of buying cheaper, then, was that this most contributed to the wealth of the country. But, in regard to corn, would free importation really do this in the present circumstances, when prices had been raised much beyond the level of the rest of Europe in consequence of the restricted intercourse? Obviously, "the immediate effect must be a still greater fall of price, a most injurious extent of loss to all our farmers, a great diminution in the demand for agricultural industry, a decrease of our annual produce, and, consequently, in the amount of our general wealth." True, this might be compensated so far by the advance in manufactures—great exports to pay for the imports of foreign grain. But was it wise or politic to obtain a great increase of manufacturing wealth by an equal diminution of that depending on agriculture? Would any sound policy justify "the general derangement of all that vast stock of labour, skill, and capital, which is vested in agriculture, for the uncertain result of adding, in some measure, to the general wealth of the country?"

Corn an exceptional case.

Adam Smith, again, had made three exceptions to his general rule: (1) when a commodity of our growth was essential to our security as a state—illustrated by his praise of the Navigation Act; (2) when an article of domestic produce had been made subject to internal taxation—in such a case it was fit, he said, to impose an import duty equal in amount to our own tax; (3)

when a particular trade had been for some time protected by restraints on importation—in such a case, he said, it would be very unjust and exceedingly ruinous suddenly to return to a free trade. Surely, by all these canons, the restraint which it was now proposed to impose on the importation of foreign corn was in every respect perfectly justifiable.

**The measure would not raise prices.**

That such a measure would increase the price, he denied; it would decrease it. But, even if it did, it need not increase the cost of production of manufactures: he had every reason to believe that the rate of wages did not vary with the price of corn, but with the demand for labour and the number of persons who offered themselves. When the price of corn was low, wages were frequently high, and *vice versa*.

It was urged, he said finally, that we ought to import a great deal of corn, to enable us to export large quantities of manufactures; but the House ought to consider what goods were exported to the Poles and other foreigners, and what were consumed in Ireland. "So far as Ireland had supplied this country with corn, she took manufactures in return, but this could not be said of foreign states. Surely it was not asking too much of this country to purchase corn from Ireland in preference to Poland."

**Free exportation carried.**

This speech of Parnell, it will be seen, was as clever as his last. The first Resolution, approving of the free exportation of grain, meal, malt, and flour from the United Kingdom, without bounty, was carried without much opposition.[1] As regards importation, in conformity with Parnell's avowed principle that he would fix the regulating price at a figure which would not interfere with the existing price of grain or bread, the ministry, as second Resolution,

**New importation proposals.**

proposed 84/- as the limit under which the high duty would be charged; at 84/- and under 87/-, 2/6; at 87/- and above, 6d. Wheat imported from the colonies in North America was to be charged a differential duty; *i.e.* the regulative price for them was to be 74/- and 77/- respectively.

[1] A curious argument advanced at this point, by a warm advocate of the proposals, is perhaps worth noting: "There was little fear that the manufactures of the country would be materially injured by an increased price of corn; they were chiefly produced by machinery; few persons were employed in the fabrication of a great quantity of goods; and therefore a small advance in the price of corn would not alter their value." Indeed, a high price had some advantages: "When provisions were very cheap, artisans could earn in a few days what was necessary to subsist them for many; they therefore indulged in idleness and dissipation; and when they returned to their labour, they were indisposed to make those exertions which they were accustomed to make" (*Hansard*, xxvii. 730).

On this second Resolution, however, Huskisson moved an amendment, in a speech which was almost as plausible as Parnell's.[1] His two objects, he said, were independence of the foreigner and steady prices. Fluctuation of price was as great an evil as high prices, for the agricultural labourer—the largest class—was nearer the mere existence level than any other, and his wages could not rise with fluctuating prices; hence the increase of poor rates. If his proposal would raise the price to a trifling extent, it would tend to keep it at a steady rate, and not so high as the average of the past fluctuating prices. Foreign grain to the value of £60 millions had been imported. True, an equal amount of manufactures had been exported, but would the £60 millions not have been better spent in improvements in agriculture, when the agriculturists would have given the manufacturers the same extent of market as they got abroad?—the £3 millions imported from Ireland demonstrating the same thing. As it was, thanks to the restrictions of the war, the country was now very nearly independent. But what was to happen if imports came in and prices went down? Already the low price was forcing the farmer to dismiss his labourers, as he was not capable of continuing his improvements—a double evil, for the farmer had his means diminished and was called upon for additional poor rates. Personally, he was in favour of the propositions before the House, but he thought that they proceeded rather too much on the principle of giving the monopoly of the English market to the English corn grower. His amendment, then, was: to retain the present price of 63/- as that at which the prohibitory duty should operate, but, above that, to introduce a sliding scale, reducing the duty above 63/- by one shilling for every rise of a shilling in the price of wheat, till, at 86/- there would be no duty at all. As regards the colonies, he would propose more favourable terms for them than under Parnell's proposal; viz. half the duty on foreign corn. Parnell accepted this amendment "for the sake of unanimity," and Canning,[2] hoping Huskisson "would feel the extent of the concession," consented to the graduated scale as the least objectionable measure—as doing least—for he had considerable doubts whether it was necessary or proper to do anything more" than allow the free exportation of corn.[3]

**Huskisson's amendment.**

**A sliding scale.**

[1] *Hansard*, xxvii. 722. [2] *Ibid.* 725.
[3] *Hansard*, xxvii. 955.

Character of the debates.

The debates were animated and protracted. The resolutions were attacked and defended from all quarters, and with the most contradictory arguments. Some asserted that the interests of landlord and consumer were one; others that the Corn Law was all a conspiracy of the landed classes against the consumer and against the industrial classes, whose growing manufactures it would ruin by raising cost and checking exports. Some said it was meant to raise price and could not fail to do so; others, as positively, that it was meant to lower price and would, or would not, do so. Most, it must be admitted, paid deference to the doctrines of political economy, but no one seemed quite sure what they were in the circumstances, and Adam Smith was constantly appealed to by both sides.

Few matters, as Parnell said, had ever received so much discussion. But as the session went on, so many demands were made for more information and for more time to consider, and the opposition of the country grew so clamorous, that, in the end, the Chancellor of the Exchequer bowed to the storm, and announced that, in consideration of the number of petitions which had been presented against the proposed alterations, he would move to refer those petitions to the consideration of a select committee.[1]

Petitions referred to a select committee.

So ended the debates for the year. Parnell succeeded in what may be presumed to have been his original aim: a Bill to permit the exportation of corn, grain, meal, malt and flour from any part of the United Kingdom, without payment of duty or receiving of bounty, was passed without much opposition.

Number of petitions.

If one counts the number of petitions which the Committee were set to examine, it will be seen that they had rather more than a holiday task. For the early part of the year, the Journals of the House of Commons record about 130 petitions "respecting the Corn Laws," and over 170 "against the Bill." These petitions, of course, came largely from the manufacturing districts; scarcely a large town in the kingdom but sent up its prayer—Scotland being amply represented—and some were very strongly worded. The Newcastle petition, *e.g.* spoke of "the unhallowed efforts of those who would, in pressing the Bill, deprive the country of the blessings of Divine Providence, by raising the price of corn, and scattering distress and devastation among the manufacturers and mechanics." On the other hand

[1] *Hansard*, xxvii. 1084.

there were some twenty-five petitions for amending the Corn Laws, almost entirely from landowners, noblemen, and gentlemen.[1] In them the farmer scarcely appears, and only one (Newcastle) includes manufacturers. As Canning said, on presenting a petition from Leeds with 22,000 signatures, it was impossible not to feel that, unless some urgent necessity called for the adoption of the proposed measures, it would be the height of impolicy to urge them at present.

Report of Committee.

But the Committee evidently had made up their minds. They said not a single word about the petitions they were appointed to consider. Instead, they proceeded, first, to examine into the state of the growth of corn at home and the circumstances which affected the same, turning their attention to three points—(1) the recent extension and improvement of the agriculture of the United Kingdom; (2) the present expense of cultivation, "including the rent"; (3) the price necessary to remunerate the grower. They dwelt accordingly on "the very rapid and extensive progress" of the last twenty years—the great additional capitals applied, the conversion of inferior pasture into productive arable, the great reclamations and enclosures "still in their infancy." The great source of encouragement to this was the increasing population and growing opulence of the kingdom, but it was not to be concealed that these causes had been, "incidentally but considerably," aided by events which had checked importation during the war. The sudden removal of these impediments might prevent the enclosure and cultivation of great tracts of land still lying waste and unproductive, counteract the spirit of improvement in other quarters, and check its progress upon lands already under tillage. Within the same twenty years, money rents and the general expenses of management and cultivation had been doubled. In these circumstances, it was the opinion of most of the witnesses that 80/- per quarter was the lowest price which would afford the British grower an adequate remuneration. Indeed a higher price, stated by different witnesses from 84/- to 96/-, would be necessary as regards the "cold clay or waste and inferior lands, on which wheat could not be grown but at an expense exceeding the average charge of its cultivation on better soils," and a considerable proportion of wheat was now raised on such lands. If

[1] It is again significant that among them were petitions from Queen's County and Wexford.

such lands were withdrawn from tillage, they would for many years be of very little use as pasture, and the loss from such a change, as well to the occupiers as to the general stock of national subsistence, would be very great.[1]

In the second place, they proceeded to give the substance of the evidence presented to them respecting the trade in foreign corn, regretting that they had not been able to procure any information respecting the expense of raising corn in foreign countries; discussed the probable sources of the foreign supply; and ended by generalities that it would become the wisdom of Parliament to protect British agriculture, while affording the greatest possible facility and inducement to the import of foreign corn when, from adverse seasons, our own growth was inadequate.

**Could England compete on a Free Trade basis**

It is of at least academic interest to enquire what amount of truth there was in the apparently universal belief that England could not compete with foreign corn without Protection. Here, however, one can only collect widely diverging calculations.

**—with the Baltic countries**

The two sources of supply were the Baltic countries and France. Malthus, in 1814, quoted the evidence given before the parliamentary committees as showing that the Poles could bring their corn to Dantzig at 32/- a quarter during the four years ending with 1813.[2] Rose, in the same year, to show that 80/- was a sufficient protecting price, said that the last average price he had seen at Dantzig was 36/3, and that the expenses in time of peace amounted to 26/- (shipping charges, 10/-, insurance, 2/-, freight, 14/-).[3] Frankland Lewis, also in 1814, to prove that the agricultural interest was in no danger, quoted an official document to the effect that grain could not be imported from the Baltic into England at a lower price than 78/-, and that without including the profit of the merchant, which would bring it up to 84/- or 85/-.[4]

**—and with France?**

As regards France, Baring, in 1815, in order to demonstrate that the bounty paid by British consumers for the support of the landed interest was £18¾ millions when the importing price was 65/-, and, at 80/-, would be £14 millions more, took the

[1] Petitions relating to the Corn Laws, 1813-14; No. 339. House of Commons Collection, vol. iii. 195-342. The Report is also given in the *Farmer's Magazine*, 445.

[2] *Observations*, 19.

[3] *Hansard*, xxvii. 695. He quoted the charges in time of war as, shipping charges, 10/-, French license, 10/-, insurance, 17/-, freight, 45/-; in all, 82/-.

[4] *Hansard*, xxvii. 952.

average price of wheat in France and Flanders at 40/-, and allowed 5/- for freight.[1] Rose denied both the 40/- and the 5/-,[2] and Frankland Lewis gave the price of wheat in Paris as 58/- and the average price throughout France as 46/-.[3] Malthus, in 1814, inferred an average not exceeding 40/-, and on this based the conclusion that, "with these prices so near us, and with the consequent power of supplying ourselves with great comparative rapidity . . . there can be no doubt that, if our ports were open, our principal supplies of grain would come from France; and that, in all years of common plenty in that country, we should import more largely from it than from the Baltic."[4]

[1] *Hansard*, xxix. 967.
[2] *Ibid.* 987.
[3] *Ibid.* 1014.
[4] *Grounds of an Opinion, etc.*, 14.

# CHAPTER XXIII

## 1815. WATERLOO

The Bank Restriction

WHEN Parliament reassembled on 8th February, the very first matters brought up were the Bank Restriction and the taxation. The Chancellor of the Exchequer intimated that he would move the House into committee to consider the continuing Act of last year, and it was understood that he would propose further delay in the resumption of cash payments. Horner was indignant. No papers connected with the subject had been given to the House nor indeed any information whatever. How could they know what the Bank had been doing during the past year? Was the Chancellor going to propose a renewal of the restriction without first moving for a Committee on the affairs of the Bank? Vansittart acridly retorted that it was not the first time Horner had been hardly dealt with on the question of the Bank restriction, as all the events which had happened since the time when that question was first agitated had controverted the opinions of the chairman of the Bullion Committee.[1] On the 16th, he said that all were agreed that cash payments could not possibly be resumed by the 21st March, and moved to bring in a Bill for the continuance of the restrictions for a time to be limited. The Restriction Act must continue "at least until the accounts of our foreign expenditure could be wound up, and until the state of our exchanges, and of the bullion trade, should be further improved."[2]

But, on 2nd March, Lord Archibald Hamilton moved for a Committee on the State of the Bank of England, with a view to find out whether the Bank was or was not in a situation to resume cash payments, and whether it was desirous of so doing. It was on evidence, he said, that the Bank did not think it would be a serious evil if the restrictions were made permanent. If so, it was high time for Parliament to take the subject into its

[1] *Hansard*, xxix. 711. [2] *Ibid.* 790.

consideration. Before the restriction, the dividend had been 7 per cent; since then, the bonuses declared were upwards of seven millions, equal to a dividend of 56 per cent. on the capital.

Vansittart prefaced his reply by saying that he was about to submit a proposition to the House which would limit the restriction to a definite period, in fact, to 5th July, 1816, and this, he thought, made the appointment of a Committee not only unnecessary but indeed harmful. Taking *seriatim* the definite questions suggested by Hamilton: (1) whether the Bank was in a condition to resume cash payments—the answer was that the proposed enquiry would tend to defeat the resumption by inviting speculation and raising the price of gold: (2) whether the £3 millions advanced without interest were not intended as an inducement to extend the restriction—the answer was in the negative: (3) if it was not the restrictions that had added so greatly to the profits of the Bank—no one could say what the profits would have been if these restrictions had not taken place; the restriction was a matter of state policy—not the wish of the Bank—and any individual who bought three per-cents. when the price was 46 or 47 had of course made enormous profits: (4) what would be the expense to the Bank of the resumption—no one could tell, but, if a parliamentary committee once entered on an enquiry into the price of bullion, he could say that no bullion would be found to buy, and that there would be an enormous advance in its price: (5) if the Bank was ready to replace its tokens with standard silver coin[1]—he apprehended that it was, but the silver currency must be referred to a period when payments in gold were resumed.

—to be again continued.

"If the peace with America had been ratified at the same time with that at Paris—if the foreign expenses had been concluded—if the arrears which were due to foreign states had been paid—if the keeping up of a large standing army on the continent had not been necessary—and if we had not had to transport a large army across the Atlantic, the short period which had elapsed since the conclusion of the peace, he was satisfied, would have so completely restored the affairs of the country to their original situation that the Bank would, without delay, have been able to resume their cash payments." As it was,

[1] The problem of the silver coinage at this time was complicated by a great importation of French silver, which was forced into circulation as shillings and sixpences (*Hansard*, xxix. 1117).

in view of the progressive improvement in exchange since 1814, he thought himself justified in saying that the country would return to its old currency by July, 1816.

Opinions on resumption —Rose,

Rose, on the other hand, thought it the most visionary thing in the world to suppose that there was a possibility of resuming cash payments until the market price of gold was as low as the mint price. It was now £4 9/- and, while there was such a difference, it would be quite useless to issue gold; it would be melted down as fast as it was coined.

Horner,

Horner did not believe that cash payments would be resumed when it came to July; new ways would be found of accounting for the exchanges not having risen as was expected, and he repeated his firm faith in his original convictions as expressed in the Report of the Bullion Committee. At the same time, he "had never supposed that, when gold was at £5 11/- or, as it had once been, at £5 14/-, this rise was solely attributable to an excess of paper circulation, or that the apparent depreciation was the true measure of the excess in the issues of the Bank. What he conceived to be the true state of the case was that, a depreciation having taken place from excess, an opening had been made for the operation of other causes, which were now in a great measure removed."

Tierney,

Tierney felt convinced that he would never live to see the resumption of cash payments. He fully believed that, so long as the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Bank could contrive to agree, the restriction was likely to continue.

Huskisson,

Huskisson thought that the Chancellor's statement was entitled to attention, and considered that the resumption might take place even sooner than 1816. "With regard to a vote which he had formerly given, in 1811, for the resumption of cash payments in two years, he would not disguise the satisfaction he now felt that that vote was overruled by the House; because, if it had not, it would have been impossible for this country to make those great efforts which had happily produced such glorious results. Nor was there any inconsistency between his past and his present conduct; for no human foresight could, by any possibility, have anticipated these results."

and Baring.

Baring, on the other hand, firmly believed that there was no more chance of resuming cash payments in July twelvemonths than there was of resuming them to-morrow. His doubt, he said, "arose from the artificial state in which we were, and the

impossibility of going on without an artificial currency to meet that state. If the high prices and high taxes continued, those high prices and high taxes could never be paid in guineas, but must be paid in paper. The only evil of bank notes, in his opinion, had been their gradual extension from year to year." All the same, he was convinced that there could be no permanent security for this country till its circulating medium was restored to its original state.

Vansittart in reply hoped that he would live many years after the restriction had ceased, and did not hesitate to repeat it as his sanguine belief that the event would take place at the period which he proposed to name. The appointment of a committee was therefore refused.[1] Vansittart

On the bringing up of the Report of the Bill, however, on 7th March, he confessed that he was not so sanguine as to say confidently that the restrictions would be removed by the date mentioned. On the third reading, Horner proposed the addition of a clause to the effect that measures should be taken by the Bank to enable them to resume cash payments; Grenfell, supporting him, was persuaded that, if the House did not urge the Bank, payments would never be resumed; and Lord Archibald Hamilton said that the Bank must first reduce its paper before it could pay in specie, and that this was contrary to its immediate interests. The amendment, however, was lost, and the Bill passed on 9th March.[2] —not now so sanguine.

The other subject brought up on the first day of the session was the proposed taxation of the year under the new conditions of peace.[3] The continuance of the detested Property Tax was, of course, the chief matter discussed. Very numerous petitions, it was said, were being prepared in opposition to it. In Liverpool, *e.g.* "there were not above seven or eight individuals paying the tax by whom the petition against it was not signed." In answer to urgent questions, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that he would immediately propose a financial scheme of which the Property Tax was no feature, and his speech was taken to mean that, failing the acceptance of his proposals, the Property Tax would appear as an alternative.[4] A new financial scheme.

[1] *Hansard*, xxix. 1177. [2] *Ibid.* xxx. 42, 85. [3] *Ibid.* xxix. 693.

[4] It is an indication, however, of the gradual change of opinion regarding the tax that, on presenting a petition against it, the Duke of Norfolk took occasion to say that a tax on the income of property, judiciously modified, would be the best tax that could be adopted (*ibid.* 760).

Praise of the Property Tax.

On 20th February accordingly, the Chancellor of the Exchequer laid before the House the finance arrangements proposed.[1] He deprecated the idea that any expression of feeling from the country should preclude them from renewing the Property Tax if circumstances rendered it necessary. He called attention to the very important benefits which the country had derived from it, going into a calculation to show that while, by the war taxes, a funded debt of £305 millions had been saved since the Peace of Amiens, with an annual charge of about £14½ millions, the Property Tax had actually furnished £126 millions, by which an additional charge of £180 millions of stock and nearly £9 millions of permanent taxes had been avoided. He wished the tax to be considered "as a great and powerful resource which, in times of public emergency, might and ought to be resorted to." It had, indeed, its imperfections. "With respect to funded property, it might be considered as absolutely perfect, as it admitted no possibility either of evasion or overcharge; and, with respect to landed property, it approached very nearly to perfection. But, with reference to trade, it was obviously imperfect. An extensive power was inevitably and necessarily obliged to be given to the commissioners for the purpose of procuring regular returns. If, at any future time, the tax should be renewed, with such an amendment as would ensure true returns without having recourse to the power he had just noticed, he thought that was all the improvement that could be looked for."

The Property Tax might, indeed, very properly have been made use of now in order to enable the country to defray the ultimate expenses of the war—the "winding-up charges,"—for "all long and expensive wars had entailed upon the country a winding-up of expenditure of great amount and dimensions." His reason for not thinking it advisable to have recourse to it at the present moment was that "the circumstances of the present time, when so great a fluctuation was observable in the price of every article, which affected every class of society, would create so many difficulties in the way of its collection as to render it peculiarly vexatious and disagreeable." It would bear very unequally, particularly on the farmer. "Various ideas had been suggested to him for the purpose of continuing this tax for another year, with certain modifications which he would shortly refer to. One was to exempt from the operation of the tax, at present,

Why he did not propose to renew it.

[1] *Hansard*, xxix. 853.

those who were affected by the circumstances of the times, and render it applicable only to fixed property, such as the rent of land, money in the funds, and other property already realised." But this would be specifically to tax one form of income—*e.g.* money lent to the public—and this could legitimately be charged only "in a general tax affecting the whole country." Another was "to charge persons possessing very high incomes at an increased rate, and either greatly to reduce the charge, or to exempt altogether from the operation of the Act, individuals of more confined circumstances. This, however, he considered to be totally impracticable, because the Act gave them no insight into the total income of any person,"[1] and it would be objectionable "as it would render a minute classification of the different ranks of society necessary."

The amount of money which would be required for the year, it was impossible as yet to say. What he intended to submit was rather "what he considered to be applicable to the gradation from a war to a peace establishment." A large sum of money would have to be borrowed. The Property Tax under no circumstances could have covered the sum wanted. But the abandonment of the tax would add considerably to the amount of the loan.

General view of the financial position.

He then proceeded to give a general view of the position of the country on the restoration of peace, comparing it with "the most flourishing period which the history of this country presented," namely, 1791.

In 1791, the taxes forming the Consolidated Fund yielded £13,472,000. The land and malt duties added to this gave

[1] The Property Tax, it should be noted, did not, as now, enquire into the total net income of a person. The existing method of assessment is suggested in Vansittart's words: "The principle of the Act was to charge every species of income, from whatever source it might be derived, as a distinct property, without examining the general situation of the proprietor. A person, for instance, might be employed in trade at a variety of places. He might have a banking house in London—a mercantile establishment at Bristol—£100,000 in the funds—and £5,000 a year in land; and, as the Act was at present constituted, he would be separately and distinctly assessed for every one of these sources of property, without any one assessor being able to say what the aggregate amount of his income was. On one branch, such an individual might be a loser, while, on another, he might gain considerably." Or, as Baring put it from another point of view in the next year: "it took 10 per cent. from the trader's profits in one concern, and allowed him no drawback for the losses he might sustain in the other; thus a shipowner who might gain on one vessel was obliged to pay the property tax on his profits on her, though he should sustain a loss to an equal amount on the other" (*Hansard*, xxxiii. 30).

£2,558,000; making a total of £16,030,000. The charge of the Debt, the Civil List, and other items came to £11,321,000. Deducting the latter from the former, a sum of £4,709,000 remained "disposable for the service of the country."

In January last, the taxes composing the Consolidated Fund yielded £38,256,000, and the sum appropriated from the war taxes to make good the charge of the loans was £2,706,000, making a total of £40,962,000. The charge of the Funded Debt was £35,420,000; of other loans was £552,000; the Civil List, pensions, and other charges, came to £1,571,000; making a total of £37,543,000. Deducting the latter from the former, there was left a net sum of £3,419,000, to which fell to be added the annual duties to pay off bills, £3 millions; these, together, made a total sum of £6,419,000 "applicable to the establishments of the country."

"It was, therefore clear, that, at the close of a war of the most expensive description, they were possessed of a disposable fund considerably larger than that which they had at its commencement—with this addition also, that they had now a Sinking Fund of £11,300,000; whereas, when the war broke out, the Sinking Fund amounted only to £1,300,000. It was true, they now had a debt of £650,000,000, and, at the time he before adverted to, it was only £230,000,000. But, comparing the Sinking Fund with the Debt, it would be evident that we had at least augmented our means of meeting it in a fourfold proportion." There was, of course, also a large unfunded debt. "But, looking to the clear surplus of war taxes, which was amply sufficient to discharge this latter debt in the course of a few years, or to provide for the charge of funding that debt by pledging a part of those taxes," he thought the Property Tax might safely be given up.

**Proposed peace establishment.**

Still, very considerable exertions would be necessary to defray the different claims on the establishment. It appeared to him that the peace establishment for the next three or four years could not be less than £19,000,000, or £17,000,000 for Great Britain alone. Taking the £6½ millions of permanent income from the annual taxes and Consolidated Fund, and £6 millions from the war taxes of customs and excise—which he meant to continue—he would propose new taxes to the amount of £5 millions; in all £17½ millions, which, according to his calculations, would defray the cost of a peace establishment.

The first resource, as already said, would be the continuance of the war taxes of customs and excise, except those already expired, such as that on the tonnage of ships, on the export of British manufactures, and on goods carried coastways, as also the duty on the importation of cotton wool in British ships. What taxes were to be continued.

For the £5 millions of new taxes—here there arose a general buzz of interest—taking the Assessed Taxes first, he proposed to extend the Window Tax by imposing it on greenhouses and conservatories, counting 48 square feet of glass as one window, and charging each such window at 3/6, and charging the windows of shops, warehouses, and manufactories at the same rate. This would yield £50,000. He would increase the Inhabited House Duty by about 30 per cent., imposing a higher rate on larger rents than on lower, and would extend the duty to the rents of warehouses and manufactories. This would yield £546,500. The duty on servants, carriages, and horses he would increase on an average 80 per cent., with no increase, however, on horses used in husbandry. Bachelors, "who already paid an additional rate on servants," would pay an additional rate of 50 per cent. on servants, carriages, and horses. The total increase, therefore, of the Assessed Taxes he calculated to amount to £2,503,000. If this seemed a large augmentation, it should be remembered that it was small in comparison with the Property Tax from which these classes would be relieved. The new taxes.

In Customs and Excise, he meant to propose an additional tax on tobacco—2¾d. per lb. of customs and 3d. of excise (£300,000); an excise duty on wine of £20 per tun on Portugal wine and others in proportion (£500,000). There would be an addition to the duties on licensed dealers under the excise (£300,000).

The remaining tax would be 1d. on every newspaper conveyed by the general post (£50,000). Later on, he would propose a further increase of Post Office duties on foreign letters and ship letters (£75,000).

This would return a total of £3,728,000. The balance of the £5 millions would be made up by stamp duties (excluding stamps on proceedings in courts of law), new regulations with respect to bounties and drawbacks, and a tax on beer.

What must still be considered was the possibility of war—although every month rendered stronger the probability of a continuance of the peace. "The country must be well aware that the best security for peace was to show that we were perfectly prepared for war." Under the plan he had sketched, by forbearing

to encroach on the Sinking Fund and by the discontinuance of the Property Tax, we should have this security.

Criticism.

The proposal to raise so large a sum within the year—by the continuance of the war taxes and the imposition of new imposts for four years—as "winding-up expenses," was much criticised, as was also the evident reluctance of the Government to part with the Property Tax—"they dared not oppose themselves to the wishes of the great body of the nation, and now they had not the generosity to confess it." Newport said that Ireland would not be able to defray the £2 millions proposed as her share of the expenses of a peace establishment: the country was enormously taxed, the revenue was already a million below the interest upon the Sinking Fund, and the Debt was £132 millions. Baring committed himself to the statement that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was under a delusion when he trusted to the taxes continuing as productive in peace as in war; the revenue, he said, must sustain a considerable reduction.[1] "If he were compelled to speak only in praise of the Property Tax, all the good that he could say of it was that it was dead; for all the opprobrious epithets that had been heaped upon it appeared to him not to come up to its deserts. In theory, it might be very beautiful to tax every man according to his property, but nothing could be more odious than that a man should be catechised by persons who possessed more than inquisitorial powers; for his own part, he would much rather be summoned before the bench of bishops, to be questioned as to his belief in the doctrinal points of religion, than appear before the commissioners under the property tax."[2]

[1] In answer to this "extraordinary estimate," Huskisson said that no such diminution was to be expected. "Nine millions of taxes had been that night remitted, which would be thrown into the usual channels of expenditure, and find their way into the Treasury. If the rent of land was diminished, as well as the price of labour, this circumstance might diminish the amount of the revenue, but the stockholders, whose nominal revenue remained the same, becoming more opulent by the reduction of prices, would augment the revenue by their increased expenditure."

[2] Two observations of Tierney are, perhaps, worth recording. (1) "The greatest merit of the Property Tax," he said, "was the dislike so generally felt to it; and if it could be held out to the people *in terrorem* against entering into war, it had done great service indeed." (2) "That excellent argument for a time of war did not apply now—that our means ought to equal our wants; for, in a peace, our wants ought to be equal to our means. If we were at peace, we ought to abstain from every arrangement not absolutely necessary; we ought to try how every farthing could be saved." Pp. 875, 877.

Rose defends the Property Tax.

Rose, on the other hand, took occasion to make an elaborate defence of the tax. The petitions against its continuance, he said, were adopted without the persons signing them realising in the least that, if their request was granted, they would unavoidably be subjected to other burdens, bearing probably much more heavily on the great mass of the people, particularly the middle and lower classes. The tax, as a fact, was due to Pitt's determination, in 1797, not to borrow the whole sum necessary for the war, but to raise a considerable portion by taxation during the year; and, till the renewal of the war in 1803, it contained abatements on the smaller incomes. But for this determination, the National Debt would have been £200 millions more than it was, representing an annual charge of £12 millions. He regretted that the Chancellor had not been allowed to modify the tax, relieving smaller incomes, and leaving the burden on those best able to bear it—a consummation which could be better reached by a modified Property Tax than by any other mode of taxation—and concluded by stating his conviction that the ingenuity of man could not devise so wise and provident a mode of raising the money immediately wanted as by the Property Tax amended and modified. Another member, with some justice, observed that the plan was "but a change of name for the Property Tax."

Grenville denounces the proposed peace establishment

In the Upper House, Grenville, speaking to Military Establishments in time of peace, held up his hands in horror at the proposal. "I have been told that there was an individual capable of proposing, and an assembly of English gentlemen who had endured to hear of, a peace establishment of £19 millions a year!" Why, at the close of the American War, an establishment of £6 millions only was founded, and, in 1792 it was actually less. It would not be consistent with his duty, he said, if he did not call attention to the "dreadful purpose which is harboured of making this nation a great military power." "No one can have proposed a peace establishment of £19 millions, but with the intention of changing the constitution of the country in such sort that it shall no longer continue a free country—making this nation rank among the great military nations of Europe. . . . For, if a large military establishment is permanently kept up—if this nation becomes a military power—we must of necessity cease to be a free, and, consequently, a happy people."[1]

On 9th March,[2] the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced

[1] *Hansard*, xxix. 914. [2] *Ibid.* xxx. 90.

Modifications in Assessed Taxes.

that he meant to modify the window tax as regarded factories; instead of 3/6 per window he would make it 1/6, and, where the number exceeded 100, the windows beyond that would be charged by measure as in the case of hot-houses. The warehouse tax (including factories) would not be progressive, but at the rate of 2/- in the pound however high the amount of the rent might be. Shops in those houses already exempt from payment of taxes on account of poverty would not be chargeable. The Marquis of Lansdowne protested that no modification could make such a tax bearable; it had no relation to ability to pay; and it was inhuman, as being a tax on light and air which would make factories more unfavourable to health than they already were.[1]

The cotton tax was protested against by Finlay, the member for Glasgow, who spoke in name of the manufacturers of that city; the duty on cotton conveyed in foreign ships, he argued, would lead to France or Holland being made a depot, where cotton would be brought from America, and then transferred to this country by British ships used as lighters; and the tax would almost certainly be countervailed by America in an export duty.[2]

The customs and excise part of the new taxes received the sanction of the House, but the tax on wine was withdrawn for political reasons connected with Portugal.[3]

The Hundred Days.

But, meantime, the Hundred Days had begun.[4] The Congress of Vienna was still sitting, and seemed, indeed, on the verge of breaking up owing to the colliding ambitions of the three emperors, when, on 20th February, Napoleon escaped from Elba. He counted, rightly it seemed, on the discontent already making itself felt over the acts of the restored monarchy—the Bourbons, like the Stewarts, forgot nothing and learned nothing — on the many thousands of his disbanded troops who would be only too willing to enlist under their old, or indeed any captain, and on the half-pay officers whose careers otherwise were likely to be at an end.

On his first entrance into France, he announced himself as lieutenant for his son, but, by the time he reached Lyons, he had assumed his old title, and, on 20th March, the *Moniteur* announced, that "his Majesty the Emperor arrived at his Palace of Tuileries

[1] *Hansard*, xxx. 174. [2] *Ibid.* 173. [3] *Ibid.* 356.

[4] —"when the disturber of Europe and the destroyer of the human race reappeared upon the throne of France, and the world was once more in arms." (The Speaker on the prorogation of Parliament in July.)

at eight o'clock."[1] On 4th April, Coulaincourt announced his resumption of the government of France and his desire of maintaining peace with all other sovereigns.[2] "Napoleon," wrote Romilly in his diary, "seems, as it were, at his pleasure, and just at his own season, quietly to have resumed his empire."[3] The differences among the allies closed up as by magic. They issued a Proclamation on 13th March, declaring that, in violating the Convention which established him at Elba, Buonaparté had destroyed the only legal title on which his existence depended, and placed himself outside the protection of the law,[4] and this was followed up by treaties between the powers virtually renewing the treaty of Chaumont. Parliament, by an overwhelming majority,[5] voted enormous sums for the equipment of army and

"Sa Majesté se couche aux Tuilleries."

[1] "Le tigre s'échappa d'Elbe; le monstre resta trois jours sur le mer; le traître débarqua à Fréjus; le chef de brigands avança à Grenoble; Napoléon entra à Lyons; l'Empereur arriva à Versailles; Sa Majesté se couche ce soir aux Tuilleries" (quoted in Mary Frampton's *Journal*, 247).

[2] The reply of the allies was that, while disclaiming any design to deny France the right to choose her own form of government, they thought they had a right to contend against the re-establishment of an individual whose past conduct had demonstrated that he would not suffer other nations to be at peace. "He calls himself Emperor of France, impiously, by the grace of God," said Castlereagh in Parliament, "and he is in no degree fettered, in the exercise of his authority, by any of those acts which he, for the moment and to deceive the world, agreed to. Sooner than shed one drop of French blood, he declared that he would abandon France and his family—and, in violation of this statement, he now returns to that country—not in consequence of any new request—not in consequence of a defeasance of any engagement that had been entered into with him—but in absolute defiance of the most explicit stipulations that human foresight could devise." *Hansard*, xxx. 422.

[3] iii. 160.

[4] The wording is: "En violant ainsi la Convention qui l'a établi dans l'isle d'Elba, Buonaparté détruit le seul titre légal dont son existence dépendait; en reparaissant en France avec des projets de confusion et de désordre, il s'est mis hors de la protection de la loi, et il manifeste à l'univers qu'il ne peut y avoir ni paix ni trêve avec lui. Les Puissances déclarent en conséquence que Napoléon Buonaparté s'est exclu des relations civiles et sociales, et que comme ennemi et perturbateur du monde, il a encouru la vindicte publique." The latter expression, as Wellington himself pointed out, means "public justice," not "public vengeance." In England, however, it was made the occasion of an attack on the Duke as having put his name to a counsel of assassination. How much this "vindicte publique" means from the standpoint of international law, is doubtful. Blucher probably would have translated it literally. In the rout after Waterloo, it is said, he sent off a flying column with orders to seize Napoleon, dead or alive, and expressed his intention of shooting him off-hand, as an outlaw, if he were captured. *Cambridge Modern History*, ix. 644.

[5] One naturally expects to find Parliament unanimous in face of such a danger, but it was not so. With many, political ambitions were stronger than any other consideration, and some were sincere in regarding the

navy, and the subsidy of £5,000,000 was renewed to the allied powers. On 11th June, Napoleon left Paris, as he said, "to match himself with Wellington," and, on the 18th, Waterloo ended the greatest war of modern history.

Waterloo.

The Property Tax again

The coming of Napoleon, however, and the recurrence of the war expenditure, made it necessary to reconsider the financial proposals, and, on 17th April, the Chancellor of the Exchequer postponed the second reading of the Assessed Taxes Bill in view of continuing the Property Tax.[1] In answer to questions, he said that, whether the country was already in a state of war or of defensive and expensive pacification, the renewal of the Property Tax would be equally necessary for the public service. Two days afterwards, he brought forward a Resolution renewing it for another year. In the discussion, the old vehement dislike of the tax manifested itself, Whitbread, *e.g.* saying that, once imposed, it would be saddled upon the country for ever, and Ponsonby, that "few persons in the House or out of it would live to see it taken off"—like the Bank Restriction Act, it would be a part of the peace system. No modifications were made. The suggestion was thrown out that it should be extended to Ireland—to no place, said Bankes, would it be more applicable. Newport said that such a proposal might endanger the connection between the two countries, and Grattan asserted that he was prepared at the proper time to prove that it was altogether foreign to the habits, condition, and financial situation of Ireland, "which would prefer more productive taxes." The Irish Chancellor, however, disclaimed any intention of proposing it, one reason being that, even in England, it was a long time before the tax was made fully productive, and before the machinery of collection could be perfected, while the present tax was proposed for only one year.[2]

renewal of war as the greater evil. Burdett represented that the war was an interference with the internal affairs of France, that Napoleon was the chosen of the French nation, and that an attempt to re-establish the Bourbons would be equally unjust and hopeless. Whitbread denounced it as the beginning of a new crusade for determining who should fill the throne of France, and actually obtained 72 votes for a motion against the war.

[1] *Hansard*, xxx. 652.

[2] The proposal, however, was again made by Bankes on 25th April, on the ground that he considered this a new era of taxation, and that the Property Tax should be looked upon as a tax that was to exist for a great number of years, but it found almost no supporters. *Hansard*, xxx. 850.

When the Bill reimposing the tax reached its third reading in the Commons,[1] a strong appeal against its operation was presented on behalf of the farmers, with reference to the assessment of their profits at three-fourths of the rent they paid. It was a singular way of estimating profits, said Horner, when the difficulty or inability of the farmer to pay his rent was notorious and undisputed. Frankland Lewis said that, in many instances, he was satisfied that a tax of 1/6 per £ on rent had amounted to no less than 35 per cent. on the farmers' profits. The same argument was used in the Lords by Grey, but the Bill passed without change.[2] —without change.

On the lottery vote[3] in the Committee of Ways and Means, Whitbread raised the old objections to the lottery as inconsistent with public morality. Vansittart, while regretting the necessity of resorting to this plan of finance, said that the evils were now done away with by the establishment of a variety of salutary checks, which put an end to the former gambling. Whitbread was glad to have the assurance, but, from the right honourable gentleman's character, he had been led to expect that he was not disposed to sell so much wickedness for so small a price. Lottery.

As the session went on, the new Stamp Duties were found to include a duty on law proceedings in Scotland.[4] This was very much objected to. It was argued that it would do away with all actions for small debts—"the expense would be so great that no person could originate an action in the Court of Session unless for sums of great magnitude"; it would operate, said Romilly, as "a total denial of justice to the inhabitants of Scotland, where law proceedings were already so extremely heavy." The Chancellor of the Exchequer admitted that taxes on law proceedings were on general grounds objectionable, but, when it was con- Stamp duties.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxi. 160.

[2] In the course of debate, Grenville said that it appeared from a schedule laid upon the table that, of the £14 millions raised by the tax, only about £2 millions were raised from trade, and the other £12 millions chiefly from land (*Hansard*, xxxi. 236). The confused ideas regarding taxation were frankly put by the Marquis of Douglas on the third reading. The Property Tax, he said, was most unjust and impolitic in its principle and in its operation—in its principle, because it took a certain proportion of the whole income of the country, and when they once came to take 10 per cent. in this way they might, on the same principle, take 99 per cent.; and in its operation, because it imposed the burden most unequally and unfairly on the different kinds of property. It was therefore an unjust and unconstitutional tax. The proper objects of taxation were articles of luxury and "matters of that kind, because they limited themselves" (*Hansard*, xxxi. 242).

[3] *Hansard*, xxxi. 239. [4] *Ibid.* 314, 555, 660, 691.

sidered how small a proportion of the expenses in a law suit consisted of law duties, the objection did not seem well founded. As regards the Newspaper Duty,[1] he announced that it would be altered to an addition of ½d. on each paper, an extra discount being given to those who increased the price of their newspaper from 6½d. to 7d. only—arguing somewhat lamely that, considering the events which were, and probably for some years would be, happening, a halfpenny extra would not be grudged. An additional 6d. was put on advertisements, making the whole tax 3/6 per advertisement.

Budget. When, after this piece-meal way of voting the supplies, the Budget was introduced on 14th June, the Chancellor of the Exchequer lamented that, after the debates on what provision would be necessary for the peace establishment, he had now to ask provision for the prosecution of another war, and that this, added to the expenses of bringing back an army from America and the arrears on the late contest in Europe, would necessitate a loan beyond all example.[2]

The total Supply was £89,728,926, of which the charge to be borne by Great Britain was £79,968,112. The chief items of the total were:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Navy | £18,644,000 | |
| Army | 39,150,000 | |
| Ordnance | 4,431,000 | |
| Foreign payments, including Bills of Credit | 9,000,000 | |
| Vote of Credit | 6,000,000 | |
| Army prize money | 942,000[3] | |
| Interest on Exchequer Bills | 2,000,000 | Separate charges. |
| Vote of Credit and reduction of Exchequer Bills | 6,000,000 | |

An important question had arisen, he said—whether it would be better to raise an unusually large proportion of the supplies within the year, or to call on the public only for what

[1] This tax was now becoming a very important one. In 1816, the *Times*—with a circulation of only 8,000 copies—was paying a stamp duty of £900 a week.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxi. 795.

[3] "He would have besides to propose to Parliament a vote to make good to the army which had fought under Lord Wellington the amount of the value of stores captured by them in different fortresses. . . . On the reduction of a fortress, an estimate was commonly made of the value of the stores captured, which were applied to the public service, and afterwards accounted for to the captors. During the war in the Peninsula, the account had been kept in the usual manner, but no payment had yet been made; and, from the extent of the service performed in the course of a war which had continued for seven years, this charge formed a considerable item; it was estimated at £800,000" (*ibid.* 798).

they had been accustomed to pay in former years, and to raise the remainder by a loan. In his belief, an expenditure to this amount was not likely to recur, and he had chosen the latter. The Ways and Means as regards the proportion for Great Britain, then, would be:

| | |
|---|---|
| Annual duties | £3,000,000 |
| Surplus of Consolidated Fund | 3,000,000 |
| War taxes | 22,000,000 |
| Lottery | 250,000 |
| Old naval stores | 508,000 |
| Vote of Credit | 6,000,000 |
| Exchequer Bills funded and 5 per cent. loan | 18,150,000 |
| Second loan, | 27,000,000 |
| In all | £79,908,000 |

To provide for the new annual charge, amounting to £3,689,000, the House had already supplied, by customs and excise on tobacco and by excise licenses, about £600,000. Stamp duties and post office charges would bring in £1,200,000. The remainder he proposed to take out of the sums in the hands of the Commissioners for liquidating the National Debt as he was authorised to do by the Act of 1813.

**The maximum expenditure of the war.**

As shown by the Public Accounts from January to January, this was the year of the maximum expenditure. The net Ordinary Revenue was £45,900,000: the War Taxes, £24,000,000 (the Property Tax being £15,000,000); other extraordinary sources, £11,500,000; and the loans, £39,500,000; making a total of close on £120,000,000.[1]

**Excessive profits of the Bank**

**—from balances,**

On the day before the Budget was taken, Grenfell[2] brought forward a set of Resolutions dealing with the profits of the Bank of England arising out of its connection with the Government. The first point was that the balances of public money left in the hands of the Bank, amounting to more than £11 millions, were

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiv. Append. i. Taxation, in Dowell's words, reached its zenith. The National Debt now amounted to about £860 millions—say £43 per head—with an annual charge of above £32 millions (*History of Taxation*, i. 239). It was Napoleon's amiable reflection, after his first abdication, that he had at least planted this "poisoned dart" in the vitals of England.

[2] Pascoe Grenfell, member for Great Marlow, Bucks.; an opulent merchant in tin and copper ores; a zealous supporter of Wilberforce in the slavery movement; a great authority on finance; and an unwearied critic of the Bank of England in its relations to the government.

productive to the Bank to the amount of the whole annual interest, say, £550,000; indeed, more productive than private deposits to that amount would be, inasmuch as there was no necessity for keeping any balance in their coffers to meet a demand—"if a demand were made on them, they had only to provide themselves with paper, pen, and ink, and they were at once able to meet it." This £550,000 he considered as the sum which the public paid to the Bank of England for the limited and circumscribed service of acting as bankers to the nation. Supposing, however, it were still contended that these balances were not productive to the Bank, they were at least unproductive to the public, and the question was in what way they might be made productive. There were several methods. One was that the Bank might advance to the public without interest a proportion of these balances, precisely as it already granted the £3 millions without interest. Another was to do as country banks did with London bankers—leave a certain sum, the use of which might be considered as a "stationary reward" for the service: a balance of £1 million would, he conceived, be a "full, liberal, and most munificent remuneration for carrying on the whole of these services." Such an arrangement would give the public at the present moment no less than £10,966,000.

managing the debt,

The second point related to the charge for managing the public debt. The amount of the charge in 1792 was £99,000 and it was now £281,000. There was here, he considered, great reason for reduction.

increase of circulation,

The third point rose out of the increase of the circulation of notes from ten or eleven millions to thirty millions. If it was not expedient that the country should participate in the profits thus derived, which he put down at £800,000 per annum, there was at least a strong claim on the liberality and generosity of the Bank.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer made an adjournment of a week to consider the matter. Subsequently, with Grenfell's consent, the discussion was deferred till the next session.[1]

Grenfell had the credit on another occasion of drawing attention to another advantage enjoyed by the Bank;—that it did not pay

and stamp duties.

by any means a due commutation for stamp duties. The private bankers between them paid £160,000, while the Bank of England, issuing twice as many notes, paid only £42,000 a year. A few days afterwards, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that

[1] *Hansard*, xxxi. 758, 1084.

he had made an agreement with the Bank that it should thereafter, in lieu of stamp duties, pay £3,500 for every million of issue, calculated on an average of three years.[1]

The final settlement with France.

In the interval between the occupation of Paris by the Allies on 7th July, when the French army marched out to take up station beyond the Loire, and the signing of the second Treaty of Paris in November, 800,000 foreign troops were quartered on the French people. An indemnity of 700 millions of francs to the Allies, payable in equal portions over five years, without interest on the instalments, was imposed. The frontiers of France were left practically as at the previous treaty—the same as they were in the year 1790, with certain modifications. Amid the restoration of legitimate princes and the repartition of the French conquests made during the war,[2] England put in no claim beyond what she had stipulated for and obtained by the previous Treaty of Paris.

Agriculture.

The course of agriculture and agricultural prices in the early part of the year has been dealt with in a separate chapter. On 15th February—for the first time since the Act of 1804—the ports were closed for all kinds of grain but oats, not now to be reopened till the home price was 80/-. During the passing of the new Act, wheat had risen to an average of 66/5 for March, and to 71/9 in April—owing probably to the expectation of a further war. But thereafter the expected did not happen. Instead of rising to 80/-, it began steadily to fall.

A magnificent harvest.

Then came a magnificent harvest over the whole island—a most abundant crop of all kinds of corn in the best condition. The price of wheat fell lower and lower till it reached 55/9 in December. Owing to the great drought in autumn and the consequent scarcity of bedding stuff, great quantities of cattle were thrown on the market for sale, and provisions in general shared the fall. Seldom, says the *Annual Register*, has there been a more general depression of spirits among any class of people than was apparent about the close of the year among the farmers.[3] Deprived of their old grievance of importation,

[1] *Hansard*, xxxi. 526, 771, 881, 968.

[2] It is interesting, in view of later history, to know that Prussia asked for Alsace and Lorraine, and that it was Wellington who pointed out that the Bourbon restoration had little chance of lasting if public opinion in France connected it with the loss of two provinces. The wisdom of the advice was amply proved by the somewhat ignoble complaints of the French at being compelled to restore to the respective nations the spoils of conquest with which Napoleon had filled the Louvre.

[3] P. 144.

they fell back on abuse of Parnell and his friends, saying that "the extravagance of their Resolutions" in 1813 had kept back the closing of the ports for two years; hinted that, while plenty was no doubt desirable—for the manufacturers and labourers—it was ruin to the farmers; and suggested, a little incoherently, that, if relief had been given to our merchants and East India planters in the time of their distress, some measures of the same kind must be extended to the landed interest, otherwise the country would see her fertile fields return again to barrenness, and the necessaries of life purchased from strangers, perhaps enemies, at the price of famine.[1]

General industry.

Of the course of trade and industry in this year of Waterloo, we hear very little. As might be expected, the termination of the war with America brought about an immediate resumption of trade between the two countries. In July, a convention was signed engaging "a reciprocal liberty of commerce" on the lines of the Most Favoured Nation. For the moment, there was great activity to make up for the long suspension of intercourse. But this, as usual, led to speculation; markets were overstocked and capital locked up in consignments; by the end of the year there were numerous failures and much distress.

Foreign trade.

In the foreign trade, there was a reduction of £¾ million in imports, and of £3½ millions in re-exports, but an increase in exports of £8½ millions.

The Official values were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports - - - - - - - - - - | £32,987,000 |
| Exports of produce and manufactures of the United Kingdom - - - - - - | 42,880,000 |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise - | 15,748,000 |

The Real value of the exports was £51,610,000.

The number of ships built and registered showed a considerable increase; namely, 1,147, representing 126,618 tons, as compared with 818 and 95,976 respectively.[2]

Rioting.

During the year, there was some alarming rioting in the north of England. In one case, the sailors of the coal ports in Northumberland and Durham, on being refused an advance of wages, stopped the traffic on the Tyne by a chain of boats, and the intervention of a strong military force was required. In another, the bargemen near Durham, finding their occupation likely to go owing to the introduction of railways to carry coals from the

[1] *Farmer's Magazine, passim.* [2] *Hansard*, xxxvi. Append. xxi.

pits, tore up the waggon ways, and set fire to immense stacks of coal, before they were dispersed. In Ireland, there were serious disturbances, directed against the tithe system; and the Insurrection Act, enabling the Lord Lieutenant to proclaim any county thus affected, was renewed.[1]

The Slave Trade.

Rallying from their disappointment over the former French treaty, the friends of the slaves seized the occasion of the Congress of Vienna to secure, from the representatives of the various powers, a solemn address to the world on the necessity of sweeping from the face of the earth a trade so "repugnant to the principles of humanity and universal morality," and a pledge that the powers concerned would take no further time for that purpose than was necessary for the internal regulations of their own dominions.[2] One of Napoleon's first acts on his return from Elba had been to publish a decree for the abolition of the trade—"and it did not seem to make him a bit more unpopular"—and Louis XVIII., in July, declared that, so far as France was concerned, the traffic in slaves should cease from that time everywhere and for ever.

England now proposed to go further. A Bill was introduced to prohibit British subjects from lending capital, or doing other acts, to assist the carrying on of the Slave Trade with colonies belonging to other states. The Bill, as it was explained, had two objects: first, to prevent the lending of British capital to be employed in the trade; second, to prevent the lending of British money on the security of estates in foreign colonies, as money so lent on mortgage would be, in all probability, employed in this traffic. It was, however, objected to as being far too sweeping. Ellenborough called it much more defective in mercy and in sense than any Bill he had ever known, and committed himself to the notable assertion that he was afraid they would never be able to put down the slave trade so long as the condition of slavery was allowed. Although the Bill reached the second reading in the Lords, it was finally lost by a majority of five.[3]

Registry for slaves.

In June, Wilberforce brought forward, as a supplement to the Abolition Bill, a motion for the establishment of a registry for slaves in the British colonies. Such a registry, he said,

[1] *Annual Register*, 140-1, Chron. 26.

[2] Castlereagh, *Hansard*, xxx. 286. The full text is given *ibid.* xxxii. 200.

[3] *Hansard*, xxx. 657; xxxi. 168, 557, 848, 912, 1062.

transmitted in duplicate to this country, would constitute the title of the owner to the slave, so that, in order to prove any claim to a negro, it would be absolutely necessary to produce the registry. If no person of colour could be considered as a slave unless his name were there, there would be an end to that cruel presumption which prevailed in all the colonies that every black man was a slave, and this would prevent the further introduction of slaves. The measure, in fact, was intended as a Bill "for better preventing the direct importation of slaves into the British colonies."[1] The motion was opposed, by several persons interested in West India property, on the ground that it was an assertion of the right of Parliament to legislate as regards the internal concerns of the colonies. The Bill founded on the motion passed the second reading in the lower House on 5th July, but seems to have got no further.

Flogging.

In June, the subject of flogging was again brought up by Bennet, who had before associated himself with Burdett. He now asked leave to bring in a Bill for the purpose of limiting the infliction of corporal punishment in the army.[2] The text this time was the case of the 10th Hussars, in which regiment, he said, 63 men had been flogged within a year, receiving in all 14,000 lashes, of which 600, 500, and 400 had been inflicted at one time. He maintained that no regiment had ever been reformed by flogging, and asked if it was fitting that the bravest and freest people in the world should be punished as the soldiers of no other power in Europe were.

The burden of defence fell upon Colonel Palmer who had been put in command of the 10th Hussars in the Peninsula. He said that, when he took over the command, the discipline was very lax, and the men were constantly in the habit of getting drunk. When the Hussars arrived in a wine country, for the first few days the whole regiment, non-commissioned officers as well as privates, were in a state of intoxication. He had then assembled the whole of the men, and intimated that he would bring every individual to punishment whose conduct should call for it. After three or four punishments, when the men found he was in earnest, they returned to their duty, and, within a month, the discipline became as high as in any regiment of the service; in fact, when they marched from Lisbon, there was but

[1] *Hansard*, xxxi. 772, 1127; *Romilly*, iii. 178 *seq.*

[2] *Hansard*, xxxi. 918.

one man drunk.[1] Other officers confirmed the statement that there was no regiment in the service more conspicuous for discipline than the 10th Hussars.

The abolition of corporal punishment was deprecated by all the military members and by Lord Palmerston, while its continuance was vehemently denounced among others by Romilly. The motion was negatived without a division, but one notes that the practice was not liked by anybody; that flogging was actually declining; and that a hundred lashes was now considered a very ample punishment.

London gaols.

The Report of the Committee on London Gaols of last session now began to bear fruit. The Gaol Fees Abolition Bill, for the abolition of gaol fees and other fees connected with the gaols in England, was brought in and met with much support—the principal criticism being that it was not to apply to the prisons of the King's Bench, Fleet, and Marshalsea, and so would tend to overcrowd these other prisons of the metropolis. The London magistrates, it was said with a suspicion of sarcasm, had done their duty to their constituents by standing up against a measure of general benefit to the kingdom; it was hoped the House would now do its duty to the prisoners. The Bill duly passed into law.[2]

Freehold Estates Bill.

The Freehold Estates Bill met the same fate as in the previous year. It was brought in by Romilly in the same terms; passed the Commons without the slightest opposition from anyone; but was strenuously opposed by Eldon, Redesdale, and Ellenborough in the Lords.[3] The Lord Chancellor argued that no necessity had been shown for it, "because every man who gave credit to a person of landed property knew that, in case of the decease of that person, he had no claim on that estate," and that, "from the very infancy of statute law, it had been the policy of the legislature to hold real estate more sacred than personal." Lord Grey, who took charge of the Bill, thought it most prudent not to divide the House, and it was lost for the moment.[4]

In March, Horner asked if it were the case that the

[1] "It is a maxim in the service, and may be found in the Standing Orders of all regiments, that drunkenness is the source of every crime that a soldier commits." *Hansard*, xxxi. 927.

[2] *Hansard*, xxix. 777, 955, 1048; xxx. 999.

[3] Romilly notes that no less than five Bills making very material improvements in the law had been rejected in this session at the instance of Lord Ellenborough and Lord Redesdale. *Diary*, iii. 190.

[4] *Hansard*, xxix. 753; xxxi. 846, 1036; *Romilly*, iii. 154, 187.

Emigration. Government was promoting the emigration of manufacturers and others from Scotland to Canada: he considered it a pernicious policy in that it deprived Scotland of many useful hands. Goulborn replied that no encouragement had been given, but, "as the danger in which Canada was during the last war had arisen from its scanty population, the object of the Government was merely to divert those who had been determined to emigration from the United States to Canada." The answer seems slightly disingenuous. The transports which were being sent to bring the troops home were taken advantage of to take emigrants out, and, although a passage money was charged, it had been officially advertised that the ships were ready in the Clyde to take passengers.[1]

The *Annual Register* notices in this year an immense emigration from Ireland to Newfoundland. In St. John's alone, exclusive of three vessels which made no returns, 3,026 men and 373 women arrived, but, it added, "the numbers far exceed the returns, the captains having brought out so many that they are ashamed to return them."[2]

Exemption from rates. A Bill was brought in by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to exempt from parochial rates churches, chapels, and other places exclusively appropriated to the purposes of religion and the gratuitous instruction of the poor. The somewhat animated discussion which took place is interesting for the amount of feeling expressed that such an exemption was an encouragement to dissent, and *pro tanto* a burden on the established church, and for the statement that it was notorious that, in the west end of London, there was a great deal of private speculation in the building of chapels and letting them to congregations.[3]

Abolition of Assize of Bread. The price of the loaf in London had long been a subject of complaint, and, in April, a committee was appointed to consider the existing laws regulating the Assize of Bread, and also to consider whether or not it was expedient to have any established Assize. The Report, presented in June, gave no uncertain sound. The Assisa Panis et Cervisiae, prescribing a scale for regulating the price of the loaf by the price of wheat, dated back to the reign of Henry III., when its purpose appears to have been to regulate the charges and profits of bakers. In 1735, the bakers carried the alteration that the Assize should be set by the price of flour. The

[1] *Hansard*, xxx. 52; xxxi. 917. [2] *Annual Register*, Chronicle, 41.
[3] *Hansard*, xxx. 240, 577, 616, 851.

Committee, pointing out that competition, even under the discouragement of an Assize, had already removed part of the evil, and that bread was cheaper in places where there was no such regulation, reported that any remedy to the evils arising from the Assize could hardly be brought about by an alteration in the law, and came to the resolution that it was expedient that the Bread Assize laws for the City of London and within ten miles of the Royal Exchange should be forthwith repealed.[1] A Bill to this effect was accordingly brought in and passed—greatly aided by a petition in its favour from 800 master bakers.[2] The effect of the repeal was that, though the bakers were still obliged to give the same weight as formerly to each denomination of loaf, the price was left to competition.

Parish Apprentices.

In April, the Committee appointed to examine into the number and state of Parish Apprentices bound into the country from the parishes within the Bills of Mortality, issued its report. They found that the whole number of apprentices bound out of those parishes, from the beginning of the year 1802 to the end of 1811, amounted to 5,815, 3,446 being males and 2,369 females. Of these, no less than three-fourths were bound to masters connected with the cotton manufacture. Children bound to manufacturers in the country had generally been apprenticed on the same day in numbers of from five or six to forty or fifty. The system in general the Committee considered highly objectionable, but of the details and the consequences very little was known. In vain had the magistrates of the West Riding and Lancashire passed resolutions declaring the impolicy of the system, and attempting to make regulations for better treatment of the apprentices, "if these wholesome regulations could be entirely done away with by the act of two magistrates for Middlesex or Surrey, who could, without any notice or previous intimation, defeat these humane objects by binding scores or even hundreds of children to manufacturers in a distant county." They could not avoid mentioning the very early age at which many of these children were bound apprentices. The evils of distant removals were very much increased when children of six or seven years of age were removed from the care of their parents and relations, in many cases prematurely subjected to a laborious employment—frequently very injurious to their health and generally highly so to their morals—

[1] The Report is printed in *Hansard*, xxx. Append. cxxxi.

[2] *Hansard*, xxx. 340; xxxi. 1009, 1071, 1119, 1133.

from which they could not hope to be set free for a period of fourteen or fifteen years, as, except in the case of two parishes in the metropolis, they were bound till the age of 21 years. The Report ended by calling the attention of the House to the practicability of finding employment for parish apprentices within a certain distance from their own homes, without the necessity of having recourse to a practice so much at variance with humanity.[1]

A Bill based on the Report, and limiting the distance to which these children could be sent to 40 miles, passed the Commons, and was reported to the Lords on 30th June, when it was ordered to be printed, with the intention of suffering it to stand over to the next session.[2]

Mendicity in the Metropolis.

An interesting report was received in July from a Committee appointed to enquire into the State of Mendicity in the metropolis. There were, it said, at least 30,000 mendicants, many of them impostors of the worst description, most of them gaining more than industrious individuals of the lower classes of society. One man confessed to making profits of about 30/- a day; the average receipts were from 3/- to 6/- a day. A hitherto unknown fact had emerged—that about a hundred parishes in the city farmed their poor for 6/- or 7/- a week per head, paid to the persons who sent them out to beg. It appeared to the Committee that the number of charities in London was "almost inconceivable," and, unfortunately, most of those who supported them never examined into the application of the money. "The House would hardly believe that there was one benevolent institution, supported by peers, members of that House, and other opulent individuals, the object of which was to purchase beef and sell it to the poor at a moderate price. . . . The revenue of it was £600 a year. But it appeared that the whole of it was managed by a single individual, and it had been recently discovered that this man put the whole of the money, with a trifling exception, in his own pocket. . . . On a Bow Street officer being employed to apprehend this person, it was found that he was the subject of other charges of as serious a nature."[3]

Young children in factories.

In June, Sir Robert Peel called attention to the expediency of some legislative regulation for restricting the employment of young children in factories. What he was disposed to recommend was a regulation that no children should be so employed under the age of ten years, either as apprentices or otherwise, and

[1] *Hansard*, xxx. 533. [2] *Ibid.* xxxi. 696, 1062.
[3] *Hansard*, xxxi. 686, 1145.

that their hours should be limited to 12½, including the time for education and meals. This would leave 10 hours for laborious employment, and accounts seemed to show that it was not so much the hardship as the duration of the labour which affected their health. He would also propose the appointment of proper inspectors, paid in proportion to their trouble. Meanwhile he suggested that the Bill should be printed and circulated, so that it should get due consideration and amendment.

Horner's only objection was that the proposal did not go far enough. The practice of apprenticing parish children in distant factories was as repugnant to humanity as any which had ever been suffered to exist by the negligence of the legislature, and it was all the worse because of the enormous abuses which existed in it. It had been known that a gang of these children had been put up to sale along with a bankrupt's effects, and transferred as part of the property. A case had come to his knowledge where the agreement was made between a London parish and a Lancashire manufacturer that, for every 20 sound children, one idiot should be taken. Philips said that the system had originated when there was an insufficient supply of labour, but that the practice was now greatly diminished: in one of the great factories employing 957 hands, only 33 were under the age of ten. The Bill accordingly was read the first time under the title "to amend and extend an Act, made in the 42d year of his present Majesty, for the preservation of the health and morals of Apprentices and others employed in Cotton and other mills and Cotton and other factories."[1]

Indian ships on home registry.

It will be remembered that, in 1814, a petition to Parliament called attention to the stagnation in the Thames yards, due, it was said, to the transfer of a great deal of shipbuilding to India. In May, we hear of the second reading of a Bill to make further regulations for the registry of ships built in that country. From the debates on the third reading, it appears that the object was to admit ships built within our Indian possessions and employed in the trade between India and Great Britain to the British registry. This was opposed, on frankly protectionist grounds, in the interests of the Thames shipbuilders, who of course wished to prevent the building in India of ships engaged in the trade, and it was asked what was to become of the Thames shipwrights, in event of a long peace, if the building of Indian ships

[1] *Hansard*, xxxi. 624.

was taken from them. On the other hand, it was contended that what had driven shipbuilding from the river was the extravagant charges. Wages which, in 1793, were 3/6 a day, were 7/- and even 10/-. Besides, not more than six or seven yards had ever built ships for India. "All that they could now complain of was that their monopoly would be affected by introducing a sort of competition." On the second reading in the Lords, Sheffield said that a Bill more mischievous in its tendency and more calculated to produce injurious consequences to the vital interests of the country he never knew, while Liverpool maintained that the provisions of the Bill gave general satisfaction to the shipping interests. The Bill passed in June.[1]

Grants.

A parliamentary grant of £20,000 was made towards the construction of roads and bridges in the Highlands of Scotland. We learn that, under the 43 George III., 460 miles of roads had already been constructed; that 270 were contracted for; and that 170 were under consideration.[2]

The safety-lamp.

Another was now added to the great discoveries which revolutionised industry. As a result of many experiments with fire-damp, Sir Humphrey Davy completed the invention of the safety-lamp, and it was at once introduced in the Newcastle pits. Thanks to this new immunity from danger, and to artificial propping, almost every particle of coal could now be got out of mines before they were abandoned.

Death of Whitbread.

On 11th July, a new writ was asked for Bedford, "for a burgess to serve in the room of Samuel Whitbread, Esq., deceased"—a politician who probably needed only the steadying influence of official position to have taken his place among the great statesmen of the age. He destroyed himself in a sudden fit of insanity. His title to honour is written in the epithets then applied to him—"the complete Englishman"—"the poor man's friend"—"one who never carried his political enmity beyond the threshold of the House."[3]

[1] *Hansard*, xxxi. 284, 692, 847, 885. [2] *Ibid.* xxx. 251.

[3] *Hansard*, xxxi. 1147. "He was," says Romilly, "the promoter of every liberal scheme for promoting the condition of mankind, the warm and zealous advocate of the oppressed in every part of the world, and the undaunted opposer of every species of corruption and ill-administration" (*Diary*, iii. 191). "He must always stand high," says Horner, "in the list of that class of public men, the peculiar growth of England and of the House of Commons, who perform great services to their country, and hold a considerable place in the sight of the world, by fearlessly expressing in that assembly the censure that is felt by the public, and by being as it were the organ of that public opinion which in some measure keeps our statesmen to their duty." *Memoirs*, ii. 260.

# CHAPTER XXIV

## 1815. THE TRIUMPH OF THE CORN LAWS

Alarming condition of agriculture.

WHEN, in February, the question of the Corn Laws came before Parliament for the third year in succession, circumstances had not improved for the agriculturists. The average price of wheat for January had been 60/8, and that of the loaf 11¼d. It was expected that the average price for the six weeks preceding 15th February would be below 63/- and so subject foreign wheat to the practically prohibitory duty of 24/3, but meanwhile the ports were open, and as yet there had been no relief from the war taxation. The foreign imports had been specially large during the later months of 1814. Upwards of 300,000 quarters of wheat came in four months from France alone.

There was no question that agricultural distress was now at its worst. Spence probably did not exaggerate when he said that the best grain was selling at a price that would have been a losing one even were the land rent free, while ordinary qualities were unsaleable; that thousands of farmers who, a year before, were living in prosperity, were utterly unable to raise money for their taxes alone, while tens of thousands to discharge them were forced to sell their produce at half its prime cost; that wide wasting ruin was extending over the farming world in every direction.[1] "I doubt," said Malthus at the beginning of 1815, "whether, in the most extensive mercantile distress that ever took place in this country, there was ever one fourth of the property or one tenth of the number of individuals concerned, when compared with the effects of the present rapid fall of raw produce combined with the very scanty crop of last year. . . . There never perhaps

[1] William Spence, *The Objections against the Corn Bill refuted, and the Necessity of the Measure to the vital Interests of every Class of the Community demonstrated*, p. 2.

was known a year more injurious to the interests of agriculture."[1] Whatever the original intentions of those who had initiated the movement, it was quite clear that the landed interests would unite in demanding protection, and that the evident distress of the farmers, and the agricultural labourers, would secure general sympathy with the feeling that "something must be done for agriculture." And now the proposed change got the powerful support of being introduced by the Government.

**Corn Law Resolutions proposed by Robinson.**

In February, then, the Corn Laws were given preference over the finance measures on the ground of "urgency," and, on the 17th of that month, Robinson, the Vice-President of the Board of Trade, introduced the subject.[2]

He was not ashamed, he said, to confess the extreme difficulty, as well as the extreme importance, of the question. It was a choice of difficulties. There was, in fact, a certain evil to be apprehended either from adopting or rejecting the principles he was about to submit. Happily, the former prejudices and misrepresentations of motive were done away with. It was not now supposed that the object sought was the mean and base and paltry one of getting, for a particular class of society, a certain profit at the expense of the rest. "For my own part, I declare to God, if I thought this was the motive which actuated any individual who supported the alteration, and, above all, if I conceived that such would be the effect of the measure, no consideration on earth would tempt me to bring it forward."

He reminded the House that they had not now to go back to first principles and decide whether there was to be restriction or not. The system of restriction "had been acted on for a long period, and we could not depart from it without encountering a frightful

[1] *The Grounds of an Opinion on the Policy of restricting the Importation of foreign Corn*, p. 7. "The most important convert the landholders have got," wrote Horner on 30th January, "is Malthus, who has now declared himself in favour of their Bill; and, to be sure, there is not a better or more informed judgment, and it is the single authority which staggers me. But those who have looked closely into his philosophy will admit that there is always a leaning in favour of the efficacy of laws, and his early bias was for corn laws in particular." See an able criticism of Malthus' two pamphlets in a letter to him from Horner (*Horner*, ii. 228).

[2] *Hansard*, xxix. 798. Frederick John Robinson (afterwards Viscount Goderich and first Earl of Ripon), son of second Baron Grantham; born 1782; educated Harrow and Cambridge; entered Lincoln's Inn, 1802, and Parliament, 1806; Under-Secretary for the Colonies, 1809; Lord of Admiralty, 1810; now Joint Paymaster-General of the Forces. "Prosperity Robinson," as Cobbett called him, subsequently became Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1823 and Prime Minister in 1827.

revulsion which it would be dreadful to combat." Many, indeed, who objected to restriction on corn did not reflect that they were flourishing and realising immense wealth, in their own trade, by the adoption of a similar principle. Wool, for instance, could not be exported, even in the smallest quantity, from this country. But, whether it was due to intentional restriction or to the circumstances of the last twenty years, there had been an extraordinary increase in the agriculture of the kingdom. Those parts of the country which were so fruitful as not to require a great deal of cultivation could provide only a limited amount of food, and the increase of population and demand had necessitated that much of the supply was raised from "that species of land which could not be cultivated without very considerable expense." We had gained produce, but that produce must necessarily be sold at a dear rate. This, it appeared to him, was "the situation in which they must always remain unless they had, what he thought they could never have (and on that impossibility he founded the present measure), an unlimited supply of foreign corn to make up for those deficiencies which, if the poorer lands were thrown out of cultivation, must certainly be created." If they were thrown out of cultivation, our own produce would be diminished, and, in the event of a scarcity both at home and abroad, we should have to contend with a double deficiency. There might be another war. Or foreign countries, jealous of us, might impose heavy export duties—at the moment, indeed, the export of corn from France was prohibited under payment of a duty. "Therefore he was of opinion, on the whole, not only that our security would be greater, but even that the price of corn might in the end be cheaper, by home cultivation, than by depending on foreign countries."

Ireland to be considered.

Consider, he said, the position of Ireland, with a large agricultural population, no manufactures, no capital, more corn than it could consume, and depending on us for the sale of the surplus. What would become of the Irish if they were driven from the home market by the unrestricted importation of grain from abroad? If there was a question of humanity in raising the price of grain in England, was there not another question of humanity as regards Ireland?

As to the extent to which protection should be given, they must be careful not to fix the importing price too high, for he admitted that the necessary effect might be to put up home prices

to that figure, although, he believed, "the ultimate result would not be so." He thought that, in the end, produce would be so much increased, and so strong a competition excited between the different parts of England, and between England and Ireland, that the people would be fed at a much cheaper rate.

The new proposals.

He would propose, then, that importation, alike of corn, meal, and flour, should be prohibited altogether till the price of wheat rose to 80/-, other grain in the same proportion as at present.[1] At and above that figure, they might be imported without the payment of any duty whatever. In the case of the North American Colonies, however, the regulating home price would be 67/-, being in the same ratio of preference as at present. The warehousing system would be continued—with the existing exception that flour could not be imported into Ireland—and the system of calculating the average price would remain unchanged.[2]

He then moved a set of nine Resolutions on which the future Corn Law was to be based.

Strong speeches against by Philips

The most striking speeches, perhaps, were those of Philips[3] (afterwards Sir George Philips,) and Alexander Baring[4] (afterwards Lord Ashburton). What was the object of their deliberations? asked Philips, and answered, "To provide a remedy for the low price of corn. That which all ages and countries had considered a great national benefit was now discovered to be a great evil against which we were imperiously called to legislate in self defence." Surely we ought not to overlook or reject advantages arising in the ordinary course of things, merely to provide against the recurrence of such an extraordinary and unprecedented combination of circumstances as might never again take place. By generally excluding imports, our corn laws prevented foreigners from providing beforehand for our supply in case of need, and the knowledge of this, in time of scarcity, would make prices rise very far and very rapidly. He had doubts of the policy of offering

[1] Baring could get no answer to his question, "Why 80/-?" It seems that all sorts of figures, from 72/- to 96/-, had been named as "necessary" by witnesses before the Committees. It should be noted, perhaps, that this was not protection by a (practically) prohibitory duty, but absolute prohibition till the price reached 80/-. It is a little curious that Baring seems to have been the only one who strongly objected to this new form of protection.

[2] The ports, after being declared open, were to remain open for three months as regards grain from Baltic ports, but for six weeks only as regards grain from all ports between the Garonne and the Eider.

[3] *Hansard*, xxix. 808. [4] *Ibid.* 827, 964.

artificial encouragement to the extended tillage of soils which could be cultivated only at a greatly increased expense. If we were to encourage by legislative enactment the indefinite tillage of our worst lands, what was now a remunerating price would soon be found insufficient; and Parliament, after an interval of a very few years, might be required regularly to make fresh calculations of remunerating prices, and to raise the importation price again.[1] Why should a commercial and manufacturing country like ours have such a jealousy and dread of the importation of corn? No importation could take place without a corresponding export of commodities on which British industry had been employed. No country, in fact, was so interested as this in establishing the principle of free trade, because no other country could profit equally by the general recognition of that principle. Foreign nations, mistaking the circumstances which had operated against our wealth for the cause of it, were now following our example, prohibiting or imposing restraints upon the import of our fabrics in order to encourage their own manufactures, and getting inferior fabrics at a higher price. We should convince them by an example of their mistake. Finally, he warned the House against legislating in a panic. Such occurrences as the great fall in the price of agricultural produce produced serious inconveniences and evils. They were incidental to all changes in the political relations of a country, whether from peace to war or from war to peace. It was certainly very desirable to lighten the pressure of a temporary evil as much as possible. But it was a serious thing to apply a permanent regulation to a temporary evil—particularly if it raised permanently the price of provisions.

—and Baring.

Baring ironically deprecated the notion which had got abroad that the question was being taken up by the members of the legislature merely with a view to their own private interests, but he could not help saying that a very peculiar interest must be taken in the value of land in that House where the whole of its members were sworn to be landed proprietors.[2] For his part, he could not conceive the constitution of that person's understanding

[1] Sir Frederick Flood gave the case away when he said that, to supply the English market, land in Ireland had been brought into tillage which was so stubborn that it required six bulls to draw the plough, and, naturally enough, argued that, unless the price was kept high, such land could not be kept in cultivation (*Hansard*, xxix. 981).

[2] Calcraft had "heard it said amongst the public that the House was too landed: the objection had never been made before" (*Hansard*, xxix. 1020).

who thought that the measure could make bread cheaper. If lands would not produce corn without greater sums being expended on them than the corn was worth, they might be forced to furnish a supply which would make us purchase our bread at eighteen pence the loaf, when, if we exerted our industry on that same land to raise that which was congenial to its soil, by exchanging its produce against that of the corn lands of other countries, we might get a loaf for a shilling. The whole mass of the country ought not to be compelled to pay a high price for bread, that the experiment of cultivating barren lands might be tried. He urged that any step taken should be of a temporary nature, his chief reason being that, while the currency remained in its present state, no permanent measure ought to be adopted.[1] With this view, he suggested an importation price of 75/-, to continue for a year, and then to be diminished by 2/- yearly till the price fell back to its existing figure. Such a plan would allow the farmer to get rid of his produce at a fair price, while it would afford time for the expiration of old leases and give warning to those who might enter into new ones.

**Resolutions carried.**

But all amendments were borne down by the overwhelming government majority. After prolonged debates, the Resolutions were carried unchanged, and, on 1st March, the Bill "to amend the laws now in force for regulating the importation of corn" was read for the first time.

**In spite of a rain of petitions,**

On the 2nd, the petitions against the change began again, and, for three weeks, it rained petitions. They came from every part of the country. Bristol sent one with 40,000 signatures, representing, it was said, "the undivided sense of the people of that city." Coventry followed with 9,000—"nearly the whole population"; Carlisle with 6,000—"practically the whole grown population." The Leeds petition bore 24,000 names; the Liverpool, 48,000; one signed by "the merchants, bankers, and traders of London" got 40,000 signatures on a single Saturday; while Burdett presented over 42,000 names from the inhabitants of Westminster. In one day, ten petitions were presented from different parts of Lancashire, including that from Manchester—which was ordered to be read to the House—with 50,000 signatures,

[1] So also Grenville subsequently: "Would it be contended that 80/- now, particularly after the sanguine prospect held out by the Chancellor of the Exchequer of the resumption of cash payments in the next year, was the same as 80/- would be when a regular and healthy circulation was restored?' (*ibid.* xxx. 137).

stigmatising the Bill as "the most unadvised and injudicious measure ever brought forward." "The people," said Sir Robert Peel, "were not to be cajoled by such arguments as that the Bill would give them cheap bread; they knew better; they knew the thing was impossible. If the measure passed the manufactures of the towns would be destroyed." It was, said Earl Grey, "the greatest number of petitions that had ever perhaps been known in the history of Parliament . . . the petitioners uniformly stating that the measure would have the effect of preventing a cheap supply of food to the labouring classes."[1]

In these petitions, one again remarks the silence of the farmers. They took no interest in the matter, said Grenville; not a single tenant of his had expressed any interest in the subject, said the Earl of Carlisle. To talk of the labourer being interested in the Bill, said Baring, was "altogether ridiculous; whether wheat was 120/- or 80/- the labourer could only expect dry bread in the one case and dry bread in the other."

In spite of serious rioting round Westminster, when Robinson's house, among others, was sacked and when the military fired on the mob, and in face of the strong protest in parliament against the precipitancy, the second reading was taken on the 3rd—when the Bill was carried by 218 to 56—and the third reading on the 10th; carried to the Lords on the 13th, it passed on the 20th.[2] the Bill passes.

The following Protest was entered on the Journals of the Lords: Protest from the Lords.

(1) Because we are adverse in principle to all new restraints on commerce. We think it certain that public prosperity is best promoted, by leaving uncontrolled the free current of national industry; and we wish rather, by well-considered steps, to bring back our commercial legislation to the straight and simple line of wisdom, than to increase the deviation, by subjecting additional and extensive branches of the public interest to fresh systems of artificial and injurious restriction.

(2) Because we think that the great practical rule, of leaving all

[1] *Hansard*, xxx. 127. "The alteration proposes avowedly to protect one order of the State at the expense of every other; it does not hesitate to sacrifice our manufactures and our commerce to the good of our agriculture." *Remarks on the Commercial Policy of Great Britain, principally in its relation to the Corn Trade*, 1815.

[2] 55 Geo. III. c. 26. The wording of the Act, as well as that of the Corn Export Act of 1814 (54 Geo. III. c. 69), is given in the *Farmer's Magazine* of May, 1815.

commerce unfettered, applies more peculiarly, and on still stronger grounds of justice as well as of policy, to the corn trade than to any other. Irresistible indeed must be that necessity which could, in our judgment, authorise the Legislature to tamper with the sustenance of the people, and to impede the free purchase and sale of that article, on which depends the existence of so large a portion of the community.

(3) Because we think that the expectations of ultimate benefit from this measure are founded on a delusive theory. We cannot persuade ourselves that this law will ever contribute to produce plenty, cheapness, or steadiness of price. So long as it operates at all, its effects must be the opposite of these. Monopoly is the parent of scarcity, of dearness, and of uncertainty. To cut off any of the sources of supply can only tend to lessen its abundance; to close against ourselves the cheapest market for any commodity, must enhance the price at which we purchase it; and to confine the consumer of corn to the produce of his own country, is to refuse to ourselves the benefit of that provision which Providence itself has made for equalising to man the variations of season and climate.

(4) But whatever may be the future consequences of this law, at some distant and uncertain period, we see, with pain, that these hopes must be purchased at the expense of a great and present evil. To compel the consumer to purchase corn dearer at home than it might be imported from abroad, is the immediate practical effect of this law. In this way alone can it operate. Its present protection, its promised extension of agriculture must result (if at all) from the profits which it creates by keeping up the price of corn to an artificial level. These future benefits are the consequences expected, but as we believe erroneously expected, from giving a bounty to the grower of corn, by a tax levied on its consumer.

(5) Because we think that the adoption of any permanent law, for such a purpose, required the fullest and most laborious investigation. Nor would it have been sufficient for our satisfaction could we have been convinced of the general policy of so hazardous an experiment. A still further inquiry would have been necessary to persuade us that the present moment was fit for its adoption. In such an inquiry we must have had the means of satisfying ourselves what its immediate operation will be as connected with the various and pressing circumstances of

public difficulty and distress with which the country is now surrounded; with the state of our circulation and currency; of our internal and external commerce; and above all with the condition and reward of the industrious and labouring classes of our community.

On all these particulars, as they respect this question, we think that Parliament is almost wholly uninformed; on all we see reason for the utmost anxiety and alarm from the operation of this law.

Lastly, Because if we could approve of the principle and purpose of this law, we think that no sufficient foundation has been laid for its details. The evidence before us, unsatisfactory and imperfect as it is, seems to us rather to disprove than to support the propriety of the high price adopted as the standard of importation, and the fallacious mode by which that price is to be ascertained.

And on all these grounds we are anxious to record our dissent from a measure so precipitate in its course, and, as we fear, so injurious in its consequences."[1]

Character of the debates.

The character of the debates in 1815 as compared with those in 1814 was as different as the result. They were, on the whole, conducted with good temper and moderation, and each side owned the candour and fairness of the other. Although class was still set against class, the accusations of class interest, which had been so prominent on former occasions, were, to a great extent, absent, and it was increasingly evident that there was

[1] *Hansard*, xxx. 263. The signatories were two royal dukes (Sussex and Gloucester), Grenville, Wellesley, Essex, Torrington, Dutton (Douglas), Chandos Buckingham, Montfort, King, and Carlisle. The Protest was drawn up by Grenville, who had seldom swerved from what was even then considered the "economist's doctrine" of Free Trade. In 1800, during the great scarcity due to the bad harvests, when all sorts of proposals were put forward, he wrote to Pitt as follows: "I am confident that provisions, like every other article of commerce, if left to themselves, will and must find their level; and that every attempt to disturb that level by artificial contrivances has a necessary tendency to increase the evil it seeks to remedy. In all the discussions with which we are overwhelmed on this subject, one view of it is wholly overlooked. Every one takes it for granted that the present price of corn is in itself undue, and such as ought not to exist, and then they dispute whether it is to be ascribed to combinations, which they wish to remedy by such means as will destroy all commerce, or to an unusual scarcity which they propose to supply by obliging the grower to contend in the home market, not with the natural rivalship of such importation as the demand might and would produce of itself, but with an artificial supply poured in at the expense of I know not how many millions to the State." Stanhope, *Life of Pitt*, iii. 248.

conscientious conviction on both sides. The finest speeches against the Bill, in fact, came from the House of Lords, those of Grey, Stanhope, and particularly Grenville, being both masterly and dignified.

What the cause of this change was, and why the Bill was supported by such large majorities, is a little obscure. Great play was made with the argument that the heavy war taxation was still pressing on agriculture, the assumption constantly made being that foreign countries did not suffer from taxation, and for that reason alone could undersell us.[1] Lord Binning, for instance, calculated that the taxes weighing on the French agriculturist were not more than one pound per head as compared with five pounds on our people. Only once was the contradictory statement made that the *contribution foncière*, paid by the French farmer, amounting to a quarter of the produce, was more than all the taxes which fell on the English agriculturist.[2] Another argument much used was that the Bill asked only for the extension to agriculture of the Protection so liberally given to manufactures.[3]

"Something must be done for agriculture."

But even the strongest speeches against the Bill were qualified by the expression that "something must be done for agriculture." During the time of the high prices, every patch of land capable of bearing a crop had been made to grow corn—even the old

[1] Ricardo so far gave in to this argument as to say, in 1822, that an import duty of 10/- per qr. should be retained on corn as a countervailing duty for the peculiar taxes imposed on the corn grower as distinguished from the taxes imposed on the other classes of producers in the country. It had never yet been suggested, he said, by those most favourable to protecting duties that any would be necessary on account of an income tax (*On Protection to Agriculture*, M'Culloch's edition, 463, 493).

[2] "The additional centime lately laid on made it amount to one fourth of the produce of the land; so that, in point of fact, the French farmer was in the same situation as if a land tax of 20/- in the pound had been laid upon him; and yet they were told the English farmer could not compete. In this statement he was supported by Mr. Malthus, who had taken the produce of this tax at a third of that of the land" (Marryat, *Hansard*, xxix. 1074).

[3] Wilberforce, supporting the Bill as "an urgent though painful duty under the present peculiar circumstances," reminded the House that no less than 150 articles were prohibited for the purpose of favouring our own manufactures (*Hansard*, xxx. 117). J. P. Grant pointed out that the duties imposed on most foreign goods amounted to an absolute exclusion in favour of our manufactures. For example, woollen cloths imported paid 100 per cent., cotton goods, 85½ per cent., glass, 114 per cent., brass and copper goods, 59 per cent., earthenware, 79 per cent., dressed leather, 142 per cent., gold and silver goods, 80 per cent., gilt ware, 100 per cent., etc. (*Hansard*, xxix. 1029). The only reasoned answer to this that I have noticed was by Lord Grenville. If the protection of the laws begun about three centuries ago, he said, "by the entire prohibition of some articles of commerce and by the imposition of prohibitory duties on others, were considered at the present

pastures were torn up and sown. Rents rose, not so much from pressure of the landlords, as from the offers made by competing tenants. In the general prosperity, the farmers forsook their old habits of life. "Formerly," said Baring, "a farmer thought it a high luxury if he was able to enjoy his ale; but now, on entering their houses, you were not only treated with a bottle of port, but sometimes even with madeira. The sons of these wealthy agriculturists were all fine gentlemen; instead of following the plough they were following the hounds, and the daughters, instead of milking the cows, were using cosmetics to their hands, that they might look delicate while strumming on the harpsichord." Then came the crash of suddenly falling prices while expenses ran on and rents were not lowered. As the price fell, the tide of foreign importation swelled and swelled. The French farmers, it was said, when the wind was fair, ran across to the Devon coast in their small vessels, and hawked their corn about to the millers, selling as small a quantity as a quarter at a place. While the only complaint of the manufacturers sometimes was that they were undersold in the foreign market, the farmers were undersold in their own. The farmer, no longer obtaining easy credit from the corn factor, was obliged to carry his grain to market and sell it for what it would bring. Farms right and

moment, it would be found that they were almost null." The abrogation of some of these prohibitions, in fact, would much benefit the British manufacturer. "A great mass of the manufacturers were so far from wishing for the protection of the legislature against foreign competition, that it was well known that these manufacturers were able to undersell their competitors in foreign markets." He quoted a resolution, framed at a meeting of Gloucester woollen manufacturers, containing the suggestive sentence: "This principle of exclusion has recently been adduced as matter of reproach to the commercial interest and of imitation to the landed: but a principle so completely exploded and abandoned by the one is hardly worth the adoption of the other, as the most enlightened and strenuous advocates for the freedom of trade are to be found amongst the commercial members of the community" (*Hansard*, xxx. 191). Barclay, a new member, argued with some force that, if he understood the principle of the Resolution aright, "the landlords now came forward and claimed from the House and from the country a compensation for the capital which they had invested in the improvement of their own estates. Surely, by the same rule, the manufacturers had an equal right to come to the House and ask a compensation for the capital they had expended in enlarging their several manufactories, in obtaining new machinery, and in the purchase of raw materials, which, during many years of the late war, had lain by them a mere drug and a dead weight" (*Hansard*, xxix. 1054). "By an extraordinary concurrence," said Philips, "a monopoly had been given to the home growers in consequence of importations not taking place; but, now that importations did take place, it was proposed to make the monopoly prices permanent" (*ibid.* 1065).

left were thrown up, and their tenants went into bankruptcy.[1] It was taken as proved that, in time of peace, our markets were liable to be completely glutted with foreign corn—"It would be better to set Boney up again." And, with the fall of the farmer, went the labourer—and it should not be forgotten that the farmer was still the principal "employer" of labour in Great Britain; the cry of want of employment was heard everywhere; the parish purse was drawn on to keep the people in life, and the pressure of the poor rates became intolerable.[2]

So it came that even Baring and Horner, the most uncompromising opponents of the Bill, said that, if some measure of a temporary nature were proposed, they would not feel free to oppose it, and most members who opposed the Bill, such as Finlay, the member for Glasgow, approved of the principle, but wished that the price should be lower than 80/-.

**Difference of opinion about results.**

There was still strong divergence of opinion as to the probable result of extended protection; still strong assertion from one side that it would raise price, from the other, that it would reduce it.[3] Only one member was fair enough to say that the object was not to make the price of corn extremely low, but to prevent it at any future time from becoming extremely high. Some knowledge of economic science was evidenced—particularly by Baring, Philips, and Grenville—and Malthus was abundantly quoted.[4] Lauderdale, however, whose standing as an economist was admitted, was

[1] They took a simpler way in Ireland. "The tenantry of a large tillage farm in the county of Kilkenny, Listerling, near Ross, containing nearly 800 acres, had taken new leases two years ago at 'speculating rates.' They all disappeared in one night, as if an earthquake had swallowed them up—not an individual was to be found, nor a vestige by which to trace one tenant, his child, or his servant" (*Scots Magazine*, 790).

[2] Brand said, during the debates, that half the population of Great Britain was engaged in agricultural pursuits, and that immense numbers were converted into "roundsmen," half their wages paid by the parish (*Hansard*, xxix. 833).

[3] Lansdowne, recalling the controversy, said in 1820 that many who opposed the measure maintained that its consequence would be that 80/- would always be the minimum, while those who supported it maintained that 80/- would be much nearer the maximum: he contended that events had shown that the latter view was right, as the average price from 5th January, 1815, to 5th January, 1820, had been 78/5 (*Hansard*, N.S. i. 580).

[4] The measure, said Newport, had two classes of opponents: that party, highly respectable as he allowed it to be, and operating more by their talents than their number, who openly avowed their hostility to it, the political economists; and those who, while they professed to protect agriculture, were disposed to narrow that protection so much as to render it utterly unavailing (*Hansard*, xxix. 1010).

consistently for the Bill. What seems now a little remarkable is the pretty general acceptance even then of the idea of Free Trade. The "general principle" that the legislature ought not to interfere but allow things to find their own level, was often enunciated,[1] though generally qualified by the condition that this system should be adopted by all the considerable nations of the world. Steadiness of price was now emphasised as much more necessary than high price, the contention being that a year of extraordinary cheapness must necessarily be followed by one of dearness, unless measures were adopted to ensure a regular domestic supply.[2]

The Free Trade argument admitted.

One thing seems certain; that the country, apart from the landed classes, was dead against the Bill. Lambton (better known afterwards as Lord Durham) said that he never would vote in support of any bill against which the wishes of the people had been so strongly, so generally, and so unequivocally expressed;[3] and many must have agreed with Sir Gilbert Heathcote: "When I witness the multitude of petitions, and see how little they are attended to, I cannot help believing that the people have just reason to complain that they are not freely and fairly represented."[4] This, indeed, was not denied, the only answers attempted being that the petitioners—the "lower orders" as they were abundantly called—did not understand what they were signing, or what was good for them—"the people might as well petition for the abolition of their liberties as for the abandonment of the measure," said Western.

The country against the Bill.

What perhaps strikes one most, in the early debates of 1813 and 1814, is the entire ignoring of the tendency of land produce to diminishing returns and of the law of rent. The explanation, however, is simple. These now cardinal principles of economic science were only definitely formulated in this year.

"Diminishing returns".

[1] Huskisson, for instance, said in 1820 that he had consented to "the modification of the general principle of a free trade" in 1815 on three grounds: (1) that, during the war, an artificial protection, by circumstances over which the country had no control, had been given to agriculture, and had forced a great mass of capital into the raising of corn which would not otherwise have been applied to that object, and that, if an "open trade" were then allowed, a great loss of capital would ensue; (2) that, in his opinion, this country, in its peculiar circumstances, should not be dependent to too great an extent on foreign countries for the necessaries of life; (3) that Ireland had previously received encouragement from our demand, and, to withdraw it, would have been most injurious to that country (*Hansard*, N.S. i. 678).

[2] "It is a steady price that is to be wished for, not merely a low price; and that regular price can only be obtained by our growing more corn than we can consume, and encouraging the export of the surplus" (*A Letter on the Corn Laws*, by Lord Sheffield, p. 9, 1815).

[3] *Hansard*, xxix. 1209. [4] *Ibid.* xxx. 58.

West's statement ; Although the Law of Diminishing Returns had been stated succinctly by the great Turgot as far back as 1768, and is at least implicit in the second edition of Malthus' *Essay* (1803), its first complete statement is due to Sir Edward West, in an *Essay on the Application of Capital to Land*, published, under the name of "A Fellow of University College, Oxford," early in 1815, with the purpose of showing how impolitic it would be to fix the price at which corn could be freely imported at the high figure proposed by the Select Committee of 1813. There he enunciated the "principle" that, "in the progress of the improvement of cultivation, the raising of rude produce becomes progressively more expensive, or, in other words, the ratio of the net produce of land to its total produce is continually diminishing," the feature which distinguishes agriculture from manufacture being that "each equal additional quantity of work bestowed on agriculture yields an actually diminished return." Like Ricardo, in the demonstration which became very familiar shortly afterwards, he follows the experience of colonists, first cultivating the "richest spots," then the land "second in quality," having recourse successively to worse lands. "The very fact that in the progress of society new land is brought into cultivation, proves that additional work cannot be bestowed with the same advantage as before on the old land." And this tendency "more than counteracts the effects of machinery and the division of labour in agriculture." West charges Adam Smith with accounting for the fact that the productive powers of labour in agriculture improved less rapidly than the productive powers of labour in manufactures, by "the impossibility of carrying the subdivision of labour, and the consequent introduction of machinery, so far in agriculture as in manufactures." This, says West, would indisputably account for a retardation of the improvement of the former when compared with the latter. But it would be a *comparative* retardation only. "Dr. Smith's principle is that the quantity of work which can be done by the same number of hands increases in the progress of improvement comparatively less rapidly in agriculture than in manufacture. The additional principle to which I allude is that each equal additional quantity of work bestowed on agriculture yields an actually diminished return." And West, it may be noted, says that "the additional work bestowed upon land must be expended either in bringing fresh land into cultivation, or in cultivating more highly that already in tillage."

"It is the diminishing rate of return upon additional portions of capital bestowed upon land that regulates and almost solely causes rent."

As to the question on hand, he made calculations to show that, if importation were totally prohibited, the price of wheat would presently rise to 90/-, this being about the "growing price of a crop of wheat raised at home" sufficient for the existing population, and, as population increased, the "increased produce would be raised at a greater proportionate expense," and price would increase. "It is the competition of the foreigner alone which could keep down wheat even to 80/-; and when that competition were withdrawn, as it must be as soon as the price fell below 80/-, our price would again rise as far as that competition would permit, viz. to 80/- the quarter." He closes by saying that he is "inclined to think that it would be reasonable to grant to the agriculturist, for the present, such protection as would keep up the price of corn to 70/-, or at the most 75/- the quarter."

Malthus's statement;

In Malthus's *Grounds of an Opinion on the Policy of restricting the Importation of Foreign Corn*, and also in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Progress of Rent*, published about the end of January, appeared the statement of the same Law and its connection with Rent. In the latter, he demonstrates that "the most fertile lands of a country . . . are never found sufficient to supply the effective demand of an increasing population. The price of raw produce, therefore, naturally rises till it becomes sufficiently high to pay the cost of raising it with inferior machines and by a more expensive process; and, as there cannot be two prices for corn of the same quality, all the other machines, the working of which requires less capital compared with the produce, must yield rents in proportion to their goodness."[1]

[1] Horner wrote an interesting letter to Malthus regarding the application of the theory: "You will think me very hardened, but I must own that my old faith is not shaken by your reasonings; on the contrary, I am even so perverse as to think I have discovered, among your ingenious deductions respecting rent, some fresh and cogent arguments in favour of a free corn trade for this country; by which I always mean as free a trade as we can secure by our own good sense, however it may be impaired by the deficiency of our neighbours in that qualification. If the consequence of 'high farming' and curious cultivation be a progressive rise of the price of produce, an importation of partial supplies from countries which, by a ruder agriculture, can furnish it cheaper, seems to be a provision laid by nature for checking too exclusive an employment of capital upon the land

Ricardo's statement.

Almost simultaneously, although after he had read Malthus's *Nature and Progress of Rent*, Ricardo published his *Essay on the Influence of a Low Price of Corn on the Profits of Stock*. Ricardo had not then seen West's pamphlet, but follows its lines, except that he gives a first draft of the Rent theory which was elaborated in his *Principles* (1817) and has since, somewhat erroneously, passed under his name, tracing the effect of the successive recourse to worse or less advantageously situated lands on the distribution of the produce between wages, profit, and rent.

It is in these three almost simultaneous pamphlets of West, Malthus, and Ricardo that the Law of Diminishing Returns and the Law of Rent are first clearly formulated. In the preface to his *Principles* (1817), Ricardo generously gives the credit of the latter to West and Malthus. In 1815, he says, they "presented to the world, nearly at the same moment, the true doctrine of Rent."

least fit for culture. It would be a palpable sacrifice of the end to the means, if, for the sake of extending our most finished husbandry to every sterile ridge that can be forced to yield something, we imposed upon the whole body of the people extravagant prices for the necessaries of life" (Letter to Malthus, in *Horner*, ii. 228).

# CHAPTER XXV

## 1816. REACTION AND DISLOCATION

"THE prevalance throughout Europe," says the *Annual Register* in its preface, "of a state of general peace, to which universal exhaustion promises a long and secure continuance, limits the history of the year 1816, with one brilliant exception,[1] to a relation of occurrences domestic and political." The historian, obliged, for so many years, to take the great war as a kind of vertebral column to which all home interests and affairs attached, finds himself for the moment at a loss how to arrange his material.

The financial changes consequent on peace.

In parliamentary history, the interest for some months centred in the financial changes, necessary to the transition from a war to a peace footing, but made extremely difficult by reason of the fact that they had to be made at a time when the distress of the agricultural classes was at its worst, and when every branch

[1] This was the bombardment of Algiers by Lord Exmouth. It led to the immediate and unconditional liberation of all Christian captives then within the territory of Algiers, and to the renunciation by its government of the practice of Christian slavery. This was one of the few government enterprises for which there was nothing but praise in Parliament. In 1820, however, a member traced the decay of British shipping in the Mediterranean to this act. "It is well known that the British flag was the only European flag respected by the Barbary powers. Our ships, therefore, navigated the Mediterranean in perfect security, and were insured at peace premiums; while those of other nations were exposed to capture, and consequently were obliged to pay war premiums. . . . This state of things gave us so decided a superiority in the carrying trade of the Mediterranean, that not less than five hundred sail of British ships were employed in the corn trade, between the Black Sea and the different ports of Italy, exclusive of the trade from one port of the Mediterranean to another. But, Sir, in one of those fits of magnanimity to which we became subject, in consequence of being hailed as the deliverers of Europe, we thought proper to equip an armament against the Dey of Algiers (the only ally who remained faithful to us during the whole war), in order to put an end to the predatory practices of the Barbary powers; and we certainly did achieve the liberation of about five hundred Sardinians, Neapolitans, and other foreigners, at the expense of the limbs and lives of a

of industry was suffering with them. The crisis in agriculture, as it presented several features of its own, has been dealt with in a separate chapter. But there was "a general complaint of the stagnation of trade and of the scarcity of money." Brougham thought he might safely venture to say that the home trade, the substantial groundwork of national industry, was at a standstill. Ships were everywhere empty, and tradesmen's books covered with debts on which not one per cent. could be collected. The pressure was greater than in 1810 and 1812.

Yet, in face of this wide-spread distress, ministers did not seem to realise its gravity. They brought forward estimates, bitterly criticised, which showed the intention of making England one of the great military powers, and, what was thought worse, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the very first day of the session, intimated that it was their intention to continue the Property Tax, although at the modified rate of 5 per cent.

**Vansittart's Financial Exposition.**

A few days later, on the 12th February, in accordance with an expressed wish that, on the first occasion on which a vote of supply was proposed, he should make some general observations as to the probable extent of the supply, and the ways and means to meet it, he made a financial exposition.[1] Comparing the produce of the last year's taxes with that of the preceding, the Customs showed an increase of half a million, the Excise of nearly one and a half millions, the Property Tax, of £100,000, etc. Although some branches of the revenue were down, the total increase was more than a million over the revenue of a year which had exceeded any former year. The exports for the three quarters of the year showed a considerable increase.[2] The

far greater number of British seamen; of more (as I understand) than a million of money; and at the further expense, of throwing about eight hundred British ships and ten thousand British seamen out of employment; for the result of this enterprise was, that all other European powers could navigate the Mediterranean with the same security as ourselves, and being able to sail at less expense than we can do, they immediately supplanted us in this trade, which does not, I believe, give employment to one single British ship at the present moment." *Hansard*, N.S. i. (1820) 847. There is a fine account of the expedition in *Walpole*, i. 227.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxii. 376. Mackintosh writes in his diary of this occasion: "Heard Vansittart, with a calmness that was admirable, if it proceeded from fortitude, open the most tremendous statement ever laid before a British parliament" (*Memoirs*, ii. 333).

[2] Castlereagh gave this as from £37,167,000 to £42,425,000 (*Hansard*, xxxii. 51). Baring, however, pointed out that this was due to an unusual export to America after the trade had been so long stopped by the war, and

cotton manufacture, in these three quarters, had exported £15,376,900, as against £13,668,900 in the same period of 1814; the linen manufacture, £1,340,600 as against £1,186,600; the woollen manufacture, £8,744,800 as against £6,131,000. While commerce was so prosperous, it was not to be denied that we were labouring under many embarrassments, arising from the circumstances in which the country had been long placed, and which had operated on the prices of all articles, especially agricultural produce.

Proposals of remedy.

The remedies he would propose were of two classes. First, there would be a diminution of taxation. By reducing the Property Tax to 5 per cent., an immediate diminution of £7 millions of taxes would be effected, of which sum above £4 millions would fall to the share of agriculture. Another million would be taken from the burden on that interest by making a change in Schedule B, called "the tenant's tax," and by reducing or removing the tax on farming horses, etc.

Second, he would propose a system of measures for the support of public credit. If no money were borrowed this year, and a sum of £14 millions were swept away from the public stocks by the Sinking Fund, a great capital would thus be thrown back into the country, which must have a most beneficial effect on public credit; that is to say, instead of adding £54 millions to the funded debt of the country, as was done last year, £14 millions would be paid off.

As to the expenditure of the year, it was by no means to be understood as that of the permanent peace establishment; after so long and expensive a war, all the retrenchments could not be carried into effect in one year. The home service would be about 25,000 men; an equal number would be kept up for Ireland; the garrisons of Gibraltar, Malta, and the Ionian Islands would require 11,000; for the West Indies, 13,000 would be necessary, and so on. In all, the total upon the British and Irish establishments would be 99,000 men.

In France, the force required was 30,000, but this would be paid out of the French indemnity. In India, there would be 20,000 men—paid for by the Company. Among the supplies, he intimated, would be an advance from the Bank of England of £6 millions, of

hinted that there was more loss than gain in it, which Marryat confirmed by saying that "the pressure of the moment had chiefly fallen on the body of the exporters."

which, however, 1½ millions would be deducted for repayment of the advance made some years before.

A storm of criticism.

The exposition was met by a storm of criticism. The military establishment was pronounced "enormous." Why should the peace establishment be six times greater than it was in 1792? "When the Bourbons had not 10,000 men at their disposal," said Baring, "and that 10,000 they dared not embody; when we had all Europe for our allies; when not a whisper of apprehension was breathed, we were called on for an establishment five times greater than ever was known in time of peace before." "The noble lord" (Castlereagh), said Ponsonby, "who had of late resided so much on the continent, and had imbibed so many continental customs, seemed almost to have forgotten that England was an island," and the apparent intention of the Government to make Great Britain one of the great military powers formed a text on which the Opposition preached with both force and effect.[1]

As to the taxation proposals, Brougham was willing to admit that the Property Tax was a "most productive tax": this was one

[1] How far this alarm was genuine, and how far mere political strategy, it is difficult to say, but, at any rate, it fills many pages of the parliamentary debates. The army estimates, for instance, were discussed for ten nights—a thing unparalleled in the history of the country, said Castlereagh. Burdett, quoted from recollection a speech of the great Chatham: "When the time comes," he said, striking his crutch upon the floor, "that a barrack shall be erected in England, then adieu to the liberties of England." Much indignation was expressed over the formation in the metropolis of a club, "all whose members were exclusively military"—it was "inconsistent," said a member, "with the true principles of the British constitution"; and Brougham, who was always on his feet in those days, joined in the chorus of denunciation—"it formed only a part of a system which had for its object to alter the character of the country and make us a military people" (*Hansard*, xxxii. 891, 1068). In such a temper, it might be expected that the motives of the "Holy Alliance"—the extraordinary "Christian Treaty" between Russia, Austria, and Prussia—would be questioned. "These three great powers," said Brougham, "professed to pledge themselves to the maintenance of Christian principles. But where was the necessity for such a pledge? No suspicion was expressed of their adherence to Christianity. Why should these sovereigns put themselves ostentatiously forward as the defenders of that Christianity which no danger menaced, or of those principles which all good men must be ready to sustain?" No such treaty had been published since the time of the Crusades. But, when they spoke of "leading their armies to protect religion, peace, and justice," was there no ground for alarm—was there nothing to excite suspicion in such language? Had we not once heard something like this—before the partition of Poland and the massacre of Warsaw. From the frequent use here made of the name of religion, he was led to apprehend that some sort of crusade was in contemplation. Another member was less tentative: "the language of the three emperors was mere cant," foreshadowing a conspiracy against the freedom and rights of their subjects—an infamous conspiracy of the few against the happiness of the many, and so on (*Hansard*, xxxii. 350, 362).

of his strongest objections to it, for "such a productive tax was likely to render ministers more saving and economical than those now in power profuse and extravagant." The relief to the farmer in the horse tax was ridiculous—it would come to no more than £12 on a farm of 300 acres. To impose the Income Tax on farmers according to rent, said Baring, when they were unable to pay any rent, was simply taxing their capital. The relief proposed under Schedule B confined it to certain classes of tenants—those holding under lease—"overlooking the plain fact that the uncertain state of things between the parties for the last few years had prevented any matured arrangements which could bring them within the letter of the proposed concession."

Grenfell, with some reason, indignantly protested against the bargain with the Bank. After the debate of last year, it had been understood, he said, that all consideration of the subject should be deferred until the present session. Considering that he had given notice of a motion relative to the transactions between Government and the Bank, it was neither fair nor candid to have concluded such a bargain. It was a mockery of the House of Commons to say that, by this loan, as it was called, the public derived any benefit from the immense profits made by the Bank: the case was neither more nor less than this, that the Bank proposed to lend to the public six millions of the public money at an interest of 4 per cent.

"Winding up" expenses.

The Government, in reply, took the ground that they were asking no more than was necessary for the expense of winding up the war; that the first year of a peace was invariably more expensive in some departments than the last year of a war;[1] that this was not the supply of the permanent peace establishment—many of the grants now necessary had nothing at all to do with the peace. But Castlereagh showed what was at the back of his mind when he said, later, that "he could not recommend to the country to disarm altogether when the continent was still covered with camps and armies."[2] When Horner expressed the very general feeling that "the people could not be relieved from their present appalling difficulties

[1] Croker's parliamentary triumph in demonstrating this is graphically described in his *Correspondence*, vol. i.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxii. 454. In the same vein, Lord Holland said: "I must know, before I rejoice at peace, whether it will be better than an armed truce." *Ibid.* 14.

in any other way than by a reduction of the proposed peace establishment,"[1] it was evident that a struggle was imminent.

**Indignation as to Property Tax.**

The battle-ground was the Property Tax. The proposal to continue it was received with an outburst of indignation against what was called a breach of faith. In page after page of *Hansard* appear the old strong statements about this "most tormenting of all taxes," as Brougham termed it. "There could be no more dreadful calamity for this country than its continuance," said Lord John Russell. The distress of the country, said one, was occasioned, in a great measure, by that detestable and shameful tax; while that abominable measure lasted, there was, in fact, no British constitution. This mischievous, wicked, and immoral tax was utterly at variance with civil liberty, said another. A third could find expression for his indignation only by referring the House to the strongest epithets with which the tax had anywhere been branded and saying that these were his sentiments. Horner had consented to its enactment during the war, "although persuaded of its odious, oppressive, burdensome, inquisitorial character," but those times were now passed away. "If the people of England would submit to bear half of it," said Tierney, "they were fully entitled to be saddled with the whole." Outside opinion, it was asserted, was unanimous against it. "The great body of the country was completely hostile to the tax, for the best possible reason—if it were renewed, they were quite unable to pay it." A Scots member asserted that, in the course of last session, he had travelled from one end of Scotland to the other, and that among all classes he had found the tax held in execration.[2]

This was confirmed by the petitions which began to pour in in almost unprecedented quantities. When Brougham rose, on 22nd February, with a petition of enormous size in his arms, he began by saying that it was unnecessary, from the size of the petition, to say that it was against the Property Tax—"falsely so-called, being in fact a tax upon income"—a tax which even

[1] *Hansard*, xxxii. 439.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxii. 33, 39, 439, 450, 947, 1043, 1046, 1047, 1050. On the other hand, Mr. Alexander said that it was a most wise and proper measure—very inconvenient, indeed—he suffered much from it himself—but he and his constituents were content to bear it because they thought it would ultimately render them essential service. This judgment was somewhat discounted when it was pointed out that Mr. Alexander was member for that respectable borough in the county of Wilts, Old Sarum, and that his constituents were five or six in number! *Hansard*, xxxiii. 415.

necessity could scarcely justify.[1] And every petition was made the occasion of a new flood of debate.

Proposed modification of the tax.

Questioned if the tax was to be permanent and if it was to be modified, Vansittart had said that he meant to propose some modifications which would remove part of the pressure from some classes of society, but by no means to exempt any class of the community from contributing its fair proportion, and that he considered it, not as a permanent tax but as a continuance of the war tax for two or three years.[2] On 5th March, accordingly, he explained the modifications proposed. Considering that the greatest relief should be given to the tenants of land under Schedule B, there would be a reduction of the assessment from three-fourths to one-third of the rental; that is to say, farmers would pay on one-third of the annual value of the land instead of on three-fourths.[3] Farmers whose rent was under £150 would be

[1] *Hansard*, xxxii. 809. The aggregate number of the petitions was about 400—130 of them being from Devonshire and Middlesex (*ibid.* 144). One was presented from the neighbourhood of Lewes, said to be signed entirely by those who had been returned to the Exchequer as defaulters for the non-payment of the Property Tax, although they had obtained no profit from their farms and were wholly unable to pay the tax; another from Devonshire, with 400 signatures, made the same statement. A petition from merchants and manufacturers of the city of Glasgow rather honourably distinguished itself by saying that the signatories had no objection to the continuance of the tax in order to wind up the war expenditure, and that, if so large a sum as six millions needed to be raised, the Property Tax was the least objectionable mode (*Hansard*, xxxiii. 118, 124). The retort was made that Scotland, owing to laxity of collection, did not pay her full share of the tax; to which Finlay replied that the proportion of the tax paid by persons engaged in trade and manufactures, etc., in Glasgow amounted to double the sum from the same class in Manchester, although the trade of Manchester was double that of Glasgow (*ibid.* 199). The great petition signed by 22,000 merchants, bankers, and traders of the city of London, began: "that, in the judgment of the petitioners, the Property or Income Tax is in its principle arbitrary, at variance with the spirit and general practice of our constitution, and that it ought only to be submitted to in cases of urgent necessity; that, inasmuch as it operates indiscriminately upon all casual as well as permanent incomes, it is not equitable; and that, in its application to trade and commerce, it has been found inquisitorial and oppressive" (*ibid.* 410). But Baring, who had attended the meeting, and bore witness that so much respectability had never been collected on any occasion whatever, said that "the whole of the discussion proceeded, not on any distress at present felt by the commercial interest, but solely on the odious nature of the tax—on the depredation to which commercial men were every year exposed by those inquisitorial examinations into their most private affairs, which the Income Tax authorised" (*ibid.* 413).

[2] *Hansard*, xxxii. 65.

[3] Western probably voiced the opinion of the agriculturists when he said that, if the property tax were to be renewed, it should be paid from the clear

exempt altogether, and those paying under £400 would be allowed certain abatements. A proportionate reduction would be made to landlords who occupied their own estates, or whose rents were necessarily reduced by existing circumstances. He added that, later on, he intended to reduce the husbandry horse tax from 17/6 to 10/-.[1]

**Rejection of the tax.**

The last stage was reached on 18th March when the Chancellor of the Exchequer brought forward his motion for the continuance of the Property Tax at 5 per cent.[2] He denied that any pledge had been given that the tax would cease with the war. "Among the many objections to which he had listened, he had hardly ever heard the general equality and equity of the principle of the Property Tax denied." He admitted that, in regard to incomes from industry, there were considerable defects; but, by altering Schedule B to make the agricultural tenants pay on one-third instead of on three-fourths of their rent, exempting all farmers occupying land of a less annual rent than £100,[3] reducing the husbandry horse tax to 7/6 for each horse, allowing the individual in trade to pay, under Schedule D, upon the established profits of the previous year, and, perhaps, by further modifications if they suggested themselves, he hoped that the House would sanction the Bill. The duration of the tax would be stated in the preamble, "with the addition that it was continued only for the purpose of defraying the extraordinary charges occasioned by the war in the first years of the peace."

When the vote was taken, to the surprise of everybody, 201 voted for the tax and 238 against. "As soon as the numbers were announced in the House," says the usually unimpassioned *Hansard*, "a loud cheering took place which continued for several minutes. Similar exultation was manifested by the crowd of strangers in the lobby and the avenues of the House."

**Malt duties given up.**

Two days afterward, the Chancellor gave up the war duties upon malt which had amounted to £2,700,000, for the curious

profits of the land: "if there must be a tax on the profits derived from trade, it was fair that it should equally extend to the real profits on agriculture" (*ibid.* 407).

[1] *Hansard*, xxxii. 1141. By a Resolution agreed to on 8th April, the following abatements were made: farmers paying less rent than £70 paid 3/- per horse; between £70 and £100, 5/-; between £100 and £150, 7/6 (*ibid.* xxxiii. 1058).

[2] *Hansard*, xxxiii. 421.

[3] It will be observed that his former proposal as to the exemption limit was £150.

reason that, as he was deprived of so great a resource as the Property Tax, and would have to fall back on the money market at any rate, it "was of little consequence that the loan should be increased by the amount of the calculated produce of the malt tax."[1] It was a matter of indifference, said Castlereagh, whether they took a loan of six or eight millions.

"Ignorant impatience of taxation."

Again and again in reading these debates, it strikes one how rarely the objection expressed to the Property Tax was the economic objection to inequality of burden; that the consideration which generally overwhelmed every other was its inquisitorial character. When the "principle" of the tax is being attacked, one gets to expect that it will be this inquisition that is meant. Our forefathers never seem to have got beyond regarding taxation as at best a most sad necessity, instead of considering it as a proportion of the national income, taken by consent from individuals, to be spent by the nation for common purposes—purposes economic as well as political. If there must be taxation, they seemed to say—and they always regarded other nations as somehow less heavily burdened than we were—do not let us know it—let it be hidden by inclusion in the price of commodities. Indeed, according to one member, there was a further advantage in this: "In most taxes the payer is generally repaid with a profit; he advances the tax on his goods, and is more than indemnified by the higher price which these goods consequently attain." But this Income Tax, he said, affects professions as well as trades, and the lawyer or physician gains no more for his guinea, though equally affected with others by the operation of the tax!

And their complacent approval of a tax which could be avoided, makes one very doubtful if they had any intelligent theory on the subject at all. If they did not follow, they seemed inclined to approve, the action of an Irishman of the time who entered on his assessment paper: "Take notice, I have cut the throats of all my horses—I have shot all my dogs—I have burned all my carriages—I have dismissed all my servants except my wife, and therefore I conceive that I cannot be liable to any assessment whatever."[2]

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiii. 457.

[2] A suggestion was made in the Lords, in all seriousness, that, in view of the number of persons of fortune who were going abroad, and thereby avoiding a great proportion of the taxes, a tax upon passports would be

Was the inquisition really a grievance?

Whether there really was very much after all in the inquisitorial argument may be doubted. The Government was said to employ an army of common informers through whose agency the system of surcharges and penalties was enforced. "This system of espionage," said Southey, "has within these few years become a regular trade; the laws are in some instances so perplexing, and in others so vexatious, that matter for prosecution is never wanting." He describes how "a fellow surcharges half the people in the district; that is, he informs the tax commissioners that such persons have given in a false account of their windows, dogs, horses, carriages, etc., an offence for which the tax is trebled and half the surplus given to the informer." Harassed and perplexed—summoned from distant parts to appear before the commissioners—the persons informed against give up the trouble and expense of seeking justice; pay the penalty and bear the surcharge.[1] But some deduction seems necessary from such broad charges in view of the violent hatred of direct taxes, and the suspicion that tax commissioners were not so careful to observe their oath of secrecy as they might be. Certainly Brougham made a great impression when he brought forward the case of a person who had found, in the paper wrapped round a purchase from his cheesemonger, the income tax returns of one of his friends and neighbours, and was told on enquiry that these had been sold as waste paper. "It would seem that all attempts for making the Commissioners keep faith with those under their inquisition are unavailing"[2]

Usury Laws.

In the Budget debates serious attention was first called to the Usury Laws. On the opening of the session, Brougham had expressed the hope that these laws would be brought under consideration of the House;—"there was no subject more deserving the attention of parliament": more than thirty years before, Sir Francis Baring had strongly pronounced against them as injuring the interests of those they were intended to protect.[3] On the occasion of his exposition, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that, if there had been a prospect that our difficulties would long continue, and if there were not other more

a very fair source of revenue. Lord Liverpool said that the subject had already been under the consideration of the treasury and appeared well worthy of attention (*Hansard*, xxxiii. 597).

[1] Quoted in Charles Knight's *History*, viii. 53.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxii. 950; xxxiii. 26, 437, 950. [3] *Ibid.* xxxii. 41.

advantageous methods of relieving credit, he would not have thought lightly of Brougham's proposition.[1]

Brougham, in reply, said that it was precisely because he thought the distress might not be permanent that he had made the proposition. At a time when the community was passing from a state of war to a state of peace, and during the distress which might be expected, borrowing should be facilitated, to enable the distressed persons to tide over the bad time. As it was, the existing laws, which forbade the borrowing of money on mortgage at a higher rate than 5 per cent., put an entire stop to such borrowing. The great insurance companies were the bodies from whom the most favourable terms might be looked for. But these companies would not lend a single shilling on mortgage. They, naturally, employed their funds in lending on annuities, for which they charged 8 per cent., requiring that the life of the borrower should be insured. This insurance cost about 2 per cent., and thus 10 per cent. was the very lowest terms on which money could be borrowed. "This one case was as good as five hundred to show that the usury laws were the sole cause which prevented the old practice of borrowing money on mortgage." The result was that the borrower, instead of paying only 6½ or 7 per cent. for his money, paid 10 per cent. at least, frequently 12, and sometimes 15 per cent. He begged the Chancellor of the Exchequer, then, to consider the expediency of immediately having recourse to "that measure which, in the present age, all mankind agreed was perfectly safe, calculated to afford the greatest measure of relief, and innoxious to the borrower, to the lender, and to the state."[2]

Grenfell's attack on the Bank.

On the day after Vansittart's exposition, Grenfell made his promised attack on the transactions between the Bank and the Government.[3]

Their gain on public deposits

First, as to the deposits of public monies lodged at the Bank. This he considered productive to the Bank to the extent of about 5 per cent. per annum on their whole aggregate amounts, which he took at an average of £11½ millions for the ten years from 1806 till the present time. When Pitt renewed the Charter in 1800, he claimed and applied the principle of participation with the Bank in the profits derived from these balances deposited. But, at that time, the balances were small—a little

[1] *Hansard*, xxxii. 381. [2] *Ibid.* 392.

[3] *Hansard*, xxxii. 458. The speech was printed separately by John Murray.

over £3 millions, according to the Bank's statement on evidence to the Commission of 1807, although he (Grenfell) said that, from papers now produced, they were shown to have actually been at that time £6 millions. It was for the Bank to explain the difference in these—their own—two statements. At any rate, in the profits derived from those deposits, Pitt claimed participation, and that participation was granted specifically in the shape of a loan, as it was called, of £3 millions for six years without interest. Under this agreement, and with the usual covenant of continuing the whole of the Bank's capital of £11,600,000 in the hands of the public, at 3 per cent., the Charter was renewed in 1812 for twenty-one years.

But, in 1806, when the £3 millions loan of 1800 became repayable, the loan was renewed to run till the end of the war, not, however, without interest, but for a payment of 3 per cent., or £90,000 a year. Inadequate as this arrangement was, the fact of the interest being 3 per cent. instead of 5 per cent., was a second admission on the part of the Bank of the profit they were deriving from the possession of those public deposits.

Meantime, however, a considerable increase had taken place in the amount of the monies deposited with the Bank, in consequence of the recent detection and discoveries of malpractices and misappropriations of the public money, which had induced the Government to place the public treasure beyond reach or hazard, in the hands of the public banker. But it was not till 1807 that the House was made aware of this enormous increase in the deposits. "At the very moment, in 1806, when the Bank required, and the public most improvidently agreed to pay, £90,000 per annum for the use of £3 millions of money, the Bank held, and were in possession of, a treasure belonging to the public amounting to a sum little short of twelve millions!—wholly unproductive to the public but productive of advantage to the Bank; which treasure, too, I would observe in passing, has remained in the Bank of England with little or no diminution ever since." It was incredible that the Government would have agreed to pay £90,000 a year for the use of £3 millions if they had known that almost £12 millions of public money were deposited with the Bank. Was it right to call this a "loan" or an "advance"?[1]

—now enormously increased.

[1] The £3 millions were duly repaid at the end of the war, in 1814, along with the interest due, which amounted during the eight years and eight months to £780,000—"which sum," said Grenfell, "I maintain was paid by the public for the use of three millions of its own money."

In 1807, the Committee on Public Expenditure reported, showing most clearly that the Bank was deriving a profit from these public monies of between £500,000 and £600,000 per annum. At once the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Perceval), with this Report in his hand, claimed a further participation, and, in 1808, the Bank agreed to advance, till the end of the war, another "loan," as it was called, of £3 millions without interest,[1] agreeing at the same time to the withdrawal of half-a-million from the balance of unclaimed dividends, and to a reduction of about a fourth in the charge for the management of the debt. The whole saving effected by the arrangement amounted to about £242,000 per annum. That is to say, the Bank in 1806 charged the public £90,000 per annum for doing what, in 1808, they did for nothing! "To what principle is this to be attributed? Can we discover in it any of that spirit of moderation which I think the public had and have a right to expect from the Bank? . . . And yet it is not less curious than true that neither the Committee of 1807, nor Mr. Perceval in 1808, could extort from the Bank any admission of the existence of these profits; the evidence of the directors before the Committee amounts, indeed, to a positive denial of it."

"From 1808, then, to 1814, the Bank held a treasure belonging to the public of £5½ millions, and made a profit—or the public lost in interest of money thereon—at the rate of £365,000 per annum. In 1814, the loan of 1806 was discharged, and the amount replaced in the possession of the Bank, by which the aggregate amount of deposits was again raised from £5½ millions to £8½. The interest on this is £425,000 per annum. From 1814, then, to 5th April, 1816, the Bank will have held a public treasure of £8½ millions, and we shall have been paying to the Bank at the rate of £425,000 per annum for taking care of it."

Value of the service rendered by the Bank.

Going on to enquire what was the nature and value of the service rendered for this munificent remuneration, Grenfell maintained that there was nothing more in it than "a common ordinary banking transaction; in its character precisely the same as that which probably subsists between every gentleman who now hears me and his private banker; simple in its nature, free from all complication, exposing the Bank to little risk or trouble, and neither requiring, nor in point of fact having, any extensive

[1] In 1814, this 1808 loan was prolonged till April, 1816.

establishment of clerks or officers necessary for carrying it into execution." He had made careful enquiries what this service would be counted worth, if there were a "second shop" to which we might go, and he ventured to affirm that, "if private bankers were employed in this service, there was not a banking house in the Metropolis that would not consider its prosperity established upon the most solid and permanent basis, and its fortune in a manner made, if this branch of public business were secured to it, with a remuneration of £26,000 per annum." In other words: "we have been paying to the Bank half a million per annum, and are at this moment giving to them £425,000, for a service, which, if there were any competition, would be performed for, and which is, therefore, worth no more than, £25,000."

Management of the debt.

Second, as to the charge made by the Bank for the management of the public debt, amounting at the moment to about £275,000 per annum, to which had to be added a further charge paid to the Bank of £800 per million upon the whole amount of every loan, and £1,000 upon every lottery contract—the two together amounting to £42,000 in 1814 and to £30,000 in 1815. The history of the charge for management was this. In 1786, Pitt reduced the charge from £562 10/- per million, at which rate the Bank had been paid since 1742, to £450 per million, a charge which then amounted to about £100,000 per annum. (Pitt had contended for £360 but gave in to the £450). In 1797, a Finance Committee recommended unequivocally a further reduction, but the suggestion passed wholly unnoticed till—on the Report of the Committee of 1807—Perceval, in 1808, got it reduced to £340 per million on £600,000,000 of the debt and to £300 per million on all excess. Since then no change had been made.

But, in addition to these two charges for the great branches of the public service, there were three other charges made by the Bank against the public, though of comparatively trifling amount.

Three more items of charge

(*a*) A sum of £4,000 per annum, called, in the original grant of the Bank's charter, "an allowance to the Bank towards its House expenses." As to this, Grenfell said that he had never been able to discover on what ground this claim was originally made, but he knew that Perceval, in 1808, felt such disgust at the charge that he made a distinct proposal to the Bank for its suppression—which was refused.

(*b*) A sum of £1,898 per annum charged for management of £4 millions of public debt, purchased by the Bank from the South Sea Company in 1722, and now forming a part of the bank capital lent to the public at 3 per cent. As to this, he would only say that, as there no longer existed any transfers of payments of dividends applicable to this part of the public debt, there did not appear any reason whatever why any charge should be allowed to the Bank for the management of it.

(*c*) A sum paid to the Bank since 1806, as a commission, of one-eighth per cent. upon such portion of the property duty as persons assessed for trades, offices, or professions voluntarily took to the Bank and deposited there on its way into the Exchequer. This appeared to him the most unwarrantable of all—a stock-broker's commission for what ought to have been done for nothing.

—not to speak of the profits on increased issues.

And all these three groups of charges were quite independent of the immense increase in the bank profits arising out of the increased circulation since 1797; that is, from between eleven and twelve millions to between twenty-seven and twenty-eight millions—a profit estimated at £800,000 a year, for which the Bank was indebted to an act of the legislature. In regard to this he did not propose to ask any participation on the part of the public—unless, indeed, the restriction were going to be made a permanent system of our currency.

What if the Bank should resist?

Having thus shown that a sum exceeding £1½ millions annually was derivable by the Bank, and arising out of its connection with the public, the question was what would be the remedy if the Bank should resist. He did not think that the Bank would resist if the House—as distinguished from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, for no Chancellor was or could be a match for the Bank of England in negotiations of this nature—showed determination. But he would mention one remedy which was within reach if the necessity arose; it was to make the balances of the various government departments all available for the temporary wants of any one department. But he would not elaborate this, as all he wanted was the appointment of a Select Committee to enquire into the engagements now subsisting between the public and the Bank; to consider the advantages derived by the Bank from its transactions with the public, with a view to the adoption of such future arrangements as might be consistent with those principles of equity and good faith which ought to prevail in all transactions between the public and

Grenfell asks for a Select Committee.

the Bank of England; and to report their opinions thereon to the House.

Vansittart's reply.

Vansittart's reply was very inadequate, his chief argument being that such a committee was unnecessary and even dangerous to the public credit. But he made one point—that it might be assumed that the Bank thought it necessary to reserve one-quarter of the balances, so that it was only on the remaining three-quarters that a profit could be made.

Bankes.

Bankes thought that Perceval had not made so good a bargain as he might; in any case, it was the duty of the House to take care that the Bank was not paid more than was proper for its services. Things could not be allowed to go on much longer without a full investigation into the circumstances of the transactions with the Bank.

Baring.

Baring (who was a bank director), said that his main objection to the motion arose from the exaggeration with which it was prefaced, and the sort of spirit with which it was proposed.

Tierney.

Tierney very aptly quoted from a recent pamphlet on the subject, to the effect that the Bank appeared to consider that the rule by which they were to measure the moderation of their charges was the saving which they effected to their employer, rather than a just compensation for their own trouble. What would they think of an engineer, if, in his charge for the construction of a steam engine, he should be guided by the value of the labour which the engine was calculated to save, and not by the value of the labour and materials necessary to its construction? In his own opinion, a stronger case had never been put forward for enquiry before a committee.

But, on a division, the motion for the Committee was rejected by 81 to 44.

Vansittart's arrangements with the Bank.

Within a few days, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that he had made an arrangement (1) for the Government to repay the other half of the £3,000,000 borrowed in 1800, of which one-half had been repaid during the Peace of Amiens; (2) for the Bank to continue the 1808 advance of £3 millions without interest; (3) for the Bank to make "a further advance of £6 millions" at 4 per cent. With regard to this latter, Bankes contended that the directors had really driven a very hard bargain; he would move that the interest be 3 per cent.: and he agreed with Grenfell and Newport that the unclaimed dividends in the hands of the Bank—which were between £700,000 and £800,000 in 1814—were certainly public money and should be available for the public service.

Grenfell, convinced that the 1808 agreement was infinitely short of what the public had a right to expect, thought that the new £6 millions should be without interest.[1]

On 14th March, Grenfell brought up the whole subject again by way of Resolutions, but these were successively rejected except one which was withdrawn.[2]

On 5th April, accordingly, we find the Bank Loan Bill passing its second reading in the House of Lords, when Grenville, supported by Lansdowne and Lauderdale, took up Grenfell's position, and stated his entire dissatisfaction with the bargain which the ministers had concluded with the Bank.[3]

Bank Restriction continued.

Shortly afterwards, the Bank Restriction was continued till the 5th of July, 1818,[4] in spite of the contention of Grenfell and others that the present seemed a favourable time for returning to specie payments, as the mint price of bullion, particularly silver, was the same with the market price.[5]

State of the silver currency.

Grenfell came prominently before the country in another connection. On 22nd March, and again on 10th April, he called attention to the disgraceful state of the silver currency. In change for a pound note, persons usually received, he affirmed, half in French coin and half, perhaps, in counterfeit coin made in Birmingham. No less than £200,000 worth of 12 and 24 sous pieces had been imported in twelve months. There was nothing like a Tower shilling in the country. It was all the more disgraceful in that silver at the moment was at the mint price.[6] Baring now made a suggestion to alter the standard of the silver, so that it might not be carried out of the country at every slight variation in the price of the metal. A reduction to the amount of 10 per cent. would effect this. On 3rd May, Grenfell, in presenting a petition, took occasion to recommend that the new silver currency should be fabricated, not according to the existing law, but in agreement with the plan proposed by Lord Liverpool in 1805. Wellesley-Pole, the Master of the Mint, admitted the force of what had been said, and intimated that the subject was under the consideration of Government.[7]

General outlines of the Government's proposals.

On 30th May, accordingly, Lord Liverpool indicated the general outlines of the measure the Government had in contemplation in regard to the silver coinage.[8] He laid it down as a fundamental

[1] *Hansard*, xxxii. 613. [2] *Ibid.* xxxiii. 264. [3] *Ibid.* 981.
[4] *Hansard*, xxxiv. Append. xci. [5] *Ibid.* xxxiii. 1054.
[6] *Hansard*, xxxiii. 1148. [7] *Ibid.* xxxiv. 239. [8] *Ibid.* 912.

principle that, in this country, gold was in point of fact the standard of value, and not only in fact but in law, as silver was legal tender only to the amount of £5.[1] The other metals, then, were counters, and, as gold was the best standard of value, so silver was the best calculated for purposes of small change. This being so, they had only to take care that there was enough of it for the purposes of change, and that it should not be liable to be melted down. In 1773, silver was considered the standard of value, and the pound of silver was coined into 62 shillings. The price of silver at the present moment was 61½d. per ounce. Silver, then, was now below the mint price, and might be coined even on the old principle. It was not till the market price of silver was so far above the mint price as to afford a profit by converting it into bullion that it was worth melting down. It was proposed to take away the inducement to this by coining the ounce into 5/6 or 5/9.

As to the arrangements to be adopted in recalling the deteriorated coin: There were lately in circulation about £3,700,000 in bank tokens, circulating at 6/8 or 6/9 per oz.; these would remain in circulation till a substitute in the new coin was provided. The deteriorated shillings and sixpences would be called in—the new and the old must not of course circulate together. He considered that £2,500,000 of new coinage would be be sufficient, and this quantity might be prepared in six or seven months.

As regards indemnity, he thought the country should be liberal, and that all the old currency which could be recognised as the coinage of the royal mint should be regarded as legal tender and received at current value, while mere counterfeits should not be received for more than their bullion value.

The only objection came from Lord Lauderdale, who could not agree to the fundamental principle that gold was the best standard. He would give the preference to silver. He thought, too, that the expense had been much underrated, and calculated that the recoinage would cost £9½ millions, on the basis that 19 out of 20 silver coins in circulation were not of the coinage of the mint.[2]

[1] *Sic.* It is curious to find Lauderdale making the same mistake (p. 918). When the gold coin was reformed in 1774, an Act was passed declaring silver not to be legal tender in coin for more than £25. This was avowedly an experiment made for two years, but the Act was renewed from time to time till, in 1799, it was made perpetual (p. 955).

[2] When the proposals were, almost unanimously, agreed to, Lauderdale entered his protest in the Journals (*Hansard*, xxxiv. 1235).

On the same day, in the House of Commons, Wellesley-Pole formally brought forward the Government's proposals,[1] prefacing them by a short survey of monetary history since the time of William the Conqueror. The last change in the silver coinage had been made by the 43rd of Elizabeth, when the silver pound, 11 oz. 2 dwt. fine to 18 dwt. of alloy, had been cut into 62 shillings. The silver coins in circulation—amounting probably to £2,500,000—were now worn away and deteriorated by about 30 per cent. of their value, and the deficiency had been supplied by an issue of £3,400,000 bank tokens. It was not intended to make any alteration in the fineness of the silver; the only change would be that the pound was now coined into 66 shillings. This seigniorage of 4 shillings out of 66 would pay the expense of the recoinage, which was estimated at 2½ per cent., and leave a profit to the Government of 3½ per cent. The legal tender of the new coins would now be limited to two guineas. To secure poor people from loss, it would be advisable to limit the legal tender of the old coins to three shillings or three sixpences in any one payment till the issuing of the proclamation for exchanging the coin. The measure would not apply to Ireland, where the bank tokens in circulation were issued by the Government, and, by Act of Parliament, were legal tender for all taxes and duties till the expiration of the bank restriction.[2] Formal proposals.

In presenting the Budget on 27th May[3]—a very different one from that which he had intended, owing to the rejection of the Budget.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 946. Gold, he said, had become, in fact, the standard measure of value by the proclamation of 1717. In 1774, the gold in circulation amounted to about £25,500,000; in 1805, it was estimated by Lord Liverpool at about £30,000,000. Of the 67 millions minted in the reign of George III., it was impossible to say what proportion remained in the country.

[2] In September, a curious incident happened in connection with the recoinage. On a Friday morning the retail dealers of the metropolis, taking fright at the near approach of the new issue, refused to take payment in plain (rubbed) shillings and sixpences. For the moment, there was almost a panic; retail dealing stopped, and disturbance was feared, till the Lord Mayor hastily issued a proclamation to the effect: "Take Notice.—The Bank of England do not refuse any shillings or sixpences on account of their being plain, provided they are English." The next morning the Bank was beset by crowds, taking their silver and receiving notes and tokens, and, in the afternoon, another notice was issued: "Take Notice.—All shillings and sixpences of the coin of the realm, whether plain or not, will continue to be exchanged at the Bank of England as heretofore, till the issue of the new silver coinage, which will not take place before the month of February next. —N.B. Those who refuse to take the current coin of the realm are liable to be prosecuted." *Annual Register*, Chronicle 145.

[3] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 821.

Property Tax—the Chancellor of the Exchequer prefaced it by notifying the new arrangement made with the Bank. In consideration of permission being given to increase their capital by one-fourth—from £11,642,400 to £14,553,000—and on condition that their notes should continue to be received in all payments made on account of the public revenue,[1] the Bank would give another advance of £3,000,000 at 3 per cent.

The total Supply was £30,424,000, including the Irish proportion of £3,145,000.

The principal items of Supply were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Army | £10,564,000 |
| Navy | 9,434,000 |
| Ordnance | 1,696,000 |
| Miscellaneous | 2,500,000 |

The Ways and Means were as under:

| | |
|---|---|
| Land and malt taxes | £3,000,000 |
| Surplus of Consolidated Fund | 3,000,000 |
| Excise Duties continued for five years | 3,500,000[2] |
| Bank Advance on Bills | 6,000,000[3] |
| Lottery | 200,000 |
| Surplus Grants, 1815 | 5,663,755[4] |
| New bank advance | 3,000,000 |
| Unclaimed dividends | 301,316[5] |
| Unapplied money in the Exchequer | 140,000 |
| Exchequer Bills | 2,500,000 |
| | £27,305,771[6] |

[1] This latter privilege would end either at the expiry of the Bank charter—*i.e.* in sixteen years from date—or on repayment of the £3,000,000. Its object was to guard against the possibility of a run on the Bank immediately on the resumption of cash payments.

[2] This was the late war duty continued by consent of parliament when the War Customs Duties were repealed.

[3] This was the first advance, made at 4 per cent.

[4] This "most satisfactory item" was the balance unspent of the £120 millions of Supply voted last year, due, said Baring, to "the rapid termination of the war which was ended almost before we were aware of its commencement."

[5] The Chancellor of the Exchequer, it will be seen, had at last accepted Grenfell's proposal, and taken the unclaimed dividends on bank stock above a certain amount (not specified). But "this was not the only advantage": in future, all stock on which no dividend was claimed for ten years successively would be paid over to the Commissioners for the liquidation of the National Debt, subject of course to future claims for restitution.

[6] It appears from the public accounts that the Public Income of Great Britain for 1816 fell to £66½ millions; to which, however, were added £9 millions of loans (*Hansard*, xxxvi. Append. i.).

The only new taxes—to meet the interest on the money borrowed for the year—would be the Soap tax, estimated at £200,000; the new duties on Butter and Cheese, estimated at £100,000; and a new arrangement of the drawbacks on Sugar, which would make up the amount required. New taxes.

Detailed criticism was reserved for a future occasion. But Ponsonby "congratulated the committee that the House, in putting an end to the Property Tax, had not brought on the finances of the country all those evils which ministers had repeatedly predicted that its rejection would occasion—that the minister now found himself able to raise the ways and means in a manner which appeared satisfactory to the House and light and easy to the country. It was satisfactory that, by resolutely persevering in opposition to the Property Tax, and by totally disregarding all the predictions and entreaties of the minister, we had now even his testimony in favour of an opinion that there was no necessity for it. It was also peculiarly satisfactory that, after he and his friends had been so frequently charged with attempting to shake the credit of the Bank of England, that establishment, amid all its trepidation from such alleged attacks, was still in a capacity to lend Government nine millions in one year, and, at the same time, to add three millions to its capital and to increase its credit." Ponsonby's criticism.

Baring, on the other hand, said that, obviously, "a very small portion of the income of the year could be calculated as anything like permanent income. To meet the expenditure of £27 millions, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had shown nothing but an income of permanent taxes to the amount of £9,700,000; all the rest was made up of temporary resources, which could not be expected to recur." Baring's criticism.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer begged, "for about the fiftieth time, to tell the right honourable gentleman that the present was not the permanent peace establishment," and Tierney retorted that this "was about the fiftieth time that he had asked what was the permanent peace establishment."[1]

A fortnight later, Lyttelton submitted a set of Resolutions to the effect that the state lotteries had encouraged and provoked a spirit of gambling, and were attended with peculiar evils, and Lotteries.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 821. It is in this Budget debate that we first hear that Peel's new Irish police, in compliment to the right honourable gentleman, were called "Peelers."

that the House should no longer authorise them under any system of regulation whatever. The evil of lotteries, said Scrope Bernard who seconded, was created by the Government itself in the reign of William. They were abolished in the tenth year of that reign, but renewed by the 8th of Queen Anne as furnishing an easy mode of raising money. The Chancellor of the Exchequer again defended them. Any mode of raising money, he said, was attended with some evils. The purchase of lottery tickets could not be called gambling, "for the person knew the disadvantages under which he bought the ticket, and also considered himself a contributor to the necessities of the State."[1] Besides, private lotteries had been "entirely set aside by the competition of state lotteries." Only 27 voted for the Resolution, while 47 voted against.[2]

Measures against illicit distilling in Scotland.

A significant change was made in the Scots excise. On 6th June, the House resolved itself into a committee on the Scotch Distillery Acts, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that, of late years, illicit distillation had been carried on to a most mischievous extent in Scotland,[3] owing to the bad quality of the spirit produced in the regular distilleries. He meant to combat this by regulation and reduction of the duty from 8/4 to 6/4 per gallon, and by encouraging the use of small stills of 40 gallons, so that, in the Highlands, a palatable spirit might be introduced in a legal way. Much doubt, however, was expressed, if this would be effectual. It was almost incredible, said one, to what an extent illicit distillation had gone. Finlay thought the duty of 6/4 still too high to put down the evil—spirits, said another member, were now selling for 6/- a gallon. Strong statements were made as to the deteriorated state of morals in the Highlands from the use of ardent spirits, but an Irish member warned the Government against expecting much from the reduction of duty:—

[1] This reminds us of Shelburne's lines:

"We drink to help his Majesty
And keep his coffers full."

[2] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 1086.

[3] This was mainly in the Highlands. But the *Annual Register* mentions a case in the neighbourhood of Glasgow. At Tambowie, in the parish of New Kilpatrick, an illicit distillery of great extent and with utensils of a superior kind was discovered. "The house was of rude construction, consisting of branches of trees interwoven with leaves and straw, supported partly by a steep bank, and partly by some fine elm trees which formed its walls." It was calculated that it was turning out more than fifty gallons of spirits a day. Chronicle 3.

in Ireland, the duty had been cut down in Foster's time to 2/6 per gallon in order to suppress illicit distilling, yet it was proved that the practice never prevailed so extensively as at the very time that the duty was thus lowered. The proposals, however, were agreed to.[1]

A new protective duty on foreign butter

As has been said, the new taxes were duties on butter and cheese and on soap. But the motive of these was not primarily fiscal. Following on a petition from Wexford, asking for butter the same protection enjoyed by the corn growers, by the prohibition of the import of any foreign butter till the price rose to a certain figure, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on 29th March, proposed a new protective duty.[2] He had, a few nights previously, stated his objections to prohibitory duties, but this was a peculiar case, arising out of the peculiarly distressed state of the butter trade in Ireland. The existing duty on import was 5/1½ per cwt.: he proposed to substitute 20/- when imported in British ships and 25/- when in foreign. This latter, he knew, would be objected to by those interested in the foreign butter trade. But it was necessary; and, whatever difficulty he felt in proposing any duty at all, he was bound, when he had made up his mind on the subject, to propose such a duty as would be effective. Butter came over in very small ships and at a trifling expense. Many people thought a duty of 30/- would be required; others again favoured 10/-; he had taken the mean.

Newport, who spoke with the authority of a former Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer, said that butter constituted one-fifth of the Irish exports—it amounted in value to £2,500,000; it was butter that enabled Ireland, in a great degree, to pay for British manufactures. The House must consider the situation of Holland and other butter exporting countries: they were comparatively exempt from taxation; they were near the British coasts; and they had special facilities for bringing the articles over in their small vessels with very trifling charges. On the other hand, butter was exported from Ireland in very large vessels, liable to the payment of very heavy freights, and running all the risks of an extensive navigation.[3] Thus Ireland required a very

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 1014. There was an interesting debate on 22nd May, on a petition from the distilleries of the city of Dublin, urging a reduction of the high duties on spirits on account of similar illicit distillation in Ireland (*ibid.* 704).

[2] *Hansard*, xxxiii. 607, 709.

[3] This novel argument, it may be noted, was not disputed.

considerable protection. This, it should be remembered, was not a duty for revenue but for protection; if it proved insufficient, he hoped it would be increased in another year.

Sir Frederick Flood, member for Wexford County, commented on the smallness of the proposed duty. Ireland had very little left but this trade. Grain was of no value—it would not return the money which the grower had expended. There was no market for cattle. The people were not able to pay either taxes or rates. 20/- and 25/- would only act as a stimulus to the industry of the foreigner who paid no taxes,[1] and the consequence would be that this country would be overwhelmed with foreign butter and the Irish butter grower would be ruined. He would, therefore, propose 25/- and 30/- instead of 20/- and 25/-. At this, Vesey Fitzgerald, the Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer, called for moderation. Holland, Ireland's principal competitor, was not so free from taxation as might be imagined. It was not exemption from taxes that enabled the Dutch to undersell the Irish; it was their productive soil and their proximity to English markets, and, against these, "a just protection" ought to be granted. The Irish butter trade was an important one. In 1801, 225,500 cwt. were exported; in 1814, 462,000. Even in 1815, when Ireland had to meet the full force of the foreign competition, the export was 432,000 cwt. This of itself, he thought, should carry conviction. The original duty proposed was then carried without dissent.

—followed by a similar duty on foreign cheese

Immediately on this, Gordon, member for Wareham, rose to move a resolution respecting cheese, which, he maintained, stood on the same footing as butter. The duties on both should operate on the same principle. True, there was one distinction; that Ireland had no interest in cheese—did not make cheese. But, he argued, if cheese was not protected while butter was, the Dutch would stop sending butter and throw their energies into making cheese. He could see no argument against this proposition, and so would propose the quadrupling of the duty on foreign cheese imported into the United Kingdom, making it 16/- a cwt. when brought in British ships and 20/- when in foreign.

Sir Thomas Acland said that, without such a protection, the

[1] Few things are more striking in the history of Protection than the ever recurring argument that England could not compete on account of her taxation—as if other countries were not taxed, and as if taxation were a mere burden for which no economic return was ever made. It seems a pity that Castlereagh did not stick to his guns when he deplored the "ignorant impatience of taxation," instead of trying to explain his phrase away.

cheese manufacturers of England would be much oppressed. This brought to his feet the mover of the original resolution on butter. He did not think that butter and cheese stood on exactly the same footing. Under the existing duty, the importation of butter had increased in 1815, but the importation of cheese had diminished —indeed, diminished by one-third. Still, he might be wrong, and, if so, it was his duty to agree with other gentlemen.

Methuen, member for Wiltshire, then said that what one had to consider was what would be the effect—or, at least, might be the effect—on the cheese trade if it were not equally protected with the butter trade. The cheese dealers ought not to suffer because the butter dealers gained. Thompson, member for Midhurst, said that he was not altogether in favour of this system of protective duties, but, if it were adopted in one case, it ought to be in another; certainly, if the foreigner's butter were shut out, he would try sending cheese. The Chancellor of the Exchequer contended that the mover had been misled by a false analogy; personally, he thought an addition of 12 per cent. would be enough instead of the quadrupling of the duty. Ponsonby, the leader of the Opposition, however, was of opinion that equal protection was due to the cheese trade as to the butter trade, and the Resolution was agreed to.

When the House went into committee on the Cheese Duties[1]—there was no further debate on the Butter Bill—only one member said a word for the interest of the consumer. He admitted that it was very proper to protect particular branches of industry, but it ought not to be at the expense of the interests of the whole: some agricultural districts, no doubt, suffered from the importation of foreign cheese, but others benefited: his was not a dairy county, and would therefore derive no advantage. Marryat again warned the House that, if they went too far in this direction, they would occasion retaliatory acts by other powers, and those powers might give better terms to other countries; but Newport scoffed at such an argument, and said we should fix our duties as our own interests demanded. Both Bills passed (56 Geo. III., c. 25 and 26).

I have given this incident at length because of its significance, and because the claim, under a protective system, for "equal favour"—whether there is hardship or not—is not always put so frankly. In this case, a protective duty on butter, itself based

—illustrates the claim for "equal favour" under protection.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiii. 983.

on the ground of the grazier having equal rights with the corn grower, is strengthened by the exceptional distress of the Irish farmer, and is at once—on the same evening—made the occasion of an equally prohibitory duty on cheese for the protection of the English farmer who is not suffering at all!

Soap excise

As suggestive, though in a different way, was the other measure, introduced as a method of protection and passed as a means of raising revenue. We hear of the Soap Excise first at the report stage, when a member became aware that an important Bill had advanced so far without observation and without being printed. One learns that, as proposed, it was an additional duty on hard soap, and that the first objection came from those who used soap in large quantities, particularly the woollen manufacturers. The Chancellor of the Exchequer then promised to remedy this by imposing equal duties on soft soap. At once it was pointed out that this was now a measure of taxation and bore heavily on the consumers, especially the lower classes. The Chancellor explained that the new duty originated in a desire to give encouragement to the whale fisheries, but he had subsequently thought that "it might be useful as a measure of revenue." It would raise about £150,000, and he commended the tax as "a very little one"; it would fall very lightly on the public, amounting to no more than threepence per head of the population of the kingdom. Sir M. W. Ridley said that he might feel no objection to it as protection, although it would considerably injure the kelp trade, but he did object to it as a finance measure. Brougham scornfully said that this was the way in which measures slipped imperceptibly through the House, and people were prevented from considering their interests properly. "Straw was laid on straw, till the last straw broke the mare's back. Additional taxation on soap, even at the lowest rate, must increase the price of labour. Had the tax on salt been begun at its present figure of 15/- a bushel, it would not have been borne; but the practice was to begin low and then to advance, and to say that it was only threepence or fourpence of an increase. He hoped the House would pause before they passed a tax Bill on an article of necessity, for which the only defence was that the amount of the increase was small."[1] Lyttelton charged ministers

—first protective, then fiscal

[1] This tax formed one of the quartet which, as a rule, had been excepted from the general rises in the excise duties. Pitt had, during his long career at the exchequer abstained from making any addition to the tax even in

with being determined to find an equivalent for the lost Property Tax, and with proposing such taxes as would make some people regret its abolition. The Bill, however, passed.[1]

Leather duties

On 9th May, Althorp asked leave to bring in a Bill for the repeal of the duties affecting the manufacture of leather.[2] No less than 500,000 persons were employed in the trade; at anything like equality of price, our manufacturers need never dread competition in any foreign market; and the trade was in a state of the most extreme depression. The tax had progressively increased till it was doubled in 1812. But the total revenue last year was £30,000 less than in 1811. The cause, of course, was the cessation of the army contracts and a fall in the exports. If the duties were removed, tanned leather would fall 6d. per lb., and a pair of shoes could be sold a shilling cheaper—enough to easily command a sale in the foreign market. The duties, too, violated one of the canons of taxation; owing to excise regulations, the trade was deprived of four times as much as was put into the exchequer, and—probably owing to this—though the leather trade was one very susceptible of improvement from every branch of science, the improvements during last century had been fewer than those in any industry of the country.

The seconder said he was aware that, to take off a tax yielding £600,000 a year, was a serious thing, but compensation might be effected by giving an additional stimulus to exportation. At present the collection alone cost about another £600,000. He would propose to replace the stamping duties by a tax on hides taken out of the tan-yard, which would yield as much. As the excise was actually levied, it became desirable, for ease of collection, that the trade should be in as few hands as possible—there were only 1,700 tanners in the kingdom—but by the method he suggested, the numbers would probably be greatly increased.

—a Select Committee appointed.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed, instead, a Select Committee to enquire. He urged that a plan of the same kind as that suggested by the seconder had been found impracticable; that the trade was one peculiarly liable to suffer by the return of peace; that the produce of the tax had not decreased since the high duties but had doubled; that the price of leather now, even

the darkest hour of the Great War (Dowell, *History of Taxation*, ii. 254). "Lor', Mr. Vansittart," said a caricature, "who would ever have thought of seeing you in the washing tub?"

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 492, 580, 717, 775. [2] *Ibid.* 408.

with the double duty, was lower than before, thanks to the fall in bark and in the raw material.

From the remarks of other speakers, it would appear that the greater part of the agitation against the duties was due to the method of collection; that, even in the trade, opinion was divided as to what should be done. But a Committee had already sat in 1813, which came to the conclusion that no mode could be adopted for collection without the vexatious excise restrictions.[1] Why, then, it was asked, should another committee be appointed —unless, as was hinted, for purposes of delay? In the end, however, the Committee was appointed.

Consolidation of the exchequers.

In this year, following the recommendation of a committee of the House of Commons of 1815, on the Financial Relations of the two countries, the Union between Great Britain and Ireland was finally completed by the consolidation of the two exchequers, to take effect from 5th January, 1817. Always a poor country, Ireland had had to bear her share not only of the heavy taxation but of the gigantic debt incurred by the predominant partner in the struggle which saved them both. Taxation in Ireland was now stretched to its limit, yet the whole sum raised was not as much as the charge of her debt alone. Ireland, in fact, was practically bankrupt. Henceforth all expenses to be incurred, together with the interest and charges of all debts hitherto contracted, were to be defrayed indiscriminately by equal taxes to be imposed on similar articles in each country, subject only to such exemptions and abatements in Ireland and Scotland as circumstances might appear to demand. Except for some grumbling that the effect was to throw almost the whole burden of the late war on Great Britain,

[1] The remit of the Committee was to examine the matter of the petitions presented to the House relating to the duty lately imposed upon leather. So far as I can find, the Committee merely presented the evidence without comment, but the "conclusion" was an obvious inference. The feeling against the duty was, of course, very great. The increase in the price of shoes had seriously affected the demand, the duty was paid to a great extent by the manufacturers, and caused great depression in the trade, and the collection was as costly as it was vexatious. "I am decidedly of opinion," said a witness, "that, if the old tax of three halfpence was done away with, it would be a great national benefit, and upon this ground, that, when that tax was laid on, the Legislature thought it necessary to lay on those kind of restrictions which we as manufacturers must comply with, in order to protect the duty, and indeed not only to protect the duty but to ascertain the duty. . . . My opinion is that the expense of leather and the expense in the manufacture in order to ascertain and collect this duty is more than the duty itself; so that the public at large lose more money in ascertaining and collecting the duty than the duty is" (p. 26).

the measure passed without opposition—"perhaps," says Walpole, "the greatest pecuniary boon which had not merely ever been conferred on Ireland, but which had ever been granted by one nation to another."[1]

It is unfortunate that some of the most serious events of the year occurred after Parliament had risen, and were not discussed at the time of their occurrence. When events have come before Parliament, there is a *prima facie* probability that the reader who comes afterwards will find them put in due focus, or will, at least, hear the two sides. But it is very different when all one has to go upon is a newspaper report, or, perhaps, the *ex parte* statement of an agricultural review.

The difficulties of agriculture in the early part of the year are dealt with in a separate chapter. While Western was speaking, the distress was due to the steady and excessive fall of prices, disorganising all contract arrangements. This fall reached its lowest point in the January average of 52/6 for wheat. But, immediately after that date, the distress became aggravated by a new phenomenon, namely, outbreaks of starving labourers thrown out of employment. In Norfolk, Suffolk, Huntingdon, and Cambridge there were "Bread or Blood" riots in April and May, with the old senseless accompaniments of rick and barn burning, destruction of threshing machines, and incendiarism generally. The worst breach of the peace was in the Isle of Ely, a district always requiring constant and large expenditure to hold what enterprise had gained from the waters. The fen country, indeed, supplied one of the most striking examples of the evils produced by the late artificial encouragements to high prices. The temptation of immediate profit had led the farmers in many cases to beggar the ground by exhausting crops, and the low prices took away the possibility of restoring its resources by high cultivation and manures. The drainage rates were generally unpaid. Much of the isle relapsed and went out of cultivation. A kind of organised insurrection of the fenmen ensued, and some blood was spilled. Seventy-three of the rioters were lodged in Ely gaol and tried by a Special Commission in June, when 34 of them were condemned to death, and the penalty was carried out in five instances.

The agricultural distress

—aggravated by rioting—

But even while these disturbances were happening, the tide of price had turned. In January and February there was a

changes its character.

[1] *History of England*, i. 415.

demand for the export of British wheat to the continent. The price rose to 60/7 in April. In May, it was 76/4. The summer was peculiarly wet, cold, and cloudy, and, in anticipation of a bad harvest, the price rose to 82/1 in August. In September, the most gloomy anticipations were realised. It was "one of the worst harvests ever known in this kingdom." Wheat universally was deficient in quantity to the extent of about one-half, while in quality the failure was even more serious. Barley and oats, though much better, were under the average. Turnips and potatoes, as a rule, were much below an average crop. And the year closed with wheat at 93/9 in October, 98/9 in November, and 103/- in December. Within the year, the agricultural distress had altogether changed its character but not its magnitude.[1]

One of the worst harvests ever known.

Great rise in grain prices.

At these high prices, the ports were now open, and grain could come in.[2] But the dearth had extended throughout most of the countries of Europe from which supplies used to come. In Germany, Switzerland, and Holland, there had been unprecedented rain and cold, hail, inundations, storms, even earthquakes; and what harvest there was, was late. In August, the ports of France were thrown open to importation of corn, and in November a bounty was actually given—"the year 1816-17 is characterised by the French writers as a period of actual famine."[3] There was no talk now of redundance; only a panic about scarcity. The high prices had come as suddenly as the low, but high prices were a doubtful blessing when there was little or nothing to sell, and when all classes felt the pinch of dear bread.

But the distress of which most was now heard was not so much agricultural as industrial.

Manufacturing distress

Among the manufacturing classes the distress continued as extreme as it was unexpected. During the war, England had been preparing to be the "workshop of the world,"[4] and vast stocks

[1] Of rents and wages, the accounts vary so much from district to district that it would be misleading to make anything like a general statement. On the whole, it would seem that both had fallen by this year. But, in Scotland at least, where the long lease prevailed, the reduction of rent was by "abatement," with the understanding that it was temporary.

[2] The import of wheat and wheat flour for the year was 332,491 quarters.

[3] *Tooke*, ii. 16.

[4] Even at that time it began to be suspected that this consummation was hardly to be hoped for. "It is obvious," says the *Annual Register*, reviewing the year, "that the spirit of internal improvement and productive industry is become so general in the states of Europe that no nation must hereafter expect exclusive commercial advantages; and, if England may still hope to

of manufactured goods had been accumulating in the warehouses waiting for the opening of the markets by peace. But, to be the "workshop of the world," England required no less than the world for its market, and the continent, exhausted by the war, was too poor to buy, besides being anxious to employ its own people and make goods at home. The first result, accordingly, was that the European markets were oversupplied. Of Leipsic Fair, for instance, one reads; "The English cotton manufacturers attended the Fair in great numbers and sold their goods so low as to defy all profitable competition."[1] It was the same in the foreign markets where goods were sent on consignment "for sales and returns"—Scottish weavers, returning from America where they had emigrated expecting better things, reported that they could not get a livelihood there, "while British manufactures were selling so far below the original cost."[2]

—its explanation.

To put it shortly. During the long war, the economic world had taken a much longer step than it realised. The factory system and large scale production had become the established forms of industrial energy, and, with them, the latest division of labour—the international—had fairly begun. But, thanks to the exigencies of historical circumstances, England had got much more than her share in that division—was doing what other countries, economically speaking, should have done, and, counting on the continuance of these circumstances, was preparing to do much more. And now she found that other countries, on the one hand, were not able to play their part as buyers, and, on the other, were at the same time preparing to claim their own share, in the international division, as producers.[3]

As result of all this, manufacturers shut down or went on short time. The distress was most felt among the iron and coal

maintain her superiority as a manufacturing country, it must be by supporting a relative superiority in skill, knowledge, and enterprise" (p. 92).

[1] *Annual Register*, Chronicle. [2] *Ibid.* p. 176.

[3] Many observers must have seen that the return of peace would cause an immediate and disastrous dislocation, and that the persistence of many industries could only be at the expense of the community. The course of events, said Philips in 1815, "has led us to form manufactures which ought never to have been established here, the very existence of which just reasoning shows must be disadvantageous to the country. But the manufactures, having once been established, capitals engaged in them, and many inhabitants of the country become dependent on them for subsistence, they cannot be abandoned without great mischief. Having acted on a bad principle, we cannot recede from it, and must still go on even after we are convinced of our mistake" (*Hansard*, xxix. 810).

workers, for, in addition to want of sale abroad, the close of the war shut off great part of the demand for iron at home. The price of iron fell from £20 to £8 per ton.[1] Many of the great works were closed, and the colliers who supplied them were plunged into a common depression. For the most part, the men bore their sufferings bravely, and the public peace was but little disturbed.

**The South Stafford miners.**

The South Stafford colliers took a novel way of exciting public sympathy; they harnessed themselves—sometimes eighty in a team—into waggons filled with coal, and dragged them to London, Leicester, Liverpool, and other centres, displaying a placard "Willing to work but none of us will beg." But, in some places, notably Merthyr Tydvil, there was rioting and suppression by the military, not without bloodshed.[2] There is mention too of bread riots at several towns in Scotland, particularly Dundee and Glasgow, in which latter city the military were badly handled by the mob—"in no place, we believe," said the *Glasgow Herald*, "are the military exposed to more insult when called out in the fulfilment of their duty."[3]

In London—where the sufferings of the Spitalfields weavers attracted much attention[4]—and other centres, large subscriptions

[1] Tooke shows that, while provisions rose to the extent of 100 per cent. and upward throughout the year, the price of commodities, as yet, showed no upward movement. Owing to great importations, reduced freight and insurance, and the progressive improvement of machinery, transatlantic produce—coffee, sugar, cotton, indigo, tobacco, etc.—had experienced a heavy fall in 1815 and 1816; so had copper, lead, and tin; while Baltic produce continued to fall throughout the two years. The fall of prices was irregular, reaching its lowest point in 1816 and the early part of 1817. "Of that great and memorable fall of prices, the principal part, beyond that which was the effect of the seasons and a recoil from the extravagant speculations in exportable commodities, is clearly attributable to the transition from war to peace; not to war as having caused extra demand, but as having obstructed supply and increased the cost of production; nor to peace, as having been attended with diminished consumption, but as having extended the sources of supply and reduced the cost of production" (*History of Prices*, ii. 12).

[2] The Merthyr riots arose out of a further reduction of wages. The men alleged that, at the price of bread, the reduced wage of 1/- a day was not sufficient to support their families, while the magistrates asserted that no man had less than 10/- a week, that the miners and colliers had at least 15/-, and the firemen from 21/- to 25/-. The rioters, gathering gradually to some 12,000, marched from place to place, putting out the blast furnaces, and trying to induce other workers to stop work, till "touched by the bayonet." But no serious damage was done (*Annual Register*, Chronicle 165).

[3] *Annual Register*, Chronicle 118, 192, etc. Weavers' wages in Scotland, which in 1803, were as high as 25/- and 30/- a week were now as low as 10/- (*Hansard*, xli. 891).

[4] Spitalfields was said to be suffering greatly from the growth of smuggling, due to the high duties on silk and the ease of evasion (*Annual Register*, Chronicle 48).

were raised. Over the kingdom whole villages were thrown on the rates and on charity.[1]

Reform agitation.

The general distress furnished fuel to the movement for parliamentary reform, which now passed from the academic field into popular discussion by the "lower orders." Under the organisation of "Orator Hunt," Thistlewood, and other "Radicals," as they were now for the first time called,[2] public meetings were held all over the country protesting against public waste and corruption, and calling for annual parliaments, universal suffrage, the ballot, property qualification, and payment of members of parliament, as the only means of improving the situation.

Spa Fields rio.

But only once was there any serious disturbance of the peace in the metropolis. This was in December, when, as sequel to a Spencean meeting of "distressed manufacturers, artizans, and others" in Spa Fields, addressed by Watson—"an indigent person of the medical profession"—the mob broke into a gunsmith's shop, began shooting, and were in possession of the city for a considerable time till the military were brought up.[3]

Hostility to machinery.

There was some renewal of frame-breaking by the Luddites during the year, and, now and then, we hear of hostility to machinery taking other forms. At Bradford, Wilts., a number of weavers were punished, for combining "to prevent the use of a particular kind of loom": in Leeds, a committee of cloth workers were convicted for illegally combining "to prevent a fellow-workman from following his trade, until he had paid £5 to them for permission to work—as a punishment for having been employed in Ireland on a species of machinery, called gig-mills, to the use of which the committee objected."[4]

Greater distress on the continent.

The distress on the continent must have been much worse. We read of "another colony of 800 persons ready to emigrate" to America from Switzerland; of several families having gone from Frankfort, etc. Things must have been pretty bad, one would think, when "30 persons left a single commune of Switzerland for Russia."[5]

[1] It was a testimony to the general want of money among all classes, said the *Annual Register*, p. 54, that works of art were sold at auction for extraordinarily low prices. Two Claudes, for which a thousand guineas each were paid three years before, went for £70 and £80 at Phillips's.

[2] Walpole, *History of England*, i. 425.

[3] *Annual Register*, Chronicle 190.

[4] *Annual Register*, Chronicle 76, 5.

[5] *Annual Register*, Chronicle 66, 79.

Foreign trade.

Thus, then, it happened that, in the first complete year of peace, there was a heavy fall in all the categories of foreign trade from the figures of the year of Waterloo.

The Official values were:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Imports - - - - | £27,431,604, | as against | £32,987,396[1] |
| Exports of produce and manufactures of the United Kingdom - - - | 35,714,681 | „ | 42,880,817[2] |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise - - - | 13,480,780 | „ | 15,748,554 |

The Real value of the exports was £41,653,930, as against £51,610,480.

The vessels built and registered numbered 1,051 as against 1,147, representing 103,765 tons as against 126,618.[3]

First protective tariff in America

Meantime, on the other side of the Atlantic a movement had begun which threatened to have serious consequences to our foreign trade. American home industries had already obtained some stimulus from the War of Independence, which cut off the new-born States both from England and from the rest of the world, and practically acted like a prohibitive tariff. But as this was before the day of the factory and of the new machinery, the most that this could mean was that the people gave more of their time to domestic manufactures—not that anything like vested interests had gathered strength and influence.

Such as it was, the stimulus came to an end in 1783, when, for the time, English goods were cheaper in the American ports than in London and Liverpool. All the same, as might be expected from the rich ore deposits, and other native resources, there was some considerable manufacture of iron, copper, and brass goods, some tanning, saw and flour milling, distilling and brewing,

[1] The following are the chief imports of the year (official values): raw sugar, £5,141,000; tea, £3,623,000; coffee, £3,325,000; cotton wool, £3,152,000; indigo, £999,000; piece goods of India, £766,000; tallow, £446,000; wines, £445,000; flax (rough), £435,000; corn, grain, meal, and flour, £406,000; raw silk, £364,000; wool, £316,000; hemp (rough), £313,000; thrown silk, £231,000; madder and madder root, £218,000. (Part IV. of Finance Accounts for year ending 5th January, 1819.) It will be seen that they are nearly all articles of food and raw materials.

[2] A detailed return of official values of the exports shows that the fall in cotton manufactures was from £19,127,000 to £13,078,000; in woollen manufactures, from £10,199,000 to £8,404,000; in hardware and cutlery, from £2,349,000 to £1,987,000; and in refined sugar, from £2,942,000 to £2,153,000.

[3] *Hansard*, xxxvi. Append. xxi. These shipping figures remained uncorrected, as part of the accounts from the Plantations had not then been received, and as, in 1817, a new classification was adopted.

and making of paper and glass. The first tariff under the Congress of 1789, which ranged only from 5 per cent. to 10 per cent., with an average of 8½ per cent., seems dictated overwhelmingly by the financial needs of the Federal Government. After 1793, the capital and energies of the nation had not been to any great extent devoted to manufactures. There was an immense demand abroad for American products, especially foodstuffs, timber, and cotton, and America followed the economic line of making the most of her natural resources, developing her agriculture and her carrying trade. When, however, the Orders in Council began to check the development of shipping, and when the Embargo threw America on her own resources and made her realise how dependent she was on Great Britain for many of the commonest articles of ordinary life, the rise of manufacturing became inevitable. Fostered by patriotic feeling, woollen and cotton factories sprang up at once in the New England states. By 1815, there were 24 incorporated companies for these manufactures in Massachusetts alone.

The tariff of 1789 a tariff for revenue.

Rise of manufactures under the Embargo.

But the close of the war, like the lifting of a mill sluice, sent a flood of goods from Great Britain. The infant industries, in danger of being swamped, sent up a cry for Protection. Petitions poured in to Congress, representing that industries, established in the time of America's need, now giving employment to thousands and involving millions of capital, were like to be ruined. In 1816, then, came a new tariff, on the lines of the famous *Report on Manufactures* of Alexander Hamilton in 1791.[1] Its general principle was:—prohibitive duties of 25 per cent. on cotton and woollen goods, and on articles of which a sufficient supply was being made at home; a duty of 20 per cent. on articles of which a full supply could not be made at home; and a tariff for revenue on a long list of articles of large consumption made for the most part abroad. But Hamilton's principles also prevailed to this extent that the protection was to be temporary; after three years the prohibitive tariff on cottons and woollens was to fall to 20 per cent.[2]

Cry of the "infant industries"

The new tariff on Hamilton's lines.

[1] Hamilton's protection was of a more scientific character than has ever appealed very much to the practical politician. He approved above all of premiums and of pecuniary bounties to manufactures, claiming that they admitted of discrimination, provided the most immediate and effective stimulus, obviated rise of price, and did not starve the market of necessary goods. It was this part of his system, however, which was rejected. On the whole subject, see Rabbeno, *American Commercial Policy*.

[2] Professor M'Master, in *Cambridge Modern History*, vii. 353 *seq.*

Sun spots.

In view of Jevons' speculations in 1875, it is of interest to the economist to know that, in this year of extreme depression, the appearance of spots in the sun attracted much attention in France. On 10th June, five spots were observed at Rennes: on the 12th, six, and on the 16th, eight. The spots reappeared in great number and more markedly in September.[1] The *Scots Magazine* spoke derisively of the "amusing conclusion which was drawn," that the price of wheat in Windsor Market was in some degree connected with the spots.[2]

The shortness of the session—for some unexplained reason it did not begin till February—and the time taken up by the discussion of treaties and by the party campaign against the military establishments, sufficiently account for the paucity of general legislation. Still a great many measures of economic and social importance were carried a stage further, and other reforms long delayed were at least ventilated.

Brougham and parliamentary reform.

Brougham now began his powerful advocacy of parliamentary reform by presenting three petitions in regard to it from Scotland. He regretted the apathy which seemed to pervade England, and expressed his satisfaction that the subject had been taken up with eagerness by the northern part of the island. Glasgow, he said, which now sent up a petition signed by 10,000 of its inhabitants, "was no more represented than if the city consisted only of bare walls, with thistles growing in the streets. . . . While many places with few or no inhabitants had two and some even four representatives, that great city had only one-fourth part of a representative (Kirkman Finlay).[3] In Scotland, even in the largest counties, there was nothing in the least resembling a popular representation. The whole country might be represented

[1] *Annual Register*, 80, 143.

[2] As we saw, Herschel in 1801 was the first to hazard the speculation. Modern researches show an approximately regular periodicity of sun spots of about eleven years. According to Wolf, who collected all the observations available before his death in 1893, the years of maximum activity were 1804, 1816-17, 1830, 1837, 1848, 1860, 1870-1, 1883-4; and of minimum, 1810-12, 1823, 1834, 1844, 1856, 1867, 1879, 1888-9. It is now accepted that, when the spots are numerous, magnetic disturbances are most common and intense. But whether the earth is warmer or colder, whether more or less rain falls, at the time of the sun-spot maximum, is not certain. According to Halm, there seems to be a slight balance of statistical evidence in favour of the belief that, on the whole, the temperature of the earth is really slightly higher at or near a spot minimum than at a maximum (Young, *Manual of Astronomy*, 212).

[3] Kirkman Finlay was member for Glasgow and three smaller burghs.

by persons who had not one foot of land in the country—it might be represented by 25 persons in Change Alley. . . . Whatever sentiments might be entertained respecting reform in the case of England, he had never heard out of the House one single dissentient voice as to the necessity of a reform in Scotland."[1]

Intemperate petition from London.

But the cause of reform was not much helped, one would think, by a most intemperate petition presented by the Common Council of London in November, ascribing the industrial distress to rash and ruinous wars, the immense subsidies to foreign powers, the maintenance of a great military force in time of peace, the sums paid in pensions and sinecures, etc., all arising from "the corrupt and inadequate state of the representation of the people in Parliament." The Regent received the petition "with strong feelings of surprise and regret."[2]

Slave trade

Nothing was done this session in regard to the Slave Trade. The merchants of Bristol interested in West India Colonies petitioned the House in protest against the proposed general registry of slaves as "an interference with the local legislatures of the colonies"; on the other hand, some strong feeling was expressed as to "withdrawing a million of British subjects from the control of the imperial Parliament." But in the meantime the friends of the slaves were content to wait, in the hope that the local legislatures would co-operate with them, or pass measures which would effect the same purpose as a general registry.[3]

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 1145. This was confirmed in the next session by Lord Archibald Hamilton: "What would the House think," he said, "when they were informed that a man in Scotland might possess £10,000 a year in property or in land without being entitled to vote for a member of Parliament" (*ibid.* xxxv. 177). On the other hand, the desire for any change was expressly denied by the Lord Advocate; it was his firm conviction that, of the classes of the people in Scotland capable of forming a correct judgment on the subject, nine-tenths did not wish for any change in the representation. But the sole evidence he gave of this was that no petitions had been presented from the landed interest—only from two of the corporate bodies, and "many of the boroughs"; and he ended, rather illogically, by saying that the inhabitants of Glasgow would much rather that the representation should stand as it did than that the country should be exposed to all the evils of granting the "boon," as it was called, of universal suffrage. As Sir M. W. Ridley said, it would have been more satisfactory if the Lord Advocate, when he undertook to state the sentiments of the people of Scotland on this subject, had mentioned what the actual number of voters was (*ibid.* xxxv. 921).

[2] The petition and the Regent's answer are quoted in the *Scots Magazine* of the year.

[3] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 719; *Romilly*, iii. 253.

Romilly

Romilly continued the crusade which he had made his own, but with even less than his ordinary success. The "Privately Stealing Bill," to abolish capital punishment of persons convicted of stealing privately in a shop to the amount of five shillings, was, as usual, passed in the Commons—aided, one would think, by his statement, on the third reading, that there was in Newgate a child of ten years of age under sentence of death for this offence, and that the Recorder of London had said, in a recent speech, that it was intended to enforce the law strictly in future. The Bill was brought in in the Lords by Lord Holland, opposed by Eldon and Ellenborough on the old grounds and, as usual, thrown out without a division.[1]

—Privately Stealing in Shops Bill.

His "Freehold Estates Bill," to render freehold estates—not including copyhold estates—liable for the payment of simple contract debts, shared the same fate. Already, as we saw, it had passed the lower House twice, and, upon the last occasion, without any division upon it or even a single objection being made to it. Again it passed the Commons "without a word being said in opposition to it in any of its stages," and again it was thrown out by the Lords.[2]

—Freehold Estates Bill.

But other members were now bearing a hand in the reform of the criminal law. In February, Michael Angelo Taylor got leave to introduce a Bill for the abolition of the Pillory—in the same terms as a bill postponed from the previous year. The ground taken was that "it was a punishment which could not be measured or dealt out by a court of justice, but was apportioned solely by the caprice of the multitude."[3] Nothing more is heard

Abolition of the Pillory.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxii. 630; xxxiii. 374; xxxiv. 683: *Romilly*, iii. 219, 233, 242.

[2] *Ibid.* xxxii. 64, 383; xxxiv. 1150: *Romilly*, iii. 215, 252. Lord Grey's dissent (drawn up by Romilly) is perhaps worth quoting: "Because it is highly inexpedient and unjust that persons who have contracted debts and have the means of paying them should be allowed at their deaths to transmit to their heirs, or their devisees, the secure enjoyment of their property; while, by the non-performance of their engagements, their unsatisfied creditors may be reduced to bankruptcy and ruin; and this injustice is the more flagrant in the case of a trustee, who, having employed the money entrusted to him in the purchase of real estates, may transmit to his representatives the fruits of his violated trust, whilst the orphans or others, whom his conduct may have reduced to indigence, are left without remedy or recourse" (Romilly, *Diary* iii., 253).

[3] It was no better than lynch law if the feelings of the populace were excited. The *Edinburgh Annual Register* of 1810 gives an account of a case where the victim was assailed by the female portion of the mob with a shower of rotten eggs and mud, which continued without intermission for the

of the Bill in the parliamentary debates, but, among the Acts passed during the session, appears one, 56 Geo. III. c. 138, entitled "to abolish the punishment of the Pillory except in certain cases" (presumably perjury).[1]

Transportation.

Addington brought in a Bill to amend the several laws relating to transportation, which was read a second time, and there was some strong speaking on the unwisdom of assembling thousands of felons in one place where reformation was utterly impossible. But nothing more is heard of it during this session.[2]

Solitary confinement.

Attention was drawn to instances of solitary confinement for slight offences. A case was mentioned in parliament where a woman had been kept for three years in the Petworth House of Correction, in a room without casements and in the most complete isolation, without any kind of occupation or mode of passing the time, and allowed to walk separately in the courtyard for only a quarter of an hour each day. The woman was by this time, as might be expected, a lunatic. A motion was carried to obtain the rules and regulations of the House mentioned.[3]

Madhouses.

The evils existing in what were then called "madhouses" were now commanding serious consideration. As far back as the beginning of the reign, a committee had been appointed which reported some very serious abuses, and its recommendations were acted on by a Bill passed in 1774. But the measure had proved very inadequate. To amend it, George Rose, in 1814, brought forward a Private Madhouses Bill, which passed the third reading in the lower House, but does not seem to have got further.[4] In 1815, a committee appointed "to consider of provision being made for the better regulation of Madhouses in England" made out a strong case for legislative interference. The patients were usually

whole of the time allotted to the punishment; when taken down, he was a "complete plaster of mud and filth," and, when lifted into the cart, fell to the bottom apparently lifeless. It is scarcely credible that Lord Cochrane, among other punishments, was condemned to the pillory in 1814, although the sentence was remitted by the Regent. "What a singular anomaly in a government of laws are these mob executions," said the acute Simond (*Journal*, i. 356).

[1] *Hansard*, xxxii. 803; xxxiv; Append. xcviii.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxiii. 594, 987.

[3] *Ibid.* xxxiv. 491.

[4] *Hansard*, xxvii. 416; xxviii. 88, 661. The current story was that a young officer, recognising a man he knew among the inmates of a private madhouse, asked, "How do you happen to be here?" "Just as you came by your commission," was the answer—"more owing to my friends than to my own merit."

confined like criminals and their treatment was in general worse than the ordinary treatment in gaols. The number of attendants was in most cases utterly insufficient, and, in consequence, the greatest severity was too frequently resorted to. And that many of the cases, if properly treated, might recover their sanity, was evident.[1]

In February of 1816, a second committee was appointed, to consider of provision being made for the better regulation of madhouses in England. The Report was presented in May, and a Bill brought in on the same day, enacting that all madhouses should be examined twice a year by eight commissioners appointed by the Home Secretary, and that provision should be made for the erection of lunatic asylums in counties, for the reception therein of pauper lunatics, who before then were allowed to range abroad, to their own and the public's great injury. It was alleged that great severity was exercised towards this latter class in the workhouses; "to prevent their escape, they were consigned to the constant wear of straight waistcoats, and a straight waistcoat being, of all instruments of personal restraint, the most heating and irritating, the poor lunatic in it became clamorous and noisy; when, to prevent his annoying his neighbours by his noise, the lancet was applied to him, by which he was not infrequently reduced to a state of exhaustion."[2] If, however, one may judge by its title (c. 117), the Act does not cover private madhouses, but relates only to the custody of "insane persons charged with offences."

**Poaching and the Game Laws.**

The Chronicle of the *Annual Register* for this year is filled with accounts of desperate affrays between poachers and keepers. It was notorious that poaching had become a profitable trade. In view of this, on 20th May, a committee was proposed to take into consideration the laws relating to Game, with a view to preventing the great increase of poaching and its melancholy consequences. The ground taken by the proposer of the committee was the effect of the offence on the character of the

[1] *Hansard*, xxx. 954; xxxi. 1144.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 859, 1125. In 1807, a committee had been appointed to enquire into the state of criminal and pauper lunatics in England and Wales. Persons acquitted of crimes on the ground of insanity, it was said, were confined in public jails—"of all places the most improper for them"—and pauper lunatics, it was hinted, were at least not prevented from committing outrages by which the parishes might be relieved of the burden of them (*Hansard*, viii. 514). But I have not been able to find any record of this committee's proceedings.

offender.[1] Poaching, he said, was formidable, not only from its immediate consequences, but from the system of insubordination to which it led. "The peasant in the first instance became habituated to dishonesty; it led him to nocturnal prowlings. He was up all night and consequently could not work all day. He proceeded onwards from depredation to depredation; when game did not fall in his way, he plundered a sheepfold, and at length ended his life on a gallows." The remedy that seemed to suggest itself was to prevent or regulate the sale of game. It was notorious that game was openly sold in the metropolis, and, indeed, many who were prosecuting poachers on their own estates were purchasing game in town and thus encouraging the theft.

A new Game Law

The text of the Report is given in the *Annual Register* (p. 443); but, strangely enough, there is no further reference to the matter in the parliamentary records of the year, and no Act appears in the register appended to the debates. But, from a debate of 12th February in the succeeding year, we learn that, at a very late period of the session, a Bill was actually hurried through without discussion or remark, and received the royal assent at the very end of the session. But evidently it was not a Bill to carry out any of the humane intentions just mentioned, but simply a most serious extension of the existing game laws. It appears that, in the Committee, the proposal to legalise the sale of game, as a means of discouraging poaching, had been overruled in favour of a resolution declaratory of the principle that game ought to be made the private property of those on whose land it was found. It put the illegal destruction of game on the same footing as any felony, and rendered the offender liable to transportation for seven years. This penalty might be incurred by anyone found in an enclosed place by night, not merely with a gun, but with a net or any other engine for killing game; and night was defined as from eight at night till seven in the morning between October and March; that is, as was pointed out, three-quarters of an hour after the sun had risen—an instance of how Parliament

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 586. The other side of the question was brought out incidentally in a discussion of solitary confinement in prisons, when a case was mentioned of a man having been kept 23 hours out of the 24, for three months, within four small walls, without any kind of employment, for destroying a pheasant's egg. Even then Huskisson was found to disapprove of the abolition of solitary confinement—"it gave the individual time to review his conduct" (*ibid.* 1262).

"could change day into night"! "The game laws," said Romilly, "had been uniformly complained of as a code unusually severe, but such an Act as this, he believed, was without an example in the laws of any other country."[1]

Insolvent debtors.

A committee was appointed to consider the necessity of materially altering, if not entirely repealing, the Insolvent Debtors' Act. The leading feature of that Act, according to the mover, was that any person who had been in custody for three months, for a debt however enormous, incurred in a manner however objectionable, might apply to the insolvent debtors' court for relief, and might obtain that relief on the simple condition of giving up all his property. In three years, the amount of debt wiped out in this way was over five and a half millions, while the aggregate funds recovered were only £1,459. Brougham insisted on the absolute necessity of a thorough revision of the statute, and Romilly said there could be no doubt that great frauds had been committed under it, and that the legislature was loudly called upon to interfere.[2] In June, a temporary measure was introduced, "to suspend the evil consequences of the Act," and it appears, from the record of Acts passed during the session, that such a measure became law.[3]

Trial by jury in Scotland.

In Scotland, a legal reform agitated for some years was now carried through, and the first trial by jury in civil causes was held in January in Edinburgh. It is interesting to notice that this first trial related to a steam engine erected for grinding flour at Stockbridge, when the jury returned a verdict, "That the engine was useful and not offensive."[4]

Brougham and popular education.

In May, on the motion of Brougham, a Select Committee was appointed to enquire into the state of the education of the lower orders in London, Westminster, and Southwark. In the district of St. Giles, it had been found, he said, that 4,865 neither had education nor had the means of obtaining it. In the east end of London, there were about 14,000 Irish Catholics, of whom only 89 had received the common elements of education. In fact, out of

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 338.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxiii. 287, 455; *Romilly*, iii. 233. Romilly was afraid of repeal, as "no other insolvent debtors' Act, however free from the defects of the present one, or however perfect, would have any chance of being passed." And he reminded the House of what the state of the law was before the Act —unlimited imprisonment of debtors; for a discharge was a relief from the debt, so that a creditor was often left with hardly any choice after taking the debtor in execution.

[3] *Ibid.* xxxiv.; Append. xcvi.

[4] *Annual Register*, Chron. 12.

the million who composed the population of London, he was justified in saying that 90,000 or 100,000 were destitute of the means of education—personally, he apprehended that the real number was nearer 200,000. He spoke in high terms of the two agencies that were trying to meet the want, the National Establishment and the British and Foreign School Societies. But the former educated about 3,000 children, the latter only 2,000, out of these 90,000 or 100,000. His proposition would be parliamentary sanction and parliamentary aid for an experiment to be tried first in London. He would urge also the establishment of a school for the preparation of schoolmasters, "in order that benevolent individuals about to establish schools might know where to apply for duly qualified teachers."[1] The motion was praised and agreed to.

In less than a month, Brougham presented the Report, and communicated an abridgment of it. There were no less than 120,000 children in the metropolis wholly without the means of education. "The poor were in general anxious for education; yet in some cases they objected to send their children to school, for the purpose of letting them out to common beggars. From 2,000 to 4,000 were in this situation, and out of this number came most of the juvenile depredators who swelled the calendar of Newgate." In such cases, he suggested, forcible interference between parent and child might be resorted to. He gave notice, that, early in next session, he would bring the matter of the Report before the House.[2]

Poor Laws; Heron's Bill.

As we saw (p. 367 *supra*) a set of resolutions proposed by Horner was accepted by the House in 1813, to prevent the introduction into local poor law bills of any clause inconsistent with the law of the land. This principle was now put into effect by Sir Robert Heron's Bill, brought in in April. The Bill, as was explained, did not affect the general poor law, but restricted "the most extravagant powers" hitherto assumed by certain local Acts. It was intended (1) to deprive the directors of the poor of the power of confining persons in the workhouse who were not actually chargeable on the parish; (2) to repeal the clause which gave them the power of disposing of children who had once received parish relief as they thought proper, *e.g.* apprenticing them to the governor of the workhouse, or to any other person, for fourteen years; (3) to prevent the junction of

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 633. [2] *Ibid.* 1230.

parishes situated more than ten miles from each other—by which paupers were often sent long distances from their friends; (4) to allow parishes which had joined to separate upon six months' notice; (5) to prevent persons of sane mind from being confined in chains. Romilly summed up the chief purport of the Bill by saying that the evil which it sought to correct was the application of the criminal law to the unprotected poor at the pleasure of persons at the head of parishes. The Bill appears among the Acts of the session under the title, "To repeal certain provisions in local Acts for the maintenance and management of the poor" (56 Geo. III. c. 129).[1]

**Curwen's anticipation of contributory pensions.**

In May, Curwen obtained the appointment of a Select Committee to take into consideration the Poor Laws. In proposing this, he took occasion to outline his own plan for getting rid of the poor laws, which is interesting as an early anticipation of the scheme of contributory pensions. It was not founded on mere theory, he said, but on an experience of his own in the Workington and Harrington Collieries, where the workmen, for thirty-three years past, had been constrained to contribute 6d. a week to a fund for their mutual support, the employer adding a third of the sum subscribed. This provided an insurance against accidents, and on the death of parent or child. The fund was managed by a committee of workmen chosen by themselves, and he had scarcely ever had an objection made to the payment. On this model, he would propose that each labourer, employed in agriculture or in manufacturing, should contribute at the rate of one-thirtieth of his weekly wages; that all employers should contribute a penny per head of persons employed; and that another penny per head should be contributed by rateable property. This would produce over £9 millions. The fund would be managed by some 14,000 committees, consisting of persons elected from among the labourers, employers, and persons of consequence, and would be spent in "the relief of sickness, age, or misfortunes, the encouragement of industry and good morals, a general plan of education, and such other objects as might be conducive to the comfort and happiness of the labouring classes."[2]

**Savings Banks.**

In April, George Rose brought the subject of Savings Banks before Parliament. During the eighteenth century, a great

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiii. 850; xxxiv.; Append. xcviii.: *Nicholls*, ii. 164.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 878.

number of Friendly Societies of various kinds were established among the labourers throughout Great Britain, to make some provision against want and old age.[1] The movement, naturally enough, had its abuses. We hear, for instance, of a kindred society called the "Menage," where members paid in a certain sum periodically for a given period to one person, generally, a publican, and drew out their contributions when wanted—very much to the advantage of the publican, who was in the habit of giving credit in liquor on security of the contributions. Rose had secured some kind of protection for Friendly Societies by an Act in 1793. He now brought in a Savings Bank Bill, "for the protection and encouragement of Provident Institutions or Banks for Savings, authorising any body of individuals to enrol themselves as such, and making regulations for their better government"; and from his introductory statement we learn that the membership of Benefit Societies—which, he said, had proved peculiarly useful in Ireland—had increased to 700,000 in England and to 60,000 in Ireland. The Bill was warmly received, but, on its first reading, Sidmouth said that "objection had been made to it from a quarter deserving of every respect," and that it was not therefore the intention to propose that it should pass in the current session.[2]

Sir Robert Peel's Committee on Factory Children.

In the previous session, it will be remembered, Sir Robert Peel got a Bill read for the first time, dealing with the health and morals of factory children. He now carried the matter a stage further by moving, on 3rd April, for a committee to take into consideration the state of the children employed in the different manufactories of the United Kingdom.[3] His object, he said, was a national one: it affected the health and morals of the rising generation, and went to determine whether the introduction of machinery into our manufactories was really a benefit. He instanced poor little creatures, torn from their beds, and compelled to work, even at the age of six years, for perhaps 15 or 16 hours—not that this was general, but it was too frequent. One object of his Bill, besides, would be to enable such children to get a little education. He hoped they would obtain the protection of the House, for, if it were not extended to them,

[1] It is interesting to note that the oldest existing Friendly Societies to-day are those founded in 1687, 1703, and 1708 by the Huguenot workmen in Spitalfields (Brabrook, *Provident Societies*, p. 45).

[2] *Hansard*, xxxiii. 841; xxxiv. 515, 1265. Brabrook, *passim*.

[3] *Hansard*, xxxiii. 884.

all our excellent machinery would be productive of injury. It might, perhaps, be said that free labour should not be subjected to any control, but surely it could not be inconsistent with our constitution to protect the interests of those helpless children.

Protests.

Finlay, the member for Glasgow, said it was a calumny to suggest that children were treated in that way in all manufactories; he would give it a flat denial as regards Scotland—with, no doubt, some exceptions. The general practice in Scotland was not to employ any children under ten years of age. And as to general healthiness and convenience, he would venture to affirm that the cotton mills of Glasgow were "not only situated most advantageously for health but were conducted upon the most liberal plan." He was a little surprised that Sir Robert should have deferred such a measure till now, when he was about to quit the concern in which he had been so long engaged. The abuses of which he complained must have existed for many years, and equally in his own establishments, yet he had never before thought it necessary to propose any measures of relief.

One member said that it would be found impossible to apply such a Bill to all the manufactories of the United Kingdom. Another protested against the principle of regulating the authority of parents, "who must best be aware of the quantity of work these children were able to bear"—it was a libel on the humanity of parents: the condition of things in factories had been much ameliorated of late years, "and the air of all of them had been so much improved, that labour was not half so distressing as it had been." A third thought that there was no reason for imputing a system of cruelty to the great body of manufacturers. A fourth, however, thought that, considering what had been found lately, that some manufacturers agreed to take one idiot for every nineteen sane parish children, there was sufficient ground for an enquiry. Finlay retorted that, in Scotland, apprentices were already well educated, and told a story of a mother who had actually walked from London to Scotland to thank the masters for the benefits they had conferred on her child. The Committee was appointed.

Conviction under the Combination Act.

Another conviction (p. 369 *supra*) under the Combination Act is mentioned in the *Annual Register*, where a number of journeymen sugar-bakers suddenly struck work on the serving of a notice of reduction of wages instead of giving the requisite notice of fourteen days. Four of the offenders were committed to a House

of Correction for one month, "as a warning to the rest, and to induce them to return to their employment."[1]

Gas Light Bill.

A Gas Light Bill is first mentioned when it had reached the report stage. It seems to have been a Bill to enable the company to increase its capital by £200,000. It was vigorously opposed by Alderman Atkins, as "calculated to ruin that hardy race of men, the persons employed in the Southern and Greenland whale fisheries, in each of which a million of money and above 100 ships were engaged. It would throw out of employ 10,000 seamen, and above 10,000 rope-makers, sail-makers, mast-makers, etc., connected with that trade." Marryat also argued against the monopoly, but admitted that sufficient oil was not now brought from Greenland to light the metropolis. Some, on the other hand, spoke of the advantages enjoyed by the public in consequence of the superior illumination of the streets by gas, and dwelt on the 'beautiful and excellent light.'" When the Bill reached the Lords, Lauderdale led the attack. It was, he said, "a gross private job"; the financial details of the Bill were wholly unsatisfactory; it would ultimately prove injurious to the public, besides ruining that most important branch of trade, the whale fisheries; the Company would destroy all competition, and then charge what prices they pleased. He did not expect that the House would suffer it to be read a third time. The Bill, however, passed.[2] We learn, from the *Annual Register*, that, in August, Preston was partially lit by gas.

Weights and Measures.

In February, a Bill was brought in for ascertaining and establishing uniformity of weights and measures. This was the outcome of a Select Committee appointed in 1814, on account of the inconvenience felt in Scotland from the want of uniformity between the two countries, and the uncertainty of the standard in England.[3] The Committee had reported[4] that the existing weights and measures were very disproportionate and inaccurate. The Bill proposed to abandon the mode of regulating by capacity, and to introduce regulation by weight. The pound avoirdupois would be chosen instead of the pound troy [except for gold and silver], as being in more general use. The pint measure would contain 20 oz. of water, and consequently the bushel, 80 lbs. Some exceptions, however, would be proposed as regards apothecaries' drugs.[5]

[1] Chron. 37.
[2] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 1071, 1225, 1280.
[3] *Hansard*, xxvii. 810.
[4] *Ibid.* xxviii. 503.
[5] *Ibid* xxxii. 933.

Stanhope's ridicule of the Bill.

When the Bill reached its second reading in the Lords, however, it was held up to ridicule by Lord Stanhope. The measures of capacity, the bushel, gallon, quart, etc., were altered, but the old names retained. If new weights and measures were really wanted, let them follow the example of France and adopt the decimal system. The types proposed, too, were to be made of various metals. Weights under 5 lbs. were to be made of brass, copper, or bell metal, but those above 5 lbs., of cast iron, "which differed more from wrought iron than wrought iron did from steel." And the sort of weights actually recommended for grocers' shops were lumps of pure silver or gold of four pounds' weight! All this was the more inexcusable that the committee had laid down their opinion that what was wanted was a system founded on a fixed standard in nature. Yet they had not adopted any such standard: "they merely stated that the space between two points, marked on a certain brass rod, was a yard." "Our ancestors had so little science that, to form an inch, they took three barley corns and placed them end-ways, which they called an inch. 108 of these barley corns went to make a yard. This was the whole science on which our measures were founded—and this was the standard recognised by the present Bill." The French system, on the other hand, was founded on an invariable standard—a standard which, ten thousand years hence, would remain unchanged.

The Bill was thrown out, and Stanhope subsequently moved for the appointment of another Commission, to consider how far it was practicable and advisable to establish a uniform system of weights and measures.[1]

General use of steam in navigation.

The application of steam in navigation was now becoming general. In 1816, five steamboats were plying on the Thames, and one entered the port of Cologne "to ascend the Rhine and Maine as far as Frankfort."[2] But a Frenchman, telling in the *Journal de Physique* of his experience of a voyage from Glasgow to London in a steamboat, concluded that "the immense quantity of combustible matter required (two tons of coal burned in 24 hours by a vessel of 75 tons) would be an unsurmountable obstacle to the employment of steam in a long voyage."[3]

At the same time, the first English stage coach seen in France

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 305, 771. It was not till 1826 that uniformity was established over the United Kingdom.

[2] *Annual Register*, 79.

[3] *Scots Magazine*, 1816, 164.

was landed at Dieppe—one of four to run regularly between St. Denis and Paris. "A real John Bull, weighing eighteen stones, mounted the box, and astonished the inhabitants as much by the dexterity of cracking his whip as by the bulk of his person." [1]

Elgin marbles.

In this year, the destination of the Elgin marbles was finally settled. In 1815, the Earl of Elgin had addressed a Petition to the House, praying that an enquiry might be made into the "value of his collection, which he was desirous of selling to government for the use of the public." It was a "complete series of the sculptures which formed the principal ornament of the ancient temples at Athens, specimens of their most characteristic architecture, as well as drawings, casts, vases, medals, and inscriptions from Athens and other parts of Greece." The proposal was not received with unmixed gratitude. Horner thought it important that the public should have the possession of the marbles, but would like to have it made clear how Lord Elgin came to be possessed of them. Others hinted, or broadly asserted, that he had availed himself of his position as British ambassador to facilitate the purchase; that he had committed flagrant acts of spoliation; that it must be ascertained whether the collection had been procured by such means as were honourable to this country. Brougham and others would like to have the collection, but the country had not the money to spend, etc. The subject was remitted to a committee.[2]

When the Report was presented on 7th June,[3] Bankes moved that £35,000 [4] be granted to his Majesty for the purchase of the Elgin marbles. He argued that there had been nothing like "spoliation" in the case; that the local authorities of Athens had been favourable; and that the natives, both Turks and Greeks, had assisted as labourers—pleased with the firman as "a means of bringing money among them." There was a competition for these marbles—France had evinced the greatest desire to become possessed of them; at least one foreign prince was extremely desirous of purchasing them. Some opposed the grant on the ground of the present distress; others, on account of the "dishonesty of the transaction." Croker, however, made a strong speech in favour. The same cry of economy, he said, had been raised in the time of

[1] *Annual Register*, 159. [2] *Hansard*, xxxi. 828; xxxii. 823.

[3] The Report is given in the *Annual Register*, 446.

[4] It was stated that they had been collected at an expense of £64,000. *Hansard*, xxxiv. 1039.

Pericles, when Athens was being adorned with these works, and his answer might be repeated now, that it was money spent for the use of the people, for the encouragement of arts, the increase of manufactures, the prosperity of trades, and the encouragement of industry. More convincing was his argument that Lord Elgin had saved the marbles from destruction—"he laid his hand on nothing that could have been preserved in any state of repair; he touched nothing that was not previously in ruins." Even while he was collecting them, many of the pieces, of which his predecessors in the pursuit had taken drawings, had entirely disappeared, some of them buried in ruins, others converted into building materials. Many of the articles taken from the Parthenon were found among its ruins; "more than one third of that noble building was rubbish before he touched it." Finally, 82 voted for the purchase and 30 against.[1]

Literature.

In the literature of economic science, appeared J. R. M'Culloch's first tract, entitled *An Essay on the Expediency of Reducing the Interest of the National Debt.* In it, M'Culloch, who became in 1818 the economic contributor to the *Edinburgh Review*, contended that such a reduction was the only possible means of relieving the distresses of the commercial and agricultural interests, and defended the "justice" of his proposal on the ground that much of the debt had been advanced in depreciated paper money. Of more importance was Ricardo's *Proposals for an Economical and Secure Currency*, in which he put forward the scheme afterwards recommended by the two committees in 1819, that the notes of the Bank of England should be exchangeable, not for gold coins, but for bars of standard gold bullion. Another publication was Mrs. Marcet's *Conversations on Political Economy*, of which, as Dr. Cannan has said, the chief interest now is that it shows what were the accepted doctrines of political economy just before Ricardo's *Principles* appeared. In general literature, were published *Old Mortality*, and *Childe Harold*, and Coleridge's *Christabel.* Cobbett, now released from Newgate, turned the *Register*, which had hitherto been sold for a shilling and a halfpenny, into "twopenny trash," and "the most powerful political writer in England suddenly became the most widely read."[2]

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 1027.

[2] *Walpole*, i. 393.

MISCELLANEA.

The *Annual Register* contains the following interesting items: "The Hon. Charles Noel, of Barham Court in Kent, was lately convicted, on the information of the Earl of Romney, of the singular offence of having admitted persons in the neighbourhood, to the number of more than twenty, to attend divine service in his house with his family and domestics. The Act of Parliament for this offence is imperative, and Mr. Noel immediately paid the penalty." [1]

On 29th December, on arrangements made by the British Ambassador, a deputation of the Highland Society of London made a solemn presentation to Louis XVIII. of a copy of the poems of Ossian "in the original Gaelic." His Majesty was pleased to accept them—"not more interesting to me from the sublime sentiments expressed in every page than from their being in the original tongue, the ancient language of my native land." [2]

In Glasgow, is shown to strangers one of the greatest curiosities in Britain; a Cow House, where 300 cows are kept constantly, in one square building, and for nine months in the year, while they are in milk, "never change their situation." They are fed regularly with grass of some sort, and groomed like horses. The grass milk is sold for half the price at which "the Londoners sell their nauseous mixture, though land is dearer around Glasgow than around London." [3]

[1] Chron. 170. [2] Chron. 4. [3] Chron. 81.

# CHAPTER XXVI

## 1816. THE DEBATES ON THE AGRICULTURAL DISTRESS

It could scarcely have been expected that, in the very year after the agricultural interests had obtained what they had so passionately clamoured for, a new and extreme Corn Law, the chief object of parliamentary attention in the early part of the session would be the crisis in agriculture. But so it was.

The great fall in grain prices.

The Regent's Speech, on the opening of Parliament on 1st February, somewhat disingenuously congratulated the House that the manufactures, commerce, and revenue of the United Kingdom were in a flourishing condition. The expression was at once strongly commented on. To speak of trade and revenue as flourishing, and to make no mention of the desperate condition of agriculture, was unpardonable; and Castlereagh's trust that the distress was but temporary and his reminder to the agricultural interest that, "if it had steadily prospered for the considerable number of years (as was well known it had), while other classes of the community suffered severely, it was not a matter of surprise that it should at length encounter misfortune," did not make matters better.[1] It seemed as if prices would never cease to fall. They had been thought to be at their lowest in December when wheat was at 55/9; but, in January, the price was 52/6.

The reality of the distress.

Of the reality of the distress, there can be no doubt. "Our prosperity was gone . . . the situation at home was truly dreadful," said Lord John Russell, then making his first appearance in Parliament. "Grain was almost a drug in the market: not only was corn at the lowest price but no price could be obtained at all." "It was a well known fact that the lands of this country had been let on a calculation that a quarter of wheat would produce £5—the present price was 48/-. Landed

[1] *Hansard*, xxxii. 52.

property had fallen 30 per cent.; nay, he might say 50 per cent. in value within the last two years." The farmers could with the utmost difficulty pay the ordinary taxes—indeed, in many cases, they paid their taxes not in money but in kind—a clear proof of their inability. "The rental, in fact," said Western, "no longer existed. After paying all the expenses of cultivation, there remained absolutely nothing for rent. . . . A great part of the arable lands paid absolutely no rent, and, where rent was received, it was not derived from the profits of the land but was supplied by money taken out of the capital of the farmers." In Somerset, many farms were totally abandoned—leases had come to an end—and such farms as were let were taken from year to year: "scarce a day passed that the French ambassador did not grant fifty passports to persons going to France, forty-five at least of whom were English emigrants flying from the weight of taxation at home." From returns made to the Board of Agriculture by their correspondents for February, March, and April, it was calculated that the abatements of rent were on the average 25 per cent., which, taking the land rent of the kingdom, according to the Property Tax assessment, at £36,000,000, amounted to a total loss of £9,000,000 to the landlords alone.[1]

—even worse in Ireland.

And yet, said Newport, "the embarrassments of Great Britain are mild in comparison with what are suffered by the people of Ireland." Every article of agricultural produce, he maintained, had fallen. The butter trade—the great reliance of that country—was depressed in consequence of the introduction of foreign butter, and the price had fallen from £5 12/- or £5 16/- in 1812-1815, to £3 16/-. And the provision trade had in a great degree failed.

In answer to the reasonable contention that the depression was nothing more than might have been expected at the end of a long war, Lockhart insisted that the pressure on agriculture was not temporary, but "arose from the operation of positive laws"—the system of taxation which "operated almost exclusively upon the husbandman": there were several taxes bearing

[1] *Annual Register*, Chron. 460. *Farmer's Magazine*, 465. It appears that the Board, rather foolishly, wished to suppress this report, but a London bookseller got hold of a copy and printed it off, thus forcing their hands. The return gives a very distressing account of bankruptcies, seizures, executions, imprisonments, arrears of rent, of improvements discontinued and farmers reduced to parish dependence, etc. Of 313 replies, for instance, 166 mention farms thrown on the landlords' hands.

exclusively on the agriculturist, such as the Malt Tax, which amounted almost to a prohibition—"a tax which operated most cruelly on the industrious peasant, who could not now obtain a drop of that invigorating beverage necessary to the discharge of his laborious functions." In agriculture, "there was such a competition that the smaller farmers could not wait for a rise of price"—as the wine-merchant, for instance, could—"but must bring their goods to market immediately."

Vansittart blames the delay in passing the law of 1815.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer was inclined to blame it all on the delay in passing the Corn Law. "The alarm of the scarce years of 1795, 1799, and 1800, had produced a general opinion, which was indeed at that time probably well founded, that the agricultural produce of this country was inadequate to its consumption. At the same time, the uncertainty of supply from abroad was increased. That supply was sometimes stopped; at other times, the price of grain was raised by the foreign powers on whom our supply depended in proportion to our wants, by the enormous sums exacted for licenses and duties on the grain itself. Having been thus thrown back on our own produce, in years which were not remarkably abundant, the inadequacy of the supply was felt more strongly, and prices continued to rise in proportion. This spur to exertion in that branch of industry increased the agricultural produce to such a degree that it would soon have been fully equal to the wants of the country, had not the foreign markets been reopened, and corn poured in in such abundance as to distress the agricultural interest. When this was discovered, protecting measures were proposed; but those measures came after a large supply had actually been received from abroad, and one very productive harvest, together with this superfluous stock, continued the depression of prices and sank them still lower. In addition to these circumstances, the Government, who had been purchasers to a considerable amount, withdrew in consequence of the peace from the market. . . . Had parliament interfered by a Corn Law earlier, much of the evil would probably have been prevented; but the measure which had been proposed had not passed, because the country was not prepared for the measure, and the House was not willing to press it till its necessity should be more generally felt. Parliament had therefore forborne, till in effect the blow at the agricultural interest had been struck. This blow was not felt by the agriculturists alone, but the suffering was necessarily extended to all

who were concerned in its prosperity, especially those who supplied the various articles consumed in agriculture. This distress would continue to be felt till the effect of the diminished prices of agricultural articles should have produced the same reduction on other commodities."

Western's speech.

On 7th March, accordingly, Western formally called the attention of the House to the Distressed State of Agriculture. The distress, he said, was quite unexampled in any former time. To give only a few instances: in Norfolk, the number of bailable writs had increased from 540 in 1814 to 670 in 1815, and executions from 96 to 174; in Suffolk, the writs and executions had increased from 430 to 850; in Worcester, from 640 to 890; in Ely and neighbourhood, where matters were even worse, there were 19 farms untenanted. These were only examples of a distress which was universal, and he did not dwell further on what was beyond dispute.

What had caused this change from the prosperous state of agriculture of between two and three years ago? Was it excessive taxation, or the burden of the debt, or the paper circulation, or the pressure of the tithe, or the burden of the poor rate? All these in combination had their effect. But, up till the middle of 1813, agriculture sustained them all and made rapid advances. There were some who blamed the return of peace. But the cutting off of the war demand was counteracted by the cutting off of the foreign supply of grain by the Act of last session, and the great fall of prices took place between January and November of 1813; *i.e.* "prior to the possible anticipation of the return of peace."

The primary cause of the fall in price

The primary cause—and the obvious cause—was "the redundant supply in the markets, a supply considerably beyond the demand, and that created chiefly by the produce of our own agriculture." [1]

—a surplus from our own fields.

It might be difficult to persuade people that such a thing was possible—he himself had always maintained that it was easily practicable. Consider the vast imports drawn from Ireland—from Scotland, too, which used to send nothing. The fact was that, in all parts of the empire during the last twenty years, agriculture

[1] As Western's avowed object in 1804 was "ultimately to make the price of corn moderate and cheap by increasing the supply," one would have thought that, in all consistency, he should have rejoiced in the success of his policy. But, exactly as in 1804, he makes the low price a reason for more protection—in order to raise the price again! (cf. *supra*, p. 96).

had advanced with rapid strides. It was only now that the effect was realised—"two or three good harvests from this extended and improved agriculture, together with continued import and demand reduced, have occasioned such a surplus in the market as very obviously accounts for the first depression of the price."[1]

Prices had never been "enormously high."

He knew it was universally believed that farmers had made enormous fortunes in the course of the past ten years. A more erroneous opinion, perhaps, never was formed. Prices had not been "enormously high," in comparison with the advanced charges of every kind to which agriculture was liable—he was surprised they had not been much higher. Nor had they been high compared with those of other years, except years of scarcity. For ten years prior to 1792, the average price of wheat was 47/-. For the ten years ending with 1812, it was 88/-. But, in the former decade, the average charge of taxes and loans was fifteen millions; in the latter, it was seventy-five millions. Thus the profits had not been large, and such was the enterprising spirit of the farmers of late years that they had sunk their profits immediately in purchase and further improvements of their lands. The extension of credit and the paper currency too had given them facilities of credit they never before enjoyed, and they borrowed largely for the same purpose. Then came the great fall in prices; their property diminished to one-half; and their creditors began to press for repayment of advances no longer considered safe.

Another cause diminished consumption

There was one other cause and effect of the progressive fall in the price of grain; it was the diminished consumption of the labouring classes. "However fast the price of provisions has fallen, the earnings of labour have recently fallen faster still, so that those who live by the labour of their hands cannot command so much of the comforts of life as when they were nearly double the price which they now are." The labourers, in fact, were starving in the midst of plenty; they had to beg for employment instead of treating upon equal terms with those to whom their labour was necessary; their independence was lost, their moral character inevitably changed and deteriorated. "There is nothing, I think, more seriously to be apprehended from our present distress than the effects thus produced on the lower class."

[1] It was calculated that, in the ten years preceding 1816, two million acres had been added to the cultivable area.

What was the remedy? It must be found in taking off that surplus, "or it would remedy itself in a short time by a reduction of supply. The present danger was that the present abundant supply should be converted into an alarming deficiency"—indeed it was not only a danger but a certainty. The relief, he said, "must come in the first instance partly from an increased price of grain and other produce of land; partly from diminished taxation, which, while it reduces the cost price of the article, will also increase the consumption." Two remedies

Of those two means of relief, reduction of taxation was the more obvious and was infinitely more to be desired. The taxes which pressed most heavily on agriculture were the various taxes upon barley—they totalled up, in malt, beer, and spirit taxes, to no less than £12,350,000—the property tax upon the tenant, the tax on agricultural horses, and the duty on hops. And those of course very much reduced the consumption. "I certainly have in contemplation a reduction of duties very far indeed beyond anything which Ministers will be likely to concede, but I am sure it is unavoidably necessary even if revenue were the sole object." —reduction of taxation,

He turned for a moment to consideration of the Act of last session regulating the corn trade. "Some people imagine it has afforded no advantage whatever to British agriculture; but when we know that it has taken a certain quantity of grain out of a market absolutely overloaded, it seems impossible to deny that it has had some beneficial consequences. If the produce of our own agriculture has been sufficient thus to depress the price, the further continuance of importation surely must have sunk it lower still."

One thing was proved, that it was not at all necessary that the import price should be the minimum price of corn.[1] "My conviction has always been that, the higher we fix the import price, and the more we encourage our own growth, the lower will be the market price upon an average of years; and the reason is obvious enough, as, by securing to the British grower the possession of the home market, we stimulate his exertions, and it is from thence we can alone obtain sufficient abundance to keep down the price." This, in fact, was amply proved by the history of prices since 1773.

[1] Later events, indeed, seemed to confirm this. Between 1815 and 1820 the average price of the year was 78/5.

and taking off the surplus.

As to the other remedy, the "taking off the surplus" and so raising the price, Western was rather vague. One suggestion was once more to grant the bounty on export. "The difference between the price of corn in this country and Europe, in consequence of our taxation and various other circumstances, is generally so great that we can rarely expect to find a foreign market for any part of it. If a bounty on the export of corn was at any time desirable, it is certainly at this time more so than ever." He was aware that there were strong opinions against such a bounty, and he himself was not sanguine of *very* advantageous results, but he would be extremely glad to have the trial made. Another suggestion was that the Government should encourage individuals, who might be disposed so to employ their capital, to take off the surplus which was weighing on the market by an advance of exchequer bills to the extent of one-half the value of the grain purchased, the grain to be deposited in warehouses under the king's lock. Here he took occasion to denounce the warehousing of foreign corn duty free, as preventing the formation of national stores.

Further protection asked.

The remainder of the speech was occupied with proposals of further protection to agriculture. In his opinion, all agricultural produce deserved "the same protection as was afforded to all other manufactures. . . . If such is the policy of this country, that no one article of home manufacture fails to receive from the legislature an ample protection from foreign competition in the home market by high duties, and is encouraged to export to foreign countries by bounties and drawbacks, why should not the same protection and encouragement be afforded to those whose properties, skill, and industry are devoted to the cultivation of the soil? . . . The fact, however, is that they neither are equally protected nor encouraged." Since the return of the peace, a quantity of articles had begun to flow in and they would speedily be deluged. "In the first place, there are a variety of seeds which this soil and climate are equally capable of producing with any countries of the continent." The import of rape seed, for instance, had increased from an average of 7,000 quarters during the war to 80,000 or 90,000 since. Again, 500,000 or 600,000 bushels of linseed had been imported, which might as well have been grown at home. So with mustard, caraway, canary, and clover seeds, which could be grown on wheat lands here, and so relieve the congestion. As to the

produce of pasture lands, tallow, cheese, and butter were pouring in from abroad. Then, as regards wool, "the amount imported rose all at once from £7,000,000 to upwards of £15,000,000." He would only observe that, in each of these cases, the same reasons existed for protection of the home producer. It was impossible to contend with countries where taxation had not run to the same extent as it had in this.

Something must be done, or the revenue would suffer.

He was aware that the Government were not prepared to accede to such a reduction of taxation as he had indicated, but he would entreat them to consider how the revenue they expected could be realised if agriculture remained in its impoverished condition. "The land at present actually pays no rent at all; the value of the produce of arable land does not even cover the charges upon it, independent of any rent whatsoever; thousands and thousands of acres are already wholly untenanted and fast returning into a state of absolute sterility." All the time the land was the chief source of our revenue. "If we measure it by the Property Tax, we find that the land yields eight-elevenths of all the productive sources of revenue. Of £14,000,000 raised by the Property Tax, very nearly eight arise from the landlord and tenant; about three from trades and manufactures, and three from funds and offices." But ministers were "going on with their plans of finance just as if the country was in the most flourishing condition; had determined upon the appropriation of the Sinking Fund to the liquidation of the National Debt, determined to force up the funds by some means or other." He quite admitted the advantage of a sinking fund, but the maintenance of it now, to the extent proposed, would hurry the country into absolute ruin. Instead of priding ourselves upon leaving untouched this great Sinking Fund of £14,000,000 per annum, and flattering ourselves with the expectation of being able thus to sustain the price of stocks, we should bend our whole thoughts to the immediate relief of the country from the taxation which overwhelmed it.

Western concluded a speech, which was much praised for its ability and moderation, by asking for a committee of the whole House to consider a set of Resolutions embodying his suggestions, and adding "that the tithe and the poor rates, to the payment of which those whose capitals are engaged in agriculture are almost exclusively subjected, have recently been felt to press with increasing and unexampled severity, and that it is therefore

necessary to relieve them as far as possible from the operation of other burdens."[1]

Frankland Lewis seconds.

Frankland Lewis, in seconding the motion, made a calculation to show that, if we should be engaged in a new war, "there would be an end to the landholders of England." The National Dividend (to give it its modern name) must, he said, first reward and maintain the industry of those who produce it. The only fund from which taxation and interest on debt could be paid was the surplus over this, *i.e.* rent of land and profits of capital. But rent must provide for buildings, drains, fences, etc.—"the lowest state to which the landowner can with safety be reduced is that of being steward of the land." As regards the produce of land, then, it appeared to him that we had already passed beyond this point.[2] He supplemented Western's suggestions by saying that "a diminution in the duty on wool was necessary, as well as the removal of all those absurd restrictions on its export and conveyance," and that the prohibition of tobacco growing at home, in favour of the colonies, should be repealed.[3]

Robinson, Vice-President of the Board of Trade, alluded to the

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiii. 31. I have given Western's speech in some detail, because, as the *Annual Register* said, "it affords a distinct view of the leading ideas entertained by the landed interest in this critical emergency" (p. 27). For want of space, presumably, the speech was not summarised in the *Register*, and only appears in complete form, so far as I know, in *Hansard*, which printed it *verbatim* from the original edition printed for Budd & Calkin, Pall Mall. It perhaps deserves the epithet "moderate," inasmuch as it did not mention wilder proposals put forward by the agriculturists in their despair; such as compelling the West Indies to take corn from us instead of from the United States, encouraging small distilleries, increasing the paper circulation, even taking advantage of the helpless condition of France to "dump" our surplus there. It is very interesting to compare it with the speeches delivered in the Corn Law debates of 1813-1815, and, particularly, to notice how those who demanded that "England should grow her own corn," and argued for the prohibition of foreign grain by the legislature as the only way to secure steady prices high enough to reward the cultivator, now claimed relief from the legislature because their plan had succeeded too well, and had reduced prices far below what they were in the years of the greatest import. For the same reason, I have, in what follows, given the views and suggestions of various members—many of them of no importance in themselves, but all throwing a strong light on the ideas of the times, and on the problems of colliding interests which arose out of protection.

[2] Marryat subsequently supplemented the argument by saying that, for the past eighteen months, mercantile men had made no profits, but had in fact encountered severe losses (*Hansard*, xxxiii. 473).

[3] Adverting to the Poor Laws, Lewis said he would propose some amendment to "bring them round to their original ends." "He would consider proper objects for relief the decrepit, the old, and the helpless, but would reject those reduced by their own imprudence or wickedness. He would also propose to fix some point at which the operation of the law should cease,

Corn Law of last session—that "much calumniated and misunderstood measure"—saying that those who had then resented it must be ready now to ask pardon for their action, and basing the statement on the fact that it had occasioned none of the mischief apprehended from it, while, he was sorry to say, "it was not productive of the good expected from its adoption . . . If it had done no good, it had done no harm . . . and therefore the popular cry of the last year had been proved to be utterly groundless." Comments by Robinson,

Sir Frederick Flood spoke of the severe distress in Ireland, contending, however, that the main cause of it was the non-residence of landowners. In a country where there were no poor rates, and poor people could not get work, they must starve, and this had of late been the fate of many. He advocated, as a beginning, the repeal of the malt duty and a protecting duty upon the import of butter. Flood,

Baring confessed himself unregenerate; his opinion of the Corn Law had undergone no change whatever. It had done nothing for the country; it was "completely a dead letter, for the country was just in the same state in which it would have been if it had never passed; therefore such an Act should never have been passed, especially against the voice of the public." Baring,

When the House went into committee on the subject on 28th March [1]—after the dropping of the Property Tax and the repeal of the Malt Duty—Brand, nominally supporting Western's Resolutions,[2] and not apparently noticing that he was raising an entirely different issue, gave a different account of the "cause of the disease." Without recourse to political economy, he said, it might be defined to be "the inadequacy of the present price of grain to the high rents of the land." Of the charges on land, he considered tithes the most grievous. He felt difficulty in supporting the proposal of national stores—"there was not sufficient capital in the country to effect this"—but he would support a duty on foreign seeds, and on wool and woollen cloth. Brand,

that the whole rent of the landlord should not be swallowed up. Without such alterations, the increasing amount of the poor rates would finish by overrunning the whole country" (*Hansard*, xxxiii. 62).

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiii. 665.

[2] It was in this speech that Brand used an expression about the agricultural distress which left a deeper impression than his proposals: "The poor in many cases had abandoned their own residences. Whole parishes had been deserted, and the crowd of paupers, increasing in numbers as they went from parish to parish, spread wider and wider this awful desolation."

Lascelles, Lord Lascelles deprecated the idea that any immediate or direct relief could be conferred by legislative interference; as regards wool particularly, they should remember that "there were two classes in the country, and that it was the duty of parliament not to protect the agricultural interest to the ruin of the manufacturing interest."

Wood, Wood spoke against the warehousing of foreign corn, duty-free, in British warehouses, arguing, with no very obvious logic, that the very existence of foreign grain in our warehouses must have an effect upon the price, although it could not come in owing to the Corn Law, and thought that national stores of home grain could not be other than beneficial.

Curwen, Curwen, on the other hand, disagreed entirely with Western as to the cause of the distress. It did not arise from surplus produce—there never had been a surplus for thirty years except in 1792. The distress originated in the immense importation previous to the Corn Law, joined to the deficiency of the crops at different times. During the discussions on the Corn Law, "all the surplus produce of the continent was poured in on us; for 1813, and up till the closing of the ports in April, the import was 1,800,000 qrs., of which the wheat alone was equal to the consumption of 100 days." On account of this the prices fell, and they had, in consequence of pecuniary distress, continued to fall ever since. "Nor has the fall of grain been the only difficulty the farmers had to contend with; an equal depreciation has taken place in all stock and every other produce, wool excepted. If therefore a redundancy of produce was the sole cause, we must admit that this extended to stock as well as grain. This, I do not suppose, will be contended for by any one."[1] Finally, Curwen recommended the lending to all farmers, where the landlord would give his collateral security, of half a year's rent, repayable in six, twelve and eighteen months, the interest of the loan to be paid 3 per cent. by the landlord and 2 per cent. by the tenant.

Foster, Foster begged the committee's attention to the fact that, in 1801, the greatest importation of foreign grain amounted to no more than one-fifteenth of the total home consumption; in 1810 and 1813, to one sixteenth.[2] That was to say, "this country, in the

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiii. 471, 680.

[2] The following calculation from the *European Magazine* of 1815, I give for what it is worth. The consumption of grain of all kinds was said to be 20,600,000 quarters for England, and 3,988,000 for Scotland, of which 1,762,000 were consumed in London alone (vol. lxviii. 238).

seasons of its largest import and its severest domestic scarcity, had never obtained from abroad above one fifteenth of its whole annual consumption." This proved how weak a reliance could be placed in seasons of exigency upon a foreign supply. On this single question of the trade in grain was he an advocate for monopoly, and the only article which he would except from the general principle of unrestricted commerce was the agricultural produce of our own soil. But to him "nothing appeared wanting to a course of progressive prosperity but a system of excluding generally the foreign corn grower, and of depending upon our own domestic industry and resources."

Newport also said that the British agriculturist must be protected by duties sufficient to countervail home taxation. "The whole system of this country was built upon monopoly and we were not at liberty to depart from that monopoly with respect to the farmer alone." Newport,

Peel, who, it will be remembered, was Chief Secretary for Ireland, said that the distress was much greater there, and that the sister island had not received the same relief from taxation. In England, the remission was £17 millions, or one-fourth of the whole; in Ireland, it was but one-eighteenth. "The only adequate protection to Ireland would be by giving the preference to her agricultural produce; to this preference she could alone look for relief." He was glad to hear that encouragement was to be given to the butter trade; it might not be realised that "there was no one article of such official value as butter except the great staple commodities of corn and linen." Peel.

Robinson considered that, since the repeal of the Property Tax and the Malt Duty, the agricultural situation was already greatly relieved, and the Resolutions accordingly were far less necessary than when they were proposed.[1] He thought he was right in assuming that the House was unfavourable both to the abandonment of the warehousing system and to the issue of exchequer bills. He condemned bounties—"no trade which could stand by itself needed the assistance of a bounty, and no bounty could uphold a trade which needed artificial support." He was equally averse from the plan of turning the protecting into prohibitory duties; "and he was so, not upon Robinson opposes the motion.

[1] Curwen had just said that he had long been strongly inclined to believe that a rise in the price of grain would take place before next harvest, and that already wheat had advanced to 72/- in many parts of England.

a view of particular articles of natural produce, but on a view of them in the gross. In the situation which he had the honour to hold, he could assure the House that he had received innumerable applications, calling upon him to impose a prohibitory duty in favour of almost all the various articles of domestic produce. Many of these statements were quite convincing when considered separately, but it was his duty to compare them and act on a consideration of the whole. To adopt the principle of a universal prohibition appeared to him to be little less than to adopt that continental system of exclusion which it was one of the first objects of the war to overturn. . . . If it were the general opinion of the House that there should be a protecting tax on foreign tallow, cheese, and hides, he would consider himself bound to submit to that opinion, which he should not deem altogether unreasonable, if the question with regard to the tallow and the hides stood alone and unconnected. The great objection was, however, that there was already a duty on these foreign articles; and, what was more important still, they were the two articles with which one of the greatest branches of our trade was carried on—namely, that with South America. It was quite impracticable to obtain specie alone for our commodities, and indeed barter itself was one of the most advantageous modes of conducting commerce.[1] . . . With regard to hides, there was also this additional objection, that any new tax on them would only increase the evil already so severely felt from the high duties on leather. . . . He was afraid that we had already gone quite as far as policy would admit in our system of prohibitions, if not indeed too far."

[1] The tentative nature of this last statement—from a member of the Cabinet—as, indeed, many of the suggestions made in the debates, remind us that, in 1816, political economy had scarcely compelled an entrance into the circle of the sciences. The crux of Protection—the clashing of interests—is well shown in the following passage from the same speech. "With regard to rapeseed, the oil extracted from which was partially employed in the woollen manufacture, any new duty on it seemed objectionable on the same grounds. Two classes of society thought it important to their interests to impose a duty on foreign rapeseed—these were the whale-fishers and the agriculturists. The former class had stated to him that they were nearly driven out of the market by the conversion of foreign rapeseed into oil, which was employed in various processes in which whale-oil would otherwise be used. But what would it avail to the agriculturist if the foreign rapeseed were driven out of the market, and they were met by the competition of the whale-fishers? And, on the other hand, if the whale-fishers were cut out by the produce of British rapeseed, they would have a similar ground of complaint" (*Hansard*, xxxiii. 697).

Frankland Lewis "most cordially concurred in the proposition that prohibitory duties of all kinds should, if possible, be avoided, but at the same time he could not but allow that those who differed from him in opinion had something like a fair ground to go upon. They might truly say that a system of prohibitions had long existed in this country among the trading and manufacturing classes; that the landholders had hitherto followed very slowly, and at great distance, the path so generally pursued by the other interests of the community; that they had not from time to time attacked the trading board with petitions to protect their individual interest to the exclusion of others; that, on the contrary, they had in general been the sacrifices to others' gain, and that every prohibition had, in fact, been a tax levied on them to the benefit of the manufacturer." But, as regards wool, he said that, "much as that commodity was protected by our laws, yet he believed that he might safely state that less attention was paid to the improvement of wool in this country than in almost any other country in Europe. Much finer wool was found abroad than at home."[1] Frankland Lewis

He proposed to move two resolutions—which, however, he afterwards withdrew. One was to allow the free exportation of wool—not that any great advantage would arise from its export, but "for the honour of the country"—"that at least Englishmen might enjoy a free, open trade in their own staple commodity." The other was to permit the growing of tobacco. The Acts of Charles II. imposing penalties on it, in favour of the colonies, were a fair ground for inferring that tobacco would grow in this country. As a fact, in 1782, the penalties imposed on one farm in Yorkshire alone, for growing tobacco, were no less than £36,000. "Perhaps it was not the least recommendation of this plant that the culture of it was thought a good preparative for the growth of wheat." moves two resolutions.

When the House again went into committee on 9th April,[2] Castlereagh declared himself against imposing any protecting duties on the importation of wool and seeds. "Our own manufactures," he said, "had heretofore been perhaps protected by Castlereagh opposes further protection.

[1] One might expect that this would have suggested to the speaker that the protection had something to do with the carelessness and want of enterprise. But Lewis' only comment was that "a small duty of 6d. or 1/- on every imported pack of fine wool would, without materially affecting the price to the consumer, be a considerable relief to the farmer"!

[2] *Hansard*, xxxiii. 1081.

duties more than they ought to have been, even for their own interest. This system pursued would have forced all the capital into the hands of the manufacturing interest to the ruin of the agricultural interest. It was proper to take a middle course, and to let the capital take its proper destination equally between them. On this principle he had supported the Corn Bill. . . . Though disposed thus to give every reasonable protection to the agricultural interest, he was not willing to lay duties on the importation of articles which entered largely into our manufactures."

Brougham's great speech.

Brougham then rose to deliver one of his great speeches.[1] He would not dwell on the *amount* of the distress—on this all men were agreed—except to call attention to the petition from Cambridgeshire, which stated that, in one parish, every proprietor and tenant being ruined with a single exception, the whole poor rates of the parish, thus wholly inhabited by paupers, were now paid by one individual, whose fortune, once ample, was thus swept entirely away. He would apply himself to the causes and the remedies or palliatives proposed.

First, he pointed out that, in 1792, the average price of wheat was 47/-; now it was 57/-; yet no complaint was ever heard of low prices before the war, nor were there signs of distress. This should serve as warning against the error of imputing the distress to any single cause. What had happened since 1792?

After the short stagnation of 1793, this country, thanks to the circumstances of the war, obtained in a very short time a mercantile and colonial monopoly, altogether unprecedented even in the most successful of her former wars. From 1797 to 1808, there was a rapid extension of our manufacturing industry and wealth and a proportionate improvement in our agriculture. But this period of ten years was filled with striking events all tending one way, bearing upon the extension of agriculture.

Several circumstances had given a great impetus to production

(1) The scarcity of wheat in 1796, and of all sorts of grain in 1799 and 1800, raised the prices to such an extent as to force a vast portion of land into cultivation. In 1797, and still more after 1800, lands were broken up which had never before known the plough, and many wastes were taken in, the tillage of which prudence would perhaps never have authorised. (2) At the same time, the financial and military operations of the war concurred to raise the prices of agricultural products—not that they

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiii. 1086. The speech was printed separately by Longman.

multiplied capital or mouths, but that they led to more wasteful consumption. (3) Then another event occurred, the restriction of the Bank of England in 1797. After the restoration of confidence, momentarily disturbed, there came "a disposition to accommodate on the part of bankers and other dealers in money and credit wholly unexampled. The Bank of England soon increased its issues, and the numbers of country banks were everywhere augmented"—all actively engaged in discounting and lending and issuing their own notes. "Hence the unlimited accommodation which they afforded to farmers and generally to all speculators in land." (4) Yet another circumstance concurred—the great extension of our colonial possessions—and few indeed reflected upon the vast effects produced by the reaction of their wealth on our agriculture, both through the channels of commerce and of remittances. (5) The last circumstance was "the completion of our commercial and manufacturing monopoly by the destruction of almost all other trade and peaceful industry, the final result of Buonaparte's continental and military system," consummating the ruin of our competitors and giving new resources to our seaport and manufacturing towns.

—but many of them were accidental and temporary.

All these circumstances together gave a start to the productive powers of this island quite unexampled in any equal period of its history. "When," he said, "on the other hand, I reflect upon the nature of the causes which I have enumerated, and find that most of them are of sudden occurrence, and that their combination in the short space of about ten years was accidental; when, moreover, I perceive that the most material of them were of a temporary duration, and could not remain long to support the great cultivation which they had occasioned, I am disposed to think that I have got hold of a principle upon which something like an overtrading in agriculture and a consequent redundance of produce may be inferred to have happened, how difficult soever it may be to ascertain the amount of this excess by any strict calculation."

Enclosures and improvements in cultivation

The 1,200 Enclosure Acts passed during the ten years, and the great areas enclosed, were of less importance, perhaps, than the improvements in the cultivation of the old enclosures. But suppose the total result "to be equal to the produce of two millions of acres added to the former produce, and if it be true that the population has only increased two millions during the same period, there will appear to have been an increase of

nearly six million quarters in the supply, and only an increase in the permanent demand in the proportion of two millions." Without referring to statistics, "the improvements in most parts of the country have been going on so visibly that the most careless observer must have been struck by them. Not only have wastes disappeared for miles and miles, giving place to houses, fences, and crops; not only have even the most inconsiderable commons, the very village greens, and the little strips of sward by the wayside, been in many places subjected to division and exclusive ownership, and cut up into corn fields in the rage for farming; not only have stubborn soils been forced to bear crops by mere weight of metal, by sinking money in the earth, as it has been called,—but the land that formerly grew something has been fatigued with labour, and loaded with capital, until it yielded much more; the work both of men and cattle has been economised, new skill has been applied, and a more dexterous combination of different kinds of husbandry been practised, until, without at all comprehending the waste lands wholly added to the productive territory of the island, it may be safely said, not perhaps that two blades of grass now grow where one only grew before, but, I am sure, that five grow where four used to be; and that this kingdom which foreigners were wont to taunt as a mere manufacturing and trading country inhabited by a shopkeeping nation, is in reality, for its size, by far the greatest agricultural state in the world."

had made five blades grow for four.

"Previous to the year 1810 or 1811, no great effect appears to have been felt in the corn market from all this system of improvement. . . . The crop of 1810 was not a very good one, and that of 1811 was extremely bad. But about 1812, when the new cultivation and improvements in farms generally, may be supposed to have produced their full effect, there began a series of events, some of them accidental and beyond human foresight to anticipate, others perhaps less strange in themselves, but, in their union, scarcely more to be expected, all operating in the same direction, and that direction the very opposite, so far as regards agriculture, to the line in which the no less unparalleled combination of circumstances already mentioned had been operative in the preceding years. The harvest of 1812 was a very abundant one; that of 1813, I believe, exceeded any that had ever been known; and the crop of 1814 was not much inferior. This, of course, depressed prices.

A set of events since 1812 operated in the opposite direction.

But (2) the political events of these three years had a still more important influence. Here he differed widely from Western as to the effects of the peace. A glance at facts and dates would show that the fall in prices at the end of 1813 was due in great part, not indeed to peace, but to the prospect of peace. Peace was probable in September and prices fell from 122/- to 86/-: it was certain after Leipsic, and they fell to 68/-. Peace, indeed, was bound to lower prices. Fifty millions of government expenditure could not be cut off without greatly disarranging all markets for manufactures and produce both directly and indirectly: when grain, provisions, and forage were no longer sent to the Peninsula, and clothing and arms no longer ordered from Yorkshire and Warwickshire, there was necessarily an immediate diminution in the demand for food and increased pressure besides from the poor rates.

The peace which inevitably lowered prices.

(3) A third circumstance was the distress in the commercial world. One remembered "the fatal year, 1810"—the difficulties of 1812. Then came the spring of 1814 and the sudden opening of the continent. "A rage for exporting goods of every kind burst forth, only to be explained by reflecting on the previous restrictions we had been labouring under, and only to be equalled (though not in extent) by some of the mercantile delusions connected with South American speculations. Everything that could be shipped was sent off; all the capital that could be laid hold of was embarked. The frenzy—I can call it nothing less after the experience of 1806 and 1810—descended to persons in the humblest circumstances, and the furthest removed, by their pursuits, from commercial cares. . . . The bubble soon burst, like its predecessors of the South Sea, the Mississippi, and Buenos Ayres: English goods were selling for much less in Holland and the north of Europe than in London and Manchester; in most places they were lying a dead weight without any sale at all; and either no returns whatever were received or pounds came back for thousands that had gone forth. The great speculators broke; the middling ones lingered out a precarious existence, deprived of all means of continuing their dealings either at home or abroad; the poorer dupes of the delusion had lost their little hoards, and went upon the parish." Hence "a prodigious diminution in the demand for manufactures, and indirectly, a serious defalcation in the demand for the produce of land."

The commercial gamble

The peace with America in 1815 produced a somewhat similar effect—with the difference that "ultimately the Americans would

and the rush of goods to America,

pay, which the exhausted state of the continent rendered very unlikely." Goods to the value of £18,000,000 were exported to North America in one year. No doubt "it was well worth while to incur a loss upon the first exportation, in order, by the glut, to stifle in the cradle those rising manufactures of the United States which the war had forced into existence, contrary to the natural course of things." But, for a considerable part of this, no returns had yet been received, while still more of it must have been selling at a very scanty profit.

at the same time as the Bank curtailed its discounts and issues.

And then it was, when a general commercial distress began to prevail, that "the principal, if not the very first cause of our present sufferings, began." The Bank of England, "not very slowly," limited its discounts and diminished its issues of paper by about three millions. The country banks lessened their discounts in a much greater degree. A single failure made it difficult, for a length of time, to discount a bill anywhere in three or four counties. The man who had speculated in land, either by purchase or improvements, beyond his actual means, found his borrowed capital withdrawn. When the fall of produce was making it difficult for him to pay the interest, he was suddenly called upon for the principal. "Destitute of anything that can be turned into money, he is fain to abandon his purchase with all the improvements which his savings and his toil have made upon it; and the lender finds himself in hardly a better situation, without the means of obtaining payment, and with title deeds in his hand, which he can turn to no account unless he brings the land into the market." This he is afraid of doing, as it would lower the price, "and, accordingly, great as the distress has been, very little land has been actually sold; not so much as ought to have been is thrown out of cultivation; good money, to use the common expression, is thrown after bad; the money dealer becomes, from necessity, a land jobber; and the distress continues, pushing its shoots in all directions round the whole circle of trade, until, by reaction, the farmers suffer again indirectly, and the total amount of suffering is, if I may so speak, augmented by its universality and the connection of its parts."

The increased revenue and taxation

Again (4) there was a circumstance affecting all classes of which it was impossible to exaggerate the importance, the state of our finances—the increase of the revenue from 15 to about 66 millions, and of the expenditure to 72 millions in this year of peace. Few, he said, had formed to themselves distinct ideas of the

manner in which excessive taxation had been operating on agriculture, and very inadequate notions were entertained of the amount of that operation. To demonstrate this, he made an elaborate calculation of the increase in expenses of a farm of 400 acres, rented at £500 or £600 a year, showing that the labour alone would cost £220 more than formerly. Wages of regular male servants had risen, since 1792, from £30 to £50 each; so had the wages of the extra labour in spring and fall; while women's wages had increased more in proportion than those of men—principally, he believed, "from the unwillingness of farmers' wives and daughters to work as they used to do before the more flourishing times." Smiths', saddlers', and carpenters' bills had also risen, representing another £60 of additional expense.

causing a rise in price of labour

To what was this great rise in the price of labour due? Much of it, manifestly, to the taxes, many of which affected articles of prime necessity, as soap, salt, leather, candles, beer, sugar, and clothes—so far as protective duties fell on foreign articles used in clothing. It might be said that the taxes had not fallen exclusively on the farmer. But (1) many of them had, and (2) the farmer could not throw the tax on the consumer, because the price of produce was declining, and he could not at once, like the manufacturer, accommodate his supply to the decreasing demand.

Law threw the burden of poor rates on land.

And, again, the law threw on the land the whole burden of maintaining the poor—for the manufacturer paid poor rates only on his real property; he might be making ten or twelve thousand a year from his trade, and all he was rated on was, say, the £500 he paid for his factory, while the farmer was rated on the £500 he paid as rent.[1] Mark, too, another difference. "The farmer employs a few hands—the manufacturer a whole colony; the farmer causes no material augmentation in the number of paupers—the manufacturer multiplies paupers by wholesale; the one supports —the other makes paupers, manufactures them just as certainly, and in something of the same proportion, as he manufactures goods. . . . From the abuse of the poor laws, it has become the prevailing practice to support by parish relief, not merely persons who are disabled from working by disease or age, but those who, though in health, cannot earn enough to maintain them; and by

[1] Or, as he put it on another occasion: "By the system at present pursued, a manufacturer living in a house filled with spinning jennies, by which he made £15,000 or £20,000 a year, paid a rate of £300 or £400 a year, while his next neighbour, with £15,000 or £20,000 in land, paid on the whole of that rent."

a short-sighted policy, wholly unaccountable, the custom has spread very widely of keeping down the wages of labour by the application of the poor rates—as if anything could equal the folly of paying rates rather than hire; of parting with the disposition of your own money, and of paying for labour, not in proportion to your own demand for that labour, but in proportion to some general average of the district you chance to live in."

From this unquestionable position, two inferences were to be drawn; one, that the effects of taxation in raising the price of labour were not distributed equally over all classes of the community, but fell exclusively upon the land; the other, that, even if the fall in the price of provisions should apparently restore wages permanently to their former level, the real rate of wages would still be raised, and the real costs of cultivation be augmented, unless the poor rates also were brought back to their former amount—the £2,000,000 or less before the American War, instead of the £8,000,000 now.

**One class was beyond remedy.**

Coming to a consideration of the means by which the evil might be remedied, or rendered supportable, he prefaced this by saying that there was one class, he was afraid, who could hardly expect effectual relief from any measures—those who had been trading largely in land upon borrowed capital. Of them, he said, "those who have been expending large sums on bad land are in the worst state, and I fear that a good deal which ought never to have been cultivated at all must be abandoned, and much grass land that should not have been broken up must be laid down again as well as circumstances will permit, unquestionably at a great loss." No reduction in rent would do any good in such a case.

**Approval of the Corn Law**

As regards the various remedies proposed: first of all, he was certainly disposed to think favourably of the Corn Law of 1815; it was "politic, at the least as a palliative, or as affording the means of carrying the country through difficulties, the greatest pressure of which we may hope will only prove temporary. . . . If it enables us to get over the existing evils arising, in great part, from a transition to a new state of things, it does a great permanent good; it saves much valuable capital from being totally lost, much skill and labour already bestowed from being thrown away."

**Bounty on export condemned**

But in a very different light did he view the proposed bounty on the export of corn. "If there be any truth in the positions

which I think I have established, that the principal causes of our distresses are the too rapid extension of cultivation, and the intolerable weight of the taxes, surely it follows inevitably that, to force exportation by a bounty, would only perpetuate the one of these causes and increase the other. . . . Why, its very essence is taxation, and to a vast amount,—taxation upon the people of this country to make us sell corn cheap to foreigners—taxation upon the land already oppressed with burdens. And how are such new sums to be levied?"—for all that was ever paid in bounties formerly would be a trifle to this. "A corn bounty, when wheat is selling perhaps 20/- higher in this country than in the foreign markets, would cost a million for every million of quarters taken out of the home market; and each effect produced by this forced exportation, in raising the price at home, would render the exportation more costly."

—as also national stores,

Much worse founded still were the proposals as regards duty-free warehousing and national stores. He ridiculed the idea that corn exporters abroad did not know long before when the price was likely to rise to the importing figure (80/-): they would as readily pour it into this country from warehouses on the other side of the water when it came to that price, in which case our merchants, agents, and warehousemen, would lose the benefit.

and prohibition of export of wool.

As to wool—which had continued at good prices all through the depression but was now falling—it seemed to him a most unwise policy to prohibit its export; the coarse home wool was necessary for many manufactures and was at present peculiar to this island; it would always be in great demand abroad, and a free trade in it would at least guard us against the great depression which might now be apprehended.

The chief evil—the burdens on land.

But the most material subject for consideration was the burdens peculiar to land, particularly the poor rates and the taxes. "As the law is now administered, under the influence of the habits which have unfortunately grown up with the abuse of it, the lower orders look to parish relief no longer with dread or shame, but they regard it as a fund out of which their wants may at all times be supplied. To say nothing of the effects of this feeling upon their habits of industry and economy; to pass over its fatal influence on their character, and especially on their spirit of independence; only observe how it removes all check upon imprudent marriages, and tends to multiply the number of people beyond the means of subsistence—that is, to multiply

the number of the poor." For this he saw but one effectual remedy—that proposed by Malthus. "It might be objectionable, on many grounds, to withhold relief from the future issue of marriages already contracted, but why may not such relief be refused to the children born of marriages to be contracted after a certain period? . . . If any gentleman is scared at so great an innovation, I would only ask him to survey the enormous amount and odious nature of the evil complained of, and to make his choice between the expedient suggested and the mischief so severely felt, not, indeed, as it at present exists but in the still greater extent towards which it is daily hastening."

Approval of Malthus' proposal,

As to the taxes, he boldly advocated the breaking in on the Sinking Fund to the extent of £6 millions. The question was now at issue between the stockholder and all the rest of the community: the House had now to say whether they would take the stockholder's part, or "listen to the only imaginable means of effectually remedying the most trying of the evils we were labouring under."

and of breaking in on the Sinking Fund.

The Government's reply was complimentary but confined to details. If the Bank restriction had possibly led to overtrading and commercial speculation, it had at least, said Castlereagh, saved the country—had "enabled the country to do all that it had done during the war." For his part, he thought the immediate cause of the distress was the simple fact that, during the past two years, the great and necessary articles of human consumption had been depreciated in value at least one-half, and that this change affected nine-tenths of the growing wealth of the community. The question to be considered was how far this depreciation was of a permanent nature. It was a pity that the Corn Law had taken so long to pass, for such a quantity of foreign corn had been poured into the country, in addition to the abundant crop of 1813, that a *momentum* had been given to the fall which was very difficult to check. It had created, too, an immediate conflict between the interests of the grower of corn and the interests of those from whom he derived the means of growing it. The farmers were in the position of being unable to fulfil their contracts—contracts made at a time when the price of produce justified them. He was bound to observe, however, that "although, during the high prices of corn, many rents had been raised, yet that had not been done generally. Rents had not been disturbed in consequence of the high prices

The Government's reply.

to the extent imagined. If all the bargains concluded between tenant and landlord had been built on those extraordinary prices, the convulsion would have been still greater, and the return to a healthy state of affairs more difficult." But he did not think that the distress, though great, was so great as it had been represented to be; if corn had not fallen below 80/- or 90/- no distress at all would have been exhibited. He could not understand how it was argued that 56/- would continue to be the price. "Shut out as the foreign supply of corn was from this country, he could not persuade himself but that the price of corn would gradually rise to 80/-, and that the profits of the agriculturist would rise with the profits of the other modes in which capital was employed in this country. If no other process had a tendency to produce this effect, it would be occasioned by the simple circumstance that the charges on the farmer would, of course, cause some land to be put out of cultivation." Indeed if, in Edinburgh, wheat had already risen to 72/-, he could not imagine that it would long remain at 56/- throughout the rest of the island. If it should rise to 80/- or 90/- where would then be the distress?

As to the Sinking Fund—which had "saved the country"—he hoped Parliament "would never consent to take from that fund until their judgment was satisfied that the fund, as compared with the debt, was sufficient to defend the public credit from the effect of the debt."

A Select Committee

As result of this discussion, a Select Committee was appointed to examine the policy of imposing an increased duty on the import of foreign seeds, and this committee was asked besides to consider of the laws relative to woollen goods and the trade in wool, and of the laws prohibiting the growth of tobacco in Great Britain. The Report was presented on 29th April, with a resolution by the Chairman, Frankland Lewis, "that it is the opinion of this Committee, founded upon the examination of evidence relative to the prices of British wool, that no part of the present agricultural distress arises from the inadequacy of those prices, and therefore that it is not expedient to make any alteration in the laws relating to woollen goods and the trade in wool." The Committee had found that, for the past ten years, the price of wool, so far from decreasing, had increased. Much dissatisfaction, however, was expressed with this Report. The Committee, it seems, had sat three days; examined only into the prices of wool

recommends no alteration in wool

for twenty years back; called a few woollen manufacturers before them, and not a single wool grower. As Brougham said, they were appointed to enquire into one thing and they had enquired into another.

On 17th May, the Committee presented another Report on the subjects added to their remit, as follows:

Further Report on import of seeds

(1) That it is the opinion of this Committee that any legislative interference which might affect the supply of linseed, clover seed, and smaller seeds, would not hold out such a prospect of relief to the agricultural interest as to induce the Committee to recommend measures which they find likely, in some degree, to affect the manufacturing and commercial relations of this country; but that the Committee are of opinion that the removal of the duties now levied on rape cake and linseed cake imported would have a beneficial effect upon the agriculture of the country, and tend materially to increase the quantity of grain for the supply of the home market.

and growing of tobacco.

(2) That it appears to this Committee that neither the soil nor the climate of this country is ill adapted to the cultivation of tobacco, but the difficulties which would attend the collection of a duty on tobacco grown at home, and the temptation which would be held out to defraud the revenue, so long as the present duties on tobacco imported continue to be levied, are such as to induce the Committee to be of opinion that no alteration, under the present circumstances, should be made in the laws relating to tobacco.[1]

Lewis proposes the free exportation of wool:

The House did not resolve itself again into a committee to consider of the Distressed State of Agriculture till 25th May,[2] when Frankland Lewis, in the continued indisposition of Western, moved that "it is expedient to permit the exportation of wool from all parts of the United Kingdom, under such regulations as may afford protection to the manufacturer."

--it would raise its price

Nothing, he said, could be more impolitic than the existing restrictions on the export of wool, and nothing more unreasonable or ungrounded than the arguments on which they were justified. Wool had actually fallen in consequence of the prohibition—at least, it had not maintained its relative position. While corn and

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 579. Brougham's criticism of the second clause was that he had hoped to hear some better reasons than this. When the prohibition was imposed, in favour of the colonies, we had Maryland, Virginia, and Georgia; these were now foreign countries, and we had scarcely an acre of tobacco except a few in what were Dutch colonies (*ibid* 579).

[2] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 778.

cattle had risen in price during the past three centuries, wool had not risen in anything like the same proportion:[1] for the last twenty years, it had not risen at all;[2] while, on the continent, it had long been much higher than here. It was to be inferred that the repeal of the prohibition would raise its price, and, of course, assist agriculture.

—and would neither affect the home market for woollen goods,

But it was objected that free exportation of wool would ruin the manufacturers. This was quite unfounded. The main prop of our manufactures was the monopoly of the home market, and of this the woollen manufacturer would not be deprived by repealing the prohibitory statutes. Consider how small was the proportion of woollens we exported to what we consumed at home—something like five millions to twenty-three. In earlier centuries, when the prohibition did not exist, the proportion was much greater—in the end of the sixteenth century, it was two millions to six. In fact, no monopoly of the raw material, and no peculiar facilities of producing it, much affected the success of the manufacturer. Compare the silk and the cotton trade where heavy duties were paid on the raw material.

nor our woollen exports,

Another objection raised was that our exported wool would be worked up by the cheap labour of other countries, and that our manufactures would thus be shut out. But cheapness of labour alone did not encourage manufactures—as might be seen from the case of Spain and of Ireland. "This country was the first manufacturing state in the world, not because labour was cheaper here than elsewhere, but because our persons and properties were secure—because we had a good government—because we possessed some peculiar natural advantages—because we had coals in abundance—because we had machinery and mechanical ingenuity—because, from our situation, we were not liable to the devastations of war which interrupt the progress of all improvement in countries exposed to its fury—and, above all, because we had a vast accumulation of capital, in which no other country could compete with us, and which would not seek employment under laws that yielded a more uncertain protection."

A third objection was that English wool was of a quite peculiar

[1] This, however, was flatly contradicted by a member, who gave figures to show that no other article could show so great and rapid an increase of price (*Hansard*, xxxiv. 786).

[2] It will be noted that Lewis, as, indeed, he admitted, had been induced "materially to alter his first resolution" (*ibid.* 780).

—while monopoly would not give us the foreign market.

quality, and that, if we retained our monopoly of it, we would likewise have a monopoly of the woollen trade of the world. But this argument was ridiculous. "By withholding this species of wool from foreigners, we could not compel them to take our manufactures, but we might teach them to do without both the raw material and the manufactured article." As it was, we had no such monopoly. Russia, for instance, was entirely shut against us; Sweden and Denmark consumed but little. Our chief hold was in America. But, as a fact, the general tendency and progress of the wool manufacture, notwithstanding all the fostering care of the legislature, was already on the decline and was likely so to continue. If America should follow the example of most of the nations of Europe, and at length exclude our manufacture of woollens, would it not become imperiously necessary to allow the free export of the raw material? The Committee had been told of a very large woollen manufacturer in Yorkshire who made cloths for the American market only, and used nothing but foreign wool. "Thus the agriculturist was pressed by a monopoly on each side; he could buy only of the home manufacturer who could make use of an article of foreign growth, and he could sell his own produce only to the same manufacturer."

Castlereagh recommended that the subject should be postponed without prejudice to its being brought up again. Baring, however, complained that such discussions were keeping the people continually unsettled, while, he said, the ministers stood aloof, disclaiming all responsibility in managing the internal concerns of the country. He wanted the question put at rest; and, for himself, he thought no case had been made out to justify an interference with the ancient laws on wool. "The arguments for a free trade in wool, however just in themselves, came with a very bad grace from the agriculturists, who had placed the country in an unnatural and artificial state by their corn laws." Finally Lewis's resolution was negatived without a division.

Lewis' resolution negatived.

Wheat rises 100 per cent. by end of year.

So ended for this year the discussions on agricultural distress, and, indeed, the debates lost their interest before they were over. For now wheat began to rise, and by December, the price was exactly double of what it had been in January. Undeterred by their previous experience, one reads by April that "the rapid rise in grain has already occasioned many applications in the home counties to take farms abandoned by their occupiers."[1]

[1] *Annual Register*, Chron. 55.

# CHAPTER XXVII

## 1817. THE SUSPENSION OF THE HABEAS CORPUS ACT

DURING the first few months of 1817, the general distress continued, although less is heard about agriculture. Since the preceding April, the revenue, which up till then had kept up as well as ever, had materially fallen off. The Regent's Speech, on 28th January, lamenting the pressure on the country, said that the evils were of a nature that did not admit of an immediate remedy; praised the fortitude with which so many privations had been borne and the active benevolence which had been employed to meet them; and promised that the estimates for the year would be formed with an anxious desire to make every reduction in the establishments which the safety of the empire and sound policy allowed.[1] Continued distress.

Shortly afterwards, Castlereagh stated that no less than 300,000 soldiers and sailors had been discharged since the termination of the war, and that the total strength of the army for which the vote would be proposed was 123,000 instead of 150,000 as formerly. The Prince Regent, he said, had set the example of economy by remitting £50,000 of his Civil List, and the public servants of the Crown were willing to contribute "that which the Property Tax, had it been continued, would have taken from them."[2] Reduction of forces.

As might be expected, the prevailing distress was the point round which nearly all the parliamentary debates of the early part of the year grouped themselves. The Regent's contribution to the problem was the particularly futile one of directing that, with a view to relieve the distresses of the manufacturing classes by affording them employment, his birthday and that of the Queen should be publicly celebrated; and "Employ British labour."

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 1. [2] *Ibid.* 252.

that all those who attended the court should appear in dresses entirely of British manufacture. All his state and household officers were ordered to wear costly dresses of home fabrication. The coats of the first class of officers, it is stated, were "of dark purple with crimson velvet collars, richly ornamented all over with gold."

Proposed stoppage of the distilleries.

From Ireland came the proposal of the old remedy, stopping the distillation of spirits from grain. It was represented that, in many places, the people were on the verge of famine; the last potato crop had been deficient in quantity, and of such a quality that the potatoes could not be preserved; the people would be forced to eat the new crop before it was ripe. We learn from a speech in 1819, relative to the outbreak of fever, that, in 1816 and 1817, the weather was so moist and wet that the lower orders in Ireland were almost deprived of fuel wherewith to dry themselves, and of food whereon to subsist; they were obliged to feed on mustard seed, nettles, potato tops, and potato stalks—a diet which brought on debility of body and increased the disease more than anything else could have done.[1] Strongly worded petitions were presented—among them, one said to be signed by every respectable gentleman and freeholder or merchant in Belfast—praying for an immediate stoppage of the distilleries.[2]

Lord Liverpool was goaded into protesting against the doctrine that responsibility attached to the executive government for not interfering with regard to the subsistence of the people. If it was thought right, he said, that the distilleries should be stopped when grain reached a certain price, let it be so enacted by law; but nothing could be more unwise than to leave it to the discretion of the executive, because, with the most honest intentions, that executive was very liable upon such a subject to be misled between conflicting and opposite interests. In his opinion, there was only one instance in which the distilleries had been rightly stopped; that was in 1802, when one bad harvest was followed by another. Personally, he was of opinion that the wisest policy was to leave the subsistence of the people entirely free. But, as, under the circumstances, there could not be a free trade in grain, the next best policy was to enact specific regulations so that all parties interested might at once know what would follow if certain contingencies arose.[3]

[1] *Hansard*, xxxix. 1430. [2] *Ibid.* xxxv. 883, 917. [3] *Ibid.* 1079.

In April, Brougham presented a petition signed by nearly the whole of the labouring population of Birmingham—11,000 names signed in less than 48 hours—a statement, he said, in humble but impressive language of the degree of misery to which they were reduced. Many of the petitioners had not had any kind of employment for several months, and few of them had had more than two or three days' work at reduced wages: "they cannot but think," said the petition, "that these calamities originate in natural causes, which it is in the power of human wisdom to discover and to remove: they cannot but think that, in a country abounding with every blessing and with every production of agricultural and mechanical industry, some means may be devised by which the blessings of Providence may be distributed and enjoyed, by which the productive powers of industry may again be brought into action, and the honest labourer may again be enabled to earn an honest bread by the sweat of his brow." [1] Birmingham petition.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 21. The distress in Birmingham, however, was clearly due to the transition from war to peace. During the war, small arms to the value of no less than three millions had been manufactured there for the use of the Allies, independently of those provided for ourselves. But the export trade in steel, iron, hardware, and cutlery had not fallen off, which itself showed that the distress was due to the stoppage of the government war demand. The suffering immediately caused to many industries by a sudden and entire check to demand like this, is apt to be thought of as a thing by itself—regrettable, indeed, but inevitable, and therefore calculable—whereas the fact is that *all* industries in modern times are more or less at the mercy of demand, and that continuity of employment becomes more and more difficult to secure. The Birmingham petition anticipates Carlyle's problem: "Why, the four-footed worker had already *got* all that this two-handed one is clamouring for. How often must I remind you? There is not a horse in England, able and willing to work, but *has* due food and lodging; and goes about sleek-coated, satisfied in heart. And you say, It is impossible." Thus, at all times of "depression," the "platitude of a world" in which all working horses are well fed and innumerable working men are starved is bound to strike the thinker, and to suggest doubt whether economic progress is really progress towards a goal of universal well-being—say, of constant employment at a high and rising standard of remuneration for all willing to work. The answer is to be found in considering that the *differentia* of human labour is that it is divided labour. Natural causes and historical circumstances began this division. The result, centuries ago, was increase of wealth, and increase of wealth resulted in increase of population; in turn, the two increases demanded further division —demanded, in short, high organisation of excessively specialised labour. But such division means that each labourer, of whatever kind and degree, makes, not for his own use and consumption, but for sale; that is to say, every man's employment depends, not on himself, but on an outside demand. And this demand, in many departments though not in all, tends to become more uncertain just because it is the demand of a rich, cultured, varied, often capricious life. No man by taking thought can produce value; he can only produce things and services to which the world may or may not attach value. Thus comes the necessity of special classes who keep their fingers on

Distress in Wales.

Much worse was the state of matters in some parts of Wales. On presenting a petition from Cardigan praying for relief from the duties on coal and culm, it was said that the distress there was quite unparalleled. In the hilly parts of it, thirty or thirty-five miles from coal, there was not a tree nor a hedge, and the peat, the only fuel of the people, after being cut, had been washed away and destroyed by the heavy rains; the oats and the potato crop were both ruined, and the inhabitants were nearly without food and wholly without firing of any kind. "Few if any of the cottagers have seen a spark of fire upon their own

the pulse of demand. But when they make mistakes, or when the highly complex and expensive machinery of supply cannot quickly adjust itself, there is dislocation between producers and those who alone can give the products value, the consumers, whether mediate or ultimate; and the worker, just because he is highly specialised and efficient in his own one line, finds his occupation for the moment gone. He is not like the four-legged general servant, the horse, for whom some use can always be found—rather is he like one leg of the horse!

This is one side of the matter—the dislocation that is always imminent and threatening because there is "no use" of the producer unless he can meet and satisfy the consumer. The other is that this highly developed organisation of industry, in which science—that is, the congenial pursuit and occupation of the best minds—finds its application and its reward, is daily bringing into existence other and rival factors of production, namely, the various forms of machinery which can be substituted for many of the former uses of man, and that the residual demands thus made on the human factor of production are such as not all human beings can rise to. Hence modern economic progress, in many directions, seems to be cutting down the numbers of the efficient army, and lengthening the "tail" of camp followers—who must be subsisted. And this compares rather strikingly with ages when there was only one kind of rather inefficient labour, but vastly greater numbers were capable of it.

From the consideration of these two tendencies—the growing difficulty of adjusting supply and demand, and the growing demands made on man—two necessary policies emerge for those who think that the present system must continue; high education of the producer, both general and technical, and universal insurance, to tide him over the "bad times" which are quite inevitable under it.

The answer to Carlyle, then, is two-fold—(1) that, if the four-footed worker "has already got all that the two-handed one is clamouring for," it is because man keeps down the number of horses according to the uses he has for them—adjusts supply to demand—as he cannot do in the case of his fellows; (2) that this may be the best of all worlds for those who can find their place in the industrial organisation, and are able to tide over its dislocations, but that it is a very poor world for the "unfit"—whether they are unfit by the "act of God," or by the exigencies of a system where brains and resource come far before muscles. But those who quarrel with the system, and denounce it as "unnatural," are apt to forget that, in the world outside of man, the race is *only* to the swift and the battle to the strong—and that there are no camp followers. In short, if we do not now, with fuller economic knowledge, say that it is "impossible," we do say that it is "difficult" to secure the advantages of the animal "survival of the fittest" in an organisation of society which demands the survival of the unfit as well.

hearths for the last three or four months"; they boiled their pots and baked their bread on the fires of the neighbouring farmers, who were themselves so ill off that they charged for the privilege. Typhus and fever greatly prevailed: in a few months, it was said, the great part of the population would be underground.[1]

Overborne by petitions like these, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on 28th April, announced the first experiment of the century in what are now called Relief Works.[2]

An issue of exchequer bills, to the amount of half-a-million, was to be advanced through commissioners to corporations and other bodies or to individuals, towards the completion of public works, such as harbours, roads, canals, bridges, etc., now in progress or about to be commenced, to encourage the fisheries, and to employ the poor in different parishes of Great Britain, on due security being given for the repayment of the sums to be advanced. A quarter of a million was allotted to Ireland, through the Lord-Lieutenant, for the same purposes. Where advances were made to parishes—on the security of the poor rates, as to the advantage of which Vansittart was rather doubtful—they were never to exceed half the rate of the previous year, and no advance was to be made to a parish except where the rate was double the average of the two preceding years. The bills were to be at 5 per cent., repayable by instalments in three years—the period might be extended to six or seven years if need be. In regard to Birmingham—where, as he pointed out, the distress arose for the most part from the cessation of the war demand—he thought a loan of £30,000 or £40,000 would be of material service to the manufacturers. Relief Works.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 1271.

[2] In the *Scots Magazine* of January, there is a short account of Relief Works already carried on in Scotland since the autumn of the previous year. In Edinburgh, in that month, there were 1,943 applicants, of whom 1,200 and subsequently 1,600 were actually employed in making and improving roads, at 10d. a day, with soup, meal, and coal tickets in proportion to the number of children. The city was divided into 26 districts, each with its Visitor and Elder who investigated the cases. The funds were got by private subscription. In Aberdeen, where clergymen and elders received the applications, the number employed was 120, including "a good many sailors": the wages were 5/- a week for single, and 6/- for married men, with 6d. extra for each child. In Glasgow, relief was given in money without work; 2/- a week to single and 3/- to married men, with 6d. for each child up to the number of four: the expenses were first defrayed from the balance of a fund raised for the same purpose several years before, and, when that was exhausted, the magistrates undertook the distribution from the general poor relief assessment.

Criticism.

From Vansittart's speech, it seems as if the Government had done nothing more than resolve to provide the money, leaving the problem of employment to be worked out by those who applied for it. And it is rather notable that, in the discussion which followed, there was more scepticism than approval.

The chief criticism was that what was wanted was not capital —capital was only too ready to flow out if it could be employed to advantage; that the only effectual relief for the manufacturers —and it was stated that this was not a loan for agriculture— was a market; but that, given a market, no relief was necessary.

Brougham, with his usual keenness of sight, said that the only effect of the measure would be a facility of obtaining loans, and pointed out that half-a-million was almost ludicrously inadequate to the universal distress—it would have taken it all to relieve Birmingham alone. But, he added, he mentioned this solely to guard against disappointment, and to prevent expectations being formed that could never be realised.[1]

When the Bill came up in the middle of May, with a considerable number of amendments, Brougham emphasised his previous objection by pointing out that the fund from which loans came would not be increased by the measure—there was no real increase of capital by the loan—it was only interposing the credit of the Government to facilitate loans, while the demand for securities, he considered, would prevent application for such loans.

Western opposes altogether.

Western opposed the Bill altogether. It would induce the lower classes to look to Government for immediate and effectual deliverance from their present difficulties. To mortgage the poor rates, was to increase their pressure by making them the means of borrowing, and to throw temptation in the way of the occupiers of land to relieve themselves by this method. As to public works, he thought that part of the scheme quite unavailing: the argument that it was not capital that was wanted but employment was quite unanswerable. The Chancellor of the Exchequer made a very weak reply, admitting the force of the objections, and showing that he had little belief in his own proposals. He announced, however, that he had inserted

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 27. A suggestion—to which, however, no attention was paid—was that part of the money should be applied to the erection of parochial schoolhouses.

clauses dispensing in certain cases with private securities in favour of special securities of various kinds.[1]

Emigration.

The reality of the distress was emphasised by what was then thought the last resort of despair. There are many references in current periodicals[2] to the new flood of emigration from several countries of the continent, due to the extreme misery prevailing—to the United States from countries bordering on the Rhine (said to be aided by American agents), to Holland and Poland from Germany, etc. But from England and Scotland, too, we read of many hundreds sailing for British America and the Cape. More curious is the following, taken from the *Annual Register* of July: "The Scotch emigrants who lately arrived at Pillau, sailed from Leith about five weeks ago in the Helen Charters. They consist chiefly of small farmers and shepherds from the southern counties of Scotland, who have been induced, by the liberal arrangements of a Count Poe, a Polish nobleman, to settle as a colony on his estate of Dovsponda for the purpose of introducing the improved agriculture of Scotland into the fertile but ill-cultivated plains of Poland. The Count has allotted a tract of his best land for the station of the colony to which he has given the name of Scotia. They enter upon regular leases of 20 years, at a rent almost nominal; and, besides other peculiar advantages, they are, by an ukase of the Emperor Alexander, freed from the operation of the military conscription. Liberal provision has also been made by the proprietor for a Presbyterian clergyman, who will speedily join them, and who will also act as schoolmaster to the settlement."[3]

Parliamentary reform.

With this session began in earnest the agitation for parliamentary reform. From the time when Parliament reassembled, both Houses were kept busy listening to petitions and deciding whether they were to be received or not. Many of these, indeed, were not allowed the honour of lying on the table, but their object was gained all the same. At every presentation a little

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 569. Before Vansittart's plan was made known, Curwen, who was prodigal in expedients, sent to the press a scheme of his own; that Government should borrow five or six millions, and take shares in every canal or similar work which should be begun in the course of a short period to be specified, to an amount not exceeding three-fourths of the whole expense, and also to advance money to a similar extent, at 3 per cent., for the building of bridges, making of new roads, etc. He ventured to assert that, in six months, little short of 100,000 persons would be employed in objects of public utility (*Blackwood's Magazine*, June, 245).

[2] *E.g. Scots Magazine*, i. 311, 466, 477. [3] Chron. 60.

speech would be made by the member presenting the petition, explaining how it came into his hands, what it was about, whether it was respectful to the House, and whether he agreed with it. It became evident that there was much serious feeling on the subject. A good deal of the agitation, indeed, was obviously manufactured—the repetition of the wording and Lord Cochrane's extreme industry were evidence of this. Scotland early distinguished itself by petitions from such important centres as Rutherglen, Kirkintilloch, Dumbarton, Dysart, etc., as well as from Glasgow.[1] But in England the petitions came from Bradford, Coventry, Birmingham, Halifax, Bristol, Oldham, Norwich, Manchester, and, of course, from London. The grievance was beyond question. That seats should be bought and sold;[2] that, out of two millions of a population in Scotland, there should be only 2,700 voters; that the House of Commons should be elected by little more than 15,000 persons altogether,[3] while a decided majority was appointed by two hundred peers and other individuals—all this was anomalous enough to secure signatures to any petition. But, while some of the documents,

Anomalies of representation.

[1] Such were the distresses of the middle and lower classes, said Cochrane in presenting the Glasgow petition, that they were not able to support their children at school, and, in consequence, two Lancastrian school-rooms, erected at a considerable expense, were now actually advertised for sale. This itself was sufficient evidence of the distress; for "every man who knew Glasgow knew how well the people were educated there" (*Hansard*, xxxv. 334).

[2] Cochrane boldly told the House of his own electioneering experience at Honiton, when "votes were openly, avowedly, and unblushingly sold." He could produce the bills of the money he had paid for his own seat (*Hansard*, xxxv. 221). Calvert said he was one of six persons who had sent two members to Parliament, each of whom paid £4,500 for his seat (*ibid.* 248). All this was notorious, yet Lauderdale could say that "there never was a period in our history when men in office were less corrupt"—adding "and perhaps never a time when the public was more corrupt" (*ibid.* 960).

[3] "Manchester had grown from a tiny village to a mighty town; Birmingham was speaking with the voice of a hundred thousand people. Leeds and Sheffield had each fifty thousand inhabitants; Leith, Paisley, and Stockport had twenty thousand each. London, ever extending its limits, had spread far beyond its ancient boundaries; and Marylebone, Finsbury, the Tower Hamlets, Lambeth, and Greenwich were thriving suburbs, teeming with humanity. None of these places had any representation. The busy town of Devonport had no member, but the neighbouring villages of Plympton and Saltash had two members each. The fashionable watering place, Brighton, had no member; but the neighbouring hamlet of Seaford had two members. The short-sighted statesmen of the day thought that these anomalies were productive of the happiest consequences. Nothing in their view was so convenient as a nomination borough; nothing was so inconvenient as a contested election in a large constituency" (Walpole, *History of England*, ii. 265).

dwelling rather on the distress of the time, merely called attention to the need of reform, and even disclaimed all wild and visionary plans, the majority indicated what was thought the remedy—annual parliaments and universal suffrage.[1]

At first, there was considerable impatience of these crude proposals, but very soon the House adopted Lord Holland's opinion that the best way of combating such errors was to discuss them in Parliament. No one but Lord Cochrane was hardy enough to accept annual parliaments and universal suffrage.[2] Even Burdett "had no difficulty in saying that he was apprehensive the proposition could not be accepted as tenable"; such a reform as would protect property and guard the bulk of the community from oppression would satisfy all who had rational views on the subject, and then nothing more would be heard about universal suffrage. Brougham exhausted his powers of ridicule over the claim that annual parliaments and universal suffrage were "the birthright of the people," and boldly declared that "the power of election should be limited to those who paid direct taxes."[3] Canning, however, was as bold in his declaration against all reform. "I deny the assumption," he said, "that the

Canning declares against reform

[1] Altogether, by the 12th of March, there were 527 such petitions, signed by nearly a million of people, lying on the floor, and great part of one sitting was taken up by Burdett and the clerks picking them up and laying them on the table—only to be told by the Speaker that they must all be taken back as 468 of them were printed and others were in irregular form (*Hansard*, xxxv. 859, 991).

[2] "Universal suffrage," however, according to the manifestoes of the Hampden Clubs, meant the right to vote only of every male of eighteen who paid taxes. In later life, Bamford at least saw reason to revise his opinion of annual parliaments—the ordinary election, he said, was "more like 'hell let loose' than anything human" (*Life of a Radical*, chap. iii.).

[3] *Hansard*, xxxv. 374. There remains some doubt, however, whether Brougham had not gone much further. Cochrane asserted that, in a speech at the London Tavern in 1814, Brougham had declared himself firmly for annual parliaments and suffrage coextensive with taxation. Place, who had not a very high opinion of Brougham, affirmed that, on that occasion—when Brougham expected to be candidate for Westminster—he was ready to go the full length of the reformers, and thought that subsequently he had deserted his convictions to secure place and power with the Whigs. But Place's standard of political morality was pitched very high. He was as unsparing in his expressions about many of the reformers as he was about the whole body of politicians—all politicians in fact were ignorant, conceited, and mercenary. Hunt was "a pretty sample of an ignorant, turbulent, mischief making fellow." Cartwright was "old Crazy Cartwright." Cobbett was "an impudent mountebank" and an "unprincipled cowardly bully." If Ministers were past praying for, the Opposition, "the speech-making gabbling Whigs," with Brougham for leader, were a "corrupt and profligate faction." What amazes the modern reader is how much was then thought

House of Commons is not, to all practical purposes, an adequate representative of the people. I deny that it requires any amendment or alteration to enable it fitly to discharge the functions which are legitimately its province. . . . I contend that our system, such as it is, has grown up with our freedom and with our power, and that it satisfies the wants, the opinions, and the feelings of the great bulk and body of the nation. When I am told that the House of Commons is not sufficiently identified with the people to catch their every nascent wish and to act upon their every transient impression—that it is not the immediate, passive, unreasoning organ of popular volition —I answer, thank God that it is not! I answer that, according to no principle of our constitution, was it ever meant to be so, and that it never pretended to be so, nor ever can pretend to be so, without bringing ruin and misery upon the kingdom."[1] When Burdett, in a pretentious speech, asked for a select committee to take into consideration the state of the representation of the people in Parliament, the motion was lost by 265 to 77, and the debate was chiefly remarkable for a strong speech against reform by J. W. Ward, member for Ivelchester, beginning: "I declare that a motion for reform in Parliament produces upon my mind the same effect as a motion for a democracy, a motion for a revolution, a motion that the government should now cease and determine."[2]

But the agitation had not got very far before it was checked by an unexpected development.

**The Secret Committees.**

The Spa Fields riot in the end of the year 1816, and an outrage on the Prince Regent—exaggerated into an attempt on his life—on his return from opening parliament, had led to the appointment of Secret Committees from the Lords and the Commons, "respecting certain dangerous meetings and combinations." The Lords' Committee reported on 18th February.[3] They had found such evidence as left no doubt of a traitorous conspiracy for the purpose of overthrowing, by means of a general insurrection, the

within the power of Governments—indicated generally, it must be said, by the denunciation of what they did not succeed in doing. Place held that all the suffering of the people was solely due to the misgovernment of the ruling classes. Even James Mill, speaking of the terrible state of the weather and the crops in 1816,—saying that there would be no flour in the ear, no work for the people, nothing but scarcity and probable starvation—added, "a curse—a tenfold curse upon the villains by whom such schemes are prepared" (Wallas' *Life of Francis Place* passim).

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 130. [2] *Ibid.* xxxvi. 704. [3] *Ibid.* xxxv. 411.

established government and constitution, and of effecting a general plunder and division of property. These designs had been formed by those who organised the Spa Fields meeting—the riot was not accidental or unpremeditated but deliberately preconcerted, and the example of the metropolis had been waited for in the provinces. The Committee had looked into the formation, principles, and conduct of those societies or clubs, by which such ends were expected. Many of them were Hampden Clubs, and Union Clubs, professing parliamentary reform as their object. Others had adopted the name of Spencean Philanthropists, and it was by this latter organisation that the plans of the late riot had been prepared. Corresponding societies were found in Leicester, Nottingham, Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow, and other centres. The destructive objects which the leading members of these societies had in view were demonstrated at their meetings, where the most revolutionary schemes were discussed, and by the literature they circulated everywhere. The Report ended by expressing the decided opinion that further provisions were necessary for the preservation of the public peace.

Very similar, but even more alarming, was the Report of the Secret Committee of the House of Commons, presented on 19th February.[1] If half of what was stated in those Reports had been true, it was certain that a dangerous and avowed revolutionary propagandism was being carried on by these various societies.

Petition from London Union Society.

But, on the 21st, a Petition was read from the Secretary of the London Union Society, setting forth, in clear terms, "that although the Union Society did advocate annual parliaments and universal suffrage—a principle laid down before the House by the late Duke of Richmond, as an inherent and inalienable right of Englishmen"—he was ready to prove at the bar that there never had existed the smallest connection of any sort, either in person or design, between the Union Society and the Spencean Philanthropists; that his Society was founded, in 1712, by the present Lord Mayor and other individuals equally respectable; that it continued to hold meetings but for a very short time, and never did any act except the publishing of one address to the nation on the subject of reform; that it never was affiliated to any society, or branch, or any body of men whatsoever; finally, that it had not even met for nearly three years and a half, and, of course,

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 438.

was not now in existence. The secretary, in conclusion, offered to produce all the books and papers of the society at the bar.

A very angry discussion followed, many asserting the impropriety of receiving such a petition before the report of the committee was regularly known. Earl Grosvenor defended it, on the ground that it was, perhaps, the only opportunity which this society might have of doing itself justice before measures based on the report were adopted—particularly if it was the intention of the ministry to propose the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. Of course, Grosvenor was at once called to order. Had anything been said about the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act? Was not such a reference quite disorderly? The motion for laying the petition on the table was then put and negatived.

Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act.

And the very next business of the House of Lords—on the same day—was to receive a communication from the Government recommending that the Habeas Corpus Act be suspended, and an Act intituled, "an Act to empower his Majesty to secure and detain such persons as his Majesty shall suspect are conspiring against his person and government" be now read a first time.

Three other coercion Acts.

The Act was accompanied by three others: one, extending to the Prince Regent the protection afforded by law to his Majesty's person, another for more effectually punishing attempts to tamper with the military, and a third—the "Gagging Bill," as it was called—reimposing an Act of 1795 for preventing seditious meetings.[1]

These coercive measures, especially the suspension of "the great safeguard of our liberties," were vehemently opposed in debate after debate by the Opposition in both houses—by Romilly and Russell[2] among others—on the grounds that there was no

[1] Cobbett fled to America on the suspension, as "he could not bear to see the abuses of government without the power of exposing them, and he could not exercise this right but by placing his personal liberty at the mercy of the Secretary of State."

[2] This was Russell's first notable appearance in parliament. Born 1792, third son of the sixth Duke of Bedford; a delicate boy, privately educated; at Edinburgh University, 1809-12; member for Tavistock, 1813. He was thus one of the great men who have taken their seats in the House while scarcely of age. Liverpool and Fox entered when 20, Russell when 21, Palmerston when 22. Peel entered at 21 and seconded the Address at 22. Pitt took his seat at the age of 22, was Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Shelburne administration when 23, and Prime Minister when 24. Hence the somewhat well-grounded complaint that, in England, the prizes of political life were so great that they drew the best brains of the country from other professions. "Had they lived in Italy," said Canova, "Pitt and Fox would have been artists."

justification for such extreme measures; that the existing laws were amply sufficient to deal with all the dangers; and that there had been very great exaggeration in the evidence and statement of the Report: but they were passed by great majorities.[1] A Protest against the suspension, signed by eighteen peers, was, however, entered upon the Journals of the House of Lords, to the effect that there was not "such a case of imminent and pressing danger as might not be sufficiently provided against by the powers of the executive government under the existing laws, and as required the suspension of the most important security of the liberty of the country."

Were such extreme measures necessary?

The verdict of history would seem to be that the extreme measures taken were absurdly disproportionate to the circumstances which provoked them. The Report was loudly denounced as a libel upon the people of England. "If ever there was a period," said Newport, "when the people had exhibited the most patient endurance under every calamity, it was the present."[2] That starving men should here and there become desperate and blame their sufferings on the Government or on the richer classes, was only to be expected; to ascribe these outbreaks to a conspiracy of a few political societies was absurd. The Hampden Clubs, founded by Cartwright in the winter of 1814-15, even if their doctrines were as dangerous as Sidmouth supposed them to be, were little more than debating societies. Up till now their maxim, constantly preached by Cartwright, had been "hold fast by the laws." But now, says Bamford, they began to broach doctrines varying from this. Cochrane may probably be believed when he said of them that they were made up of materials so discordant that, to suppose that anything like a conspiracy could originate in them was ridiculous; no two of them agreed on the subject of parliamentary reform, or indeed on any other subject—some were for one plan, some for another: he solemnly declared before God that he had never heard anything in them which tended to put the smallest part of the constitution in the slightest danger. As for the Spenceans, even Cochrane

Hampden Clubs.

[1] Immediately after the passing of the Seditious Meetings measure, the Opposition got a fine occasion for declaring that the liberty of the country had been given into the hands of irresponsible individuals, when it was announced that the Academical Society had been refused a license on the ground that "the object of the Act was to prevent all political discussion whatever!" (*Hansard*, xxxvi. 1).

[2] *Hansard*, xxxv. 1305.

Spenceans. said that the Lord Mayor had estimated that the whole number of these visionaries did not exceed one hundred—"and there was plenty of room in Bedlam for them all."[1] "The poor harmless Spenceans," said Place, "with their library consisting of an old Bible and three or four small publications, a high priest under the name of librarian, and some forty or fifty followers, were held out as a bugbear to all men of landed property who were to succumb to these formidable and numerous speculators, and be compelled to resign their lands to the parishes for the use of the whole community."[2] But there is little reason to believe in Place's exaggerated accounts of agents provocateurs on the part of the Government. The Report of the Secret Committee was unanimous, and the Committee was composed of men from both sides of the House. One can only conclude that the members were thrown into a panic by the evidence presented, and did not sufficiently discount it by the character of the witnesses. There are not wanting signs that some of the members at least were rather ashamed of the Report subsequently, but had not the courage to confess it.

Secret Committees reappointed. On 3rd and 5th June, on a message from the Prince Regent, laying before the House of Commons papers containing information respecting the continuance of the same practices, meetings, and combinations, the Secret Committees were reappointed, and, on 12th June, the Lords' Committee presented a second Report.[3]

There were only "too many proofs," it said, "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." The papers referred to them related almost exclusively to the principal manufacturing districts in the Midlands and northern counties of England, and the prin-

March of the Blanketeers. cipal feature of the Report was the account of the March of the Blanketeers. On 10th March, it appears, a meeting of 10,000 to

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 764, 857. There is a foreshadowing of doctrines of our own time in the utterances of the Spencean Clubs. The great and crying evil of the time, they said, was the "usurpation of the land, the gift of God, from the people." "Landlords are the only oppressors of the people." "All the land, the waters, the houses, the mines, etc., must return to the people, the whole people; without the restoration of this property, reforms and revolutions are unavailing" (*Christian Policy the Salvation of the Empire*. Published by Thomas Evans, Librarian to the Society of Spencean Philanthropists).

[2] Wallas' *Life*, 121. Cochrane said that the people of Glasgow had published a declaration that they had never heard even the name of the Spenceans till they had read it in the newspapers (*Hansard*, xxxv. 857).

[3] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 860, 897.

12,000 persons assembled in Manchester, with the professed intention that ten out of every twenty persons who attended should proceed to London with a petition to the Prince Regent against the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. Although some of the leaders had previously been arrested, and others were apprehended on the spot, large numbers of these deluded people, provided with blankets, shoes—one wonders if the provision of "shoes" is significant—and knapsacks, as well as with money and food, set off on the march. A considerable body of them were stopped on the road to Stockport, but about twenty of them reached Ashbourne, and there the march ended.

Undeterred by this, fresh meetings were held, though in smaller numbers; "in these proceedings, the pretence of parliamentary reform appears to have been wholly discarded; they evidently point to nothing short of revolution."

A projected insurrection at Manchester.

"It was on the night of the 30th of March," proceeds the Report impressively, "that a general insurrection was intended to have commenced at Manchester. The magistrates were to be seized: the prisoners were to be liberated; the soldiers were either to be surprised in their barracks, or a certain number of factories were to be set on fire for the purpose of drawing the soldiers out of their barracks, of which a party, stationed near them for that object, were then to take possession, with the view of seizing the magazines. The signal for the commencement of these proceedings was to be the firing of a rocket or rockets, and hopes were held out that 2,000 or 3,000 men would be sufficient to accomplish the first object, and that the insurgents would be 50,000 strong in the morning. . . . This atrocious conspiracy was detected by the vigilance of the magistrates, and defeated by the apprehension and confinement of some of the ringleaders a few days before the period fixed for its execution." The Report ended by saying that, in view of these dangers, the time was not yet arrived when the maintenance of the public tranquillity, and the protection of the lives of His Majesty's subjects, could be allowed to rest upon the ordinary powers of the law.[1]

The Secret Committee of the House of Commons reported to much the same effect on 20th June. Though much contempt was poured on these Reports, the result was the continued suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act till 1st March, 1818.

These coercive measures did not make the Government any

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 949.

more popular with moderate men within the House. Romilly thought them both unnecessary and unconstitutional, and the employment of spies and informers[1] exasperated the people. The last great debate on the subject took place on the closing day of the session, when Brougham moved for an Address to the Regent on the State of the Nation. His speech was a somewhat ineffective attack on the Government alike for what it had done and for what it had not. As Castlereagh said, if Brougham's object had been deliberation and not inflammation, his speech would have been unnecessary: for one part of it consisted of statements which formed a proper ground of enquiry, and another of assertions which, if true, ought long since to have led to an impeachment. After a very acrimonious discussion, the motion was negatived.[2]

**The country again tranquil.**

The measures, however, were effectual in silencing the people. By September, the country was so tranquil, said Romilly in the beginning of the next session, that it was deemed unnecessary to resort to the ordinary modes of legal trial as regards the rioters at Manchester and Derby, and the alleged offenders were discharged, while, all the same, those who had been arrested under the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act were kept in prison.[3]

**Roman Catholic claims.**

We saw that, in 1813, Grattan carried a resolution to remove the civil and military disqualifications of the Roman Catholics, and that a great change in public opinion seemed to have taken place on the subject. After this success, it is disappointing to find that, in 1815, Parnell's motion for a committee to take their claims into consideration was lost by 228 to 147. The change was due, says Romilly, to the indiscreet way in which these claims were now put forward, and the rash and intemperate conduct of the Catholic Board—nothing was now said of the securities for the Protestant Establishment which had been so strongly put forward before.[4]

When, in 1816, they made claim for equal participation in the civil rights enjoyed by their fellow-subjects, they were again defeated. The long debate was introduced by Grattan—"poor Grattan's last exhibition of his setting genius, and of the gentle

[1] The employment of spies was exposed and condemned in the House in June, and after that date none were employed. "From that time," says Romilly (*Diary*, iii. 328), "all signs of disaffection which had manifested themselves in different parts of the country ceased."

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 1377. [3] *Ibid.* xxxvii. 35. [4] *Diary*, iii. 174.

goodness which will glow till the last spark of life be extinguished."[1] Canning and Castlereagh both spoke in support. All the Regent's personal friends voted against the Catholics,[2] and the motion was lost by 245 to 221. But, curiously enough, in July a Bill passed both Houses almost without notice "to regulate the administration of oaths in certain cases to officers in his Majesty's land and sea forces" (c. 92). This in effect removed the principal obstacle to the entry of Roman Catholics into the two services, by relieving them of the necessity of taking the oath or subscribing to the declarations which were formerly an impediment to their advance, and thus situations of the highest rank were thrown open to them in these professions.[3]

Petition for relief from foreign wine duties.

In view of the coming Budget, various proposals for the relief of taxation were brought forward. In February, a petition was presented from the wine merchants of the United Kingdom, praying that the duty on foreign wines should be reduced one-half, as the trade was almost at the lowest ebb. The petitioners expressed the opinion that the reduced duty would produce a larger sum to the exchequer than was at present derived from the high duty. In the port of London alone, it was said in the discussion, the diminution of revenue on wines was £338,000, although the duties had been considerably increased—exemplifying Swift's saying that, in the arithmetic of the revenue, one and one did not always make two. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said decisively that, whatever reason there might be for a reduction of duty on any other article of consumption, it would be agreed that the duty on wine ought to be kept at as high a rate as possible. He was prepared to show that the adoption of such a proposal would be an irreparable injury to the revenue.[4]

Agitation as regards salt duties.

In April, Calcraft[5] brought forward a motion to take into consideration the great and grievous duties on salt. Those duties, he said, were first imposed as temporary ones, in the reign of William and Mary, at three halfpence a gallon, and increased shortly thereafter to threepence a gallon. They were made perpetual,

[1] Mackintosh, *Memoirs*, ii. 342. His speech occupies 92 pages of *Hansard!*

[2] *Romilly*, iii. 291.

[3] *Scots Magazine*, July, 574. The only reference in *Hansard* is a note of the first reading. xxxvi. 1204.

[4] *Hansard*, xxxv. 639.

[5] John Calcraft, the younger, born 1765; entered parliament for Wareham, 1786, at the age of 21; a clerk of ordnance, 1806; became Paymaster-General in 1828; one of the earliest reformers of the liquor traffic.

under George II., at eightpence a gallon or 5/- a bushel, increased by Pitt to 10/-, and, four years afterwards—in the teeth of a report of a committee of 1801, which pronounced against them in the strongest way—increased to 15/-, at which figure they now stood. The prime cost of a bushel of salt was 6d., so that the duty was to the original value as 30 to 1. The present price of salt was 5/- a lb.—the price at which it was in France in 1769, when Burke compared it with the British price of twopence farthing. The duties were very productive, yielding no less than £1,500,000 —and that, indeed, was the only difficulty he felt about making his proposal. It appeared that, in the last quarter, the yield had fallen short by about £80,000.

He did not need to point out that salt was a raw material mixed up with all the necessaries of life—that the tax was very grievous on the poor and the middle class, acting, in fact, as a kind of income tax on the wages of labour. It pressed particularly hard on the fisheries; they had it on evidence before the committee on herring fishing, that it was the constant practice of the trade to pay duty for the salt they used—it was less burdensome than to comply with those regulations by observing which they might obtain salt duty free—and that no inconsiderable portion of the supply of fish intended for the London market was destroyed on this account.

In reply, the Chancellor of the Exchequer could say no more than that, before such a motion could be agreed to, the mover was bound to show how an adequate substitute could be found for the revenue. "Great difficulties had always attended any change in the mode of taxation. When a tax had been long imposed, even its evils were borne with greater patience than the less inconveniences of a new impost." As to the fisheries, a Bill was now before the House to allow rock salt to be used for curing without duty; this, he thought, would afford all the relief wanted.[1] Perhaps also an exemption might be allowed in the case of salt used as manure, and some concession made as regarded salt applied to the food of cattle.

It was at once retorted that rock salt would be of no use whatever; that the continued tax was preventing all advance in the many directions which chemistry was opening out, etc. Curwen

[1] Although not otherwise mentioned, the Bill appears among the Acts of the Session under the title: "for altering and amending the laws of excise with respect to salt and rock salt" (*Hansard*, xxxvi. Append. cix.).

delivered a long but diffuse speech as to the necessity of salt for innumerable purposes, in which one finds two interesting statistical statements; (1) that the value of the fish caught by our fishermen was no more than a million and a half sterling, employing about 60,000 hands—which of course, he thought a great anomaly [1]—and (2) that the smuggling of salt was so extensive that not half the amount consumed paid duty.

The committee asked for was refused, but only by 79 to 70.

Lotteries

On 17th March, the Sheriffs of London presented a petition from the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Commons of the City against Lotteries, as "destroying industrial habits, estranging men from their families, and corrupting their morals." Next day, Lyttelton followed this up by a powerful speech. Two committees had now reported that the system was a vicious one, as improvident as it was immoral. On an average of the last five years, the lottery had produced not more than £550,000. But the cost and charge of raising it amounted to some £570,000; that is, the expense of collection was greater than the sum brought into the treasury. The chance of winning any of the great prizes—it seems there were two of £40,000, and two of £20,000—was as 71 to 1. But the worst of all was that the great prizes were not convertible into cash, but were to be kept in reserve, in part, to purchase shares in a subsequent lottery. The attitude of the Government, he said, seemed to be that gambling was a vice which could not be exterminated; and that, on this account, as much profit should be drawn from it as possible. He concluded by proposing three resolutions against the continuance of the system.

Nothing in reason, of course, could be said for this way of raising money. Instead of one a year, there were now six lotteries, to keep the people's minds distracted from the ordinary ways of making a living—"when once the drawing of a lottery begins, all trade ceases." They "gave the people no time to breathe and kept them in perpetual expectation": the contractors spared no expense of advertising and tempting: carts covered with seductive bills went all over the country.

—Vansittart's defence.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer's text in reply was, to impress upon the House "the important truth that, on the preservation of what remained of the public income, the security of the empire

[1] He might well have pointed out that, at some of the worst times of the distress, the herring on the coasts were particularly abundant.

depended." But one is amazed at the arguments he brought forward—and his opponents did not fail to dwell on their inconsistency with his well-known character as a deeply religious man. His great point, of course, was that the lottery raised half-a-million by an impost which, as a voluntary tax, and as the only voluntary tax, was cheerfully assented to. But, besides this, he adduced five leading arguments:

(1) There was nothing immoral or illegal in the principle unless all games of chance were to be condemned, and, if games of chance were at all lawful, they could not take a more unobjectionable shape than lotteries.

(2) The maintenance of the state lottery kept up an establishment which, in the interest of the government, checked little-goes and private gambling generally.

(3) If the home lottery were abolished, the sale of foreign lottery tickets would be materially increased.

(4) The lottery contractors seldom gained much by their bargains, and on some occasions were losers.

(5) Half-a-million of other taxes to replace the lottery would materially increase the existing distress.

As Wilberforce said: "The arguments used for the lottery might be brought to justify other practices, such as the farming of the public stews, by which perhaps £500,000 might be obtained."

It is significant, however, that Lyttelton's motion found only 26 supporters against 72.[1]

**Burden of taxation in Ireland.**

The distress in Ireland gave occasion to Newport to propose that it should be met by relaxing the taxation in that country. In the past session, £17 millions of a reduction had been granted to Great Britain, and only £320,000 to Ireland. The heavy taxation had reduced the resources of the country—had, in fact, taxed capital—and defeated the avowed object of increasing the revenue. Consequently, the demand for British manufactures had fallen off heavily in every branch; absenteeism was increasing; in 1816 and 1817, notices had been served closing up no less than 42,000 windows and above 10,000 fireplaces, to escape the taxes; even the necessary little jaunting car paid a tax of £7. True, England had taken over the Irish debt—of necessity and

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 1132, 1169. The arguments on the other side—the deep wrong done to the people by the state encouragement of gambling and its deplorable results—need not be elaborated here. They were urged with great power by Lyttelton, Romilly, and Wilberforce.

after the country was beggared—but she had left the taxation which was intended to meet it.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer replied that all these things fell properly to the discussion of the Finance Committee now sitting. But he could not by any means agree with those who thought that all the distresses of the people were to be attributed to taxation. If any proof were wanting, it might be found in the situation of almost every nation on the continent. In Switzerland, for instance, where there were hardly any taxes, the distress was so great that the state of Ireland, bad as it was, was one of comparative happiness.[1] Newport's resolutions accordingly were negatived.[2]

Budget.

The Budget was brought in on 20th June.[3] The Houses, began the Chancellor of the Exchequer, now came to the consideration of the subject with more information before them than they had usually possessed at the opening of a Budget. On 5th January last, a new account had been opened for the consolidated treasuries of Great Britain and Ireland, and the technical distinctions which had till then existed between them were no more. The arrears and deficiencies had all been discharged, and the finances of the empire would now be brought under the view of Parliament in a simple and intelligible form. The committee which had been enquiring into the matter[4] had not encumbered their report with

[1] On 10th June, Liverpool said that, on the continent, in regard to the distress arising from the scarcity of food, the people were much worse off than in this country; he had himself received that day accounts from Germany and France on this subject which were quite appalling (*Hansard*, xxxvi. 930). "In August, 1816, the ports of France were declared to be open to importation (of corn) free of duty. In November following, the French government announced a bounty to be given on importation . . . the year 1816-17 is characterised by the French writers as a period of actual famine" (*Tooke*, ii. 16).

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 578. The taxation of Ireland was brought up in another form in May, when a motion was made for a committee to take into consideration the petitions against the Window Tax and the Carriage Tax. A case was adduced where a person paying only £28 a year for rent paid £24 in these two taxes. The Chancellor of the Exchequer refused the committee, but only on the ground that a plan had lately been before him for remodelling the whole system of collecting the Assessed Taxes in Ireland, and that he would like to avail himself of an investigation on the spot before he came to any decision (*Hansard*, xxxvi. 823).

[3] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 1098.

[4] The committee spoken of was moved for by Castlereagh in February (*Hansard*, xxxv. 251), on the ground that, for many years past, the whole scope of public measures and expenditure had been calculated upon and governed by a war policy, and that now, for the first time, they came to the consideration of what might be a proper scale of expenditure, and what might

a statement of the various distinctions of consolidated fund, war taxes, etc., but had, on the one side, set down the whole of the nation's finances, and, on the other, the sum total of its expenditure.

The first thing he had to say was that, compared with the previous year, there was a falling off of 10 per cent. in the English and of 20 per cent. in the Irish revenue. Notwithstanding this unpleasant fact, he thought that the means by which he meant to meet the Supply of the year would be perfectly unobjectionable. The different items were as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Army (including £1½ millions for extraordinaries and exclusive of troops in France) - - | £9,080,000 |
| Navy (exclusive of grant for navy debt) - - | 6,000,000 |
| Ordnance - - - - - - - - - | 2,221,300 |
| Miscellaneous - - - - - - - | 1,700,000 |
| Total Supply - - - - - | £18,001,300 |

The grants for the same services last year amounted to £24,887,000. The reduction, it would be seen, fell little short of £7 millions, or very nearly one-third of the whole, and that "not on the peace establishment, for he was far from thinking that we had yet arrived at what might properly be so called."

In addition to the £18,000,000, however, a further provision of £4,136,000 would be necessary for the charges of unfunded debt, and to make good previously existing deficiencies which formed no part of the supply necessary for the year.

Turning now to Ways and Means, he took first the annual duties on malt, sugar, tobacco, and some other articles, as usual, at £3 millions, explaining that the considerable surplus which these duties always produced over the £3 millions charged upon

be the proper financial arrangements, with reference to a state of peace. In such a state, when it might be laid down as an incontrovertible maxim that no country, especially a country with such an accumulation of debt, could ever consider its prosperity in time of peace established on a firm and secure foundation unless its expenditure were reduced, not only to the level, but below the level, of its revenue, the earnest consideration, by a committee taken from both sides of the House, of the income and expenditure of 1816 and of the probable income and expenditure of 1817 and 1818, as also of what measures might be adopted for the relief of the country from any part of the said expenditure, seemed to him very desirable. The first report issued by this committee in March took up the question of the abolition of sinecures, and, acting on this, Bills were at once brought in to abolish or regulate certain offices, notably the Justices in Eyre (*Hansard*, xxxv. 1275; xxxvi. 128, 689, 1254). The fourth report, on which the Budget was based, is printed in the Appendix to *Hansard*, xxxvi.

them was carried to the Consolidated Fund. Next came a considerable surplus of Ways and Means from the grants of 1815 and 1816, arising in great part from temporary excise duties, amounting to £1,865,000—not a genuine surplus indeed, but disposable in consequence of Parliament having made a different provision for a great part of the supplies charged upon them. In the present year, these excise duties would produce a further sum of £1,300,000. The surplus of the Consolidated Fund he took at £1,226,000 (there had been a considerable deficiency on 5th January, but it had been made good by subsequent votes). With this explanation, the Ways and Means were given as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Annual Duties | £3,000,000 |
| Surplus of Ways and Means | 1,865,000 |
| Further surplus of excise duties | 1,300,000 |
| Surplus of Consolidated Fund | 1,226,000 |
| Lottery | 250,000 |
| Old stores | 400,000 |
| Arrears of Property Tax | 1,500,000 |
| Total | £9,541,000 |

This left a balance of £12,600,000 to make up the Supply, which he proposed to raise by £3,600,000 of Irish treasury bills, and by a new issue of £9,000,000 of exchequer bills.

Hopeful review of the position.

Reviewing the position, he looked forward, if the harvest should prove favourable, to a speedy improvement in the internal comfort and prosperity of the country. Though the revenue had fallen short by six or eight millions, there had been an evident improvement in the public credit during the year. Consols had risen from 62 and 63 to 74; exchequer bills at 3¾ per cent. bore 12/- premium; large sums had been sold out of the funds and invested in real property and mortgages; there was an increasing facility and cheapness of discount; not least, the payments in cash of the Bank of England had been, for every practical purpose, resumed, and that without any shock or danger to public credit. And, since 1st November, 1815, "at which time the National Debt stood at its highest amount," £32 millions of capital stock had actually been purchased. A great part of the public distress arose, not from any derangement in our domestic affairs, but from the general state of Europe. "At a time when, all over the continent, many were struggling for the mere

necessaries of life, it was not to be expected that there could be a great demand for our manufactures."

The Bank—Grenfell

On 15th February, Grenfell again brought up the matter of the Bank, asking for a select committee to investigate. He did little more than repeat the same arguments as formerly—the only new point being the confident assertion that the profits, within the last twenty years, had been £27 millions, in addition to the usual dividend of 7 per cent.[1] Vansittart protested against such harassing enquiries, which, he said, could have no other effect than to disturb existing regulations and render the Bank less quick, and probably less able, to resume cash payments, and in this he was supported by Huskisson. After a short debate, 40 voted for the committee and 90 against.

and Hamilton.

On the same day,[2] Lord Archibald Hamilton asked for some papers, with a view to find out whether the Bank was preparing for the resumption of specie payments, as expected, on 5th July, 1818. He could not, he said, place implicit confidence in the actions of the bank directors. His own experience convinced him that the prosperity of the Bank always kept pace with the distresses of the country, and that it would be so till the present mode of management was changed, and the House, on behalf of the public, obtained some say in it. The Chancellor of the Exchequer again protested; cash payments could be resumed only if the public retained its great confidence in the Bank—how could this confidence be maintained if Parliament exhibited jealousy and want of confidence in the directors? The Bank had now been six months preparing the treasure necessary for resumption. If the state of exchange continued to improve, and the price of bullion to fall, there could be no doubt that the resumption would take place. The motion was rejected without a division.

Notice of resumption.

On September 18th, all doubt seemed to be set at rest by the following notice signed by the Speaker: "That, on and after the 1st Oct. next, the Bank will be ready to pay cash for their notes of every description dated prior to 1st Jan. 1817."[3]

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 447. In May, however, he said £25 millions.

[2] *Ibid.* 470.

[3] *Annual Register*, Chron. 87. "It is quite clear," says Tooke, "that the value of the paper had been virtually restored, and that the Bank was in 1817 in a position, looking only to the amount of its treasure relatively to its circulation, extended as this was, to resume cash payments. And the directors, so far from taking advantage of the prolonged term of the restriction, were adopting measures for anticipating it." In the months of

In May, Grenfell brought up another matter connected with the Bank. He moved for a return of alien proprietors of bank stock—who formed, he believed, one-tenth of the whole number. The ground he took was that it was an aggravation of the evil of the enormous profits made by the Bank out of the public—and he took occasion to go over some of his old statements as to the amount and illegitimate causes of these profits—that any proportion of them should be exported from the kingdom and go to enrich foreigners. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, however, replied with some acridness that the House had no more right to call upon the Bank for such a return than they had to call upon any mercantile house to lay its accounts before them. The motion was negatived.[1] Alien proprietors.

In accordance with the terms of a Proclamation, between 3rd and 17th February the old silver coin of the realm was brought in to the Mint, and the new silver crowns, half-crowns, shillings, and sixpences were delivered in exchange "without creating the least confusion." By another Proclamation of 12th February, it was announced that "no tender or payment of money made in the silver coins of this realm of any sum exceeding the sum of 40/- at any one time shall be reputed a tender in law, or allowed to be a legal tender within the United Kingdom."[2] Issue of the new silver

On 5th July, the issue of the modern "sovereign or twenty shilling piece" was ordered, each piece to be of the weight of 5 dwt. 3 grains $\frac{2740}{10000}$ troy of standard gold, as current and lawful money of the United Kingdom.[3] and of the sovereign.

As we have seen, the Government, in May, authorised the issue of half a million for Relief Works. But, before the Bill passed, there were many signs that the distress was passing away and trade reviving in the manufacturing counties. The Edinburgh relief works were closed in June on account of the gradual diminution of applicants. Before the session ended, on 12th July, the general improvement was acknowledged. The value of land was rising. Passing of the distress.

April and September they actually undertook by public notice to pay a large proportion of their notes in coin, and did actually pay upwards of five millions of gold (*History of Prices*, ii. 50).

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 252.

[2] The Proclamations are quoted in full in *Annual Register*, Chron. 6, 9. The coins, as before stated, were of silver of the standard of 11 oz. and 2 dwts. of fine silver and 18 dwts. alloy, to the pound troy, and in weight after the rate of 66 shillings to the pound troy.

[3] *Annual Register*, Chron. 56.

The funds, which had been under 63, made a sensational advance in June, and by the following January had risen to 79.[1] Trade had somewhat improved, although, as Brougham said, the recent importations of foreign grain owing to the high price had given an additional stimulus to exports, and so "operated as a practical remedy for the depreciation of our general commerce without being an evidence of its growing prosperity."[2] But, by November, everything was cheerful again. We read that wool had advanced 50 per cent. within a few months owing to the great demand for woollen goods, and that Leeds could not execute her orders; in the iron trade, the increased demand had sent up the price £4 and £5 per ton; since May, cotton manufacturers were in full employment, and even Spitalfields was actively employed; an increased demand had set in from Europe and from North and South America for our manufactures generally.[3]

Rise of prices.

Tooke has shown that, with 1817, began a general rise in prices, which continued all through 1818. He ascribes this mainly to two causes; (1) that the very low prices of 1815 and 1816 had induced a greatly increased consumption, reducing the stocks of importers, dealers, and manufacturers, and spreading a feeling of confidence that prices had for the moment seen their lowest; (2) that the inclemency of the season of 1816 had occasioned a failure of the vintage in France, and of the crops of silk and oil in Italy, besides directly or indirectly affecting numerous other articles, and that this shortage—shown in the imports of 1816—led to a rise, over the two years, of from 50 to 100 per cent. in the prices of silks, coffee, tallow, linseed, and oils.[4]

Hostile tariffs.

It is a little surprising to find how little notice is taken in trade discussions of the protective tariffs set up by other countries. In January, we hear that, by the new regulations of the Prussian dominions, heavy taxes were to be imposed on English goods, while the manufactures of other nations were to be subject to smaller duties—the cause surmised being that England was as yet the only nation dreaded as a competitor in manufactures.[5] In April, we are told that, "from the most important continental markets, France and Austria, our manufactures are

[1] Lord Liverpool claimed that the rise was evidence of the removal of apprehension and despondency due to the coercive measures (*Hansard*, xxxv. 952)

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 1379.

[3] *Edinburgh Magazine*, 394; *Blackwood*, 112.

[4] *History of Prices*, ii. 24.

[5] *Scots Magazine*, 68.

completely shut out."[1] Again we find references to the "prohibitory system adopted by the Swedish government," in the early part of the year, against the entrance of our manufactures and colonial articles; of patriotic speeches made by the Swedes against the use of foreign luxuries; of the great growth of smuggling which followed; and of the consequent stagnation of trade both in Norway and Sweden.[2] But no alarm seems to be excited by those attempts to limit the sale of British goods abroad. What is more surprising still is that there is no reference, casual or otherwise, so far as I have found, to the new tariff in America.

Agriculture.

As has been said, we hear comparatively little of agricultural distress in the debates during the session. Lauderdale, indeed, said in March that "the landed interest was in a situation of distress never before felt in this country"; few of the tenantry were able to pay their rents, and those who did were drawing on their capital—adding the notable statement that "it was capital in the hands of the tenantry that had created that high state of cultivation for which the country was justly famed."[3] But this strong assertion of agricultural distress stands almost by itself, and it never was the way of the landed interest to be silent when they had much to complain of. Farmers, indeed, did not cease to grumble. Remembering their statements of previous years, one reads with amazement that, when crops were abundant and prices were low, farmers were "richer by hundreds" than they were with the present deficient crop and scarcity prices; but the impatient impression one gets that nothing would content them but abundant crops and famine prices is modified when it is remembered that, even with extravagant prices, there may be little to sell. For the first part of the year, prices were very high—rising from 103/1 in January to 111/6 in June, owing to an extraordinary demand for

[1] *Blackwood's Magazine*, 113. During the war, the French tariff was dictated entirely by hostility to England. In 1814, Louis XVIII.—who owed her so much—would have been willing to return to the very moderate tariff which ruled before the war, but the vested interest, as usual, was too strong. Instead of the high duties being taken off as regards England, they were extended to other countries, and corn, cattle, and iron besides were now taxed.

[2] A decree, in fact, was published at Stockholm prohibiting the sale of coffee in inns, hotels, coffee-houses, taverns, etc., under severe penalties, and the use of champagne, burgundy, canary, malmsey, sack, cape, and tokay, as well as all foreign spirits, brandy, cider, and beer (*Blackwood's Magazine*, 317, 648).

[3] *Hansard*, xxxv. 957.

exportation to France. As the autumn drew on, it was the general opinion that the harvest would be most productive, and wheat fell to 76/2 in September.

A disappointing harvest.

But a month of torrential rain in August, although succeeded by fine weather, made the harvest late and disappointing. On the whole, although the results varied very much over the kingdom, being better in England than in Scotland, the new wheat was badly ripened and not to be compared with the produce of former years; barley was below the average; oats not better than last year; turnips good, but not a full crop. Potatoes, happily, were extraordinarily abundant and of excellent quality. The price of wheat had risen again in December to 84/6, and the Board of Agriculture average for the year was 96/11. Happily, the supply of corn on the continent was abundant, and, as the ports were open, no less than 1,089,000 quarters of wheat and wheat flour were imported. So far as one can gather, the landlords had not yet made up their minds to the inevitable, and clung to their nominal high rents, although they do not appear to have collected them to any great amount. In the end of the year, however, after an active competition, several estates were sold for which there had been no bidders a year or two before. There was some improvement in the condition of the farmers, but one is struck now to hear of the "universally low prices of labour"—wages quoted as low as a shilling a day without food.

Foreign trade.

In foreign trade, there was an improvement of about £3½ millions in imports, and £4½ millions in exports, but a decline of over £3 millions in re-exports. The Official figures were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports - - - - - - - - - - | £30,834,299 |
| Exports of British produce and manufactures - | 40,111,157 |
| Foreign and colonial merchandise - - - | 10,292,684 |

The Real value of the exports was £41,817,540.

The number of vessels built and registered in the several ports of the empire was: in the United Kingdom, 851, in the Isles (Guernsey, Jersey, and Man) 15, in the British Plantations, 408; representing, respectively, 84,676, 443, and 32,282 tons.[1]

It seems strange, after these long years when the history of England could not be written without considering her as one of

[1] *Hansard*, xxxviii. Append. lix. It will be noticed that the classification is a new one, and renders comparison with the figures of former years impossible. Calculating for previous years in the same way, the returns for 1815 were 864 vessels, representing 97,949 tons, and, for 1816, 1,183 vessels, representing 128,540 tons.

the pieces on the chessboard of Europe, to find now that general European affairs belong to our subject rather as ending the tale of England's great interference than as much entering into her life. For twenty years, she has played the part of Cincinnatus. History becomes a little humdrum when she returns to "the plough, the loom, and the sail."

Foreign affairs.

The foreign affairs of the year which concern us may be put in a few lines. In France, after April, the Army of Occupation was considerably reduced. Spain, under an absolute monarchy and a worthless king, suffered from continual disorders and attempts at revolution. Portugal also had revolutionary outbreaks at home; in South America, she took possession of Monte Video, the act being characterised by the powers as an "act of hostility" against Spain. The German States, with the exception of Saxe Weimar, seemed slow to establish the principle of free government. America, however, manifested great prosperity: in December, President Monroe recommended the repeal of internal taxes, as the revenue from imports and tonnage, along with that from the sale of the public lands, was fully equal to all public charges.

Newfoundland

The attention of the House was called, in June, to the state of Newfoundland, which, it was said, derived all its supplies except fish from this country. The fish caught, cured, and sold to the European markets, within two years, were valued at two millions sterling. Owing to the permission, "injudiciously given" by treaty, to the French to fish at Newfoundland—an industry which France encouraged by bounties on fish caught and on ships and men employed—and to the prohibitive duties on fish imposed by Naples and Spain, the colony was in a state of beggary. Out of a population of 80,000, 5,000 were out of work, and had taken to plundering the warehouses.

—unexampled distress

A Select Committee was appointed, which reported that Newfoundland was suffering from a state of misery almost unexampled in the history of the world. The merchants suggested that, if 5,000 of the population were removed by government, employment might be found for the rest. They suggested also that a bounty should be given of 2/- per quintal on all fish caught and cured in the island. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that the only question to be considered was what relief could be granted and how it could be most beneficially applied. He himself did not approve of a bounty—Baring said that no trade that could not support itself should be encouraged by a bounty, but, if there

was to be any exception, this was a proper case for making it—and held that, as government had not encouraged the emigration to Newfoundland, it could not be held accountable for the fate of those who had gone there. While much sympathy was expressed, and the suggestion made that direct relief might be given, the consideration of the report was negatived.[1]

Foreign slave trade

In July, Wilberforce proposed an Address to the Crown, for the purpose of giving weight to the executive in its negotiations with foreign states in the matter of the slave trade. That trade was still carried on—even by America—but Spain and Portugal were the great offenders. It almost looked, indeed, from the conduct of Spain, as if she intended to ridicule our efforts. It was known that we had chosen a certain part of the African coast, where we were trying to introduce a relish for the enjoyments of civilised life, and, to carry on this good work, it was absolutely necessary to secure it against the ravages of the slave trade. In the negotiations

—Spain

with Spain, she was allowed to confine her trade to a certain part of that coast. Would it be believed that she had fixed upon the very portion which we had selected for these efforts? It was an insult almost too great for an independent nation to bear. He gave some sickening, almost incredible, accounts of the horrors still perpetrated on the "middle passage." The ships were now crowded beyond all precedent—in one vessel of 120 tons, 600

—Portugal.

slaves had been conveyed. Among others, he read an affidavit, dated 17th March, 1815, signed by a British officer in charge of a slave ship captured from the Portuguese, containing details so revolting as scarcely to justify repetition except on Fox's saying that humanity did not consist in a squeamish ear but in a feeling heart. "The brig appears to have been built for a privateer and for fast sailing, not for stowage; the slaves were all stowed together, perfectly naked, with nothing but rough unplaned planks to crouch down upon, in a hold situated over their water and provisions, the place being little more than two feet in height, and the space allowed to each slave being so small that it was impossible for them to avoid touching and pressing upon those immediately surrounding them; the greater part of them were fastened, some three together, by one leg each, in heavy iron

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 1023, 1293. It was noticed in the next year that the distress in Newfoundland had caused a great demand for the cured fish of this country. Portsmouth herring, for instance, found a great sale in the West Indies (*Annual Register*, 1819, 6).

shackles, a very great proportion of them having the flux." When it is said that these poor wretches were not released for any purpose whatever, the horrible conditions under which they lived —and died—need not be given in the frank words of the British sailor. Those who were left landed "just like skeletons covered with skin, and moving by slow machinery, hardly maintaining the appearance of animated human beings."

Castlereagh gave his most sympathetic support, and the Address was agreed to both by Lords and Commons.[1]

As might be expected, now that Parliament had time to think of other things than national defence, and might hope to have some money to spend on the remedy of abuses at home, attention began to be largely given to social and economic legislation.

Bennet co-operates with Romilly.

Bennet was now ardently co-operating with Romilly in giving publicity to defects in the administration of the criminal law. In February, he drew attention to the delay of the Crown in the case of individuals under sentence of death. In Newgate at the moment, there were, he said, 73 men and 15 women in that unhappy position: on a recent visit, he found that there were many persons in that prison on whom the death sentence had been passed three sessions before, and about whose final fate no determination had been come to. The Lord Chancellor's tardiness and procrastination were become proverbial. Returning to the attack a few days later, he asserted that, according to an official return, 5 persons received sentence of death in July, 4 in September, 29 in October, 29 in December, 21 in January, and 12 more since—altogether a hundred persons kept in Newgate under this fearful suspense. Such was the shameless manner of administering the law, that the unhappy offenders rejoiced when the certainty of execution was made known to them. No adequate replies were given to the charge—only assertions of the Lord Chancellor's private character and virtues.[2]

Dublin prisons.

In March, Bennet called attention to the miserable condition of the Dublin prisons—ten persons, for instance, of both sexes were sometimes huddled together for a night in a room 12 feet by 7 —and Parliament was agreed on the necessity of measures being taken for their improvement. Meantime he contented himself with

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 1321.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxv. 404, 503. Cf. *A Letter to the Common Council and Livery of London, on the abuses existing in Newgate*, by the Hon. H. G. Bennet.

asking for returns of persons confined at one period in the chief of these prisons.[1]

Public whipping of females abolished.

In June, General Thornton got leave to bring in a Bill to abolish the public whipping of females. He was especially led to this by a notice in the *Inverness Journal*, which stated that a woman, young and beautiful, had been whipped in the public streets; that she was then in a state of intoxication, seemed quite lost to every sense of her situation, and shortly after returned to her old courses. The punishment had, indeed, been partially abolished in England, but he proposed to abolish it entirely for the whole kingdom, and replace it by hard labour in a workhouse for a period not exceeding three years. The Bill appears among the Acts passed during the session.[2] But, as we learn from a debate in 1820, the private whipping of women in workhouses, gaols, penitentiaries, and lunatic asylums still continued.[3]

Metropolitan Police: Report of Committee.

In 1812, as we saw, a Committee had been appointed to enquire into "the State of the Nightly Watch of the Metropolis." The Report contained much curious historical matter, but nothing came of it. At the instance of Romilly, the subject was again taken up by Bennet; and, on 3rd April, 1816, a Committee on the State of the Police of the Metropolis was appointed.[4] The Report was brought up on the last day but one of the session, and, of course, no action could be taken upon it. The Committee, indeed, contented themselves with presenting the evidence, considering that the subject "was by no means exhausted," and trusting that they would be permitted to resume their labours. But the evidence alone was enough to draw very serious attention

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 1277.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 932. Append. cx. The incident is mentioned in the *Scots Magazine*, April, 315. It seems incredible that women were not only whipped but burned alive for certain offences till nearly the end of the 18th century. But I do not see what else can be gathered from a passage in *Hansard* of 10th May, 1790, when Sir Benjamin Hemmet secured the deletion of the penalty from the statute book (Geo. III. 30, c. 48), "it having been his official duty to attend on the melancholy occasion of seeing the dreadful sentence put in execution."

[3] *Hansard*, N.S. ii. 105.

[4] *Hansard*, xxxiii. 888; xxxiv. 1281. "Bennet's zeal and activity in promoting everything useful to the public is well suited to such an enquiry," wrote Romilly, "and I rejoice that I have prevailed upon him to undertake it" (*Diary*, iii. 239). The Hon. Henry Grey Bennet was the second son of the 4th Earl of Tankerville—"he is most amiable, occasionally most *boring*, but at all times most upright and honourable," said Creevey (i. 36).

to the licensing system, and Romilly, in presenting a petition complaining of the conduct of magistrates in the licensing of public-houses,[1] asked if anything was going to be done, in view of the Report, regarding this matter; if not, he would move that a special committee be appointed on the subject. The conduct of the magistrates, he contended, was most arbitrary; in some cases, like that mentioned in the petition, they refused a licence to a very superior house in a district where it was very much wanted; in others, they granted licences to houses of the most notoriously objectionable description. This system was intimately connected with the state of the police and affected the criminal poor. In Shadwell, every twelfth house was a public-house; in Gravel-lane, every eighth house; in Nortonfalgate, there was a public-house for every 73 inhabitants; and these houses—termed "Flash-houses"—were principally of the lowest and most infamous description, the common resort of thieves and prostitutes. It was said that some of the magistrates were themselves brewers, some were owners of public-houses, others had relations who were brewers or owners; one of the magistrates who granted licences in Stepney was the proprietor of twelve public-houses and receiver of the rents of ten others. One publican had obtained his licence after six different convictions! Shortly afterwards, on 7th July, another Report was presented from the Committee on the Police of the Metropolis—which had evidently been reappointed—dealing with four subjects:

Licensing system.

Another Report.

(1) The system of licensing public-houses;

(2) The system of rewards on conviction, commonly called Blood-money, under which persons often foreswore themselves for the sake of the reward—"it was stated that officers had made a practice of swearing persons to be vagrants for the parliamentary reward of 10/- each, and it was so easy a way of getting money that some of them doubted whether it was not better than catching felons";

(3) The alarming increase of juvenile delinquency;

(4) The transportation system, under which 4,659 persons had been sent to Botany Bay since 1812—3,978 males and 681 females. The total expense of the two convict establishments for the past fifteen years was £225,588 a year. Though the expense of this system of punishment was so great, it answered no good purpose, and moreover occasioned great injustice, as well as an increase of

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 495.

punishment never contemplated by the judges who passed sentence, inasmuch as the persons transported for seven years had no means of returning. Women, it was said, who wished to return to England prostituted themselves to obtain a passage, and those who did return were not at all improved in morals or habits.[1]

Regulation of Ale Houses.

Before the Report was formally brought up, Bennet, who was chairman, brought in a Bill dealing with the first of these—for the better regulation of Ale Houses throughout the kingdom. The Committee, he said, had reported strongly against the bad system of licensing. Under it, there were some 200 houses which were mere thieves' clubs. The law governing licences was still the 29th of Geo. II., under which it was necessary that a person applying for a licence should have a certificate of character, and that certain recognisances should be entered into. The "character" could be obtained for half-a-crown, and the recognisances were "mere nonsense." The Bill he proposed to bring in would secure that characters were *bona fide*; for certain offences licences would be forfeited; the system whereby brewers compelled their tenants to use only their beer, would be prevented, and such contracts declared null and void; and the power now possessed by magistrates of refusing and taking away licences at their own discretion would be abolished, and the property of publicans put, where all other property was put, in the hands of a jury. But the Bill was ultimately dropped owing to the lateness of the session.[2]

Game Laws.

The Game Laws came up for discussion in February, when Romilly brought forward a proposal to repeal the Bill which had been hurried through at the very end of the previous session without discussion (*infra*, p. 501), and had added greatly to the severity of these laws. He reminded the House of this obvious distinction between the game laws and other penal laws, that the latter were made for the protection of the poor as well as of the rich, while this was not so with the game laws. Frankland Lewis said he agreed with the late committee that game should be put on the same footing as other private property. Wilberforce strongly objected to such a dictum. This

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 1304. The more striking details of these Reports will be found in Walpole, *History of England*, i. 206, and in Charles Knight's *Popular History*, viii. 65.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 910, 1298.

was not a case where the insecurity of property rendered it necessary to pass very severe laws for its protection—to deprive an individual of his amusement could not be put on the same footing as stealing cloth from the tenter hooks of a bleachfield. He considered that the law was unjust and severe: "it subjected individuals to a severe penalty for an act which it was contrary to the natural feeling of mankind to say was in itself a crime, and which men could never be brought to think a crime merely because there were legislative provisions against it." The general feeling was so much against the Act in question that leave was given to introduce a Bill to repeal it.[1]

Romilly's repealing bill lost.

Romilly's account of his speech on the second reading is interesting: "In the course of what I said on this occasion, I took notice of the pernicious effects of our present system of game laws; and particularly observed upon that spirit of inhumanity and ferocity which it seemed to excite in all orders of persons on whom it could be thought to produce any effect. It was not only in poachers, but in the preservers of game, that the savage disposition was every day becoming more manifest. The poachers went out armed, prepared for acts of most desperate violence; while, on the other hand, the practice was becoming every day more frequent of placing spring guns and other engines of death or of mutilation in enclosed grounds and woods, by which the most dreadful calamities were brought often on persons who were perfectly innocent. I stated such expedients to be clearly illegal, and that if the death of a man produced by such means were not murder (as I supposed it was not), yet it was certainly a very aggravated manslaughter in those who placed, and in those who gave directions for placing, the engine where it was found. This practice, to our disgrace, is quite peculiar, I believe, to England. I have never heard or read of such means being resorted to in any other countries, even in those in which the most severe laws were made and enforced for the preservation of game."[2]

But, on this occasion, the Bill was lost.[3]

Knatchbull's amending bill passed.

In the beginning of March, again, we read of two Bills on the subject. Knatchbull got a measure to amend the Act of last session read for the first time. While continuing the punishment of transportation as regards those who might go out by night with arms about them for the purpose of killing game, he

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 338. [2] *Diary*, iii. 284. [3] *Hansard*, xxxv. 1222.

proposed to repeal that part of the Act which inflicted this punishment on persons thus engaged but without arms. The Bill appears among the Acts passed during the session.[1]

Wood's bill to legalise sale

Colonel Wood's Bill was for the definite purpose of legalising the sale of game. By the 5th of Anne, he said, higglers, chapmen, carriers, innkeepers, and victuallers were restricted from selling game. But, by the 28th of George II., the gamekeepers of lords or ladies of manors were prevented, under a penalty, from selling game without the consent of their employers; but, having obtained that consent, they were at liberty to sell. The same Act extended the meaning of the word "chapman" to all persons, qualified or not, who sold game; in short, it was made illegal for any person to sell game, and yet it was certain that at present pheasants were to be bought and sold in almost every poulterer's shop.[2] "He was convinced that, only by legalising the sale, would poaching be put down."

The chief objection raised at first was that the prohibition of the sale of game "induced gentlemen of property to live on their estates," but, on the second reading, the Bill was strongly opposed. Lord Deerhurst said that "if the Bill were passed, in two years there would be no game in the country." In the end, Wood withdrew his bill—not so much because of the opposition, but from the feeling expressed that a fuller consideration should be given to the whole subject of the "abomination of the Game Laws," as one speaker called them. "Who are the protectors of game?" asked Curwen—"a few individuals. Who are their enemies?—almost the whole collective body of the people. To a breach of such laws, no moral turpitude can possibly be attached; whilst odium and ill-will attends the rigorous protection of game." "There was something peculiar," said Wilberforce, "in the feeling relative to these laws. It was not considered any crime to purchase this sort of luxury for a gentleman's table, for which the poor wretch who purloined it would suffer the loss of his liberty, and perhaps be ultimately led to the gallows."[3]

withdrawn.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 837; xxxvi. 126. Append. cxi.

[2] This was amply confirmed by the evidence before the Commission of 1823.

[3] *Hansard*, xxxv. 876; xxxvi. 921. "It may be inferred that, as the law stands at present, no one can legally sell game, and that no one, unless he has £100 in an estate of inheritance, or £150 a year in estates for life, or leasehold for terms of not less than 99 years, can either kill game, or keep or use any dog or engine for the purpose of its destruction" (*Scots Magazine*, 178). "The law is so excessively ridiculous in the case of small landed

Attention was again drawn to the state of the Bankruptcy Laws. The system, said Romilly, was radically defective; the grossest frauds were practised, and many persons entirely subsisted by the fraudulent management of bankrupt concerns—by the superintendence and subornation of perjury. A Bill was brought in—of which Romilly, however, did not approve—but was not persevered with. In the end, a Select Committee was appointed to deal with the whole subject.[1] Bankruptcy Laws.

After Brougham had once raised the question of the Usury Laws, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer had intimated that he did not think lightly of the proposal, the matter was not allowed to rest. In May of the past year, Sergeant Onslow had moved to bring in a Bill for the absolute and unqualified repeal of the laws which regulated the rate of interest on private loans of money. He had withdrawn it for the moment, but now, on 1st May, he introduced his motion again. He pointed out forcibly that these laws had originated in a wish to open, not to limit, the rate of interest—before they were enacted it was forbidden to take any interest at all, and it was to protect those who took interest that the "usury" laws were passed. Again, it could not be argued now, as it was before, that the state of the funds made it improper to agitate the subject; stocks had risen 10 per cent. It was perfectly clear that, the more restraints were put on money transactions, the higher always was the amount of interest actually paid on loans. In Edward VI.'s reign, when the 10 per cent. usury law of Henry VIII. was repealed, and the taking of any interest was made unlawful again, the rate of interest commonly was 14 per cent. Since the 12th of Anne, the legal rate had been 5 per cent., and it was worth noting that the loans contracted for by the public were never in reality affected by the legal rate. The common mode of late years had been to grant annuities for a term of 99 years, determinable on three lives at 15 per cent. or on four lives at 14 per cent. Every part of the kingdom suffered from these laws, but particularly Ireland, which, with a fertile soil, a great population, and a favourable climate, was deficient only in capital. Usury Laws.

proprietors, that, on a property of less than £100 per annum, *no human being* has the right of shooting. It is not confined but annihilated. The Lord of the Manor may be warned off by the proprietor; and the proprietor may be informed against by anybody who sees him sporting" (Sydney Smith, in *Edinburgh Review*, 1819).

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 244, 1274; xxxvi. 819, 932.

Onslow's bill well received

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that, in the general principles of the measure proposed, he perfectly coincided. He doubted whether the public mind was prepared for the measure, but he acknowledged that the state of public credit was such that the question might be agitated without inconvenience, and he had hopes that it might lead to a successful issue. The Bill accordingly was brought in.[1]

—supported by Parnell.

On 30th June, we find the report being further considered. Sir Henry Parnell said that, instead of asking what were the reasons on which such a Bill was founded, the proper question rather was what were the reasons on which the continuance of these laws could be justified. They depended, in fact, on doctrines concerning the nature and use of money which belonged to the darkest periods of the most ignorant times, and particularly to those ages when the principles of commercial policy were wholly unknown, and they were at variance with all educated authority. "If the taking of interest for money is viewed in its proper light, it consists in a bargain between the lender and the borrower which is exactly of the same nature as all other bargains. The borrower finds it to his advantage to take the lender's money and to give a fair remuneration for it, and the lender is induced to confer this advantage if the remuneration is sufficient to repay him for the value of his money and the risk he incurs in placing it out of his power. It is this circumstance, that he must secure not only a sum which shall be a sufficient one for the use of his money, but also for the risk he runs, which renders it quite impossible to fix a rate of interest which shall suit all cases, for both the actual value of money and the risk incurred vary according to so many circumstances, that no fixed rate can ever be devised which shall not operate to the injury of either the borrower or the lender."

But, in the end, Onslow agreed that more time should be given for the proper consideration of the subject, and the report was postponed for the session.[2]

Committee on Education of the Poor.

On Brougham's motion, the Committee to enquire into the education of the lower orders in the Metropolis, which had reported in 1816, was renewed,[3] and, in July, he brought up the Report of the Committee on the Education of the Poor. It contained, he said, a description of many enormous abuses

[1] *Hansard*, xxxiv. 723 ; xxxvi. 100. [2] *Ibid.* xxxvi. 1266.
[3] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 822.

attending the management and application of charitable funds. The Committee, however, on account of the limitation of their powers, did not propose any immediate legislative measure, and asked that the subject should be entrusted to a parliamentary commission which might visit different parts of the country.[1]

Towards the reform of the Poor Laws, several steps were taken. Sir Egerton Brydges brought in a Bill to alter the law of Settlement, which, however, does not seem to have got beyond a first reading.[2] Peel moved for a committee to enquire into the expediency of making further provision for the relief of the lunatic poor in Ireland. With the exception of one house in Dublin, one in Cork, and one in Tipperary, he said there was not provision for more than a hundred such persons in Ireland. The committee was granted *nem. con.*[3] On the presentation of petitions, asserting *inter alia* that, in certain places, 19/- and 21/- in the pound were not uncommon in poor rates, Castlereagh said that the House ought always to keep in view that a great proportion of the wages of the labour of the country was paid out of the poor rates. The farmers had fallen into the system, and this in great measure accounted for the rapid rise from one and a half to upwards of seven millions. Where rates were 19/- Poor Laws:

[1] *Ibid.* 1303. It is interesting to find the following in the *Annual Register* of the year: "An ordinance has been passed in the city of Savannah by which anyone who teaches a person of colour, either a slave or free, to read or write, or causes such person to be so taught, is subjected to a fine of 30 dollars for each offence; and every person of colour who shall keep a school to teach reading or writing is subject to a fine of 30 dollars, or to be imprisoned, and whipped 39 lashes." (Chron. 122.)

[2] *Hansard*, xxxv. 759. The question of Settlement was one of real difficulty as well as of real hardship. In 1815, Brydges had introduced a Bill to prevent the removal of chargeable paupers till a final adjudication of their respective settlements. As the law stood, he said, a pauper might be dragged or carted from the one end of the kingdom to the other, and a little more enquiry might show the order to be founded on erroneous or imperfect facts or mistaken law, and the pauper might be dragged back as a witness to the county from whence he came, and, if the order were confirmed, be sent back again. The Bill passed a second reading in the Commons on June 2nd, but we hear no more of it (*Hansard*, xxxi. 221, 581). Crabb Robinson tells of a case he witnessed at Clerkenwell Sessions. "Was the pauper settled in Parish A or B? The house he occupied was in both parishes, and models both of the house and the bed in which the pauper slept were laid before the court that it might ascertain how much of his body lay in each parish. The court held the pauper to be settled where his head (being the nobler part) lay, though one of his legs at least, and great part of his body, lay out of that parish" (*Diary*, i. 506).

[3] *Hansard*, xxxv. 881.

or 20/- in the pound, he was convinced that 15/- of that would be found to be wages paid in this form.[1]

But the most notable step was the appointment of two committees on the whole subject.

—a Committee appointed by the Commons

On 21st February, Curwen asked for a Committee on the Poor Laws. He held that there was not a statute relating to the subject which would not require to be revised and amended, if the country were to avoid a crisis which could not be far distant, namely the failure of voluntary contributions. The evil had enormously increased since we became a manufacturing country. In 1776, the amount of the poor rates was £1,530,800. Now it was, he believed, eight and a half millions. If the system continued, it would not stop short of swallowing up the whole revenue and industry of the country, besides exterminating every vestige of respectability and happiness among the poor. His own plan, as expounded already, was to impose a rate of 2½ per cent. on the wages of every one earning above 12/- a week.[2] But all he asked for now was enquiry. Among many sympathetic expressions from the Government, the Committee was appointed, with Sturges Bourne as chairman.[3]

—and another by the Lords.

Not to be outdone,—"the other House," said Lord Liverpool, "had no advantages for such an investigation which their Lordships did not possess in fully as great a degree"—the House of Lords appointed a similar Committee on 9th May,[4] and this reported, with somewhat suspicious haste, on 10th July. It could

[1] *Hansard*, 907. Lord Cochrane on this took occasion to say that the only remedy for the excessive taxes which were reducing the people to want was "a fair and equitable reduction of the interest of the funded debt."

[2] Curwen was so far a convert to Robert Owen's opinions that, in a communication to the press, he proposed that, in every county, one or two large manufactories, "of that sort which will give the largest employment to human labour," should be erected at the public expense, to be surrounded by buildings fit to accommodate from 2000 to 4000 persons besides children. Every person, male or female, young or old, should be entitled to demand work in those establishments, and to be immediately accommodated with a lodging. The rate of labour should be fixed by statute at a sum which would be merely sufficient to procure the necessaries of life. "If that of the men were fixed at 1½d. per hour, of the women at 1¼d., of boys and girls below a certain age at 1d., each, by labouring a sufficient number of hours, might earn a support." Each manufactory should be let for a term of from three to five years; "the directors should be the whole justices of peace of the county;" and "the lessee should be the sole proprietor in everything else, paying and superintending his labourers, furnishing the materials, and receiving the profits of the manufactures." The total expense would not be more than £10,000,000 (*Blackwood's Magazine*, June, 241).

[3] *Hansard*, xxxv. 506.

[4] *Ibid.* xxxvi. 297.

hardly have been expected, said Lord Hardwicke, that the Committee in this short period could have fully examined the subject, or have collected so much information as to enable it to give any decided opinion as to what ought to be done; but Liverpool bore witness that "no examination had ever been conducted with more candour and liberality, or with a stronger disposition to attend to every view in which the subject could be represented." But he recommended their lordships, during the recess, to collect in their several counties all the information that could be produced on the subject.[1]

Report of Sturges Bourne's Committee

More exhaustive was the Report of the House of Commons Committee, dated 4th July. The labours of the Committee, said Castlereagh, had been extraordinary: they had met three days in every week, and generally their meetings were from day to day; they had carried their investigations into every branch connected with the subject of their enquiry. The Report began by saying that, while, in 1776, the whole sum expended on the poor was about £1½ millions, in 1815, it was over £5 millions. Both the number of paupers and the amount of money levied by assessment were progressively increasing, while the situation of the poor did not seem to have been in a corresponding degree improved; and they were of opinion that, while the existing poor laws and the system under which they were administered remained unchanged, there did not exist any power of arresting the progress of this increase till it should no longer be found possible to augment the sums raised by assessment. The Report of 1817 certainly suffers by the inevitable comparison with the more famous one of 1834, but, in view of the "impending calamity" of which it speaks, its conclusions seem far from adequate. Among other things, the Committee recommended the rating of owners instead of tenants in large towns; approved of industrial schools; considered that great benefit on the whole had been derived from work-houses; spoke favourably of the establishment of parochial farms; recommended paid overseers and select vestries; approved of parochial benefit societies and savings banks; and advised three years' residence in a parish without becoming chargeable as a basis of settlement.

—rather inadequate,

The Report, says Nicholls, "brought together much valuable information, impressed sound principles upon parish officers and the public generally, and laid a foundation on which our legislators

and not directly productive of any reform.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 1365.

might hereafter proceed to build with greater certainty and effect. The labours of the Committee were continued in the two following sessions; and the debates which took place on the introduction of bills prepared by it, for amending the law with respect to vestries, settlement, misapplication of the rates, and other matters, served to keep the attention both of Parliament and the nation alive to the subject. The only Acts, however, which can be said to have directly emanated from this Report and from the other labours of the Committee, are the two Vestry Acts, and a short Act making a trifling alteration in the law of Settlement. The other measures suggested by the Committee were found to be attended with so many difficulties, and to be open to so many objections, that no attempt to introduce them was ever made."[1]

Saving Banks Bill

The Saving Banks Bill, which had been very fully discussed during the previous session but had failed to pass, was brought in again by Rose. The only objection urged against it in the early stages was that there was no need for regulation, and no complaint of any want of bye-laws, in the savings banks already established. When the Bill arrived at the committee stage, there was very considerable difference of opinion over the clause allowing persons who had not more than £30 in such banks to receive parish relief. It was objected to on the ground that it was likely to destroy the spirit of independence if parish relief was extended to and generally accepted by those who had property of their own, and that it was a dangerous precedent to give relief to persons not absolutely incapable of supporting themselves. The clause, however, was agreed to and the Bill sent up to the Lords. There, however, objection was taken to its imperfect state, and, on the recommendation of the Lord Chancellor, it was postponed.[2]

—postponed.

Climbing boys.

It may have been noticed that, in 1804, a society—probably prompted by a chapter in Pratt's *Gleanings in England*, giving some account of the unhappy lot of the "climbing boys"—was founded, for "superseding the necessity of employing children in the destructive and dangerous business of sweeping chimneys."

[1] *History of the Poor Law*, ii. 190. The Report is given in full in the *Annual Register*, 263.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxv. 222, 348; xxxvi. 680, 833, 1278. A Bill of some sort, however, appears among the Acts passed, under the title: "to encourage the establishment of banks for savings in England," with a similar Act for Ireland. *Ibid.* xxxvi. Append. cxii., cxiv.

From time to time we hear of children getting stuck in chimneys which were certainly never built for convenience of sweeping. But it took a long time for the public conscience to awaken on the matter. In June of this year, however, a petition was presented from Sheffield asking the House to take into consideration the propriety of adopting some means of abolishing the sweeping of chimneys by boys, and the matter was unanimously and warmly remitted to a Select Committee.[1] The Report was presented in June and disclosed a ghastly state of matters. The Act passed a few years before had enacted that no children under the age of eight should be employed as climbing boys, but it was "wholly unattended to and violated with impunity." Many were employed at not more than four and six years—as might be expected when one learns that few of the chimneys in the Metropolis were more than seven inches in diameter. In some distant parts of the country, even girls were employed. The children were "compelled to carry bags of soot and cloths the weight of which sometimes exceeded twenty or thirty pounds not including the soot"—their knees and ankle-joints "became deformed, in the first instance, from the position they were obliged to put them in in order to support themselves, not only while climbing up the chimney, but more particularly whilst coming down, when they rested solely on the lower extremities, the arms being used for scraping and sweeping down the soot." They were also liable to a formidable complaint called "chimney sweepers' cancer."

Select Committee's Report.

The number of master chimney sweepers within the bills of mortality was estimated at 200, with about 500 apprentices among them; not above 20 of these masters were reputable tradesmen in easy circumstances, and about 90 of them were recently journeymen, who picked up boys as they could, lodged them with themselves in huts, sheds, and cellars in the outskirts of the town, and occasionally wandered into the villages around. The youngest and most delicate children were in the service of the worst class of masters, and employed exclusively to clean flues which, from their peculiar construction, could not be swept without great personal hazard. All this was the more unnecessary that machines had already been introduced, by which three-fourths of the chimneys might be swept, and legislation might be counted on to bring out machines that could sweep every class of chimney. Finally, the committee

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 889.

recommended that the use of climbing boys should be prohibited altogether.[1]

Bennet's Bill.

The Chimney Sweepers' Regulation Bill, which Bennet now brought in, left untouched the existing relations between masters and apprentices, but proposed that in future no person should be procured for the purpose till he had completed his fourteenth year. Wilberforce, in warmly seconding it, read a letter from a clergyman of a considerable county town, which stated that, within three months, two children had stuck fast in chimneys, and perished in that shocking state from suffocation.[2] Probably owing to the lateness of the session, no more was heard of the Bill for the present.

Another Gas Light Company.

In May, we hear of the third reading of a Bill for the incorporation of another Gas Light Company in London. Lauderdale still opposed the encouragement of such companies, holding that the true line of policy was to allow private individuals or companies to manage these concerns, rather than monopolies which, "by holding out the prospect of great profits to their subscribers, would entangle widows and persons unacquainted with business," and prevent private enterprise which could do the work better. On the other hand, it was contended that large provisions of this sort were better conducted by a competition between incorporations. It appears that it was now compulsory that £100,000 should be subscribed before a company such as this began operations. The Bill was passed.[3] In spring, a Gas Light Company with a capital of £20,000 in £25 shares was established in Edinburgh, the Lord Provost being Governor, and in November the pipes were being laid. In Glasgow an "immense apparatus" was being prepared to light all the streets.[4]

Metropolitan paving

The state of the London streets had long caused much complaint. For some years, there had been a Board for paving and lighting, but quarrels had arisen among parishes as to their shares in the contribution, and the funds, it was suspected, were being diverted to general parochial purposes. In 1815, Taylor,[5] who had

[1] The Report is given in full in the *European Magazine*, July, p. 21, and in the *Annual Register*, State Papers, 302.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 1155. [3] *Ibid.* xxxvi. 559.

[4] *Edinburgh Magazine*, November 1818, 437.

[5] Michael Angelo Taylor; born 1747, son of Sir Robert Taylor; called to the bar, 1774; member for Poole, 1784; the subject of merciless caricature on account of his smallness of stature and the phrase he once used of himself, "young—but a chicken in the profession." In 1810, his house in Whitehall was a "constant and favourite rendezvous of the Whig party."

obtained returns of the assessments and disbursements of the parishes, brought in a Bill "for the better paving of the streets of the Metropolis." The streets, he asserted, were both disgraceful and dangerous, and compared most unfavourably with those of Paris and Edinburgh. When the pavements were opened up by public companies, as they continually were, they were sometimes not laid down again for months. The Bill would propose a Board of Commissioners, acting gratuitously, dividing London into four or five districts, with one inspector to each. It would contain a compulsory clause on the water companies, restraining them from taking up any pavement at their own pleasure, or from laying down any other than iron pipes in future, as well as limiting their right of breaking up a street to a particular period of the year. The same provisions would be extended to gas light companies as to the commissioners of sewers, and they would all be interdicted from laying down wooden pipes. The Bill reached a second reading, but was subsequently discharged at Taylor's request, on a pledge from representatives of the various parishes that they would themselves arrange such a Bill as would meet the wishes of the public.[1]

—Michael Angelo Taylor's Act.

In 1816, Taylor, in consequence of divisions of opinion among the several parishes, asked for a Select Committee to consider the whole matter,[2] and ultimately, in 1817, carried the Act still known as the Michael Angelo Taylor Metropolitan Paving Act.

Boiler explosions.

Attention was now being drawn to the dangers attending the constant introduction of machinery. The immediate occasion was an explosion, causing the loss of eleven lives, on board a steam packet at Norwich, due, it was said, to the faulty construction of the boiler. A committee was appointed to consider of the means of preventing such explosions, and a Bill brought in, read a second time, reported, and then dropped, for the better regulation of steam vessels. The debate is interesting as containing the statement that, at the moment, there was a great number of steam vessels on the various rivers of the country, and that several others were building.[3]

[1] *Hansard*, xxix. 920; xxx. 840. [2] *Ibid.* xxxiii. 17.

[3] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 271, 1302. The committee submitted several resolutions, containing provisions that every boiler should be composed of wrought iron or copper and should be certified by an expert, that it should have two sufficient safety valves, and that a penalty should be inflicted for putting additional weight on such valves.

Copyright: —its history

In June, Sir Egerton Brydges moved for leave to bring in a Bill to amend the Copyright Act. The history of copyright in England, he said, was this. The Stationers' Company, incorporated by charter in 1556, had, from that date, kept books in which the publishers entered the names of their publications, for the mutual convenience of establishing evidence of title. The first legislative protection was a parliamentary ordinance of 1643, by which all persons were strictly forbidden under certain penalties to interfere with the copyrights of others when an entry had been made of the title of the prior claimant in the stationers' book. For this no price or condition was required, and no copies were delivered to any body. After the Restoration, in 1662, the Licensing Act was passed, with a view to suppress seditious writings, and, indeed, to destroy the liberty of the press. That act prohibited any publication without a license being first obtained from the ministers of state or from the Vice-Chancellors of Oxford and Cambridge, and, under this Act, three copies of every publication had to be delivered, one to the king's library, one to Oxford, and one to Cambridge. This Act was suffered to expire about 1692, and, from that time, publishers had no legal penalties to protect them from piracies. Then came the celebrated Copyright Act of 1710. Those who thereafter chose to obtain its protection had to enter the title of their works in the stationers' book, and deliver nine copies to be distributed to the King's library, Oxford and Cambridge Universities, Sion College, the four Scottish Universities, and the Advocates' Library. After the Union, two more were added for Ireland.

The security afforded by the Act, however, being very imperfect, publishers gradually withdrew from entering their books at Stationers' Hall. The Universities, disappointed. made several efforts to recover their supply of books, and finally, in 1811, the University of Cambridge secured a construction of the Act which required a delivery of the eleven copies whether the entry was made or not, and this was confirmed by the court of King's-bench. The booksellers appealed to the legislature, but the amended Act of 1814 was a "highly aggravated grievance."

—the eleven copies.

Romilly contended that this was a most unjustifiable tax upon literature. It was no doubt desirable that public institutions should be furnished with books, but it ought to be done at the public expense, not at that of the poor author. Ponsonby could not see why public bodies should not purchase their books just as

individuals did. Wynn said that, with the exception of two of the universities which refused novels and music, the other learned bodies took copies of every description of work that was published. It would be much better to adjudge the universities a pecuniary compensation.

The motion, however, was lost by the narrow majority of one: 57 voting for and 58 against.[1]

The movement towards further Protection did not make much advance during this session.

Petition of wool growers.

On 1st May, was presented a petition from the Wool Growers of Brighthelmston, who considered themselves aggrieved that there should be so little restriction on the importation of foreign wool while the prohibition of the export of wool gave the manufacturers a monopoly of all wool of British growth. Presumably as consequence, the price of wool had fallen from 3/- to 1/6 per lb. Western, in presenting a similar petition from Essex, spoke of the wool growers as "persecuted on the one hand by the laws which inflicted a severe penalty on any attempt on their part to find a foreign market for their wool, and, on the other, by the permission given to the wool of all Europe to be brought to this country." The object of the wool growers, said another, was to get either a tax on importation or a bounty on exportation; but they would prefer the former.[2]

Petition against export of cotton yarn.

On 7th May, there was a curious petition from the cotton piece-goods merchants of London, stating that their "dreadful state of depression" was due to the unrestricted exportation of cotton yarn—giving an encouragement to foreign manufacturers at the expense of our own.[3] Several petitions, indeed, seem to have been presented asking that the exportation of cotton yarn should be prohibited; one was sent to the Prince Regent, while another, signed by 200,000 names, was kept back by Brougham's persuasion, as he "hoped delay and discussion might dispel their prejudices."[4]

Linen Transit Duties.

On 22nd May, Finlay, the member for Glasgow, drew attention to the Linen Transit Duties, with a view to moving their repeal. Foreign linens, if taken out of warehouse for home consumption, paid 7½ per cent., and, if entered for exportation, another 15 per cent., in all 22½ per cent.—a provision "wisely imposed by parliament when this country enjoyed the monopoly of the trade

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 1063.
[2] *Ibid.* 94.
[3] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 235.
[4] *Ibid.* 1384.

of the world." But, as things were, said Brougham, "a more absurd regulation did not exist in the statute book of any country."

The subject was deferred till the following session, but from the debate one gathers some interesting facts and figures about the trade: (1) that Irish linens were not in favour in South America, being regarded as inferior; (2) that by an "innocent deception" —a "pious fraud"—the Irish linen manufacturers imitated German trade marks;[1] (3) that the Irish linen trade was growing —from an export of 35 million yards in 1812 to 40 millions in 1815; (4) that, of the Irish exports of the previous year, amounting in value to £6,400,000, one-half consisted of linen manufactures.[2]

Acts passed. Although not mentioned in any way in the parliamentary debates, several noteworthy Acts appear in the list of those passed during the session, viz.:[3]

c. 15. To continue, until the 5th of July, 1818, an Act of the 46th of his present majesty, for granting an additional bounty on the exportation of the silk manufactures of Great Britain.

c. 46. To prevent the issuing and circulating of pieces of copper or other metal, usually called tokens.

c. 85. To permit, until the 14th of November, 1817, the importation of corn and other articles in any ship and from any country; to permit such articles which may have been warehoused for exportation only to be entered for home consumption; and for indemnifying all persons who have given directions for the importation of corn and other articles, or the taking the same out of warehouse free of duty, and who have acted in obedience thereto.

c. 115. To extend the provisions of an Act of the 12th of George I., and an Act of the 22nd George II., against payment of labourers in goods or by truck, and to secure their payment in the lawful money of this realm, to labourers employed in the manufacture of articles made of steel, or of steel and iron com-

[1] The commercial morality of our ancestors is not conspicuous in this debate. Of the two speakers who mentioned the matter, the one seemed to think that the fact of the South Americans having a great prejudice against Irish linen justified the lying trade mark, and the other (Robinson) thought it a great misfortune if any fraud were necessary, but, if it were so, he was sure it "would be carried on much better" if the Irish pieces were mixed with the foreign!

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 826, 1382. [3] *Ibid*, xxxvi. Append. cv.

bined, and of plated articles, or of other articles of cutlery. And a similar Act (122) to extend these provisions to labourers, employed in the collieries and in the working and getting of coal (to apply to Scotland and Ireland as well).

c. 126. To repeal an Act, passed in the 54th of his present Majesty, for the punishment of persons destroying stocking or lace frames, and articles in such frames; and to make until the 1st of August, 1820, other provisions in lieu thereof.

Steam tugs

In steam navigation, two new developments took place. In February, in a letter to the *Scots Magazine*, Henry Bell put forward the idea of steam tugs, his immediate purpose being the towing of barges from the mouths of the Forth and Clyde Canal to Leith and Greenock; and, in August, there is mention of a "fine new steamboat called the *Tug*" built at Glasgow for this purpose, and arriving at Leith after a successful passage through the Pentland Firth.[1] The other is the appearance of a steam frigate for the American navy, built by Fulton just before his death. It carried thirty-five 32 pounders between decks, and was furnished besides with concealed scythes and boiling water appliances to be used against boarders—"never were more means of destruction united." On 4th July, 1815, before the guns were put in, she had made a run to the ocean eastward of Sandy Hook and back, a distance of 53 miles, in 8 hours, 20 minutes, and, when fully armed, appears to have fulfilled all that was expected of her. The coming of peace before this "noble project" could be utilised against the British, is mentioned a little regretfully by the United States Commissioners.[2]

Fulton's steam frigate.

Death of Horner,

The obituary of the year included two well-known names—Horner who died at the early age of 38, and Ponsonby in his 63rd year.

"In these times," said Lord Morpeth, of Horner, "when the structure of the constitution is undergoing close and rigorous investigation, on the part of some with the view of exposing its defects, on the part of others, with that of displaying its beauties and perfections, we may derive some consolation from the reflection that a man, not possessed of the advantages of hereditary rank or of very ample fortune, was enabled, by the exertion of his own honourable industry—by the successful cultivation of his native talents—to vindicate to himself a station

[1] *Scots Magazine*, 106; *Edinburgh Magazine*, 86.

[2] *Scots Magazine*, April, 282; *Blackwood*, April, 30.

and eminence which the proudest and wealthiest might envy and admire." Members vied with each other in doing homage to the private and public virtues of a man who had been "one of the greatest ornaments of his country."[1] Romilly entered in his Diary the following notes of his speech on this occasion: "I noticed particularly his independence of mind, and observed that, while he was taking a most conspicuous part in our debates, and was commanding the admiration of the House, he never relaxed in the most laborious application to his profession (though without any success in it at all proportional to his merit), because he thought it essential to maintaining his independence that he should look to his profession alone for the honours and emoluments to which his talents gave him so just a claim. I spoke, too, of his eloquence as being not merely calculated to excite admiration and vulgar applause, but as ennobled and sanctified by the great and virtuous ends to which it was uniformly directed, the protection of the oppressed, the enfranchisement of the enslaved, the advancing the best interests of the country, and enlarging the sphere of human happiness. Considering his knowledge, his talents, his excellent judgment, his patriotic intentions, and the prospect of years which he had before him, I consider his death as a great public calamity."[2] "Never," said Mackintosh, "was so much honour paid in any age or nation to intrinsic claims alone. A Howard introduced, and an English House of Commons adopted, the proposition of thus honouring a man of thirty-eight, the son of a shopkeeper, who never filled an office or had the power of obliging a living creature, and whose grand title to this distinction was the belief of his virtue."[3]

—of Ponsonby,

Of Ponsonby, Castlereagh, lamenting the decease of a "high-minded, candid, liberal political opponent," said that "no man in the House or out of it, entertained more respect for him while living or more deeply regretted his loss when dead."[4] "He was a very honest man," writes Romilly in his Diary, "had many excellent qualities, and possessed very considerable talents; but he was by no means fit for the situation which he has for ten years occupied—that of leader of the party of Opposition."[5]

—of the Princess Charlotte.

In addition to these, death carried off the Princess Charlotte, the only daughter of the Regent, who had been married to Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg only a year before. Alike for her private

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 841. [2] iii. 281. [3] *Memoir*, ii. 340.
[4] *Hansard*, xxxvi. 1373. [5] iii. 307.

virtues, and for the blow to any hope of a direct succession to the throne, the mourning of the nation was universal and sincere.

In economic science, the appearance of Ricardo's *Principles of Political Economy and Taxation* marked a new stage in the development of theory. In general literature, Byron published *Manfred*, and Moore, *Lalla Rookh*. In April, appeared the first number of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*—a "Repository of whatever may be supposed to be most interesting to general readers." It is some testimony to its immediate success that the *Scots Magazine*, after an existence of seventy-eight years, changed its name in August to *The Edinburgh Magazine*, and appeared in a form closely imitating that of its new rival—without, it must be said, the note of distinction which marked *Blackwood* from the first. Literature.

MISCELLANEA.

The *Annual Register* records an action brought by the Rector of Sutton against the Lord of the Manor in which his parish was situated, for absenting himself from divine worship for nineteen months. The plaintiff was very contemptuously handled by the judge, and the jury, without hesitation, found the defendant Not Guilty.[1]

[1] Chron. 192.

# CHAPTER XXVIII

## 1817. ATTEMPTS TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DISTRESS

THE most interesting feature, perhaps, in the early debates of the session was the attempts made to explain a distress which was so severe and so unexpected. It may be as well to devote a separate chapter to them.

The official view.

What might be called the official view, dwelt on by the Government and its supporters, was that the distress was due to the transition from twenty-three years of war to the ordinary conditions of peace, with all the disturbance, both to demand and supply, that this necessarily involved—particularly the reduction of the national expenditure in one year from £120,000,000 to £70,000,000, the withdrawal of the one great customer, the Government, from the market, and the return of some 300,000 soldiers and sailors to be reabsorbed into the industry of the country. Consequently, they held the distress to be temporary.

The Opposition's view.

The Opposition, as insistently, put forward the statement that the real causes were the pressure of the enormous debt and the intolerable taxation, aggravated by the size of the establishments still retained and by the waste in all departments. The distress, in their view, would continue till these causes were removed. Lord Holland thus succinctly summed up: "We had a revenue almost beyond the endurance of a loyal people; an expenditure beyond that revenue; and we acted on a system of foreign policy —and also of domestic policy, if Ireland were included—beyond that expenditure; and no real and permanent good would be done till our revenue should be reduced in a degree commensurate with the distressed situation of the country, and our expenditure should be reduced below our revenue."[1] Not what

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 424.

"sound policy" requires, said Grey, but what necessity will admit; not what the Government would have, but what the country can afford.

Charles Grant blames the dislocation of agriculture;

More ingenious was the explanation of Charles Grant, Jr., the member for Inverness-shire. The evil was not, he said, in the transition of the country from war to peace, but in the transition from a state in which it had been compelled to rely on its own resources for food to a state in which foreign supplies could be obtained. An impulse had been given by the circumstances of the war to our agriculture, and the effect of this on the home market had been to give the middle and lower classes a greater power of demand for the articles made by our manufacturers. "In the prosperity of our agriculture was found the prosperity of the whole kingdom." The return of peace shook this internal system of demand and supply to its foundations. Happily the Corn Bill did much to restore it, and, from its gradual operation, they might expect an improvement in all our manufactures and in every branch of our trade.[1]

Wellesley, the inordinate expenditure.

Wellesley made a very strong speech on the necessity for making the most rigid reductions in every possible expense, and charged the Government with being silent on "the true cause of the national distress." But, after much pretension of exposing this true cause—after saying that the transition to peace and other "pretended causes" were mere proximate symptoms, not causes, that the "vicious paper currency" was only contributory, it appeared that "the great and original cause of all our evils" was the expenditure—the inordinate expenditure—of the country. This must be put an end to—the scandalous profusion could not go on: the army must be reduced, the civil list—all the establishments of every kind. The peace, he said, had not brought with it the usual benefits of peace, for we were not delivered from that unconstitutional evil, a standing army.[2]

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 30.

[2] A passage in this speech may be quoted as, perhaps, presenting the general feeling of at least one side of the House. "It was the peculiar character of our constitution that it contained within it the three great principles of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, blended together so intimately, yet perhaps so inexplicably except as to the effect, that the crown had no strength except in connection with the aristocracy and the people, the aristocracy was nothing except connected with the crown and the people, and the people were powerless if independent of the crown and the aristocracy" (*Hansard*, xxxv. 74).

Growing recognition of the solidarity of various interests.

The gradual advance in economic views is seen in the growing recognition of the solidarity of interests throughout the country—the dependence and reaction of each on the others. It might be matter of dispute in which compartment of industry the distress took its rise, but it was amply recognised that the compartments were no longer distinct and separate. Many members accordingly, laying the emphasis on the distress in agriculture, pointed out how this affected all the other classes. A poor rate of £8 millions, and a fall in prices of grain to one-half, could not be borne by the landed interests without diminishing their consumption of manufactures, including the taxed commodities on which the revenue depended, and causing depression and want of employment everywhere. The decline in home consumption, again, drove manufacturers to send their goods abroad for sale; when, owing to over-supply of these markets or owing to the poverty of the continent, they got low prices, or found their capital locked up in unsold goods, they had no purchasing power, and they curtailed their demand for labour.[1]

Canning's suggestive speech

Among the most suggestive speeches was that of Canning.[2] He considered that the distress was not the result of positive difficulties alone, but arose in some degree from lassitude and prostration, and from the cessation of that excitement by which the nation had been continually quickened and agitated during the last twenty years. Many of the causes, he held, were far beyond the reach of immediate remedy because they were beyond the limits of human control. He twitted Brougham—who had just ascribed everything to the taxation—as having, a few months ago, enumerated thirteen distinct causes, of which taxation was only one. As for "retrenchment," he reminded the House that it was not an unmixed good: "Such a process necessarily throws upon the world many meritorious and helpless individuals, who are added to the numbers of the distressed and augment the mass of discontent throughout the country. . . . I state this not as an argument against reduction, but as an excuse for the frank avowal that, in cutting deep, it is impossible not to feel

[1] Bankes took the exceptional view of ascribing much of the disastrous change to "the seasons"—for which, at least, no blame could be attached to ministers. A petition from the Journeymen Tailors of London said that "the facility with which the nobility and gentry were enabled to reside in foreign countries, in order to avoid excessive taxation at home, was one of the many causes of the great privation."

[2] *Hansard*, xxxv. 120.

severely." But, he concluded, "the necessities of the time admit of no alternative; reduction must take place."

Brougham's contribution to the opening discussion, if not quite convincing, showed his usual impatience of the commonplace and determination to think out matters for himself.[1] He disposed of the statement that the country was no worse off now than it was after the American War, by pointing out that, instead of taking off £17 millions of taxes as the present Government had been compelled to do, Pitt then imposed £2 millions of new taxation. Could the Government now raise, not millions or thousands, but one silver penny by way of new impost? "The people had paid to their utmost farthing and must be taxed no more." (Cries of Hear, hear, hear.)

Brougham —on the limits of taxation

He charged the Government with having made no arrangements with foreign powers for the promotion of commercial interests. Never was our influence abroad so great—never had we possessed higher authority. We had exerted that authority for many other purposes questionable enough, "but an arrangement substantially to benefit the country, to revive its sinking commerce, to cherish its drooping manufactures, was disregarded as beneath the dignity of a great nation." Had the markets of the continent been opened by the peace? On the contrary, were they not more closely shut against us than ever? The continental system, which Buonaparté was unable to complete, had been carried into effect by the Bourbons and our other allies—with this important addition that their measures had the full consent of the people, which Buonaparté's never had.

—the want of commercial treaties

As for "retrenchment," Ministers denied that any considerable portion of our enormous establishment could be spared. True, if we went on as we had been doing. "The increase of our colonial empire, far from being the justification of a standing army that exhausts our resources while it endangers our liberties, is an aggravation of the charge, because it is an increase of the very same evils which that standing army produces." Every new settlement that was acquired, he continued, occasioned additional expense and bestowed fresh patronage, while, in a commercial point of view, the accession only injured the interests of our former planters. Yet on we went, every successive war occupying a boundless extent of sugar islands and barren rocks of high military importance. Not content with Gibraltar, we must have

—the extension of empire.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 112.

Malta—must have Ceylon; not content with Trinidad and Tobago, we took on ourselves the permanent burden of most of the Dutch colonies—all to benefit a few favoured individuals in Liverpool. "This accession of territory was an evil in itself, even if it were not the parent of a still worse mischief, the increase of the army. It was, however, for Parliament at length to teach the government that, if the new settlements could not support their own expenses, and provide for their own defence, they must be abandoned. Nor would it be difficult to find those who might be thankful to take them, and, in return, to grant our commerce such advantages as might far more than compensate for a much greater surrender."

It was the first time, perhaps, for many a year that any authoritative voice had been raised in Parliament for calling a halt in the addition of new lands to the British crown, and the loud and repeated cheers from all parts of the House, with which the speech was greeted, show that the sentiment went home to many.

Brougham's great speech.

On 13th March, Brougham made a great speech on the State of the Trade and Manufactures of the Country.[1]

A period, he began, had now arrived when, the war being closed, and prodigious changes having taken place all over the world, it became necessary to enter upon a careful but fearless revision of our whole commercial system.

Every one was aware that there existed in the country a great and universal distress. This would require no proof, were it not that the extent and the peculiar shapes it had assumed must be examined before we could probe its sources or find a remedy.

Comparison with earlier depressions.

He might call attention to the innumerable petitions, to the custom-house returns, to the falling off in the shipping by nearly 5,000 vessels. There never was any example of distress like this

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 1004. I have given this speech in considerable detail, and, as usual, so far as possible in *ipsissima verba*, for the reasons that it was the first quite decided speech of the century against the prohibitive system; that it gives many facts and figures not otherwise ascertainable about the industrial condition of the country, presumably gathered from those who had some right to be called authorities; and because of the real greatness of the speech—of which it is impossible to get any just idea in an abstract—from the economic and political point of view. The qualities of Brougham had, of course, already attracted attention, but hitherto more because of his readiness of speech and his strange faculty of saying something worth listening to on almost anything. But, since his speech on the agricultural distress, he had taken a different position, and the present deliverance—which apparently was quite unexpected—put him at once in the forefront, probably somewhat in advance, of his party. From the language, and particularly from the closeness of the reasoning, it is evident that the speech, as printed in *Hansard*, was most carefully revised by Brougham.

—not in 1800 when the scarcity was greater but the affliction ended with the bad season and work was all the time abundant; not in 1812, when there was much greater distress, when the dearth, indeed, was less, but the rate of wages was far lower than in 1800—compared with now, 1812 was a period of actual prosperity. To take some particulars from the great staple manufactures of the kingdom.

In the clothing trade—"not so depressed as our other great staples"—in cloth-dressing, one-third of the operatives were idle, and, of those who had any work, only one-third, or two men in nine of the whole, had full employment. Clothing.

Iron presented a most gloomy picture. In Birmingham, out of a population of 84,000, about 27,500 were receiving parish relief. Of the work-people, one-third were wholly out of employ and the rest were at half-work. The poor rates had risen to between £50,000 and £60,000 a year, a sum exceeding what the inhabitants paid in income tax. But, in 1812, only a ninth part of the population were paupers, and the rates did not exceed £27,000; yet we then thought the public distresses had reached their utmost pitch. Of the four classes engaged in the iron trade, the ironworkers, who, in 1810, got from 18/- to two guineas a week, were now getting from 10/- to 18/-: those engaged in the manufacture of arms, who used to receive still higher—one might say exorbitant—wages, now got 7/6 when employed at all: the nailers—better off than most classes—were earning no more than 8/- or 9/- instead of 12/- or 15/-: the common artificers were working at a shilling a day. And, in all these classes, the women and children, who used nearly to double the wage of the heads of the house, were now wholly unemployed. Iron.

Still more melancholy was the state of the great staple of the country, the cotton manufacture. As the House knew, since the introduction of machinery, the numbers employed in weaving were beyond all comparison greater than those employed in spinning; there were about half-a-million weavers in Lancashire alone. Taking the average gains of a thousand weavers of all ages and classes, their rate of wages, in 1800, was 13/3 a week; in 1802, it was still higher, namely, 13/10. But, in 1806, it had fallen to 10/6; in 1808, to 6/7; in 1812, to 6/4. In 1816, the third year of the peace, wages were as low as 5/2 in May, and, in January of the present year, they reached the fearful point of 4/3½, from which, when the usual expenses paid by the work-people for the Cotton.

loom were deducted, there remained no more than 3/3 to support human life for seven days.

How do the workers live at all?

How could people sustain existence on such a sum? He had been told that half a pound of oatmeal daily, mixed with a little salt and water, constituted the whole food of many of them. Charity was out of the question in such circumstances—the case was far beyond it. It was found that, to distribute a little increase of nourishment—a little milk, or beer, or a morsel of meat—would cost £20,000, and that at a time when the masters were receiving hardly any profits.

Three striking symptoms—diminished consumption of luxuries

If we rose to considerations of a more general nature, and took notice of certain symptoms, which, though less striking, were perhaps the safest guides in such an enquiry, we should get confirmation of all this. Consider the great diminution in the consumption of luxuries, as evidenced by the returns of customs and excise. Those depending on the manufacture of such luxuries suffered first and most severely. In Spitalfields, the poor of that neighbourhood, after exhausting the rates, had received as much in charity as, added to the rates, exceeded the whole income of the parish at rack rent. In Coventry, the levies had increased beyond all former example. To take a small but suggestive instance from the watch trade, a traveller he knew of, who used to dispose of 600 watches on a journey extending over 283 cities and towns, was now selling only 43.[1] It was said, again, that 2,000, out of the 18,000 journeymen tailors in Westminster, were wholly without work.

—discontent over the introduction of machinery

Another symptom, and a most unerring one, of the present distress was the discontent excited by the introduction of machinery.[2]

[1] Robinson, however, gave another explanation of this, namely the smuggling of foreign watches, which were not only much cheaper, but in some respects better than ours. During the war the intercourse was less, and as consequence the smuggling was also less. But watches were now brought into the country not only by common smugglers but by ladies and gentlemen coming from France. Rose gave a curious explanation of the diminution of the demand for luxuries. It was, he said, principally to be attributed to the temporary emigration of many families to the continent—to which Newport retorted that this was rather an effect of the distress than a cause, as these people were driven by the force of taxation from the country, finding it utterly impossible to exist here under such an intolerable load.

[2] A petition presented in February gives a fair idea of the feeling against the machinery whose introduction was now inevitably causing much hardship to individuals. It came from some 3,600 of the cloth-dressers of Leeds. They submitted that, from evidence taken before the House, it appeared that, in 1806, there were only five gig mills and not more than a hundred pairs

Formerly the displacement of labour was partial and transient, and those displaced were soon absorbed in other trades or by new demand. But now the case was widely different. The petitions, presented night after night, signed by thousands and tens of thousands, complaining of machinery, testified that, when workmen were flung out of one employment, they could no longer find others ready to receive them, and that the capital saved by the abridgement of labour no longer produced its former healing effect. When Arkwright's machines were introduced, one man, it was calculated, could do the work of a hundred. But no particular discontent was excited. But the case was very different now. By the introduction of what was called the power loom—when a child could do the work of two or three men—numbers more would be thrown out of work. "But the House will learn with

of shears wrought by machinery in Yorkshire; that the number of gig mills was now 72, and, of shears, 1,462; that great numbers were in consequence out of employment, and those stated to be partially employed could not make more than 5/- to 10/- per week. They pleaded that they had a particular claim upon the legislature insomuch as they were prohibited by the laws from seeking employment in a foreign state. They asserted that the pleas of necessity and expediency which had been raised for the introduction of machinery were unfounded, as "there have always been a sufficient number of workmen to perform all that labour that was required"; that the cloth was dressed neither better nor more cheaply by machinery than by hand—indeed, the contrary was the case, "the large sums expended in the erection and maintenance of these establishments more than counterbalancing any saving in the price of dressing"; that the unrestrained use of machinery was not necessary to enable this country to compete with foreigners, as "the universal adoption of gig mills and shearing frames would not in the least tend to lower the price of cloth, and would not be the means of causing a single additional piece of cloth to be sold either at home or in the foreign market." And the further introduction of machinery would be the means of depriving many thousands of persons of employment in the business to which they had served a long and laborious apprenticeship, without a chance, in the present depressed state of trade, of obtaining employment in any other business. They ended with the prayer that the House would take their case into immediate and serious consideration, and afford them such relief, by restraining the use of this kind of machinery, or by such other means as might seem meet.

Brougham complimented the petition and its introducer—"this was the proper way in which the complaints of the people should be treated." It was obvious, of course, he said, that, to adopt any measures to check the use of machinery, would be as impolitic as it was impracticable, but, to prevent the emigration of such artisans, was a branch of ancient policy which required the serious consideration of the House. He added that the feeling evinced against machinery was a ground of formidable alarm: "it showed that, instead of now being, as it lately was, a source of wealth, it was the cause of the most severe distress to the great body of the people, because the hands thrown out of work by the introduction of machines in one branch could not now find employment in other lines." He thought this well deserved the attention of Parliament.

surprise and vexation that mechanical improvement has, as it were, reached its limit. It is now found, for the first time in the history of mankind—so low are wages fallen—so great is the pressure of distress—that manual labour is now making reprisals on machinery, standing a successful competition with it, beating it out of the market, and precluding the use of an engine, far from costly in itself, which saves three labourers in four. The further introduction of the power loom is actually stopped by the low rate of weavers' wages."

—unemployed capital.

The last symptom he would mention was the state of the money market. The funds had risen—thanks to the coercion acts, said the Chancellor of the Exchequer; stocks were 10 per cent. higher; exchequer bills at 3½ per cent. were still at a premium. And no capital overflowed upon the land. What did all this prove, but a glut of unemployed capital? There being no employment for it in trade, no capitalist put his money beyond his reach for more than a few months. And capital was being driven abroad—*vide* the French loan, *vide* American stock operations.[1]

Such being the unparalleled embarrassments under which commerce and manufactures laboured, there could be no improvement in agriculture, "the ultimate source of all wealth and prosperity." True, less was heard at the moment of agricultural distress, because the foreign grain had been consumed, and the last crop was scanty, and prices rose. But, in the greater part of the country, the crop had been a failing one, and high prices were by no means a compensation for the deficiency and the poor rates. He had no manner of doubt that the land was, generally speaking, worse off than before. It must be so. As Child said, "Trade and land are knit to each other and must wax and wane together; so that it shall never be well with land but trade must feel it, nor ill with trade but land must fall."

The transition to peace accounted for only a part of the distress.

Thus early he would state his opinion as to the causes which had concurred in producing the present state of things—it was founded on the universal extent and the great variety

[1] Up till this time, the only complaint of this nature had been that want of employment and heavy taxation were driving, or were likely to drive, our artisans and their skill to other countries; and that in some instances, as in cotton yarn, we were sending raw material abroad to be worked up and compete with our finished manufactures. But now we hear definite statements about the emigration of capital. The part played by British capitalists in negotiating the French loan—to pay the indemnity—was severely commented on in parliament.

of the distresses described. A transition from war to peace must, indeed, always affect many branches of public wealth; for instance, the provision trade of Ireland and the manufacture of arms were now suffering severely, and such distress might be temporary. But, when they found the same distress in lines of employment unconnected with the war demand, such as the cotton trade, when hands thrown out of work in one quarter could no longer be absorbed in other parts of the industrial system, when there plainly appeared to be a choking up of all the channels of industry, we were driven to the conclusion that the peace accounted for only a part of the sad change.

The real cause: the restrictive policy

He would ask the House then to fix their attention on the line of policy for many years past adopted by the public councils of the country. With the "practical politicians," as they called themselves—really the dupes of the old mercantile theory, long since exploded and repudiated by all who had received a liberal education—it was a maxim, equally sacred and profound, that too much could hardly be done to discourage importations of all sorts and from all countries. Year after year we had proceeded under their auspices, until now we found ourselves, as might naturally be expected, deprived of most of the great staples of foreign commerce.

—which had indeed a special justification in the case of corn—

At this point, however, he felt bound to say a single word on the policy adopted in the late Corn Law. He still adhered to his approval of it. In this case, the first injurious effect of cutting off a great article of foreign trade would be, it might be hoped, compensated by advantages of a higher nature—the ensuring of a regular, a safe, and, ultimately, a cheap supply of the great necessity of life, without depending on any change of foreign policy or caprice of foreign governments. "At any rate we resorted to it, not as the only prohibitory law in our commercial code, but while almost every branch of trade was struggling in the fetters of the restrictive system. We approved of it for special reasons, many of them temporary in their nature, and regarded it as an exception justified by those reasons and by the unnatural state of our whole policy"—not as a part of a national scheme.

But let the House cast an eye over the numberless other trammels which had no such justification.

but none in the case of Baltic goods,

Take the Baltic trade—a peculiarly secure and steady kind of traffic—which had always been regarded as highly important both

with regard to defence and gain. Of its four great staples, we had cut off two; we still received hemp and tallow, but we had prohibited iron and timber—the latter in order "to force the importation of inferior timber from our North American colonies," that is, to gratify the Canadian and shipping interests. As consequence, while we used to export £400,000 or £500,000 worth of our manufactures to Norway, that sale had now ceased, "Norway, having no other means of making payment but the iron and timber which our modern practitioners of antiquated wisdom have seen good to exclude altogether." A similar prohibition of foreign copper had cut us off from one of the principal articles of South American produce.

copper,

butter and cheese,

Take the new protecting duties on butter and cheese. "The instant that these duties were imposed, as true as the pulse keeps time with the stroke of the heart, foreign exchange rose, as it is called, in our favour two or three per cent. A branch of our importation was lopped off; it became more difficult to remit from abroad in the first instance, and consequently, must have become more difficult to send goods thither immediately after; our whole foreign trade was sensibly diminished, and by the very operation which raised the exchange and in exact proportion to its rise."

French wines,

The same perverse views regulated our commercial intercourse with France. "Although that fine country is our nearest market, and ought to be our best customer; although the vine is its chief produce, and its wines are allowed to be the best, by some considered as the only ones drinkable, yet their importation is to be avoided, because France is our natural enemy and Portugal our dear, indeed, costly friend."

foreign linens,

But worse blunders remained. In direct contradiction to their own principles—the principles of the mercantile school, which aimed at protecting the carrying trade in an especial manner—a duty of 15 per cent. was imposed on all linens imported and re-exported, although no branch of our carrying trade was ever more productive than the transit of foreign linens. Why this was done he could not tell, but he could tell what ministers thought they were doing. They thought they could impose a law on foreign taste, and make people buy what they did not want. The fact was that many nations preferred foreign linens to British ones, and they bought them here for the convenience of having their assortments completed with British goods. Now they bought their linens direct from Hamburg,

Amsterdam, and Copenhagen, where they got them somewhat cheaper, and they left British goods alone. And this law was not passed centuries ago in the heyday of mercantilism, but in 1810, and the Government declined to revise this piece of nonsense no later than last year!

coal.

He might give numberless instances of the same policy. The exportation of coal, for instance, was prohibited by a duty of 70 per cent., but for which that article might find a ready market in France, provided we agreed to take French goods in return. Here, indeed, we might be said to act consistently, "for when we refuse to receive the produce of a country, it seems natural, though perhaps it is superfluous, to prevent ours from going thither." But we were not so consistent in other branches. While we protected agriculture in some respects, we allowed the importation and prohibited the export of wool. This was professedly to encourage manufactures by denying to foreigners the use of the raw produce; yet cotton twist was allowed to go abroad, though it was in the first stage of manufacture, and one would think it full as easy for the continent to grow long wool as to erect spinning mills. The silk duties afforded matter of similar observation.

Time to revise this whole policy

But without going further into instances, he ventured to assert that, taking all things into account, the time was now arrived when the circumstances of our situation imperiously demanded a full and unsparing review of the whole commercial policy of the country; not only the trade laws, but even the navigation law itself, required prompt and accurate revision.

—even the Navigation Law.

The Navigation Act, indeed, was a good policy in its time. It hastened by half a century the transference of trade from the United Provinces to this country. But it had outlived its usefulness by a century. In our colonies it was enforced with unusual strictness—with what result? America said, "since you will not suffer us to supply your settlements in any vessels but your own, we shall retaliate, and forthwith shut our ports against all vessels coming from ports from which you exclude ours." This was the substance of a Bill he held in his hand just passed by Congress—a striking instance of "that obstinate perverse system that refuses to vary with the alteration of circumstances, and clings superstitiously to what is now inapplicable."

Brougham then went on to draw a glowing picture of the magnificent field for British enterprise in South America, from

which we were excluding ourselves out of consideration for the legitimate claims of Spain and Portugal,[1] and went on to discuss certain fallacies as to the reality of the connection between taxation and depression. But his most effective point was the re-demonstration of the doctrine which Pitt put into practice before the war, that taxes might be repealed with positive and immediate benefit to the revenue, illustrating the effects of taxation upon consumption by reference to facts. "I suspect we have been in many instances killing the goose that laid the golden eggs, and I greatly deceive myself if the right honourable gentleman opposite will not soon be aware how much truth there is in Dean Swift's remark that, 'in the arithmetic of the customs, two and two do not always make four.'"

**Demonstration of how reduction of taxes usually increases the revenue.**

In the three years from 1803 to 1806, the duties on sugar were increased by about 50 per cent. The consumption fell off from the first rise; the trade suffered severely; and the revenue gained in but a very small proportion. The duties on glass were doubled in ten years; the produce did not sensibly increase at all—a destruction of the glass trade to the amount of one-half its whole bulk, without any direct gain to the revenue, and a very certain loss to it in other branches connected with the diminished consumption. The duties on wine were trebled since 1792; the deficiency in the port of London alone last year was over £338,000 as compared with 1815. In 1804, the duty on port wine was increased one-ninth; the produce fell off nearly a fourth. It was not so easy to illustrate the converse, for few taxes had been taken off. When Pitt, in 1784, lowered the duty on tea from 56 to 12 per cent., the revenue rose considerably—not, indeed, that consumption increased sixfold, but that smuggling stopped. In 1787, the duty on wines and spirits was lowered 50 per cent., and the revenue was improved—the trade must therefore have doubled. Coffee again supplied a striking instance. In 1805, the duty was raised one-third and the produce fell off by one-eighth; in 1806, the revenue had increased but only by a sixteenth, so that the consumption had diminished above a fourth. Then it was lowered from 2/- to 7d. per cwt. The average produce of the lower duty, reckoned by three years, was £195,000 against £166,000 from the high duty; the consumption increased between four and fivefold; in Scotland, it increased tenfold.

[1] The answer, of course, was that, in the circumstances, we could not secure the trade of South America without risking a war with Spain.

It was not, then, on mere speculative grounds that he recommended the finance ministers to retrace their steps, and to turn their attention from devising ways of augmenting the taxes—an object, by the way, they would never be able to accomplish—to discover the best means of lessening the public burdens.

The very collection of this enormous revenue had serious evils of its own. Few people were aware how severely the customs regulations bore on trade—the delay, the expense, and annoyance. "You cannot, in a word, collect such a revenue as ours without infinite vexation and delay, beyond the actual burden of the impost."

The collection itself was a burden.

How, again, was it that the Government had entirely abandoned all care for the commercial interests of this country in the administration of our foreign affairs? How did it come to pass that, after the glorious peace which our efforts had purchased, we were still shut out from most parts of the continent as if war was still waging against our commerce? In what quarter of Europe had we obtained one single facility of trade, one single custom-house regulation in our favour? In Russia, our commerce laboured under duties so nearly amounting to a prohibition as to throw it into the hands of contraband traders. Prussia almost excluded us from intercourse with her dominions. With the cabinet of Madrid, we possessed just no interest whatsoever, either commercial or political—a disgusting instance of ingratitude in Spain, of imbecility in ourselves. The commerce with Spain, indeed, was in a worse condition than that with almost any other foreign state. In Austria, again, we met nothing but prohibition. "It would seem as if, from all our exertions to serve the continental powers, whether looking after honour or profit, we were fated to reap nothing but loss and disgrace."

The continental markets were shut against us.

Nay, did not Ragusa, after we had betrayed it to the Austrians, absolutely shut out our trade? Did not Genoa enforce a code directed specially against the commerce of this country after we had delivered over its ancient and gallant people to a petty tyrant? Compare with that the example of America—from whom, indeed, we had no right to expect peculiar favour. She had pursued a course favourable to the interests of the people in each nation; she was allowing the manufactures created by our absurd system gradually to decline, because industry there would be more beneficially employed in other pursuits, and, in a few

Only America showed us any favour.

months, with some trifling exceptions, the American market would be completely restored to us, so far as manufactures were concerned. We might have obtained the same advantages from France, for there was a time when the feelings of the people ran strongly in our favour. But, with 130,000 men quartered on her soil, how could we look for a commercial treaty, or, indeed, for any trade with us.

He concluded his speech by moving a set of four resolutions based on its various arguments.

Robinson agrees as to the evil of the prohibitive system,

Robinson, the Vice-President of the Board of Trade, while entirely concurring with Brougham as to the prohibitive system —he wished we had never entered on it, and he thought it would be an advantage if we could break through it—and its effect on the promotion of the distress by preventing commercial arrangements with foreign countries, said very sensibly that it was a matter of infinite difficulty to escape from the system now that we were so deeply entangled in it. And how could we hope to get concessions from foreign powers, unless we could induce the manufacturers of this country to consent to giving them the same concessions?—which seemed to him hopeless; had he (Robinson) not himself been burned in effigy in half the towns of the north of Ireland when he endeavoured to take the duty off linens?[1] As to enforcing concessions, we had all of late fought for a common cause; if we had made our assistance dependent on concessions to our trade, what would have been thought of the disinterestedness of which we were so proud? If Brougham, again, made an exception of the Corn Law—in which he also concurred: "its overwhelming necessity set all general principle at defiance"—there would be no wonder if others claimed that their industries also should be exceptions. The rest of his speech was a strong statement of the enormous difficulty presented by the "vested interest" in every manufacture which had hitherto been protected; but he ended by saying that, on account of the political turn given by Brougham in his

but dwells on the power of the vested interest.

[1] "The cessation of war must sooner or later establish manufactures on the continent. What was there to prevent it? The people of the continent had capital, skill, and industry—there was nothing mysterious in the machinery. . . . France had paid great attention to her cotton manufactures; already she employed hundreds and thousands in the manufacture of the best cloths and silks. What was there to prevent her also manufacturing cottons? So it was with Saxony and several other parts of Germany—so it was with Switzerland—and so would it be in every country possessed of capital and industry."

crimination of the ministry, he must move the other orders of the day.[1]

Baring supports Brougham.

Baring wondered at this conclusion, as the speaker had actually confirmed some of the leading and essential parts of Brougham's opening statement. As to the applicability of commercial treaties, he confessed he was not very decided; they must be founded on reciprocity of interest, and nothing could be more silly than to impose upon one party while under the influence of a particular restraint, a condition which was only productive to the interest of another. As to the funds, their present high price evidently arose from the want of a sufficient employment for capital in the general business of the country. A great borrower, the Government, had suddenly gone out of the market, and capital was withdrawn in a great degree from landed speculation and deposited in the funds. But this disposal of money was greatly induced by the impolitic laws regulating interest. If there were no usury laws—and it was a great evil that the Government alone was exempted from their operation—money would be obtained at 5¼ or 5½ per cent., instead of landholders being driven into the fangs of the Jews who extorted 13 per cent. and upward from thoughtless or dissipated individuals. He trusted that the House would agree to the motion in order to convince the country that it was not altogether forgetful of its duty, however negligent ministers might be of theirs.

Weakness of the Government's replies.

The replies from the side of the Government were very weak. For the most part they confined themselves to controverting details; complained that a speech like Brougham's only tended to produce gloom throughout the country—regret for the past and hopelessness for the future—and, as might well be the case, convicted Brougham of some inaccuracies and hasty generalisations. Their persistent minimising of the severity of the distress must, one would think, have been greatly resented by the people. But they were unanimous in one important statement; that, of late, an improvement had taken place in all the manufacturing branches,

[1] Of Robinson's speech, Brougham afterwards said that it was memorable "for the candour with which it was uttered, memorable for the liberality of the principles which it sanctioned and which he showed he so well understood, but still more memorable for the striking admission with which it was coupled—he allowed that he saw the great errors and pernicious tendency of the narrow and absurd system on which the trade of the country was conducted, but that hostile representations and conflicting interests stood in the way of new arrangements or any beneficial improvements," (*Hansard* xxxvi. 1381).

specially in cottons and woollens, and that many recently out of employment were now in full work—in Glasgow, most of the weavers were again engaged.

Finally, Castlereagh adopted Robinson's position that the political hostility of the honourable and learned gentleman was so mixed up with his commercial propositions—which, otherwise, the Government would have been very willing to discuss—that he could not expect from ministers their concurrence in his resolutions, and the orders of the day were read by 118 to 63.[1]

[1] *Hansard*, xxxv. 1004. In the course of the debate two extraordinary statements were made, one of fact, one of theory. (1) Castlereagh said that very considerable exports had been made to America, where, in consequence of a distress similar to that which prevailed in Europe, the power of purchasing had diminished, and that the goods, after lying for a while in warehouses, were re-exported to this country. This produced a surplus in the home market and a consequent depression of prices. (2) Finlay, the member for Glasgow, said that the distress did not proceed from a diminished demand for our manufactures. The goods were disposed of, but the evil lay in the low state of wages; for "when prices of labour became thus reduced, the workman found it necessary to work a greater number of hours to enable him to maintain his family; and this additional work threw a new quantity of labour into the market and aggravated the distress." Brougham knew enough of economic science to suggest mildly that the low wage was an effect rather than a cause, and asked if it was not because the exports were sold for little or no profit, or at a loss, that the manufacturer could not afford to pay even moderate wages (*ibid.* 1067, 1064, 1073).

## NOTE ON INDUSTRIAL CYCLES.

It will probably strike the reader that we are, to-day, not very much nearer to any recognised and authoritative explanation of the recurrent "depression of trade" than our ancestors were when this debate took place. I have given considerable space to the discussion which the unexpected economic phenomena of 1817 called forth, and I hope, in future volumes, to follow the same procedure on each recurring depression. Meanwhile it may not be out of place for one who was a manufacturer of the same article, cotton thread, both in free trade England and in protected America, for many years before he became an economist, to state shortly his own explanation.

It is that of Jevons. For want of systematic study of economic history since the "factory system" began, it has never been sufficiently noticed that, during the nineteenth century, industry has described a cyclical movement. A table drawn up by me for the recent Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress shows that, within every ten or eleven years since 1815—that is, since England became a manufacturing country and ceased to be affected by the abnormal phenomena attending the great war—there has been a time of deep depression and a time of active trade, and that the movement between the recurrence of these points has described an almost constant ebb and flow. From 1815 to 1842, the country was trying the great experiment of universal Protection, the difficulty of dealing even-handed favour to differing and often warring interests increasing with each year. Even after Free Trade came, there were disturbances from outside, like the potato and the cotton famine, and from inside, like the banking crises, which

might be suspected to throw the industrial movement out of its normal course. But, after the marvellous six years of "leaps and bounds," 1870-1875, we see the same cycle described, and, in the last two decades, when there has been no outstanding disturbance either external or internal, the cyclical movement is, if possible, more definitely marked than ever. Thus from 1887 to 1896 the cycle runs: revival, marked revival, prosperity, prosperity, decline, depression, depression, settled depression, revival, slow revival; and from 1897 to 1906 it runs: prosperity, prosperity, great prosperity, culmination of prosperity, slow ebb, slow ebb, depression, distress, revival, prosperity. If we trust to history, then, the answer seems to be that the cyclical movement is part and parcel of the *normal* system of industry.

If we ask economic theory for an explanation of why this should be so, the answer seems clear. The outstanding feature of modern industry is the excessive division of labour. This division of labour has three consequences. The first is that, as the value of all products depends on a demand outside and independent of the maker—no man "makes" value, but only things to which value is attached by the desires and purchasing powers of others—the individuals of the community are daily perilling their resources on the chance of finding a paying demand from other people for their goods, while, all the time, there is any number of causes acting on this demand, increasing, diminishing, or, it may be, totally extinguishing it. What is more, every advance in wealth and culture tends to make this demand more capricious, and, with every change in demand, some industry or other goes on short time. For, while the simple wants of a poor community may be fairly counted on to produce a steady demand, the desires and activities of a wealthy community are infinitely varied and constantly changing, and every such change affects a long chain of industries in which huge capitals are specialised and literally "sunk," and thousands of labourers are employed.

The second is that every industry depends for its smooth working on other industries. The production of any and every good which man consumes being divided up into many successive and complementary industries, every individual industry depends, first, on getting the supply of things necessary for its operations from a preceding industry; and, second, on its products being taken up by the succeeding industries which carry them one stage nearer to the final good which people demand for their living. The drop of a single link in the long chain causes dislocation in every trade which connects the first raw material obtained from the earth with the finished article sold across the counter. And this danger of dislocation is the greater, the more highly "manufactured" the article is.

The third is that every industry depends on purchasing power obtained from other industries. If any trade, either because of dislocation of supply or change of demand, goes on short time, the loss of purchasing power on the part of its members at once affects the shops, and to that extent puts the shops, and through them the factories, the farms, and the carrying trades which fill the shops, on short time, and the diminished purchasing power of such shops, factories, farms, and carrying trades in turn affects other industries, and so on *ad infinitum*.

The third, and to some extent the second, of these explains the phenomena of industrial contagion, and contagion explains the cyclical movement. That depression breeds depression has often been noticed, and is easily understood once it is realised that "contagion" is more than a mere metaphor—the *virus* is diminished purchasing power transmitted from pocket to pocket. It has not been so much noticed that in industry there is a contagion of health as well as a contagion of disease. When the depression has run its course, and the cycle begins the upward movement, the healthy current of added purchasing power acts in precisely the same way, spreading activity through the shops to the farms, the factories, and the carrying trades. The

only thing that still remains obscure is how the reaction from depression begins. As a rule, it comes so gradually that the beginnings are already beyond record when it is ascertained that "trade is on the turn." As a matter of theory, an abundant harvest--particularly if it be international--would make the new start, for such a harvest is a spontaneous gift of heaven, and fills the farmers' pockets with new purchasing power.

Putting these three things together, the marvel is that the industrial machine should run with even tolerable smoothness. First, the whole chain of the divided production process depends on a demand for the final "consumption-good," and this demand is in the highest degree capricious. Second, every single industry in the productive chain depends for its smooth running on industries which precede and industries which follow, and the possibilities of dislocation—of over-supply and under-demand—are endless. Third--and quite independently of dislocation--when depression sets in, contagion inevitably carries it from industry to industry. For steady, continuous, remunerative employment, an organic system like ours would require steadiness of demand and steadiness of supply, both as regards the divided production processes and as regards the final consumption-good. But if one considers, for instance, the fine calculation which does, in great measure, secure steadiness of employment in a great "combine" where many industries are planned to work into one another, and then remembers that, among industries generally, there is no organisation to make the various supplies meet the various demands except that effected by competition, it is clear that such steadiness of employment is just what we cannot expect.

What history, then, suggests, theory confirms: the cyclical movement is an essential feature of the modern industrial system. In opposition to common opinion, it must now be realised that "normal conditions of industry" are not those which prevail in good times. Depression is as normal as activity. The recurring bad years, which always take us by surprise and catch us unprepared, and which we always ascribe to something else than the system, are as normal as the ebbing of the tide. The causes lie far deeper than either Free Trade or Protection, and they will persist whichever of these we adopt, for they are bound up with the very existence of organised industry.

This being the analysis and explanation of the historical phenomena, one conclusion seems to follow; that, far from being an abnormal state of things, the periodical unemployment of all classes, however skilled and capable, is a thing on which we must count. That is to say, suppose we could turn every present "unemployable" into a sober, skilled, conscientious workman, we could not secure his continuous employment. The recent Royal Commission has done good service in making a clear distinction between the problem of the "unemployed" whom any employer would willingly hire if he had the trade to employ them on, and the problem of the "unemployed" whom no modern employer would willingly have anything to do with. The two problems are entirely distinct: to confuse the two classes and treat them similarly, is the gravest of mistakes The "unemployables" it divides into four classes, each class requiring different treatment according to its hopefulness. Between these and the regular workers it puts the casuals and the seasonal workers, for whom again quite distinct treatment is needed and suggested, for the reason that they may, with some difficulty indeed, be raised into regular workers, or, with ease, be depressed into unemployables. But as regards the regular workers who are able to work, and whom every employer wishes to employ, it remains true that, within every ten or eleven years, there will be times when the employers cannot find employment for them.

For these regular workers, then, the urgent question is: How can they be "tided over" the inevitable bad times? One answer at least "leaps to the eyes." The comfortable classes tide themselves over by drawing on

their reserves of capital, or, it may be, by running into debt. The worker who has no such resources must be induced or compelled to insure himself by a somewhat new form of insurance policy—namely, one which allows him to draw out his insurance money in times of unemployment. The Trade Unions already provide such unemployment insurance. The Friendly Societies might do it. These are the two bodies which, from intimate knowledge of the members' circumstances, and from the strong motive of protecting their general funds, could best secure against the abuses to which such insurance is obviously exposed. But, among Unions of unskilled workers, the cost of this is at present prohibitive. It is principally for this reason that the Commission took the strong step of recommending that these bodies, or similar trade organisations created for the purpose, should be encouraged to establish and maintain unemployed benefit by a State subsidy.

This seems to me the outcome of that analysis of industrial phenomena under the new conditions of divided and organised labour which parliament began immediately after the war. In another regard the debates of 1816 and 1817 are notable. They contain an implicit recognition of the fact that the whole framework of society has become economic. The difference between an age when agriculture is almost everything and the manufactures are quite subsidiary, and an age when all industries are organised in large units and all products are poured into the one common pool of the "market," cannot be too much emphasised. The careful reader of the successive debates on the subject notices that the close interdependence, first of agriculture and manufactures, and, later, of all industries and services, is of the nature of a "discovery," made by individuals, and announced by them as such. It is a new thing in the history of the world that every man, be his position what it may, is simply a unit in a vast organisation where the worker makes everything to *sell*, and consumes almost nothing of what he personally produces, and it contains no less than the promise of a new moral organism where work is a duty to society. For, being a seller, and making his income by the things—goods or services—which he sells, it is impossible for anyone to be sufficient unto himself. From the "head of our crowned republic" down to the scavenger on the streets, we do actually make our living by serving each other, and the conscious recognition of this—as it is recognised in the professions—would go far, it seems to me, to make every man's working life a moral discipline.

# CHAPTER XXIX

## 1818. A QUICK RETURN OF PROSPERITY

The revival of trade.

THE country was still ringing with the three trials of William Hone for seditious and profane libels,[1] when parliament met on 27th January. The Regent's Speech, and the debates which followed, afford authoritative proof that the country had emerged from the long distress, and that trade was again on the upgrade. Improvement had taken place in almost every branch of domestic industry; the funds had risen to 80; the revenue had increased, particularly in the last six months; most of the iron works, where, in the past year the fires had been extinguished, were again in full activity; the price of iron had risen from £8 or £9 to about £14; the demand for linen, the staple of the north of Ireland, was unprecedented; money was abundant, and, on good mortgages, was to be had at 4½ per cent.; the sales of land showed a better price; and gold had reappeared. For the moment, languor and depression had given place to hopefulness and enterprise.

[1] The name of this poor publisher—who died a quarter of a century afterwards in the odour of sanctity and sub-editor of a religious journal—would never have been known to history had it not been for the unwise persistence of the government in his prosecution. He was tried three times in quick succession, the last two times by Lord Ellenborough and a special jury. Hone made a wonderful defence, in speeches of six, seven, and eight hours respectively, ransacking history for precedents of parody, and, each time, the verdict was Not Guilty. On the last trial, on 19th December, "the moment the words were pronounced," says the *Annual Register* (Appendix 175) "a spontaneous burst of applause issued from the crowd in the Court, which soon extended to the crowd on the outside; and for some minutes the hall and adjoining avenues rang with shouts and acclamations. Some days afterwards a liberal subscription was entered into for Mr. Hone and his family." The failure of this prosecution emphasised the many other failures under the coercive measures, and gave colour to the cry of "persecution." And, on the day after, Lord Ellenborough gave notice of his resignation. The wonderfully graphic account of the trials in Harriet Martineau's *History* has secured immortality for the pale little man in threadbare black who overthrew the Lord Chief Justice of England.

It is a substantial indication of the passing away of the distress that the Speech called particular attention to "the deficiency which had so long existed in the number of places of public worship belonging to the Established Church." In pursuance of this, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in March, moved "That his Majesty be enabled to direct exchequer bills to an amount not exceeding one million to be issued to commissioners to be by them advanced, under certain regulations and restrictions, towards building and promoting the building of additional Churches and chapels in England." A million sterling for churches.

No communication from the Throne, he said—surely, with some exaggeration—had ever been expected with greater anxiety, or received with more satisfaction by the public, than this. The last time that any similar measure had been brought forward was in the reign of Queen Anne, when it was proposed to erect 50 churches in the metropolis, of which, however, only 11 had been built. The money was then raised by a tax imposed on certain articles imported into the port of London. The present, however, was not a local scheme, and the expense could not be borne by localities but must be spread over the whole kingdom. On a calculation that a large deduction must be made (1) for infants—in fact children up to the age of seven or eight, (2) for old persons and persons suffering from sickness or accident, (3) for, say, one person in each family to look after the houses, he considered that "a parish might be considered as not inadequately supplied if the church could contain one third of the inhabitants at the same time." At present, it seemed, the more populous parishes had accommodation for about one in seven of the population, and the smaller parishes, for one in five. And it would be "obviously desirable to provide in the bill for the performance of three services on every Sunday."

The funds from which the new clergymen were to be paid would be supplied by pew rents—a large proportion of the space, however, being reserved for free seats—and, where the parish was divided, the patronage would remain in the hands of the former patrons of the parish.

Scotland would not be included in the bill—for obvious reasons—but he hoped shortly to bring forward a corresponding proposal on this subject. As regards Ireland, a similar hope was expressed, if there should be need for more accommodation.

The only objections taken were: that, if additional churches

Criticism.

were to be of any use—if the dissenters were to be "reclaimed (in no invidious sense)"—there ought to be some modification in the manner of performing the worship—"it ought to be more frequently performed in a day"; and that it was not equitable to raise money from the whole nation and apply it to a locality—particularly to the metropolis. Liverpool, *e.g.* had built her own churches without assistance from parliament.[1]

The Prime Minister, in bringing forward the measure in the Lords, as "the most important measure he had ever submitted to their lordships' consideration,"[2] added two more arguments;—

(1) that, in the calculation of one-third, he did not allow for dissent, "as the object of the measure was to remove dissent"; in all populous parishes, however, great allowance must be made for dissenters;

(2) that the Church was under a certain disadvantage in regard to churches. Dissenters had it in their power to build places of worship in any number, to any extent, and without any limitation. But, in the Church of England, reference must be had to the rights of property and to the discipline of the Church. By building additional churches, the establishment and the dissenters would be placed on a fair and equal footing.

Some little discussion was given to the proportion in which the expenditure should be divided between considerations of accommodation and considerations of architecture and ornament. The Archbishop of Canterbury hoped they would not forget that the object of the bill was churches. "Even the humble spire of the village church indicated the purposes to which it was dedicated. If edifices were erected which departed so far from the style of ecclesiastical architecture that they might be mistaken for places devoted to another use, one object of the bill would be entirely lost sight of. The churches erected in the reign of Queen Anne were not built merely to accommodate the people of London and Westminster, but were designed to remain as lasting ornaments of their cities. He was satisfied, however, that, while their lordships paid a due attention to the accommodation of the

[1] *Hansard* xxxvii. 1116, 1162; xxxviii. 426.

[2] Lord Holland made gentle fun of the statement. He "certainly did wonder that a minister who had restrained the prerogative of the heir to the Crown, who had called on the country to grant sums unprecedented in amount, who had suspended the liberties of the people, should esteem the building of a few churches a measure of such paramount importance." "It was the practice of sinners in all ages," said Cochrane, "to build churches."

frequenters of the Established Church in point of room, they would not neglect an adherence to that mode of building which characterised the reformed Church of England (as distinguished) from churches where that reform was carried too far." [1]

It is some evidence of the state of religious belief—perhaps, also, of the absence of dissent in the personnel of parliament—that, at a time when economy and retrenchment were accepted as principles by both sides, the two Houses should vote a million to the erection of State churches, with general approval and, practically, without opposition.

Treaty with Spain for abolition of the Slave Trade.

Another matter alluded to in the royal Speech, and treated by parliament in the same somewhat magnificent manner, was the very important advance made in the general abolition of the Slave Trade. On the second day of the session (28th January), Castlereagh presented the text of a treaty with Spain, for preventing any illicit traffic in slaves. His Catholic Majesty had at last resolved to co-operate with his Britannic Majesty, and, by this treaty, engaged that the slave trade would be abolished throughout the entire dominions of Spain from 30th May, 1820. But Great Britain had to pay for the "principles of humanity" with which his Majesty of Spain professed himself animated. By a clause in the treaty, England agreed to pay, in February, 1818, the sum of £400,000 as full compensation for all losses sustained by Spanish subjects engaged in the traffic, on account of vessels captured prior to the treaty, as also for the losses which were a "necessary consequence of the abolition of the said traffic." And the two powers allowed to each other the right of search on merchant vessels of the two nations which might reasonably be suspected of carrying slaves.

Compensation to Spain.

The treaty was received with some little grumbling as to the compensation—to which Castlereagh, however, replied that, on a previous occasion, Great Britain had offered, and Spain refused, a sum of £850,000, together with a loan of ten million dollars, for the same concession, and that the Spanish merchants at the Havannah had offered five times the amount for the privilege of continuing the trade—and as to the absence of cordiality in the commercial relations with a power which was being so generously treated. One learns from the discussion that cottons, woollens, and linens were practically prohibited entry into Spain, and that the duties on iron were 110 per cent.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 709, 830.

But, practically, the House was unanimous, and, when one speaker suggested that nations, like individuals, should be just before they were generous, Wilberforce replied that the House would agree that the sum of £400,000 could not be better expended, and Mackintosh expressed his pride that the flag which had never been lowered to an enemy had now risen to loftier honour by bending to the cause of justice and humanity, and submitting, for this object alone, to the right of search by Spain.[1]

Repeal of the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act.

But the first business of the House was, at the instance of ministers themselves, to repeal the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act—not without considerable jubilation on the part of the Opposition that there had not been a tittle of evidence to prove the "organised conspiracy" which was said to justify the suspension. Indeed, as regards the riots at Dudley, Romilly did not scruple to speak of the strong presumption that the whole of that insurrection was the work of the persons sent by the government —not, indeed, for the specific purpose of fomenting disaffection, but as emissaries of sedition from clubs that had never existed.[2]

Party debates.

Great part of the session was taken up by party debates on the late proceedings under the Suspension—discussion of the many petitions presented by individuals complaining of their treatment under it—and on the Indemnity Bill which followed; on the marriages of the royal Dukes, with their somewhat sordid bargaining for allowances; and on the renewal, in time of peace, of the Alien Act which gave power to remove aliens who had become objects of suspicion.

Apart from these, most time was given to matters of finance and currency.

The debates on the Bank Restriction began on the third day of the session and continued almost till the very end. They were marked with such tenderness on the part of the government towards the Bank that one suspects that the Exchequer was more under the control of the directors than the Chancellor cared to avow.

Would the Bank resume cash payments?

When Grenfell, on 29th January, asked if the resumption of cash payments was actually to take place on 5th July as fixed, he received the extraordinary answer from the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the Bank had made ample preparations for the

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 232, 352. The full text of the treaty is given *ibid.* 67, and in the *Annual Register*, Append. 215.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 36.

resumption, and that he knew of nothing in the internal state of the country, or in its political relations with foreign powers, to prevent the resumption taking place on the date mentioned; but "he had reason to believe that pecuniary arrangements of foreign powers were going on of such a nature and extent as might probably make it necessary for parliament to continue the restriction so long as the immediate effects of those arrangements were in operation." Grenfell said it would be absurd in him to affect any surprise; he had never believed that the promise would be kept. Because two or three merchants in the city, Messrs. Rothschild for instance, wished to negotiate loans with foreign powers, the House of Commons was to inflict an evil on the people of England. "What would be said," asked Lord King, "if the minister of France were to tell the legislative body of that country that the Bank of France could not pay in cash because there was a loan negotiating there for England?" Tierney said that, in the past session, when he expressed a doubt as to the resumption on 5th July of the present year, he was twitted with the assertion, "Is not the Bank already paying its notes in cash?" What sort of payments were then made, he need not describe. They certainly did not encourage one to calculate upon the capacity or disposition of the Bank to return to the old system of paying its notes in cash. The issues had been materially enlarged instead of diminished for some time back. The truth was that there were some persons in this country very much disposed to continue the restriction if they could find any excuse for it, and, if such an excuse did not offer itself at home, they looked abroad for it.[1]

Suggestions that it might not be prudent.

On 6th February, Castlereagh explained the arrangements to which the Chancellor of the Exchequer had referred. It was, he said, the anxious wish of his Majesty's ministers that the Bank should resume its payments in cash. But could it be the wish of the House to place the Bank, by a premature removal of the restriction, in such a predicament as might suggest the necessity of again renewing that restriction, or of urging the Bank to withhold that degree of accommodation which was essential to the commercial interests of the country? "Now, in case a foreign loan of such magnitude should be contracted as would threaten the exportation of a considerable quantity of bullion, would not parliament owe it to the country to continue, or, if discontinued, to renew, the restriction, as a matter of paramount necessity? It

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 113, 119, 131.

was to be apprehended that foreign loans of this nature might be contracted, over which the councils of the country could have no control—with which, indeed, it would be highly improper in these councils at all to interfere. He did not mean a loan of three or four millions to this or that particular power, but loans of such an extent as could not yet be ascertained, and therefore ministers were not yet prepared to open the case in parliament."[1]

It will be remembered that, in September of the previous year, the Bank gave notice that from 1st October they would be ready to pay cash for notes of every description dated prior to 1st January, 1817. One notices then, with surprise that, on 4th March, Lord Archibald Hamilton was bringing forward a motion respecting the Restriction of Cash Payments, and beginning his speech by saying that "it was evidently intended to continue still further the restriction." A pretty general impression prevailed, he said, that the notice was issued merely for the purpose of delusion, and to induce a belief that the Bank was in a position, and was in process of preparing, to resume its payments in cash. He wanted to know the motive and end of such a notice, as it was now clear that there was no intention of so doing.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that he must answer, as he did last year, that nothing would be so inadvisable as to interfere with the conduct of the Bank in the matter, and so damage their proceedings and impede their preparations for the final resumption. "That it had taken up a vast number of notes, and issued cash to a considerable amount, in consequence of the notices referred to, was a fact which, he presumed, no one would venture to deny." It was also indisputable that these notices were issued with the view of paving the way for the complete resumption of cash payments, and that the Bank had thus given a pledge of its sincerity and preparation for it.

**If resumption was intended, why were the issues enlarged?**

Tierney admitted that the Bank had accumulated a large amount of specie—larger, he believed, than at any former period in its history. But what availed that accumulation with respect to the return to cash payments if there was such a progressive increase in the amount of outstanding notes? Such an increase had actually taken place; it looked as if the Bank were determined to multiply impediments to resumption.[2]

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 211.

[2] In the latter six months of 1817, there had been a marked increase of Bank issues, when the notes in circulation rose to £30 millions, including

The Chancellor replied that he would agree for the most part with the principle that the reduction of the issues of the Bank was a necessary means and preparation for enabling the Bank to resume cash payments. But it was not the only means.

Tierney, accordingly, gave notice that if, by April next, no preparation was made, by withdrawing and reducing the issues, he would draw attention to the matter, and contend that the Bank had forfeited its claim to any further confidence.[1]

Suspension to be continued.

As had been anticipated, on 9th April, the Chancellor of the Exchequer brought up his usual motion to continue the suspension of cash payments by the Bank of England, "although for a limited period."[2] He explained—"he appeared in the utmost despondency"—that, after Waterloo, the Bank had adopted every means of precaution which might enable them to resume cash payments with safety; their collection of specie had been very rapid and to a large amount. On 1st January, 1817, they made a preparatory experiment, and gave notice that they were ready to make payments in cash of a certain description of outstanding notes, under which about a million might have been demanded. The result was that, so far were the public from being anxious to obtain repayment, a very inconsiderable, if any demand whatever, was made on the Bank. No preference whatever of metallic currency to paper was shown by the holders of those notes. At that time, the price of gold bullion was reduced to £3 18/6. "It was, therefore, probable that if, at that time, the Bank had returned generally to cash payments, scarcely any would have been demanded."

The two experiments in resumption

In October last, they made a more extensive experiment, announcing that they were ready to cash notes of every description dated prior to 1st January, 1817. But now the result was very different: no less than £2,600,000 in cash were demanded and issued. The causes of this different result appeared to him to be these:

(1) the deficient harvest of 1816 and the merely ordinary one

notes under £5. Tooke shows that the increased issue began in July, after the rapid fall had begun in the price of corn, and that the further fall in price to the extent of 40/- per qr. was coincident with a further increase of issues. "There is therefore no foundation for the commonly received opinion that the highest amount of the Bank circulation coincided with the highest prices of corn in 1817, and that a contraction of the circulation after 1817 was the originating and sole or main cause of the fall of the prices of provisions" (*History of Prices*, ii. 58).

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 778. [2] *Ibid.* xxxvii. 1229.

of 1817 rendered it necessary to import corn, and the payment for this took a good deal of specie out of the country;

(2) there was a considerable emigration from England—on balance about 13,000; allowing £200 for each person, this accounted for above £2½ millions;

(3) the large sums expended privately by British officers in the Army of Occupation.

Effect of the French loans.

But more serious was the effect of the French loans. In 1816, France negotiated a loan of five millions in this country; in 1817, a much larger—amounting to thirteen or fourteen millions. Exchange began to fall soon after the negotiation of the first loan. Gold rose, and had continued to rise till the present month. With such loans no government ought to interfere; and, in this case, it would have been both impolitic and unjustifiable, for these loans had contributed to support the French government, and enabled it to make good its engagements with foreign powers. The effect was that the £2½ millions of gold issued by the Bank had immediately gone out of the country.[1] The loans for which the French government had contracted in the present year amounted to £12 millions—not perhaps of sufficient importance if these were the only loans. But, if the Army of Occupation was withdrawn, a further sum of £20 millions would be wanted by France to liquidate all the claims upon her.

So far, then, as regarded our internal situation, there could be no danger in resumption; there was but little disposition on the part of the public to call for payment in cash of any large proportion of the notes. But, when so large a drain might be made as would be occasioned by the French loan in contemplation, he would ask whether the danger of attempting the operation of resuming cash payments at an undue time would not more than counterbalance any disadvantages which might arise from the temporary prolongation of the restriction.[2]

New proposals

He meant now, however, to propose another measure—it was founded on a pamphlet published by Weston in 1800—which, he thought, might have the effect of considerably mitigating the evil

[1] Newport said that this was not quite correct. Much of the gold was taken by private bankers, who had placed full confidence in the Chancellor's assurance, and had drawn large sums as a preparation for the period when cash payments should be resumed (*Hansard*, xxxvii. 1284).

[2] An account of the partial resumption is given in the Second Report of the Committee of Secrecy, 1819 (*ibid.* xl. 152).

of the restriction, and would place a great part of our paper currency on a more secure footing than ever.

He would propose that, from 5th July, 1820, no private banker should issue notes in England or Ireland for any sum under £5, without having made a sufficient deposit of government securities, consisting either of stock or of exchequer bills—if stock, to an amount double the nominal value of the notes; if exchequer bills, to an equal value with the notes. as to private bank notes under £5.

This would be a return, so far, to the old system, for it would be remembered that it was when the metallic currency was first suspended, by the act prohibiting cash payments by the Bank of England, that permission was given to circulate notes under £5 and of not less that 20/-.

To the objection that this would tend to produce a great and unlimited circulation—as this paper was founded on the immense amount of the funds, it might be considered as co-extensive—he would reply that it was impossible that there could be a greater temptation to an overissue in the case of a paper founded on security than in the case of one founded on no security, the limit of which depended on the will of the banker, and on the will of those among whom it was to be circulated. He considered, besides, that one consequence of the proposed plan would be a tendency to engage men of large property in banking concerns, and to exclude those who did not possess an invariable security for their creditors.

With reference to the continuance of the restriction, there was little criticism in parliament except "we told you so," and the confident statement by many that, when 5th July, 1819, arrived, it would be said that they might as well continue the restriction for another year—that it would throw everything into confusion to resume cash payments until the other fine plan began to operate; surely, no man of decent habits of life could then find it in his heart to refuse such a proposal![1] Criticism.

[1] Grenfell, however, was very contemptuous. In 1816, the exchange was in our favour; gold was only 3 per cent. above par, and silver considerably below it. Notwithstanding this favourable change, nothing had been done by the right honourable gentleman: he said that, at such a moment, it was better to let matters subside and settle. The state of the harvest of 1816, and also that of the following year, was alluded to; but it could not be forgotten that, for the whole spring and summer of 1817, the course of exchange was greatly in our favour, and the price of the precious metals at par. It was in the autumn of 1817 that these advantages ceased, and then, not on account of the harvest, but in consequence of the increase of bank notes which at that time took place. This was the index and barometer by

But the second proposal was strongly attacked. It was a total change in the principle of private bank paper; it was made without consideration by a committee of the House and without calling a single witness; no banker would issue paper on such terms: would any man be such a fool as to take £5 notes from a private banker when he could get £1 notes with good security? etc. On 30th April, the Bill was withdrawn, "in consequence of some circumstances which had occurred at a meeting with the chief country bankers." Vansittart would not say, however, that he would withdraw it permanently. His opinion as to the measure was unchanged, and he still thought that, with some modifications, much good might be done by it.[1]

Lauderdale's powerful speech.

The next stage in the controversy came in the shape of a powerful speech by Lauderdale, in the House of Lords, on the occasion of his asking for a committee to enquire into the existing state of the Metallic and Paper Currency of the United Kingdom.

He ridiculed the idea that foreign loans were the principal obstacle to the resumption of cash payments, and cited the loans and subsidies of 1794 and 1795, as proving that the remittances then made were almost entirely in goods and not in bullion. It was an "indisputable proposition" that this country would not be drained of its specie if the Bank paid its notes, though all the powers in Europe were making loans and though all these loans were negotiated in England. There were two ways of making foreign remittances—in commodities or in money. Merchants would always make remittances in the article which was most advantageous to their own interests; it followed that the foreign loans which had been so much dwelt on could not have sent any money out of the country, or only to a very small extent. The security against a country being drained of specie was complete. If they remitted cash to foreign countries, they would reduce the price of commodities at home. True, they might glut the foreign markets with goods, but the demand for gold could only be temporary.[2]

which the real cause and its progress could be distinctly explained. As to the foreign loans being the explanation, this was equally futile. If a wealthy German merchant happened to settle in this country and contract for a Prussian loan—and a rich English merchant should go over to Paris and treat for a French loan—was it to be endured that, for such a reason, incalculable mischiefs should be borne by a whole people. He could not dwell without warmth on such flimsy pretexts (*Hansard*, xxxvii. 1251).

[1] *Ibid.* xxxviii. 410.

[2] It will be observed that Lauderdale's proof, as stated, is incomplete. He felt it so himself, and "found it so difficult to convey these doctrines in a

His second point was that the real reason for the continuance of the restriction was the advance made by the Bank to the government and the increased circulation of notes. What with the £29 millions of paper in circulation, and what with the loans to the government—of which the government refused to give returns—was there anybody who did not think that the coin requisite for resuming cash payments must be more than double the eleven millions that had been so confidently stated as the sum. On his conscience, he believed that cash payments were at a greater distance than ever.

Turning to the new proposal of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he denounced it as contrary to the whole spirit of the commercial laws of the country; those laws required no other security than the promise to pay and the power to demand the fulfilment of that promise. If the ancient system were restored, the securities proposed were wholly unnecessary. The scheme was nothing but an arbitrary interference of parliament to favour creditors of a particular class. The proposer wished to annihilate country notes under the value of £5; but if he had wished to annihilate all notes of country banks above £5, he could not have taken a better way. It was in effect to stigmatise the country banks, and no man would be willing to take any other notes of such stigmatised banks than those founded on the security. It was to make the country bankers a sacrifice to the favoured Bank of England.

But, as to the notes of the Bank of England, those also called for an enquiry. What had happened when the Bank issued its notice that it would pay in cash all the £2 and £1 notes issued before January, 1817? Why, as everyone knew, those notes were sold at a premium of 2 per cent.—of course, because they, and they alone, were payable in gold on demand. Here, then, the country was to have four descriptions of paper: a Bank of England paper payable in cash on demand; a Bank of England

speech" that he read a long extract from his book, published in 1812, showing that gold would never be sent out of a country except when there was a want of commodities on the exportation of which, joined to the state of the exchange, the merchant might make a profit. He put it better on a later occasion: "If a metallic currency existed in a country, it was impossible that it should be stripped of its gold. The gold might be taken abroad, but, as this operation would tend to reduce the price of commodities, so it would tend to increase the exports, to turn the course of exchange in our favour, and thus to bring back gold and restore the equilibrium" (*ibid.* xxxviii. 946). But he said enough to throw doubt on the current easy doctrine that a gold loan was, necessarily or usually, made in gold.

paper not payable on demand; a paper circulating on the security of deposits of stock and bills; and a paper circulating without any security. Obviously a paper currency of four different descriptions of character must differ also in value. And there was no man who knew anything of the subject but knew that these four different kinds of notes, differing in value, could not circulate together in the same country.

Lauderdale then went on to his own favourite hobby—the advocacy of a silver standard: coin was advantageous to a country as it acted as a measure of value, and, the cheaper the instrument by which that purpose could be effected, the greater the advantage to the country.

**Liverpool opposes a committee.**

Replying to the latter point, Liverpool reminded the House that gold was not arbitrarily chosen as the one standard which they both considered necessary. Gold had become, in fact and in practice, the standard metal before it was declared so by law. It had risen into this state imperceptibly before an act of the legislature sanctioned the practice. As for the country bank issue, the many failures of those banks, and the great distress consequent on them, showed that some regulation was necessary. The only question was: were we to allow the issue of £1 and £2 notes, as now, on no security or on some security. All that a committee could do—seeing that the House had been enquiring into the subject ever since it had been sitting—would be to bring forward the mere speculations of two or three individuals. And he repeated that there was no man in the kingdom more anxious than he to see a return to cash payments as speedily as possible.

**Loans as affecting currency.**

Lansdowne pointed out that Genoa and Holland had supplied loan after loan to other countries without any disturbance or impediment to their home currency. As to the new scheme, he pointed out that it was a curious "palliative" for the continuance of the Bank restriction, that it was not to come into operation for a year after the restriction was (promised to be) removed!

In the end, the motion for a committee was negatived without a division.[1]

**Tierney also asks for a committee.**

In the Commons, Tierney took up the subject, asking for a Select Committee to take into consideration the State of the Circulating Medium, with reference to the continuance of the restriction. He covered the whole ground again, making a most

[1] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 177.

effective point that the preamble to the present Bill was, word for word, comma for comma, the same as that of the Bill two years ago, which stated that the reason for delaying the suspension for two years was the expediency of giving time to the Bank to make arrangements, while, at the present moment, the Bank directors stated that they were perfectly ready and willing to pay immediately in money, and the reason which the Chancellor gave in parliament was—the foreign loans.[1] He repeated the argument that at least part of the loans would go in commodities; if not, the efflux of gold would alter the rate of exchange and bring back the gold. Unless the House showed that it was in earnest, the Bank would never resume cash payments—had it not increased its issues, although the trade of the country showed that there was a diminished need for currency?

Lord Althorp doubted whether foreign loans could ever drain the country of its bullion; this at least was a suitable object for enquiry by a committee. Parnell supported this by adducing the German loan of 1797 for six millions, when only £1,200,000 was exported in cash, the remainder being sent in manufactures the exports of which in that year rose from two millions to eight. As a proof that remittances from one country to another could be performed without bullion, he mentioned the case of the Irish absentee landlords, to whom two or three millions were yearly remitted, though for a long time there had been no metallic currency in Ireland. Tierney replied in a speech, says *Hansard*, "of unusual brilliancy and force," in which he reminded the House that Canning, at the time of the Bullion Committee's discussions, had given Vansittart a severe lecture upon the doctrines he then maintained. Had anybody foretold at that time that an honourable member, so severely lashed for his erroneous opinions on matters of finance, would soon afterwards become Chancellor of the Exchequer, and that the lecturer, and a party to the lecture (Huskisson), would sit by this Chancellor of the Exchequer and support him on an occasion like the present, he would have thought the prophet out of his wits.[2] The committee, of course, was refused by 164 to 99.

**The committee refused.**

The last attempt to make any change in the restriction arrangements was on 18th May, when Frankland Lewis tried to

[1] Vansittart explained that the preamble was "inadvertently copied from the last Act," and that he would, in committee, correct the negligence for which he took the whole blame.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 435.

Frankland Lewis tries to commit the Bank to resumption.

get words introduced into the preamble of the Bill containing a distinct expression of expectation that cash payments would not be again postponed. He discussed once more the reasons given for the continuance, repeating the contention that loans could not drain the country of its bullion—"The exchanges were nearly at par while gold was £4 2s. 6d. per oz. While bills of exchange might be procured at par, it would be obviously impolitic to export gold." France, again, it was known, had undergone every variety of circumstance that could visit a nation, in war or peace, in her trade or commerce, and yet her metallic money currency continued the same. The fact was, and it had been stated ten thousand times in that House, that the rise in the price of gold and the fall of the exchange were solely to be attributed to the enormous issue of bank paper, and nothing could serve to remedy the evil but the restoration of a sound state of currency. Canning now took up the defence of the Bill. It was true, he asserted, that it was the "unforeseen circumstances" which rendered it expedient to continue the restriction. "A loan of unexampled magnitude was contracted for by a neighbouring nation. From obvious probabilities and notorious facts, it appeared that a great proportion of it must go from this country." It was no shame for any person not to have foreseen these circumstances, however great might be his political sagacity. But there was no probability that such circumstances would arise again before the lapse of twelve months.[1]

Restriction continued.

When the Bill came before the Lords on 26th May, the arguments *pro* and *con* were all gone over again, without anything new being brought up, and it duly passed into law.[2]

Mackintosh on forgery of notes

After attention had been called on several occasions, both in the course of debates and by petitions, to the rapid multiplication of forgeries of bank notes, Sir James Mackintosh, on 21st April, brought up the matter formally—putting the crime, however, in such close connection with the Restriction Act that he could scarcely have expected to get the sympathetic consideration of Government. He was prepared to show, he said, that the existing system of paper currency had created an enormous public evil; that it had tainted and corrupted the morals of a large class of people; and that it had occasioned an increase of crime with a rapidity unexampled in the history of law and of civil society. For seven years previous to the restriction, there had not been a single prosecution

[1] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 764, 796. [2] *Ibid.* 920, 971.

for forgery of notes; for the seven years subsequent to it, there were 222. In the twenty-one years preceding, there had been only 6 prosecutions; in the twenty-one years subsequent, there were 850. He would ask whether the history of the criminal law of this, or indeed of any other country, afforded a parallel instance of so great, so sudden, and so permanent an augmentation of crime. And he would make this single observation to the admirers of capital punishment, that, although the crime was always visited with the utmost severity, the more the promoters of capital punishment cried hang! hang! hang! the more the offence was committed, and the more numerous were the offenders executed.[1]

What was the remedy? "The natural remedy was to revert to that state in which there had been no forgeries; but, if this could not be done, it was incumbent on the Bank to seek out some plan for diminishing the calamities consequent on a paper circulation. Some method of making forgery easily detected, if difficult, could not be too eagerly sought after. His present object, however, was to ask for returns of notes forged, the number of persons prosecuted, and the whole expense incurred by the Bank in prosecuting."

His "most eloquent speech" was warmly received, and, in spite of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's opposition to the Bank being asked as to the expenses of prosecution, the whole of the motion was carried without a division.[2]

—asks for a committee.

On 13th May, he moved for a committee to enquire into the means of more effectually preventing the forgery of Bank of England notes. The returns procured showed that the expenses of prosecution by the Bank amounted in the last year to £30,000, and in 1818, up till the present, they were close on £20,000—a general average of £265 for each individual prosecuted. The returns showed also that while, in former years, the forgeries had been chiefly confined to small notes, a proportionate increase of forgeries of large notes had now taken place. The Bank had not taken a single step to save the public—the unfortunate traders and shopkeepers—from the

[1] Sir James Graham stated that half the Bank of England notes (mostly for £1 and £2) circulated in the three northern counties turned out to be forgeries, while the county bank notes were scarcely ever forged (*Hansard*, xxxviii. 434).

[2] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 272.

evils of forgery, while they had adopted abundant measures to save themselves; the liability of the public to be plundered and harassed remained the same as it had been in 1797. He was informed by very competent authority that any boy, who had been six months under the instruction of an engraver, could easily contrive to forge a Bank of England note—not, of course, so as to impose upon the Bank itself—they took good care to provide against that—but to impose upon that class of the people whom it was peculiarly the duty of the House to protect. This was not a matter that concerned the private affairs of the Bank. The enquiry he proposed was necessary, "in order to diminish crime, to stop the course of blood, and to spare the feelings of the public from that horrible carnage which the present system occasioned."

Vansittart grants a Royal Commission.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer rose, not to decry the importance of the subject, but to propose a more effectual mode, namely, an investigation conducted by a special Royal Commission of fully qualified persons, who should have an opportunity of consulting the first artists in the country.[1] Mackintosh passionately protested against a Commission, as meaning delay of months, while the evil went on and the lives of human beings were involved, but the Commission was carried.[2]

As might be expected, several attempts were made, from various motives, to procure some relief from the taxation which bore so heavily on the nation.

Modification of salt duties.

An important modification was made this year on the duties on Salt. On 10th March, Calcraft, who had in the previous session raised the grievance of these duties, announced that it would not be necessary to bring up the question again as the Chancellor of the Exchequer had conceded a Select Committee on the subject; and, amid much congratulation, the Committee was appointed. On 22nd May, Calcraft announced that, while other subjects more complicated must lie over till another session, the Committee were agreed that immediate steps should be taken to reduce the duty on rock salt used for agricultural purposes. Last session, it had been reduced to £10 per ton; the Committee now recom-

[1] He added, rather feebly, that the prevention of forgery of notes would not be quite the panacea for crime that the proposer seemed to think. The resumption of cash payments would, in all probability, lead to an increase in the crime of coining!

[2] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 671.

mended that it should be reduced to £5, so as to make Salt accessible to every holder of land desirous of trying it.[1]

Nothing more appears in *Hansard*, except the mention of the Act in the list of measures passed during the session: "To repeal the duty upon rock salt delivered for feeding or mixing with the food of cattle, and imposing another duty, and making other provisions in lieu thereof."[2]

An attempt to repeal the leather tax

After many petitions had been presented for the repeal of the Leather tax, Lord Althorp moved for leave to bring in a bill on the subject. He asserted that, since the additional tax of 25 per cent. imposed in 1812, the leather trade had fallen from its previously flourishing state. The whole produce of the tax did not exceed £200,000, and, moreover, it was a war tax intended to be repealed on the return of peace.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer questioned very much if the trade was declining. The consumption of leather was certainly increasing, although the war demand, of course, had come to an end. He begged the House to consider calmly what would be the result of repealing duty after duty on the complaints of petitioners. There were at present on the table petitions praying for the repeal of duties and taxes to the amount of three and a half millions, without including the English window tax, which would probably share the fate of the Irish window tax if the latter were repealed. If the entire body of the taxes were to be repealed in that way, what would become of the revenue? In reference to the allegation that the number of manufacturers had decreased, Castlereagh said that this could not be remedied. Perhaps it might be desirable that the different branches of our internal industry were more extended among the people, but the tendency of great capital was to collect that branch of trade in which it was vested into large masses, and thereby to absorb the smaller establishments; "great capitalists would still continue to overlay the small ones." In the teeth of the government opposition, however, leave was given, and Althorp and Brougham were ordered to bring in a bill.

The case was strengthened in the interim by the presentation

[1] There was much speculation and much diversity of opinion among authorities as to the value of salt in agriculture. During the year, the Board of Agriculture offered a gold medal, or £50, for the most satisfactory experiments in its use as a manure, and the Highland Society offered a prize of thirty guineas for the same.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 592; xxxviii. 893, 1327.

of numerous further petitions, and, on 6th April, Althorp moved the second reading. But now the opposition to the repeal was much more determined. The trade, it was affirmed, was not suffering—the tax was thrown on the consumer as in other such cases; leather, almost alone, had escaped extra taxation till 1812; the revenue had not diminished in consequence of the tax, but rather increased. True, it was a tax on a necessary; but if it was found inevitable to lay taxes on all the other necessaries of life, why should leather escape?

Brougham replied to the argument that, if this tax were repealed, another to an equal amount must be imposed, by saying that the Government could do, as it had found possible to do before—reduce establishments by the amount of the tax. The question was one which interested, not only the makers, but the consumers. It was a tax on a common necessary of life, and for that reason it was highly impolitic. But it was worse; it was a poll tax, and a poll tax which weighed most heavily on the wrong class; every person paid it, but, as the tax was by weight, the poorest, who wore the heaviest shoes, paid the most.

is unsuccessful.

In the end, the bill was thrown out, but only by the narrow majority of 6.[1]

Budget.

The Budget this year was brought in at an unusually early date—20th April—on the ground that it was right that the House should approve and sanction the very large loan proposed.[2] The annual accounts had not been presented, but the Supply and the Ways and Means might be given with the exception of a few items.

The Supply was as follows:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Army | £8,970,000 | as compared with last year's, | £9,412,000 |
| Navy | 6,456,800 | „ „ | 7,596,000 |
| Ordnance | 1,245,600 | „ „ | 1,270,000 |
| Miscellaneous | 1,720,000 | „ „ | 1,795,000 |
| Interest and Sinking Fund on Exchequer Bills | 2,560,000 | | |
| Compensation to Spain for Slave Trade | 400,000 | | |
| Deficiency in last year's Ways and Means | 259,600 | | |
| Total | £21,000,000 | | |

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 1043, 1193. [2] *Ibid.* xxxviii. 207.

The Ways and Means were as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Annual taxes | £3,000,000 |
| Excise duties continued till 1821 | 3,500,000 |
| Lottery | 250,000 |
| Old navy stores | 260,000 |
| Arrears of Property Tax, | 250,000 |
| Profits from loan of £1,000,000 for Public Works | 21,448[1] |
| Total | £7,271,000 |

It thus appeared that there was a sum of about £14 millions to be provided for the service of the year. The elaborate scheme by which this was made somewhat palatable is difficult to follow, but it may be put thus:

Three millions were got by a conversion process. The 3 per cents. were now at about 80. The Chancellor of the Exchequer offered to convert £27 millions of those into 3½ per cents. on a payment of £11 per cent. from those who accepted the conversion. This payment would yield about £3,000,000 for the service of the year.[2] But it would have an ulterior effect. The 4 and 5 per cents. would be more easily converted in future into 3½ per cents. than into 3, "for the 3½ per cents. would rise to par sooner than the 3 per cents.; and if the holders of the 5 per cents. were to be reduced to 4 per cent. instead of this 3½ per cent. stock, there might be an apprehension entertained by them that they would be eventually to 3, which, by the terms of the contract for the creation of the 3½ per cent. stock, they were secure from for ten years." Conversion of 3 to 3½ per cents.

At the same time he proposed to fund £27 millions of exchequer bills—it being "inexpedient to prolong the existence of 50 or 60 millions of floating debt, because, in the event of any public alarm or danger, the existence of such a debt might be productive of serious mischief."

It is curious that, neither in the speech nor in the discussion, is mention made of the £11 millions which remained to be met, other than a surmise on the part of one speaker that there would be another issue of exchequer bills to that amount. The

[1] This is the first intimation that a million had been issued in exchequer bills for the "employment of the poor," instead of £750,000, although, in the debates, there were anticipations that the sum named would be exceeded. The above "profits," it was said, had already been paid into the exchequer, and "much more was expected to be returned in the current year."

[2] As Grenfell pointed out, this was really raising £3 millions at 4½ per cent.

No new taxes.

Chancellor finished by announcing that the interest on the new debt would be laid on the Sinking Fund, and that there would be no new taxes—at least this year.

Brougham said that one could not be expected to follow the great multiplication of details, but, in vulgar language, the upshot was this;—after three or four years of peace, so far were we from being able to make the two ends of our finances meet, that there was a clear deficit of £14 millions, and the means resorted to to supply that deficiency was the old war means of a loan, the interest of which was to be paid, not on the old war system, but by charging it on the Sinking Fund. This was the great and new plan of finance from which so much had been hoped. He must withhold his congratulations.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer replied that the deficiency of £14 millions had arisen in a great measure from circumstances which would not recur. A considerable portion of it proceeded from the charge of £2,600,000 on the unfunded debt. Next year this would be reduced by £900,000. In the ways and means of next year, again, he confidently expected an increase that would occasion a considerable surplus in the consolidated fund.

Lottery.

Both Brougham and Lyttelton spoke strongly against the continuation of the lottery. The Budget, said Brougham, contained a sum of £400,000 to be paid to Spain for the relinquishment of the slave trade, as a fit sacrifice to that justice and morality which, with the greatest inconsistency, the proposition for raising a sum of money by way of lottery tended to trample under foot. While the honourable gentleman, said Lyttelton, was voting a million towards the building of churches, he was by the lottery system opening gaming houses all over the kingdom. He had described himself very good-humouredly as a "hardened sinner"—an expression which could not have been applied to him with decorum by any other person—he could not help thinking that he might be more accurately described as a "soft saint," for he bent his morality to answer the views of his policy.[1]

Financial proposals condemned.

When the House went into committee on the Loan Bill, J. P. Grant heartily denounced the financial proposals. In the first year of the peace, we had borrowed £14 millions; in the next,

[1] Parnell thought that the following would be an appropriate epitaph for his tomb: "Here lies the right honourable Nicholas Vansittart, once Chancellor of the Exchequer; the patron of Bible Societies; the builder of churches; a friend of the education of the poor; an encourager of Savings Banks; and—a supporter of lotteries" (*Hansard*, xxxviii. 970).

£12 or £13 millions; now we were borrowing £14 millions, while the income of the country available for the public service did not exceed £6,700,000. Was it possible to go on under such a system, with an income less than a third of the expenditure? Without any settled plan of apportioning the expenses to the income, he could not conceive what advantage could be derived from a nominal sinking fund, when the country was obliged to borrow what it paid off. No man of common-sense, in the affairs of private life, could be imposed on by such a delusion. All this complicated machinery was only throwing a veil over the facts.[1]

The Window Tax in Ireland

A determined attempt was made by the Irish members to secure some remission of the taxation on Ireland. In April, it was moved that the petitions from various parts of Ireland for the repeal of the Window Tax should be referred to a committee. It was represented (1) that it was a war tax; (2) that it was intolerably inquisitorial—the collectors could demand an entrance into every room in every house in Ireland, from eight in the morning until sunset, and insist upon admission under a penalty of £20; (3) that it was a tax on health—during the fever epidemic of the past year, the houses had become so miserably unhealthy from the constant devices to evade the tax, by stopping the windows and excluding the light and air, that government took the alarm and gave orders that all the windows which had been hitherto closed up, and that were necessary to ventilation, should be thrown open for that purpose, without subjecting the owners to any additional claims on the part of the excise.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that he was bound to oppose the motion. Though the window tax might have been a war tax originally, yet, having been from time to time enacted, and at length pledged as a security for certain charges on the consolidated fund, it appeared to him to have lost that character, and it could not, in fact, be repealed without breaking faith with the public creditor. He would allow, however, that "the assessed taxes, and particularly the window tax, had been increased with a rapidity and to an extent which defeated the object sought to be attained—that of producing a steady permanent revenue." (It had, as a fact, produced £54,000 less than in the previous year.) For this reason, he was about to propose to relieve the people of Ireland from the additional duty of 25 per cent. imposed a few years ago.

As Plunkett observed, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had

[1] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 401.

supplied an answer to his own statement that the tax was pledged for a part of the charge on the debt;—"he was ready to give up 25 per cent. of this tax—willing to break one-fourth of his good faith with the public creditor!" The motion, of course, was rejected—by 67 to 51.[1]

—an evil emphasised by the fever.

A few days thereafter, the evil of a tax which tended so directly to encourage disease was emphasised, when Newport asked for a Select Committee to enquire into the contagious fever that had so long raged in Ireland, extending over a space of country containing nineteen million acres and six millions of inhabitants. The fever, which broke out four or five months before, had in September assumed a malignant character. He would not disguise his opinion, he said, that "want of sufficient employment for the productive labour of the people was the main cause of the evil—to that eternal source, he was satisfied, it could be fully and unequivocally traced. . . . It would be of the first importance to enquire whether it would be possible that the labour of six millions of people could be directed so beneficially as to preserve the great majority of them from that state of misery which led to this extent of disease and perhaps of crime" —perhaps the first admission from an Irish member that the population of Ireland was more than it could be expected to support. Peel also ascribed the epidemic greatly to want of employment—using the curious expression that "the great poverty of the labouring classes, owing to a want of employment, had produced a marked depression of mind"—to the wet season which had affected the potatoes, and to the want of fuel. Two circumstances, he said, had aggravated the evil;—the incurable hospitality of the Irish, whom no persuasion would induce to shut their doors against the hordes of wandering beggars roaming about the country and communicating contagion, and the practice of the lower classes of assembling to attend the funerals of their friends. Amid much sympathy, the Committee was appointed.[2]

The new question: Could Ireland feed six millions?

Reduction of taxation in Ireland.

In fulfilment of his promise, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on 13th May, announced that, as regards Ireland, he would make a reduction of 25 per cent. on the Window Tax (imposed on all houses with more than seven windows), and would charge only 1/- per window on houses let in lodgings to poor people. He would make a great reduction also in the tax on all carriages, in the hope that this would produce employment for the carriage

[1] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 239. [2] *Ibid.* 285.

builders; the jaunting-car, for instance, would now pay two guineas instead of £6 10/-. The concession was not received with any gratitude, and demands were at once made for a further 25 per cent., for repeal of the hearth duty, etc., but, of course, in vain.[1]

Parliamentary reform

The question of parliamentary reform was brought up this session only in a speech by Burdett, putting twenty-six Resolutions. Brougham (in a speech which, according to a note in *Hansard* explaining that it was not corrected by the author, was "deemed of peculiar importance in a party view, and with respect to the line taken by the Whigs on the question") said that he could not support Burdett, as he was "most averse to that universal suffrage which was the object of these Resolutions"; and, while expressing himself friendly to the general principle of parliamentary reform, devoted himself, for the most part, to demolishing Burdett's arguments. On the question being put, the order of the day was carried by 106 to 0.[2]

Septennial Act

Before this, however, Sir Robert Heron, seconded by Brougham, had proposed the repeal of the Septennial Act, and got 42 supporters against 117.[3]

Slave Trade—continued evasion.

Towards the end of the session, Wilberforce and Romilly heartily co-operated in keeping before the House the continued evasion of the law in our West India Colonies, and the bad treatment of the slaves there. Romilly contested the argument that the British legislature had no right to interfere with the internal affairs of the colonies. The colonists pretended, he said, that such interference was a violation of the most sacred principles of our constitution. This was to invoke the constitution while they were inverting one of its most sacred principles. "A slave no sooner sets his foot on the shores of Great Britain than he becomes free: in Dominica, when a free negro lands upon their coast, he instantly sinks into a slave, and it is only by money that he can redeem himself." Wilberforce said that, against his better judgment, he had agreed that the further prosecution of the work had better be left to the colonial legislatures; but he now found that he could place no firm dependence except on the legislative of the mother country, and reiterated his belief that an act for establishing a registry of slaves in the West India Colonies by authority of parliament would require to be resorted to.[4]

[1] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 631. [2] *Ibid.* 1118. [3] *Ibid.* 801.
[4] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 294, 298, 841, 1201, 1317. *Romilly*, iii. 341.

Romilly's Privately Stealing in Shops Bill

Although Romilly did much in other fields during this session —and his voice was always raised on the side of mercy and against oppression—his crusade against the Criminal Laws did not make much progress. In February, he got leave to bring in again his Privately Stealing in Shops Bill—the identical bill that had passed the Commons four times, on the last occasion unanimously—and had every time been stopped in the other House. Peel, the Irish Secretary, undertook, if the Bill should pass, to apply the same reform to Ireland, and in the meantime brought in a bill to repeal the Irish act which punished with death the stealing of goods to the value of five shillings from the person—the punishment repealed, as regards England, since 1808.[1] The third reading was marked by an incident which gave Romilly another opportunity of illustrating the evil against which he was fighting. The Attorney-General proposed an amendment changing the terms of the preamble, which set forth that the Bill was founded on the principle that extreme severity was calculated to obtain impunity for crimes. This he objected to, as misleading men into the supposition that punishment ought to be proportional to the precise degree of moral turpitude: he contended that the severity of the punishment ought to have regard, not only to moral turpitude but to the pernicious consequences of the offence. Romilly replied that this would be to expunge the very principle which made the bill both necessary and proper. The "abstract proposition," as the Attorney-General had called it, was only the result of observation and long experience. He quoted a case at the last assize of Southampton, where a servant was convicted of having broken into his master's house and stolen property to a considerable extent. Applications were made to the Secretary of State for a mitigation of the sentence, but they were refused, and the man was executed. "In the newspapers the reason assigned for the failure of these applications was that the judges had come to a resolution that all servants convicted of stealing from their masters should suffer death." What was the immediate consequence? At the next Old Bailey Sessions, a person was tried for stealing property of the value of several hundreds from his master. The evidence was conclusive, and the jury convicted him of "stealing to the amount of 39/-!" "Could any man doubt that the jury in this case returned such

[1] Romilly, *Diary*, iii. 334.

a verdict in consequence of the statement in the newspapers of the resolution of the judges that death should follow upon a verdict of guilty of stealing to the value of 40/-?" The jury were driven to the dreadful alternative of acting in opposition to the awful oath they had taken, or of handing over a fellow-being to the last punishment for a crime which had not been regularly connected with such a punishment.[1]

But, as before, on the second reading, the Bill, championed by Lord Holland, was negatived without a division.[2] again negatived in the Lords.

Romilly, in the last pages of his *Diary*, tells of a meeting he had with Mrs. Fry. "I learned from her some curious facts respecting the effects produced by capital punishments. She told me that there prevails among such prisoners a very strong and general sense of the great injustice of punishing mere thefts and forgeries in the same manner as murders; that it is frequently said by them that the crimes of which they have been guilty are nothing when compared with the crimes of government towards themselves—that they have only been thieves, but that their governors are murderers. There is an opinion, too, very prevalent among them, that those who suffer under such unjust and cruel sentences are sure of their salvation; their sufferings they have had in this life, and they will be rewarded in that which is to come. All the crimes they have committed, they say, are more than expiated by the cruel wrongs they are made to endure. She spoke of the docility she had found, and the gratitude she had experienced from the female prisoners, though they were the most profligate and abandoned of their sex. Kind treatment and regulations, though of restraint, yet obviously framed for their benefit, seem to have been alike new to them; and to Elizabeth Fry.

[1] A more ridiculous case still was quoted in the next session, when Mackintosh took up Romilly's work. "A man swore that, going to bed in his own house, he wound up his watch, put it into his breeches pocket under his pillow, and went to sleep. During the night, a thief got privately into the house, stole the watch, and was detected in pawning it. The jury found the thief, a very young lad, guilty of stealing, but *not in the dwelling-house!*" On which a law commentator observed: "to make common-sense of this verdict, the breeches must have conveyed themselves out of the house, and their motive must have been a desire to be robbed. Having succeeded in a wish—so natural to a pair of breeches—they must have returned, re-entered the room, and replaced themselves under the pillow; and there their master found them the next morning, without once suspecting their midnight truancy" (*Hansard*, xxxix. 817).

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 610; xxxviii. 47, 1185.

have called forth, even in the most depraved, grateful and generous feelings."[1]

Abolition of "blood money."

Bennet's bill, entitled the Offenders Conviction Rewards Bill, for the total abolition of all rewards for the apprehension and conviction of offenders—which was intended to put an end to "blood money"—was read a second time in April. His principal reason for asking the repeal of a system "against which there was a general feeling throughout the country," was that its effects were two-fold: (1) it allowed juvenile offenders to proceed from one crime to another unmolested, till they were, as it was technically called, "worth their weight"—that was £40 sterling; (2) it led to conspiracies for procuring and stimulating people to commit crimes to obtain the reward for their conviction. But, on its recommittal, the Attorney-General, in teeth of the strong opposition of Romilly and Mackintosh, carried an amendment, the effect of which was, not to abolish rewards, but to leave it to the discretion of the judge to apportion such compensation as might appear fit, or to refuse it altogether. After this, we hear no more of the Bill till it appears, among the Acts passed, under the title "For repealing such parts of several acts as allow pecuniary and other rewards on the conviction of persons for highway robbery, and other crimes and offences; and for facilitating the means of prosecuting persons accused of felony and other offences" (c. 70).[2]

Bankes' Game Bill to punish buying of game

The Game Bill, brought in in February by Bankes, was rather a testimony to the strength of the feeling against the Game Laws than any attempt to amend them. It was a bill providing that all persons purchasing game should suffer the same punishment as those selling it.

Curwen at once pointed out that, under such a provision, the smaller culprits would be punished, while those of more importance would escape—for instance, the Lord Mayor must have game; he would not purchase it himself but others would purchase it for him. No legislative measures could prevent the sale of game.[3] On the second reading, Bankes explained that he,

[1] *Diary*, iii. 332.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 690; xxxviii. 15, 507.

[3] The following passage from Blackstone was quoted: "Though the forest laws 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 law, now arrived to, and wantoning in, its highest vigour: both founded upon the same unreasonable notions of permanent property in wild creatures;

personally, was willing to agree to the repeal of all the Game Laws, but, so long as they existed, their operation should be made uniform; and, moreover, he wanted to do something to prevent the punishment by taking away the temptation. It was not the case, he said, that, if this bill passed into law, there would be no means of obtaining game: if there was anything enviable in the situation of a country gentleman, it was the power of making presents of game to his friends, and, game not being found in the market, it would be sent to town as gifts, and the tables of the rich would be as amply supplied as before. Curwen, while saying that the English language did not contain words to express the injustice, tyranny, and oppression of the Game Laws, contended that the bill, by creating additional difficulties in the way of purchasing game, would only raise its price, and give an extra premium to the poacher. But Romilly gave the bill his powerful support.[1] He thought it would be a great improvement on the existing system. He could not see how, when the House refused to make it legal to sell game, they could hesitate to punish the buying of it. It was like punishing thieves and declaring the receivers of stolen goods innocent. The Bill passed the lower House by a large majority.

—passed by the Lords.

When it reached the Lords, none of its supporters was at all enthusiastic, and its opponents had at least the better of the argument. Lauderdale took the ground that, unless the whole system of the game laws was taken up and dealt with, no good could be done by tinkering. The measure was impracticable; nothing could prevent rich men obtaining any of the luxuries of life—even the table of the sovereign was served with purchased game. He wished the bill withdrawn,

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."

[1] "I am myself very much an enemy to those laws; but, because I am an enemy to them, I approve and spoke in support of Mr. Bankes's Bill. The present system is a most pernicious one, and is productive of great misery and enormous crimes. It consists of a very rigorous body of criminal law, but of criminal law which has so little the sanction of public opinion, that no man is thought the worse of, by persons in his own rank of life, for incurring its penalties. . . . What renders this system the more mischievous is, in my opinion, the very circumstance that, while the selling of game is punished as a crime, the buying of it is allowed to pass with complete impunity. If there were no buyers, there could be no sellers. It is the buyers of game who encourage and make poachers, though among these buyers are often the most rigid enforcers of the Game Laws" (*Diary*, iii. 345).

in order that the subject might be taken up on more enlarged principles next session. The Earl of Limerick believed that it would be quite nugatory—"were their lordships not aware that a turkey might be sold for four times its value and game given as a present along with it?" The Lord Chancellor said that, if it was the intention to do equal justice to poor and rich, the bill did not accomplish that object, for it only imposed a fine on the rich purchaser, whereas the poor seller was liable both to fine and imprisonment. The Bill, however, passed, and so far it was clear that, in the House of Lords too, there was a very strong feeling against the Game Laws. Lord Liverpool, in fact, said that there could be no diversity of opinion as to their impolicy and oppression, while Lord Holland confessed that, although these laws were cruel and oppressive, there was great difficulty in furnishing an adequate remedy.[1]

**Its doubtful success.**

The success of the new act may be gathered from Sydney Smith's remark in his article on the Game Laws in 1820: "There must be game on Lord Mayor's Day, do what you will. You may multiply the crimes by which it is procured; but nothing can arrest its inevitable progress from the wood of the esquire to the spit of the citizen. The late law for preventing the sale of game produced some little temporary effect in London at the beginning of the season. The poulterers were alarmed, and came to some resolutions. But the alarm soon began to subside, and the difficulties to vanish. In another season, the law will be entirely nugatory and forgotten."

**Sturges Bourne's Poor Law Amendment Bill,**

Sturges Bourne brought in three bills, based on the findings of his committee which had reported in the previous year.

The first was a Bill for the Amendment of the Laws for the Relief of the Poor. Its principal objects were these. (1) To make provision for carrying into better effect the statute of Elizabeth, so far as regarded setting to work the children of parents who were unable to maintain them. The evil which was aimed at was the very great one of lowering the wages of labour and making good the deficiency out of the poor rates. In one parish, Bourne mentioned, the price of labour had been reduced to 6d. a day, the parish making up the rest. The evil had existed for some time, but it was now increasing beyond all bounds both in manufacturing and agricultural districts. But how it was proposed to meet this evil by setting poor

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 508; xxxviii. 540, 757, 1071, 1185.

children to work, he did not explain. (2) In the case of towns, to enable parishes to rate the owners of houses instead of the occupiers. This, he said, had become necessary because, in towns, by various means a large proportion of the occupiers of houses escaped being rated, the consequence of which was, a large rent paid to the owners, and an immense burden thrown on the remainder.

Minor provisions were: to give employment to those out of work by enabling parishes to let small portions of land to industrious individuals; to authorise parishes to discriminate in the relief they afforded and to regulate its amount by the character and habits of those to whom it was granted; to pay pensions weekly through the parishes and so prevent the improvidence of those who now received their pensions quarterly, dissipated them in two or three days, and then resorted to the parish for assistance; to give magistrates power to pass persons who had no settlement in England to the seaport nearest their homes without committing them as vagrants. There were other provisions, as regards select vestries, overseers, etc., of less importance. Leave was given to bring in a bill on those lines.

This Bill passed the Commons, and reached the committee stage in the Lords, when the clause which enabled churchwardens to take the children of paupers from their parents and consign them to a workhouse was deleted. But, probably owing to the extreme difficulty of the subject and the late period of the session, the bill got no further.[1]

—Parish Vestries Bill,

The second bill was for the Regulation of Parish Vestries. Its chief object was to give additional influence to persons in parish vestries in proportion to their contribution to the poor rate. Those rated under £50 would have one vote only; those above, one vote for every £25 of assessment up to the limit of six votes. This, he said, was to follow the analogy of the kirk sessions in Scotland, where the wealthier classes had the greater influence in managing the provision for the poor. The objection of Curwen, Calcraft, and others was that this was "a curtailment of the rights of what were called the lower orders of society." This Bill duly passed into law.[2]

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 1055; xxxviii. 575, 915.

[2] *Ibid.* xxxvii. 1055; xxxviii. 573. "Bourne," says Nicholls, "founded his hope of improvement chiefly on the administration of the law being placed in the hands of persons of property and intelligence" (*History of the English Poor Law*, ii. 191).

—and Settlement Bill.

The third was a Bill for altering the existing law of Settlement. After a brief historical review of the course of legislation since the statute of Elizabeth first established settlement, he said that the bill proposed would enact that a residence of three years, without an absence of more than sixty days (not consecutive) in each year, and without the individual having been in the meantime chargeable on any parish, or convicted of any crime or misdemeanour, should entitle to settlement in a parish. And, to remove any disinclination to take boys and apprentices, no settlement would be gained under the age of sixteen. The measure would obviate also the existing restrictions in hiring servants, and would have the effect of producing a stronger attachment between them and their employers.

The principle was generally approved, and leave given to bring in a bill, but nothing further was done in this session.[1]

Brougham displeased at this outcome of the Poor Law Committee.

This by no means pleased Brougham, who seemed now to have had his appetite for social legislation whetted by his immense exertions on the Education Committee. He said that, if those three bills were the whole outcome of the Poor Law Committee, he would be considerably disappointed at their not taking a more extensive view of the evil and its remedies; and he gave notice that he would himself lay before the House the result of his consideration of the subject. His first plan would have for object the limitation of the progress of the burden. His next plan would be for gradually narrowing these limits. He was assured, however, by Huskisson, that he was mistaken if he thought that the Committee had no further measures to submit but these three: they felt that other measures were necessary to prevent the evil from overwhelming the country. With this, Brougham professed himself in the meantime content, and urged the Committee to continue its investigations, "in spite of timid, panic-struck alarmists—in spite of sceptical, speculative legislators—in spite of quibbling, subtle lawyers—in spite of those he was unwilling to name."[2]

[1] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 420. "Nothing can be more impolitic," said Romilly, "and in many cases more cruel, than the present law; according to which a man may have resided and exercised his industry for twenty years in a parish without gaining a settlement, and may, at the pleasure of the parish officers, the moment he stands in need of a little temporary relief, be removable, with his wife and all his children, perhaps to some remote part of the kingdom, amongst strangers, where he can find no occupation, and where he, with his family, may be destined to become the inhabitants of a workhouse" (*Diary*, iii. 344).

[2] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 894, 1000.

As might have been expected, the continued peace and the sudden return of prosperity resulted in more attention being given to what may be called economic legislation.

Select Committee on Usury Laws.

The report of the Select Committee on the Usury Laws, presented in May, gave no uncertain sound on the subject remitted to them. The following were the Resolutions:

(1) "That the laws regulating or restraining the rate of interest have been extensively evaded, and have failed of the effect of imposing a maximum on such rate; and that of late years, from the constant excess of the market rate of interest above the rate limited by law, they have added to the expense incurred by borrowers on real security, and that such borrowers have been compelled to resort to the mode of granting annuities on lives, a mode which has been made a cover for obtaining higher interest than the rate limited by law, and has further subjected the borrowers to enormous charges, or forced them to make very disadvantageous sales of their estates.

(2) That the construction of such laws, as applicable to the transactions of commerce as at present carried on, have been attended with much uncertainty as to the legality of many transactions of frequent occurrence, and consequently been productive of much embarrassment and litigation.

(3) That the present period, when the market rate of interest is below the legal rate, affords an opportunity peculiarly proper for the repeal of the said laws."

Onslow gave notice that, early in the next session, he would bring in a bill for their repeal.[1]

Success of Savings Bank.

In March, the Chancellor of the Exchequer asked leave to amend the Savings Banks Act, with a view to obviate certain difficulties which had been found in carrying it into execution. At the same time, he congratulated the House "on the establishment and rapid progress of these Banks—far beyond expectation." Since the 6th August, when the Bill came into force, to 11th March, no less a sum than £657,000 had been deposited. The interest given was 4½ per cent., but, on suggestions as to the propriety of preventing any but the lower classes from taking advantage of the Banks, he suggested that it might be as well to reduce the amount which could be deposited to £100 for the first deposit and £50 a year thereafter.[2]

[1] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 996. [2] *Ibid.* xxxvii. 1156, 1177.

Discussion as to the export of wool.

A motion was made for a Select Committee to enquire into the state of the laws which restrained the trade in home-grown wool. The agricultural interest had long asked for the right of exportation of their wool—the only staple that was under such an interdict. The long wools of Lincolnshire and Worcestershire, it was said, had fallen in price, in consequence of the quantity of foreign wool imported, amounting in value to thirty million sterling in 1814 and 1815.

Against the motion, it was asserted that, since 1816, wool had actually advanced in price; that, with all the foreign import, the home market was yet inadequately supplied; that the woollen manufacturers of Yorkshire had never known so flourishing a year as last, except 1813; that the long wool, which it was in contemplation to export, was that without which the foreign manufacturer could not make goods equal to those produced in England; that the export of wool from England would be the signal for retaliation by other countries, who would put an export duty on their wool; that the system was nearly 200 years old, and had been very advantageous to our manufacturers, etc.

Frankland Lewis, who had been chairman of the committee of 1816, said, on the other hand, that, if the committee were appointed, he would undertake to prove that all the grounds on which the prohibition of export of wool had been founded in 1660 were wholly untenable. But the motion for the appointment of a committee was negatived by 85 to 80.[1]

Truck.

The movement against the payment of wages by truck made some little progress. It appears that, including those passed in the preceding year, there were already acts on the statute book against such payments in certain trades. J. P. Grant now brought in a bill to amend these by way of making them effectual. He agreed that it would be most desirable to extend the operation of the bill to other trades, but, in view of the lateness of the session, he merely asked for a bill to amend certain statutes named, prohibiting the payment of wages in these particular trades otherwise than in the lawful coin or money of the realm (including bank notes). The Bill appears as c. 51 among the Acts passed.[2]

Steam Boats Bill.

The Steam Boats Bill reappears this session in *Hansard* on going into committee. Finlay then moved its rejection, condemning "the spirit which had lately appeared, and of which this was a

[1] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 32. [2] *Ibid.* 855. Append. 1325.

part, for legislating on matters that it were better to leave to the guidance of the parties concerned." The object of the Bill, he said, was to throw the management of steamboats into the hands of certain inspectors and to take away the responsibility of carefully attending to the steam-engines from the parties really interested in seeing them work with safety and effect—all because some accidents had occurred in high-pressure engines. No such accidents were ever known in the low-pressure engines which were in general use. He withdrew his amendment, but the measure does not seem to have got further.[1]

London Water Companies.

In April, attention was drawn to the Supply of Water in the metropolis. A coalition, it was asserted, had been formed among the four companies who had divided the city among them, reducing them to three, depriving certain districts of their supply, and raising the price. Lauderdale contended that this was to establish a monopoly and defeat the very object of the different bills.[2] In sequel to this, came a petition from the vestry of Marylebone, praying for an order to establish a new water company. The companies, it said, had been cutting each others' throats, till they became so distressed in their finances that they were almost under the necessity of stopping their works. They then came to an agreement to divide the metropolis between them, but, in the division, some places were left without water altogether. Meanwhile the matter was referred to a committee.[3]

Gas.

In February, we find a Bath Gas Lights Bill read for the second time. One gathers that it was opposed by the Corporation of Bath, on the grounds ostensibly that there was a difference of opinion with respect to the merits of the new light; and that the great majority of the owners of property in Bath were opposed to it, largely on account of the abominable smell. On the other hand, it was hinted that the opposition to the Bill was fomented by the Corporation, who wished to undertake the job themselves, "conceiving that it would be profitable."[4]

Limited liability.

The system now familiar as "limited liability" was again (see p. 232 *supra*) brought before the House in a curious connection, when Alderman Wood moved for leave to bring in a bill for the "Employment of the Poor." It was in his judgment a

[1] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 511.
[2] *Ibid.* xxxvii. 1183, 1210.
[3] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 31.
[4] *Ibid.* xxxvii. 576, 1180.

measure of the highest importance—no less than one which would procure employment for the millions of people in the United Kingdom, particularly in Ireland, who were now unhappily without any means of exerting their industry. It turned out that this high-sounding aspiration referred to a proposal to allow persons to embark a certain capital in trading partnerships under limitation of their liability to the amount of the capital embarked. In Ireland this permission was already given, but certain deficiencies had been found in the statutes under which it was granted, and the present Bill was intended to correct these and to extend the privilege to England. This, said Grenfell, was to legalise joint-stock companies, while leaving the parties to them liable only to the amount of their respective shares. It was thus doing away with all the existing laws for the protection of trade and commerce. It would strike at the root of our whole commercial system. He knew that, in many parts of the continent, limited liability was adopted, but it was so contrary to the system on which this country had ever acted, that he should feel it his duty to oppose the proposition at every stage. In spite of this opposition, the resolution to bring in a bill was agreed to, but nothing more was heard of it during this session.[1]

Ribbon weavers.

A petition was presented from the Coventry Ribbon Weavers. The objects aimed at were: (1) to remedy the evil resulting from the existing law with respect to apprenticeships; (2) to enable them to settle the rate of their wages among themselves—they were precluded, it was said, from making such arrangements among themselves as were necessary to secure a due remuneration for their labour. The petition was referred to a committee, but no account of any report appears.[2]

Thames watermen.

In April, several petitions were presented from the Thames Watermen[3]—"a very worthy and meritorious class"—to the effect

[1] *Hansard*, 1289; xxxviii. 22. From a debate in 1819, when the matter was brought up again, we find that the "anonymous partnership," as it was called, the idea of which had been taken from a French law book, was passed in the Irish parliament in 1781. It had been rejected by the English law authorities as contrary to the practice of England, but was allowed to Ireland as being necessary for the encouragement of her manufactures. Wood said in this debate that his object was to induce men of large capitals to vest part of them in trade or manufactures in Ireland without fear of subjecting themselves to the operation of the bankrupt laws, by limiting their liability to the amount invested (*Hansard*, xl. 124).

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 395. [3] *Ibid.* 1187.

that their employment and consequent sole means of living arose from the conveyance of passengers and luggage across the Thames near Rotherhithe; that they had acquired a right to ply upon the river by an apprenticeship of several years; that most of them, moreover, had served on board his Majesty's ships of war; and that, if the bridge now contemplated by an act before the House were built, their plying would be rendered unnecessary. It is some indication of the hopelessness of their case that they did not, in so many words, petition against the building of the bridge, but asked for an indemnity in case of its being built.

Want of employmen in Cork.

A petition from Cork, setting forth the daily increase of poverty arising from want of employment, suggested a comprehensive list of remedies, namely, "some legislative enactment respecting the non-residence of the nobility and gentry, the encouragement necessary for the increase of their manufactures, the formation of canals, the working of mines and fisheries, the more profitable tillage of land, the construction and repairing of roads. and such other means of employment as the House might think proper to devise," adding that, to extend the benefits of education to all classes, would be the best corrective of human depravity and the most efficient moral engine of state.[1]

Petition against London brewers.

In March, a curious petition was presented, signed by 14,000 inhabitants of the metropolis and vicinity, complaining of the monopoly of the brewing of porter by certain brewers. The charge was made that, in spite of the fall in the price of hops and malt since the war, of the removal of the malt duty, and of the abolition of the property tax, beer was of inferior quality, and was kept at high prices by the eleven chief brewers in the metropolis, who met and fixed the price at which it should be sold. The evil grew out of the monopoly, and the monopoly was created and maintained by the discretion given to the magistrates in granting licenses. The remedies suggested were that the trade should be thrown open, the power of the magistrates reduced from the patronage and entire control over it to the legal one of correcting its abuses, and a very large duty imposed on the licenses to open any new house.

Two paragraphs of the petition are interesting to modern readers: "That the supposition of correcting the licentiousness encouraged at some public-houses by denying licences for others, is only calculated to benefit the monopoly system: it being

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 671.

evident, in principle, that men will not drink less, or be less disorderly, when drawn together in one house than they would be if divided among two or three, and notorious in practice, that some of the houses which command a superior share of custom and profit are among those which are most injurious to the public health and morals.

"That such is the value, however, of the prohibition of competition, that thousands of pounds are frequently given for the consideration of a licence to a house, in other words, for permission to trade, which expense, together with the extra profits secured by the monopoly, fall upon the consumers and become a grievous burthen to the lower classes of the community."[1]

The brewers' reply.

The indignant answer of the brewers was that there was no monopoly in the metropolis—the "tied-house" was a country institution; of the 2,000 public-houses supplied by the three largest breweries, not 300 were their property; that the price was not and never had been excessive; that no deleterious ingredients were mixed with the beer of the great brewers—it was indeed impossible that such practices could be carried on without at once becoming public, making them liable to a heavy fine, and ruining their name. In the debate, very severe things were said about this "scandalous petition," and it was agreed that, to give the brewers a full opportunity of justifying themselves, the petition should be referred to a Committee.[2]

Report of Committee on the subject.

In June, the Committee reported. As to prices, they were of opinion, after a full examination, that those were neither unfair nor unreasonable. As to deleterious ingredients, not a single instance was found of such in the case of any of the eleven great breweries. As regards the so-called monopoly, it was a public benefit, in virtue of the superior article which the brewers were enabled to furnish from the better arrangements which their large capitals necessarily commanded. As to licensing, though from want of time they could not examine at any great length into the state of the country breweries, it did appear to them that the abuse of the licensing system was in progress there, and was producing more injurious effect than in the metropolis.

"Tied houses."

"It further appears to your committee," said the Report, "that, in some districts, not only brewers become the purchasers of licensed houses, but maltsters and spirit merchants also; that

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 930. [2] *Ibid.* xxxvii. 1072.

the brewers bind their proprietory houses to the spirit merchant, who, in return, performs the same service for the brewers; that the liquor then becomes inferior; private families supply themselves from their own breweries; smaller societies brew from molasses in tea kettles; but the poor, who have none of these resources, must be content with such liquor as is retailed at the licensed houses, whatever may be the quality, the price, or the measure. This system of purchasing licensed houses appears to be condemned by two of the principal brewers, who must be supposed best to know its evil tendency and effects, not only as against the public, but as against the prosperity of their own trade."

Recommendation.

"Your committee, on the difficult question of applying a proper and temperate remedy to this evil, and avoiding as much as possible proposing any measure by which that species of property which the legislature has, by its attention not having been called to the subject, permitted to arrive at its present magnitude, beg leave to suggest, that it may be fit to enact some prospective law, which, at a given period of time, shall direct the magistrates to refuse licences to such houses as shall, on due inquiry, appear to them, by any new contract, purchase or mortgage, to have become, in substance, the property of a brewer; and, until some regulation of this nature be adopted, they beg leave to submit to the House that they entirely concur in that part of the report of the police committee which earnestly calls 'on the magistrates in the country to lend their aid to break down a confederacy which is so injurious to the interests of the poor and middling classes of the community.'"[1]

Regulation of Surgery Bill.

The dread of monopoly, so strongly expressed in certain directions, was curiously shown by the short shrift given to a bill introduced for the better Regulation of Surgery throughout the United Kingdom. The objects of the Bill were: that no one should be allowed to practise surgery without a testimonial from some of the regular colleges; that no higher fee should be demanded for such a testimonial than had heretofore been paid; and that the laws should be repealed which precluded any surgeon from officiating in the hospitals and dispensaries of Ireland who had not obtained a testimonial from the College of Surgeons in that country.

The opposition found expression, at the moment, only in the

[1] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 1196.

remark that, if this bill originated with the surgeons, it must have a monopoly in view. But, on the second reading, it was literally overwhelmed with abuse. Apprenticeship restrictions had been abolished as regards ordinary trades; were certain corporations then to be invested with the power of deciding who should and who should not practise surgery? It would destroy the only check that now existed against an improper system of professional practice—it would destroy all competition. It might with equal propriety be demanded that the surgeons of the United Kingdom should all pass through a certain turnpike and pay toll in order to qualify them for the exercise of their function as to regulate their efficiency by such a test as was now proposed. Even Peel said that, under such a system, it would soon come to be a mere competition among the several bodies to procure the greatest quantity of fees—the more testimonials they granted, the greater would be their profits. In the end, the mover said that he was not disposed to press its adoption against the opinion of the House, and the Bill was postponed till that day six months.[1]

**Copyright.**

The grievances of authors and publishers under the existing Copyright Act were freely ventilated during this session. In March, Sir Egerton Brydges got leave to bring in a bill to repeal the Act. It seems to have got no further than the second reading; but, on that occasion, the general feeling was that the subject had better be referred, and Wynn secured the appointment of a Select Committee to consider the existing Copyright Acts. The hands of the Committee were strengthened by numerous petitions from influential publishers, and, when the Report was presented, on 5th June, it was found to contain little but a strong pronouncement on the principal grievance, the delivery of eleven copies free to the great libraries. There was no other country, it was said, in which a demand of this nature was carried to a similar extent, and the following resolutions were come to:

**A Select Committee appointed.**

**The eleven copies.**

(1) That it is the opinion of this Committee that it is desirable that so much of the Copyright Act as requires the gratuitous delivery of eleven copies should be repealed, except in so far as relates to the British Museum, and that it is desirable that a fixed allowance should be granted in lieu thereof to such of the other public libraries as may be thought expedient.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 396, 1285.

(2) That, if it should not be thought expedient by the House to comply with the above recommendation, it is desirable that the number of libraries entitled to claim such delivery should be restricted to the British Museum, and the libraries of Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, and Dublin Universities.

(3) That all books of prints, wherein the letterpress shall not exceed a certain very small proportion to each plate, shall be exempted from delivery, except to the Museum, with an exception of all books of mathematics.

(4) That all books, in respect of which claim to copyright shall be expressly and effectually abandoned, be also exempted.

(5) That the obligation imposed on printers to retain one copy of each work printed by them shall cease, and the copy of the Museum be made evidence in lieu of it.[1]

Chimney Sweepers Bill

In February, Bennet asked leave to bring in a Chimney Sweepers Regulation Bill—a transcript of the bill of last year, "with the exception only of that provision which related to the total and prompt abolition of the use of climbing boys," which provision, he said, had perhaps prevented the Bill from being carried. The object now was, without disturbing the present apprenticeships, to prohibit any master sweep from thereafter taking any apprentice under fourteen years of age. The measure was supported by several petitions—among others, one from certain master chimney sweepers of London and Westminster. On presenting one of these, Lord Milton deprecated haste—some chimneys could only be swept by boys; suggested the compromise of giving particular encouragement to those persons who swept chimneys by means of machinery; and, on this proposal being somewhat contemptuously received, significantly reminded the House that the Bill had yet to pass "in another place."

—withdrawn in the Lords.

The next notice of the Bill is when it reached its third reading in the Lords. It was then withdrawn by Lord Auckland, on the ground that experiments in sweeping by machinery had been made on a very extensive scale—sixty of the most difficult chimneys had been swept without any failure. On that account, he would not press the third reading, and hoped next session to be able to propose, not the regulation but the abolition of sweeping by climbing boys.[2]

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 756; xxxviii. 154, 1256.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 216, 506; xxxviii. 649.

Committee on Education

In March, Brougham moved for the renewal of the Select Committee, which had already sat for two sessions, on the Education of the Lower Orders. The Committee had not yet completed their labours, but he might say that they were of opinion that steps should be taken to remedy the want of education in different parts of the country by state assistance to the erection—not to the maintenance—of schools in various places. A moderate sum would be sufficient (and this might be with the more propriety bestowed when one remembered that, ever since the Union, seldom less than £40,000 a year had been given for the Irish Charter Schools) as there existed throughout the country very large sums—something between £200,000 and £300,000—bequeathed by individuals for the education of the poor. These charitable funds were, indeed, in many cases grossly misapplied,[1] and he thought that another tribunal ought to be instituted, besides a Committee of the House of Commons, namely, a Commission which might visit and make enquiries on the spot into such misapplication.[2]

renewed.

The Committee (Education of the Lower Orders) was renewed, and Brougham lost no time in bringing in a bill appointing

Commission on Charitable Funds appointed.

Commissioners to enquire into the Application of Charitable Funds for the purposes of education in England. From stage to stage, as the measure was passing through, he kept pouring in fresh instances of abuses and malversation, and in the end the Bill was carried. But he had to submit to limitations in powers and remit which he very much resented.[3] The universities, the great public schools, and charities having special visitors, were excluded from the purview of the Commission. So far, however, Brougham made up for this by obtaining powers for his Committee to look into the administration of charity funds committed to these bodies.[4]

[1] Cf. *A Letter to Sir Samuel Romilly from Henry Brougham, upon the Abuses of Charities.* Longmans, 1818.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 815.

[3] The Chancellor (Lord Eldon), as one might expect, did all he could against the Bill. It would be most detrimental, he said, to the interests of charities; no honourable man would take upon himself the responsibility of a charitable trust if he were to be exposed to suspicious and vexatious enquiries into all the details of his duties, etc. In the same tone, Lord Redesdale said that the Bill could do no good and might occasion infinite mischief: "the Commissioners would not do their duty if they did not rigidly enquire into all charitable foundations; and if they did do their duty, it would give disgust to all who had hitherto executed their trusts most faithfully and beneficially."

[4] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 285, 336, 341, 585, 760, 835, 975 1036, 1207, 1212, 1294.

In April, another Committee was appointed to enquire into the state of the Police of the Metropolis, with instructions to report on the condition of three of the London prisons—Coldbath-fields, Tothill-fields Bridewell, and Clerkenwell—and on 5th June it reported. The points mainly dwelt on were: the absence of any classification of prisoners—first offenders being thrown into the company of hardened criminals; the pitiful condition of those who came out of prison without money, debarred from employment and almost driven back again to crime; and the number of transportations and capital convictions which had grown up under this system. Report on London prisons.

In presenting the Report, Bennet, who was again Chairman, took occasion to say that those evils were not confined to the London prisons,—what were known throughout the country by the name of Houses of Industry and Correction were in reality nurseries of idleness and vice; and he concluded by expressing the hope that the result of the enquiry would be to alter the existing system in the management of gaols, as that system, instead of contributing to the reformation of offenders, operated to their further corruption and degradation.[1]

In February, a Gambling Suppression Bill was brought up for a second reading, the object being to prevent gambling in any house or room without a license. Strong objection was taken to it on the ground that it was not a bill to suppress but merely a bill to regulate vice, and it was thrown out.[2] Gambling Suppression Bill.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 1228; xxxviii. 1264. At the same time Fowell Buxton's little book, entitled *An Inquiry whether Crime and Misery are Produced or Prevented by our Present System of Prison Discipline*, had produced a great effect on public opinion. This impression must have been deepened by the publication, in 1819, of *Visits to Some of the Prisons in Scotland*, by Mr. Gurney and his sister, Mrs. Fry, in which the corruption consequent on the indiscriminate mingling of prisoners of various degrees of depravity, and, too often, of both sexes, is forcibly dwelt on. The very description of most of the persons is sufficient to induce nausea. The following is the account of Haddington Jail: "The part allotted to criminals *and vagrants* consists of four cells on the ground floor, each thirteen feet by eight, and one on the second floor, eleven feet by seven. These cells were dark—excessively dirty—clay floors—no fireplaces—straw in one corner for a bed, with a single rug—a tub in each of them the receptacle of all filth. No clothing is allowed—no medical man attends it—no chaplain. There is no change of rooms or airing-ground—and the jailer lives away from prison. The prisoners can keep up an almost unchecked communication with the people of the town through the grated windows of their cells, which all look into the street. This prison, owing to a late riot, was crowded—and they all seemed hardened and indifferent." The principles of reform advocated by Mrs. Fry, it may be noted, were classification, employment, cleanliness, and inspection.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 567.

Parliament dissolved.

In the Regent's Speech on closing the session, he announced that it was his intention to dissolve the parliament which had now sat for six years. The last action of the Ministry was to continue the Alien Act for two years longer, and the occasion is notable for Romilly's last speech, in which he ended up a tremendous indictment of the government's encroachments on liberty with the words: "This, Sir, is what we have done; and we are about to crown all by the present most violent and most unjustifiable act. Who our successors may be, I know not; but God grant that this country may never see another Parliament as regardless of the liberties and rights of the people, and of the principles of general justice as this Parliament has been."[1]

General elections.

The election which followed was fought with unusual bitterness on both sides. One of its pleasant incidents was the return of Romilly for Westminster at the head of the poll, without solicitation or personal canvass, and without his even appearing on the hustings or issuing an election address.[2] The net result was a gain of 33 seats to the Opposition. But the 173 members, who could now be counted on in any vote against the Government, were divided in every other respect. The Whigs, hopeless of return to power, and deserted by the shopkeeping class who thought law and order threatened, were becoming more conservative as to parliamentary reform, and losing the confidence of the people, and the Radicals were left to bolder and less capable leaders.

Return of prosperity.

As the year went on, it became evident that the tide of depression had fairly turned. On 27th May, the Chancellor of the Exchequer could say that the revenue was increasing at the rate of £100,000 a week; that the money market was redundant, and the general state of the country highly satisfactory. And the Regent's Speech, in closing the session on 10th June, said that the improvement in the internal circumstances of the country was happily manifest and promised to be steadily progressive.[3] Consols remained steady during the year. The bankruptcies were one-third fewer than they had been in the previous year.

Foreign trade.

The return of prosperity was reflected in the figures of foreign trade, which showed an increase of about six millions in imports,

[1] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 1276. [2] Romilly, *Diary*, iii. 356.
[3] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 981, 1315.

three millions in exports, and half a million in re-exports. The Official values were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports - - - - - - - - - - | £36,885,182[1] |
| Exports of British produce and manufactures - | 42,702,068 |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise - | 10,859,817 |

The Real value of the exports was £46,470,863.

The number of vessels built and registered in the several ports of the empire were: in the United Kingdom, 758; in the Isles, 8; in the British Plantations, 316; representing, respectively, 81,263, 845 and 22,321 tons.[2]

Agriculture.

The harvest was rather a peculiar one. The spring months were singularly cold and vegetation was far behind. Then, from the middle of May till late autumn, the weather was genial in the extreme; in some quarters, indeed, the land was parched.[3] Reaping began in the southern counties as early as July. In Scotland, where the heat had not been so extreme, the crop as a whole was plentiful, the wheat of excellent quality, and potatoes most abundant. But, in England, while wheat was estimated as an average crop, oats, peas, and beans were deficient by about a half, and, in some places, potatoes were "as dear as apples." Cattle were in brisk demand at very high prices. As it turned out, however, the main factor in determining the price was the import. The harvests of 1817 and 1818 were very abundant all over Europe. The four months of drought and the expectation of scarcity brought immense quantities of barley, oats, and rye from the Baltic, Indian corn from America, beans and Indian corn from Italy and Egypt, hay from New York, and barley from

A fine harvest in Scotland —not so good in England.

[1] For the sake of comparison with the figures of 1816, it may be well to give the official values of the imports into Great Britain from all parts (except Ireland), for the year ending 5th January, 1819: cotton wool, £5,764,000; raw sugar, £5,418,000; corn, grain, meal, and flour, £3,914,000; coffee, £2,804,000; tea, £2,007,000; sheep's wool, £1,017,000; wines, £892,000; rough flax, £867,000; indigo, £777,000; piece goods of India, £768,000; madder and madder root, £720,000; raw silk, £708,000; thrown silk, £548,000; tallow, £581,000; rough hemp, £561,000 (Finance Accounts, Part IV.).

[2] *Hansard*, xl. Append. xli. "The demand for ships is very great," said the Commercial Report in *Blackwood* of the following January, "and, we have reason to know, has not been so extensive for a great number of years. In the port of the Clyde, there are more new ships building than has been known since 1792, and we believe we may say that it is the same in many other ports" (p. 497).

[3] The *Farmer's Magazine* in May said that the condition of the labouring classes throughout Scotland was better than it had been for three years, though wages were only about three-quarters of the war rates (p. 350).

Great importation.

Constantinople.[1] The import of wheat and wheat-flour was the greatest on record up till that date, namely, 1,694,000 quarters, while the export fell from 317,000 quarters in 1817 to 58,000. The price, which had been 85/3 in January and had touched 90/- in April, fell to 80/- in August and to 78/10 at the close of the year. The Board of Agriculture average of the year was 86/3.

Corn Laws.

"The present corn laws seem to please nobody," said the *Edinburgh Magazine* in December. "They are a standing topic of reproach with speculative men, as well as with the great body of the manufacturing classes; and now the agriculturists, whom they were to save from utter ruin, take the lead in seeking their repeal. Petitions to this effect have been circulated through most of the English counties, and, it is confidently expected, will be signed by most of the landed proprietors and farmers. What the precise object may be, does not yet appear, the prayer of these petitions being quite general; but, in the shape of a protecting duty, which is the language employed, there can be no doubt that it is wished to throw greater obstructions in the way of foreign supplies."[2]

Extreme activity in industry.

In most other departments of industry, up till the end of the year, there was extreme activity. As much cotton came into Liverpool alone by 5th December as had been imported into the whole of the United Kingdom during 1817, while the imports of the same into London and Glasgow amounted in value to something like £12 millions in eleven months. If other countries had put on protective duties, they did not seem to present any serious impediment to our trade; "the cotton manufactures of the United States and of continental Europe," said *Blackwood* exultantly in January, "have sunk before our own." The woollen trade was most prosperous—"wool never, we believe, was sold for more money." At Dudley, Stourbridge and other centres, the iron trade

[1] Tooke, *History of Prices*, ii. 21.

[2] P. 582. The unsatisfactory working of the Corn Law may be seen from the fact that, the average of the six weeks previous to 15th August having been a fraction more than 79/11, the ports were closed to wheat, while remaining open for all other sorts of grain. "It is evident," says the *Edinburgh Magazine*, "how much the interests of the producers on the one hand, and of the consumers on the other, may be affected by a slight inaccuracy in making up the returns from which these averages are calculated; and yet we hear great complaints from several quarters of their inaccuracy" (October, 385). On the averages made up to 15th November, the ports were again opened. "The ports, it is alleged, would not have been opened to wheat if the November average had been correctly made up" (*ibid.* December, 582).

had never been known to be so brisk as in September, and makers could not execute their foreign orders.[1]

Strike of Lancashire spinners.

One of the best proofs of reviving prosperity was the fact that the Lancashire spinners, without funds of their own, were able to fight out a determined strike for ten weeks.

The men's side.

The case, from the side of the men, was put in an Address to the Public. They stated that, two years previously, the employers had enforced a reduction of ten hanks, promising that, when the market would permit of an advance, they would willingly give it. This brought down wages twenty to twenty-five per cent. below the former average of about 24/- a week, and at that level they had remained ever since. The demand for yarn was now unprecedented, and the consequent rise in twist great, but the masters refused to implement their promise, and "in order to cause a belief that trade was in a declining state, gave notice that their mills should only work three days in the week, which appeared so extremely ridiculous that the very children employed in factories laughed at it." They added that, when it was considered that the hours were from five in the morning till seven at night, and in some mills longer, of unremitting toil—they did not blame the employers; it was perhaps inseparable from the very nature of the employment—they believed the public would agree that no body of workmen received so inadequate a compensation for their labour—"to labour hard is not an easy task, but to labour hard and want is impossible."

The masters side.

The other side was put in the *Manchester Chronicle* which pledged itself to the accuracy of the statements. While the weavers, like every other class except spinners, had suffered excessively from low wages and want of employment, the spinners had had constant work and high wages during the past two years. At the time when they turned out, their wages were the same as they had been for nine months previously, namely, a net average of over 31/- for men spinners, and 17/- for boy and girl spinners, clear of all charges and deductions whatsoever.

Picketing.

The strikers acted under leaders and according to plans. They were supported by subscriptions from outside and by weekly levies upon other trades. Their chief method was "watching"

[1] Monthly commercial reports in *Blackwood* and *Edinburgh Magazine*, *passim*.

—we should say "picketing"—those factories which were partially or wholly at work, and "seducing" their operatives. Generally, their conduct was peaceable, though "marked by a steady adherence to the rules of combination," but, even in July, there was some breaking of windows and reading of the Riot Act, and, in September, an attack was made upon a mill when those inside fired on the mob and wounded several. But the military were called out, and, by 15th September, we hear that the strikers were again at work—convinced, said the *Manchester Herald*, "that they have neither the right nor the power to dictate, as a body, to their employers."

It will be seen that the strike—one of the very earliest struggles on a large scale between the rival powers of capital and labour—did not differ from later ones, either in its methods of "peaceable picketing," or in the totally irreconcilable accounts of "facts" from the two sides.[1]

The weavers demand an advance,

It would seem, however, that the weavers meanwhile had to some extent followed the example of the spinners, and made a demand for an advance of 7/- in the pound. "Plain cotton fabrics," says the *Manchester Herald*, "which require the least personal skill in weaving, are chiefly made in Burnley, and, when it is considered that three weeks are always deemed a sufficient length of time to teach a mere labourer, when committed for any offence to the New Bailey Prison, to weave calico, it cannot be wondered that competition is excessive or that the price paid for weaving the article should be small, compared with that paid for goods which require superior skill." The Burnley weavers, however, were not satisfied with "the advance they had actually obtained on the price of their labour," and began rioting on the 17th September. The magistrates, having only six dragoons at their disposal, did not deem it prudent to persist in the exercise of their duty, and things looked very threatening, till the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry, "in the handsomest manner, volunteered their services." "The presence of the force broke the spirits of the refractory, and, instead of attending an unlawful meeting, the quiet, peaceable, and industrious weavers, who had been forcibly driven from their looms by threats of vengeance by the leaders, resumed their daily labour, and the click of the fly-shuttle was heard in every loom-house."[2]

and at Burnley break into rioting.

[1] *Annual Register*, Chron. 90, 101, 103, 121, 123.

[2] *Annual Register*, 124, 128.

George Rose died in January, the old Queen in November, and Ellenborough in December. But a greater than these also passed. The gentle Romilly, tortured by painful illness and crazed by the loss of his beloved wife, added his name to the list of great men who have died by their own hand—an end all the more tragic that his life was so singularly tranquil and happy.[1] The historian, accustomed to turn to the *Diary* for wise commentary on the events in which its writer bore so great a part, has a feeling of a personal loss.[2]

Obituary. Romilly.

In general literature, appeared Keats' *Endymion*,[3] Shelley's *Revolt of Islam*, Scott's *Heart of Midlothian*, and Miss Ferrier's *Marriage*.

Literature.

MISCELLANEA.

A grant of £13,500 was voted to the British Museum for the purchase of Dr. Burney's library, said to contain "the most complete collection of Greek literature that had perhaps ever been in the possession of any one individual," as well as complete sets of newspapers from the earliest publication of anything in that shape—not without some grumbling from the advocates of economy.[4]

Romilly, in his *Diary* of 22nd April, tells that he went down to Deptford to see the vessels about to sail to the North Pole and in search of the North-West Passage, and had much conversation with Lieutenant Franklin who commanded the *Trent*.[5]

[1] One remembers what his friend Horner had written on Whitbread's suicide: "Nor do I remember in our time another catastrophe so morally impressive as the instantaneous failure of all that constancy and rectitude and inflexibility of mind, which seemed possessions that could be lost only with life" (*Memoirs*, ii. 261).

[2] "By his courageous and consistent public conduct, united with his known private worth, he was rapidly acquiring an authority over men's minds that, had his life been spared a few years, would, I think, have equalled, if not surpassed, even that of Mr. Fox. He indeed was a *leader* that all true Whigs would have been proud to follow, however his modesty might induce him to decline being called so" (Creevey, i. 290). Romilly's last printed matter was a review in the *Edinburgh Review* of Bentham's *Papers relative to Codification and Public Instruction*, in which he drew attention to those evils which seemed to him inseparable from an unwritten law, such as the Common Law of England (*Diary*, iii. 324).

[3] As everybody knows, the review in the *Quarterly*, by Croker, went far to account for Keats' early death. Croker, congratulating himself that he had not read beyond the first of the four books of which this poetical romance consists, went on: "The author is a copyist of Mr. Hunt; but he is more unintelligible, almost as rugged, twice as diffuse, and ten times more tiresome and absurd."

[4] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 501.

[5] iii. 335.

# CHAPTER XXX

## 1818. INTRODUCTION OF THE FIRST GREAT FACTORY ACT

AMONG the parliamentary debates of the session, perhaps the most important, from the point of view of economic history, was that over the introduction of the first great Factory Act.

**Petition of cotton spinners.**

On 10th February, Sir Robert Peel presented a petition from the cotton spinners of Manchester. "The petitioners," he said, "had come to him most unexpectedly, but he felt that they were entitled to his peculiar attention. They were aware that the attainment of the object of their petition must be attended with a reduction of their wages; but, anxious for health and in order to enjoy some of the comforts of life, they were willing to submit to that sacrifice. He had had a communication with some of these poor men this morning; and he declared he could not hear their statement, or witness their appearance which confirmed that statement, without shedding tears. . . . In rooms badly ventilated and much over-heated, they were compelled to work 14 or 15 hours a day. Young persons might endure such labour; but, after men had attained a certain age, it became intolerable. Premature old age, accompanied by incurable disease, was, indeed, too often the consequence of such labour in such places. . . . He had himself been long concerned in the cotton trade; and, from a strong conviction of its necessity, he had brought in a Bill for the purpose of regulating the work of apprentices; but, since that Bill passed into law, masters declined to take apprentices, and employed the children of paupers without any limitation. Hence the law was evaded and rendered ineffective for the object which it had in view—that object was the prevention of inhumanity; and he hoped that it was not inconsistent with our constitution to legislate for the protection of children as well as grown persons against the

harshness of their employers. Those immediately concerned in the cotton trade did not perhaps perceive the injury to health which their workmen suffered, as they were in the habit of seeing them every day; but that injury was obvious to every stranger. Such a case was detailed in this petition as presented an appeal to the House which could not be withstood by any assemblage of gentlemen susceptible of common humanity; and these people had no other protection but in that House."

The honourable baronet, says the usually impassive *Hansard*, manifested throughout very great emotion, and was listened to with peculiar attention.

The petition asked that "the period for their employment might be limited to 10½ hours each day," allowing half an hour for breakfast and an hour for dinner.[1]

Reply by employers.

A few days later, a petition was presented from owners and occupiers of cotton mills in Manchester and vicinity, who conceived themselves grossly calumniated by the statements made as to the labour and health of persons employed by them, asking that a special commission of the House should examine upon the spot into the actual conditions of persons so employed.[2]

Sir Robert Peel's motion.

On 19th February, Sir Robert made his motion on the subject. When he had brought in his Bill for the Regulation of Apprentices in Cotton Manufactories fifteen years before, he said, apprentices were the description of persons most employed—he had had 1,000 of them himself. But the business had greatly extended since. Manufactories were established in large towns, and the proprietors availed themselves of all the poor population of those towns. In Manchester alone, 20,000 were employed in cotton mills, and perhaps three times that in all England. "The business was of a peculiar nature, requiring of necessity that adults and children should work in the same rooms and at the same hours. It was notorious that children of a very tender age were dragged from their beds some hours before daylight and confined in the factories not less than 15 hours; and it was also notoriously the opinion of the faculty that no children

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 264. The text says "*including* the allowance of half an hour," etc., but it is obvious that this was a mistake. It will be seen that the whole speech is ambiguous. It is not clear that the petition related to children's labour only, and, indeed, it is not clear that Sir Robert meant to limit consideration to children's labour. But the ambiguity may be due to bad reporting.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 440.

of eight or nine years of age could bear that degree of hardship with impunity to their health and constitution. It had been urged by the humane that there might be two sets of young labourers for one set of adults. He was afraid this would produce more harm than good. The better way would be to shorten the time of working for adults as well as for children, and to prevent the introduction of the latter at a very early age." He moved that leave be given to amend and extend the 42nd of the present reign, "for the preservation of the health and morals of Apprentices and others employed in cotton and other mills and cotton and other factories."

**Actual hours of children's labour.**

Mr. Peel, son of the baronet, said that it was proved that, in one notorious factory at least, children were employed fifteen hours a day, and, after any stoppage, from 5 a.m. till 10 p.m.—seventeen hours, and this often for three weeks at a time. On Sundays, they were employed from 6 a.m. till noon in cleaning the machinery. It was on evidence that children had even been employed at as early an age as five, and that some were employed under the age of seven. "Was it necessary," he asked, "to have the evidence of medical men to prove that, to employ a child of seven years of age, was unfavourable to health?"

**Peel's defence of his father.**

A sort of personal reflection, he said, had been thrown out against an individual with whom he was nearly connected, that he had not introduced his Bill till he had acquired his wealth and abandoned the trade. This was perfectly correct as regards facts. But it was in 1784 and in 1796 that the magistrates had complained of the way in which his father's establishments were conducted, and it was in consequence of these complaints that the Bill of 1802 had been introduced. But, since that period a great change had taken place. "Before the application of steam, it was necessary to select situations where falls of water could be had; these situations were frequently mountainous, and the population thin, and children were obtained as apprentices from large towns.[1] But now these factories were in populous neigh-

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 559. In this connection, Lord Lascelles gave an argument against the proposed restriction which I have never seen stated elsewhere. "In former times, a great part of the manufactories had been conducted upon streams of water, but lately the introduction of steam had removed many of them into remote parts of the country. But still a number were upon streams. The Bill was calculated to give a great superiority and advantage to those factories that were carried on by steam. There were many factories that could not work except when the water suited them, and, if they were

bourhoods." His father, finding that, in his own establishment, abuses had taken place and were kept from his knowledge by the overseer, and learning that the same abuses took place in other manufactories, gave a proof of his sincere wish to remedy the evil by bringing in the Bill of 1802.

On the second reading, 23rd February, Sir Robert Peel explained that the principle of the present Bill was exactly the same as that of the Bill brought in in 1815, but withdrawn on the contention that there was not sufficient evidence before the House. In 1816, a Committee had sat for the purpose of investigation, and only the indisposition of the mover prevented a Bill from being brought in sooner. When he introduced the previous Bill, that of 1802, for regulating the labour of apprentices, he told the House that he was an advocate of free labour. He was so still, and he did not wish that principle infringed. But he could not think that little children who had not a will of their own could be called free labourers. They were under the control either of a master or of a parent, and he hoped the House would take these children under its protection. He proposed that the second reading should be agreed to, and the clauses of the Bill filled up in a committee, and that plenty of time should be given for circulating the Bill up and down the country. His 1815 Bill had fixed the age at which children might be employed at ten. He would now propose that the age should be nine years, and that the powers of the Act should terminate when the child reached sixteen and could be considered a free agent. He, therefore, recommended that children employed in cotton factories should, from nine to sixteen, be under the protection of parliament, that they should not be admitted before nine, and that they should be employed in working eleven hours, which, with 1½ hours for meals, made on the whole 12½ hours. He knew that the iniquitous practice of working children at a time when their masters were in bed too often took place. He was ashamed to own that he had himself been concerned where that proceeding had been suffered, but he hoped the House would interfere and prevent it for the future. It was his wish that there should be no night work at all in the factories.

The Bills of 1802 and 1815.

The Cotton Factories Bill was then read a second time, com-

limited to the hours prescribed by the Bill, they would be rendered useless, which was a strong fact for the consideration of the House" (*ibid.* 582). He afterwards said that, in a small district of the county of York, out of sixteen factories, fifteen were worked upon water, and obliged to wait for their water till other mills had used it (*ibid.* xxxviii. 350.)

mitted, and the report received and ordered to be taken into consideration on the 6th of April.[1]

Curwen, Philips, and Finlay oppose.

Thus far, the chief—indeed almost the only—opponents of the Bill had been Curwen—a member who, as he himself said, had no concern in manufactories and was therefore unprejudiced, but, it must be added, a philanthropist who seemed to have a perverse pleasure in condemning the philanthropic schemes of other people; Philips, a great cotton spinner, whose factories—judged by the standard of the day—were above reproach; and Kirkman Finlay, the member for Glasgow, who seemed always to consider himself as peculiarly the representative for the industries of Scotland.

Arguments against the Bill.

The main arguments advanced against the measure were:

(1) that the children were not overworked—in the schools it was impossible to tell who were factory children except, indeed, that they were better looking and in better health; even in a somewhat notoriously badly conducted factory, the children, though employed fourteen hours, were "in exceeding good health";

(2) that the better class mills were already model establishments;

(3) that the evil was confined to small factories—a person's health might suffer more in six hours of a small factory than in fifteen hours of a large and well-ventilated one—and that this evil cured itself, as "small factories generally went to ruin";

(4) that, although the Act of 1802 was completely a dead letter, the manufactories were now in a far better state than they were at that time;

(5) that it was not necessary to forbid night work, as "night work could not be carried on to advantage";

(6) that the hours worked in linen and woollen factories were as long;

(7) that in weaving persons were employed at an earlier age and for longer hours;

(8) that returns showed that only 5½ per cent. of the persons employed in cotton spinning were under ten years of age;

(9) that cotton spinning employed more people than all the other manufactures of the country taken together—producing probably £40 millions a year—and that it was exceedingly serious to introduce legislative interference, particularly as the hours of work on the continent were fully as long, and were unrestricted;

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 581.

(10) that the natural protectors of the children were their parents—was it possible that parents would seek to "wear away the health and spirits of their children by over-exertion?"

(11) that it was an interference with the liberty of parents;

(12) that it was an interference with free labour, and "it was difficult to say how far this might not be carried";

(13) that, instead of being content with lower wages, the measure would lead to a demand for higher—"the habits of these people led them to combine together, and it required great delicacy on the part of employers to prevent much mischief being done in this way."

Arguments for the Bill.

On the other hand, it was as strongly argued that factory children could always be known by their stunted growth, and overworked and unhealthy appearance; that legislation was necessary precisely because there were many small and ill-conducted factories; that, of the thousands who had signed the petition, many were parents; that children could not be called free agents, apart from other considerations, because they must work the same number of hours as adults or not work at all.

Petitions for and against.

More suggestive of the difficulties which the Bill would encounter were two debates on petitions presented in favour (Manchester, Hebden Bridge, Halifax and Stockport), and against (Manchester, Blackburn, and Glasgow).

The Manchester petition in favour of the Bill was signed by 1,731 persons, "of the first respectability," including 7 magistrates, 9 physicians, 21 resident surgeons, and 20 clergymen. If the petition was not more numerously signed, it was because the parties wished that it should contain only the names of individuals who had no personal interest in the question. The Stockport petition was said to be from "all the cotton spinning factories of the place." "It purported to be from the labourers above sixteen years of age, and stated that, under the existing regulations, workmen were over-laboured, over-heated, and subject to oppressive inconveniences, and that the personal experience of most of the petitioners showed how injurious the system was to the constitution." It was signed besides by 7 master manufacturers—"the opinion of one of whom, Mr. Entwistle, was entitled to the greatest consideration"—13 resident clergymen, and 8 medical men.

Sir James Graham.

On the Stockport petition, Sir James Graham, the member for Carlisle, made a reckless attack; he could inform the House

"that these petitioners were no other, for the most part, than a set of idle, discontented, discarded, and good-for-nothing workmen, who conceived that they did too much, when in employment, for the wages which they received." He knew them to be of the description which he had stated, and he had no doubt that, if the Bill were carried, these men would endeavour next year to have a bill carried to limit their hours of employment to a much smaller number than that fixed by the present Bill. Peel retorted that, "to his certain knowledge," the character of the petitioners varied materially from the character just given them.

Kirkman Finlay.

Finlay took the safer line of arguing that the corresponding evils in silk mills, the potteries, etc., were as great, if not greater, and asked why the operation of the Bill should not be extended to these. But, he went on, he could state to the House that "it was not the fault of the manufacturers that the people were employed for so long a portion of the day. They were compelled to work by that greatest of all necessities—hunger. The evil was inherent in the very nature of manufactories, and in the present state of society, and unless these could be altered, it would be useless to make any legislative regulations to remedy the evils which arose out of them." He was convinced accordingly that the effects of the Bill would operate more to the injury than the benefit of those for whom it was intended.

Wynn.

Wynn, in favour of the Bill, advanced a somewhat novel argument against the principle that it was interfering with free labour. On what, he asked, was that principle founded? Was it not on the knowledge that, by leaving the regulation of labour in the hands of the master, if he worked his labourer too hard, that labourer could resort to some other employment? But this was wholly inapplicable to children of tender age placed in cotton factories. Besides, such children had less remedy than apprentices, for apprentices could appeal to the magistrate if they were tasked beyond their strength. On these grounds, he considered that a complete case had been made out for the interference of the legislature.[1]

The next discussion was on the order of the day for going into committee.[2] Sir Robert Peel asserted that the number of master manufacturers who supported the Bill was greater than that of those who opposed it—adding that many of them were even anxious that its provisions should be extended

[1] *Hansard*, xxxvii. 1188, 1259. [2] *Ibid.* xxxviii. 342.

to adults. Lord Stanley made a strong attack on it. His great objection was that it would interfere with free labour; there was no precedent for such an interference[1]—admitting, in the same breath, that he would not oppose such interference in the case of apprentices or where a trade was found to be injurious to health. The Bill said virtually that parliament would no longer trust parents with the care of their own children—adding, however, with strange logic, that, when children were employed under the age of nine, it was at the desire rather of their parents than of the master. To deprive parents of the earnings of their children, again, was to strike directly at "that established principle which gave the parent the labour of his child during his minority, so long as he gave him adequate support." The result would be that the child would cease to be employed, and be "consigned to unprofitable idleness." It would create dissension too between parents and their children when the children saw that the legislature did not consider parents fit to be entrusted with their interests. And, again, it could be proved that the cotton trade was not more unwholesome than others. Water-gilding, for instance, plate-glass making, glass-cutting, weaving, coal and lead mining—all these were unhealthy trades, and yet "nobody ever called for such legislative enactments in the management of those concerns."[2] Stanley.

Lord Lascelles took the same view. "If they thought legislative interference necessary in the regulation of cotton factories, why should they not also interfere in the regulation of all other sorts of labour, and point out what was the number of hours during which the different trades should be carried on?" The measure would have the effect of discharging all children under sixteen; these would be thrown upon their parents, and from their parents upon the parish. The Bill really had its origin in "a gentleman who had, for the last twelve months, made much noise in the public prints, he meant Mr. Owen. . . . It formed a part of that system of moral education which was projected by that individual in the management of this branch of trade, who said Lascelles. The example of Owen.

[1] The obvious answer was—the Chimney Sweepers Bill, which had just passed in the House of Commons "with acclamation." It is almost incredible that it should have been argued that this was "abolition," not "regulation"! (*Hansard*, xxxviii. 357).

[2] Not the least remarkable thing in these debates is that no one took up the challenge, so often thrown down, and urged that the restriction should be extended to factory children generally.

that, from his own experience at Lanark, the reduction in the hours of labour, so far from diminishing the general produce of the factories, rather tended to increase it."[1] This proposition, he professed, was beyond his comprehension.

Philips.

Philips was more uncompromising—even bitter. Those who employed apprentices, he said, being under the regulation of an act of parliament, and conceiving that they were thus disadvantageously situated in comparison with those who employed free labour, wished to reduce the latter to their own condition. There was an impression created too, that an act of parliament would reduce the hours of labour without reducing wages—one could get any number of petitions signed on these terms. Many medical men had testified to the health of the cotton workers, but, for himself, he decried medical pronouncements on the subject—that doctors differed, was proverbial. In the exchange between wages and labour, interference must have a most pernicious tendency. "The low rate at which we had been able to sell our manufactures on the continent, in consequence of the low rate of labour here, had depressed the continental manufactures, and raised the English, much more than any interference could do; if the legislature interfered now, they would repress the English and raise the continental manufactures. . . . The tendency of interference would be, first, to increase wages—workmen would do less and receive more, and increase of population would follow, and the increased competition for labour must in the end lower wages, while the temporary increase of price, consequent on a temporary increase of wages, would give the continental manufacturers a start, by enabling them to sell at a lower price than ourselves, and thus, by lessening our sale, lessen the demand for labour while the demand for employment was increasing. . . . Nothing could be done by interference but mischief. It was most dangerous to manufacturers by producing combinations among workmen, and he would conceive it his duty on all occasions to speak against combinations, so destructive to the happiness and morals, as well as to the existence of the working classes, besides being ruinous to our manufactures. A spirit of false honour was created which it was most difficult to cope with; the present bill held out a

[1] "In Mr. Owen's factory at New Lanark, the people did as much in 10½ hours as was done by any other factory in 15. The reason was that, knowing they were not required to work beyond their strength, they went about it with more cheerfulness and alacrity" (J. Smith, *Hansard*, xxxviii. 370).

temptation to all such combinations by exciting petitions and promising little work and high wages. . . . The House ought to know that these petitions were obtained by disorderly workmen, meeting at public houses and forming themselves into central committees." This increase of wages would be the first effect. But he besought the House to consider where they would stop if they interfered in the present instance. The principle, once introduced, would extend to all; for, if abuses existed in the cotton trade, the same abuses were to be found in all other manufactures, and therefore they ought all to be regulated.

Finlay. Finlay forgot his manners in abuse of the Bill. He threw out insinuations against the management of the Peel factories, and said that possibly they were worked altogether by apprentices, who, of course, would be compelled to work twelve hours—he could not conceive any other motive for the Bill. If Mr. Owen —probably with a view to his own interest—had consented to reduce his hours to ten and a half, it was very natural that he should desire to limit the hours of other manufacturers. But, if the hours were thus abridged, he could assure the House that this country could no longer enjoy her present superiority in the foreign markets. But Finlay, in one respect, did not go so far as Philips. He was ready to admit, he said, that the number of hours worked by children was too long—he would even acknowledge that it was fully competent for the legislature to interfere in correcting the evil; his objection was that it would drive people from a healthy to an unhealthy employment, and cause severity and hardship to the children. One feels some pleasure in noticing that Finlay laid himself open to a very fair retort. He had complained of the many hours in one day spent on the present discussion. Lambton observed that the objection came with a very ill grace from those who were so indifferent to the laborious occupation of children for so many hours every day!

Peel. Mr. Peel, on the other hand, pointed out the inconsistency of approving of the protection of apprentices and refusing protection to "free labour." "The master had an interest in preserving the health of his apprentice, particularly during his early years, for he was bound so to apply his time as to prevent his being a burden upon him, by indisposition or otherwise, during the subsisting engagement it was imperative on him to maintain; but, in the factories, the terms of engagement were either daily or weekly, and the proprietor, in case of illness or

accident, had always at hand the means of replacing the person discharged." He asked, with a burst of indignation, "what education was possible for children, when, throughout the day, labour had drained from them every spring of action that could refresh their faculties and benumbed that elasticity of mind which could excite them in the pursuit of study—was it not disgusting to see them thus transferred, after 13 or 15 hours of bodily exertion, to close the day under the hands of a writing master?" He would appeal to the common-sense and feeling of every man to admit—he wanted no evidence to prove—that it was impossible it could be requisite to the prosperity of this great and flourishing country that such enormous labour should be exacted of nearly 12,000 children in one town.[1] As to the alleged healthiness and good looks of the children, one would think, from the statements made, that, of all healthy spots on the face of the globe, a cotton mill was the most healthy. "Indeed, if all these members said of the healthiness of cotton mills were true, application ought to be made to the legislature for the erection of cotton mills, for the purpose of furthering and more effectually providing for the health of his Majesty's liege subjects."

There is no further mention in *Hansard* of how the Bill passed the lower House.

Lauderdale secures the withdrawal of the Bill.

When it came before the Lords, on 8th May, Lauderdale—almost alone—voiced the opposition, but with such perseverance that he secured its withdrawal. His chief argument was "the great principle of Political Economy, that labour ought to be left free." If it were to be regulated at all, reference should be had to the personal strength of each individual, and this made any general rule inapplicable. "The employer was the person most likely to be acquainted with the different degrees of strength possessed by his workmen, and most likely to avoid overworking them with a view to his own advantage." In vain did Liverpool argue that, to have free labour, there must be free agents, and say that he considered it so much a principle of the common

[1] I should think it very likely that Carlyle had Peel's speech in his mind when he wrote in *Past and Present* (in 1843): "'What is to become of our Cotton-trade?' cried certain Spinners, when the Factory Bill was proposed; 'What is to become of our invaluable Cotton-trade?' The Humanity of England answered steadily: 'Deliver me these rickety perishing souls of infants, and let your Cotton-trade take its chance. God Himself commands the one thing; not God especially the other thing. We cannot have prosperous Cotton-trades at the expense of keeping the Devil a partner in them'" (Book IV. chap. iii.).

law of the land that children should not be overworked that he desired some words to be introduced into the Bill to that effect: in vain did the Bishop of Chester ask if it could be believed that children would labour so many hours every day if they had any choice of their own. Lauderdale persuaded his colleagues that counsel must be heard against the Bill and further evidence taken, and, in view of the lateness of the session, the mover reluctantly agreed to bring up the matter early in the next year.[1]

The debates seem to give a very fair idea of the general attitude of the times towards Child Labour. It will be noticed that it was not by any means the opposition of the employers as a body that kept back the Factory Acts, but rather the doctrinaire ideas as to the "liberty of the subject,"—so often invoked, before and since, against the regulation that makes for freedom.

**The debates give a fair reflex of the ideas of the time.**

It will be seen that I have preferred rather to state the arguments of those who opposed the measure, and let their inconsistencies speak for themselves, than to emphasise them. Writing nearly a century after the events, when the Factory Acts have justified themselves. I have felt that one may easily be unjust to those who opposed them when they were a new thing. It is perhaps significant that Peel's Bill and the debates thereon are not even mentioned in the *Annual Register* of the year.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxviii. 548, 578, 646, 793, 1252.

# CHAPTER XXXI

## 1819. A DISASTROUS YEAR

The promise of January.

THE Prince Regent's Speech, on 21st January, spoke of the intimate union so happily subsisting between the powers, and the prospect of peace and tranquillity for all Europe—France, by the Convention of Aix-la-Chapelle, having now become a member of the great European Confederacy; of the renewal of the Commercial Convention with the United States for a further period of years; of the extent of the reduction which these circumstances had enabled him to make in the naval and military establishments of the country; and of the considerable and progressive improvement of the revenue in its most important branches. And he ended by expressing his pleasure in being able to say that the trade, commerce, and manufactures of the country were in a most flourishing condition, and that the favourable change which had so rapidly taken place in the internal circumstances of the kingdom were the strongest proof of the solidity of its resources.[1]

These various matters, particularly the last, formed the text, as usual, of much discussion. Some doubts were expressed whether the effects of the revival had yet reached the labourers and the agricultural classes, and mention was made of disturbances which had recently taken place in the manufacturing districts over the reduced rate of wages. But, on the whole, there was little criticism of the Regent's statement, and the mover of the Address in the Commons said that there never was a period at which all branches of the different manufactures of the kingdom were more universally employed, or received a fuller and more comfortable remuneration for their labour.[2]

[1] *Hansard*, xxxix. 17.

[2] Castlereagh mentioned, in a subsequent speech, that the manufacture of cotton for home and export, on an average of the last few years, amounted to no less than £18,000,000 (*ibid.* xxxix. 745).

A few days later, Castlereagh announced with much jubilation that the increase on a revenue of £54 millions was no less than over £5 millions, and that the increase was not on one article but on between thirty and forty articles of excise; as regards the exportation of British produce and manufacture, it had been "the most splendid year ever known in the history of British commerce"—even exceeding that of 1815 by £10 millions. It was noticed, however, that already there was a considerable depression in the country, and that interest, which was last year at so low a rate, was now at 8 per cent. and 10 per cent.[1]

1818 the most splendid year for exports.

A glance at the periodical literature of the day shows that, whatever might be the doubt about actual prosperity in particular trades, there was none about the reality of the general revival, and none about the prospects. The great trades were fully employed; if wages had not yet risen very much—well, so much better for the employing class. The temper of the country was hopeful in the highest degree. At last we were about to realise the full advantages of peace, and, being the nation which had outstripped all competitors in perhaps all departments, we were going to reap a correspondingly rich harvest.

Confidence in the revival.

Two things evidently were forgotten. The one was that a nation which depends so much on other nations for its materials and for its market, cannot prosper unless these other nations are prospering also. Considering how much our manufactures depended on two great markets, it might be thought that anyone with any economic foresight might have seen breakers ahead. In January, for instance, in a most optimistic article as regards the trade prospects "on whichever side we turn our eyes,"[2] notice is taken of great commercial distress throughout the chief commercial States of the Union—numerous failures—confidence shaken—money not to be had; of the former great and lucrative trade with Spanish South America now subjected to the greatest vexations, vicissitude, and uncertainty from the sanguinary and destructive warfare there carried on. The other was that, in manufacturing industries, the tendency of great activity of trade is always to induce employers to sink capital in concrete forms sufficient not only to meet the maximum demand at the time but to meet the expected greater demand.[3]

Breakers ahead.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxix. 360.

[2] *Blackwood's Magazine*, January, 1818, 496.

[3] It is true that capital, as a whole, is infinitely more mobile than labour,

Agriculture demands more protection.

In the early part of the session, it was shown again that the appetite of the agricultural interest was only whetted by the heavy protection it had got under the Corn Law of 1815. The farmers, it was said, could not sell wheat under 80/- the quarter, while it could be imported for 56/-.[1]

The first petition came in January from the landholders of Rutland, setting forth that this country possessed within itself sufficient means of producing an abundant supply of corn of every description, for all its inhabitants, without having recourse to the aid of other countries. They prayed accordingly for a Select Committee to examine into the matter, with a view to "such protection to agriculture as was enjoyed by the manufacturers, merchants, and traders." The object, of course, was to raise the price at which corn might be imported to a higher figure.

The government deprecates it

Robinson at once replied, on behalf of the Government, that, while they looked upon the last measure as one of sound legislative policy, they would meet any proposition for raising the regulative price with the most determined resistance. It would be the height of imprudence, amounting almost to insanity, to introduce any new measures, or to revive discussions which could have no other effect than that of exciting differences and animosities from one end of the kingdom to the other. The same language was used by all the speakers.

The Rutland petition, however, was followed by several others on the same lines, from Northumberland, West Riding, Devon, Norfolk, Berkshire, Salop, Montgomeryshire, Middlesex, and Somerset. The House was evidently alarmed. Speaker after speaker, generally including the member presenting the petition, expressed disapproval of the attempts made to disturb the public mind. "It appears to me," said one, "that the agriculturists do not know, or will not consider, the temper and condition of the labouring classes, or they would never hazard the further exasperation of feelings which have never been completely tranquillised since the last corn bill was passed: they never would thus madly throw a firebrand into combustible

—as do most speakers,

but, when it is ossified in buildings, it becomes really more immobile, and suffers from local congestion just as labour does.

[1] It will be remembered that, under the existing Corn Law, wheat could not be imported at all until the price of British wheat was at or above 80/- per qr., at which price it came in without any duty. In 1817, when the average for the year was 96/11, about a million qrs. of wheat had been imported, and, in 1818, when it was 86/3, about 1,700,000 qrs.

elements. . . . The labouring classes are now suffering the greatest distress from the high price of provisions. They will not submit to starve silently under a new system of prohibitory duties. . . . If the agriculturists persist, the table of this House will be loaded, not merely with counter-petitions, but petitions against the existing corn laws." [1]

Coke of Norfolk, presenting a petition in the same terms, said he could not agree with it; in his opinion, the price of corn was fully sufficient to remunerate the farmer.

except Western.

Western, presenting a petition signed by 1,200 of his constituents, including many of the great landholders of his county, almost alone took the side of the petitioners. The progress of agriculture, he said, was evidently not so great as it had been a few years before—"a circumstance that could only be accounted for by the want of due encouragement." For the three years, 1811-13, 385 enclosure bills had passed the House; for the last three, only 135.

Lyttelton thought there was something sinister under the agitation. "The House must see, from the remonstrances of the agriculturists, how dangerous it is to enter on a vicious system of legislation; when once it is commenced, no person can say where it is likely to end." Either the agriculturists must be protected, or protection must be removed from manufactures. "The movement," he said, "appeared to him to be a matter of policy, with the object of inducing the House to break down the system of protection for manufactures." [2]

In June, another petition was presented from Barnstaple, signed by nearly 700 owners and occupiers of land, including some of the principal gentry, clergy, and yeomanry of the district, and expressing, it was said, the sentiments of the great majority of the landed interest in that part of the country. Lord Ebrington, however, in presenting it, said that he could not agree to further legislative interference with the price of corn. The truth of the advantages offered to manufacturers by import duties and prohibitions could not be denied, and the corn grower felt it hard that he did not enjoy in like manner an adequate protection against foreign competition. But any one could see that, with

[1] *Hansard*, xxxix. 67. As a fact, a petition was numerously signed at Nottingham asking that the importing price should be reduced to 63/—"a price that would fully remunerate the grower, and is quite high enough for the consumer."

[2] *Hansard*, xxxix. 439, 444, 607, 656, 709.

all these advantages, manufactures were not less depressed than agriculture.[1] With this the agitation ended for the moment.

Would cash payments be resumed?

The question of the Resumption of Cash Payments was raised at the very first meeting of parliament:—was the promise so often made to be kept or not? And again the old formula was repeated: "considering the present state of the exchanges, and the progress of the pecuniary operations alluded to in last session, it was impossible that cash payments could with safety be restored on 5th July next; if such should be found to be the case, it would be prudent to extend the restriction till next session when the whole question might be deliberately weighed and finally decided on." Just as we expected, muttered the Opposition: the government's promise had never taken him in, said Lauderdale.[2]

Secret Committees on Resumption.

A few days afterwards, however, the Prime Minister announced that he had been induced to change his intention, and to hold an inquiry at once instead of waiting till another session. Two Secret Committees, of the Lords and of the Commons, were appointed by ballot to enquire into the state of the Bank of England, with a view to the resumption of cash payments at the period prescribed by law, and to take into consideration any other matters connected therewith.[3] "Young Mr. Peel," then a man of thirty-one and member for the University of Oxford, was appointed Chairman of the Commons Committee.

Report of Commission on Forgery.

In the meantime, on 22nd January, a preliminary Report from the Commissioners appointed for enquiring into the mode of preventing the Forgery of Bank Notes was presented. They bore ample witness to the anxiety of the Bank to prevent forgery, and to the efforts and expense already put forth in the attempt. Hitherto, however, none of the means tried had given any prospect of adequate prevention. In the case of specimens submitted to them, apparently of great excellence and the result of "a combination of talent or machinery," they found that a very good imitation had been produced in a very short time, without any peculiar expense, and by the application of means which were within the reach of very many artists and engravers in England. And, they pointed out, the adoption of any new form of note which could not be confidently pronounced extremely difficult of imitation would do more harm than good by giving a false security. The public was blameable, which in so many instances suffered itself to be deceived by very miserable

[1] *Hansard*, xl. 997. [2] *Ibid.* xxxix. 32. [3] *Ibid.* 202, 213, 280, 289.

counterfeits. It had been commonly imagined, they said, that, in consequence of simplicity of execution in the present bank notes, the actual forgery of them was very generally and extensively practised, and that often by persons without money or talent. The reverse of this was the fact; and they felt themselves warranted in saying that the great quantity of forged small notes which had lately been found in circulation had all issued from a very few plates only, and that the fabrication of them was chiefly confined to one part of the country, and was carried on by men of skill and experience, possessed of very considerable command of capital. It seemed remarkable that so many utterers of forged notes were constantly brought to justice, while the actual forgers were so rarely detected. There must, they thought, be some remissness on the part of the local police, and they suggested the offer of a very large reward for conviction. The Report concluded by saying that one plan, which was being experimented on, seemed to afford "a specimen of great ingenuity in the fabric of the paper, of great excellence in the workmanship, and of a very peculiar invention and difficult machinery in the art of printing," and they hoped before long to lay the result before his Royal Highness.[1]

Mackintosh sarcastic.

Mackintosh made great play with this Report: about two hundred projects for the improvement of bank notes had been laid before the Bank, and, of these, only one held out some sort of expectation of success; was it not clear to demonstration that there was little or no prospect of ever lessening the facilities of forgery, removing the temptation to crime, and diminishing all that depravity which accompanied it, by any course but by a return to cash payments?[2]

The Secret Committees restrain the resumption,

But, for the moment, it seemed as if the appointment of the Secret Committees had removed the resumption further than ever. On 5th April, Parliament was startled by a First Report from both Committees recommending the restraining all such payments in gold as the Bank had already engaged to make. Peel, in bringing in a bill for the purpose, supplied the explanation. Since 1st January, 1816, the Bank had paid away £5,200,000 in gold. That issue had not been attended with any good to the nation; it might, indeed, have been foreseen that, unless it had been accompanied by a simultaneous reduction of the number of bank notes, the gold would find its way to those places where there

[1] *Hansard.* xxxix. 72. [2] *Ibid.* 137.

was a greater demand for it. As a fact, it had gone to France. Within the first six months of 1818, 125 million francs had been coined at the French mint, of which three-fourths had been drawn from the Bank of England. Whenever the time came for removing the restriction generally, a large sum in cash would be necessary; that sum considerably exceeded the amount which the Bank had at present in its possession. It was for these reasons, and in the fullest confidence that it would hasten the period of cash payments, that he would propose the measure. In spite of strong protests, the Bill was introduced in the Commons, passed there in one day, and in the Lords on the next.[1]

and recommend repayment by the government.

On 6th May, the Second Report of the Secret Committee of the Commons on the Affairs of the Bank was presented. After explaining the circumstances which led to the issue of their former report recommending the suspension of payments already begun, they went on to say that the necessity of repayment of a large portion of the debt due by the public to the Bank was earnestly insisted on by the directors as a condition of the resumption of cash payments. Unless the Bank had control over their issues, so as to contract them when necessary, they could not retain coin in circulation. But, while it was the case that the notes issued upon discount of mercantile bills reverted to them at a period never exceeding 65 days, and that this part of the issue could be extended or limited at their discretion, they had no such control over the notes issued in consequence of advances made to government. Agreeing with this, the Committee made their first recommendation, that immediate provision should be made for the repayment of £10 millions out of the £19½ millions outstanding on 1st January upon government securities.

As the legislature, they continued, had, on various occasions, expressly pronounced their opinion on the policy of re-establishing the metallic standard of value, the only question before the Committee was at what period and by what means this should be done. In recommending the further postponement of cash payments, they were desirous to devise some additional security that preparations were made for the resumption. The following plan had been under their consideration, and this they were disposed to make as their second recommendation:

Proposals for final resumption,

"That, after the 1st May, 1821, the Bank shall be liable to deliver a quantity of gold, not less than 60 ounces, of standard

[1] *Hansard*, xxxix. 1392, 1398, 1420.

fineness, to be first assayed and stamped at his Majesty's mint, at the established mint price of £3 17/10½ per oz. in exchange for such an amount of notes presented to them as shall represent, at that rate, the value of the gold demanded:[1]

That this liability of the Bank, to deliver gold in exchange for their notes, shall continue for not less than two nor more than three years, from the 1st May, 1821; and that at the end of that period, cash payments shall be resumed:

That, on a day, to be fixed by parliament, not later than the 1st February, 1820, the Bank shall be required to deliver gold, of standard fineness, assayed and stamped as before-mentioned, in exchange for their notes (an amount of not less than 60 ounces of gold being demanded) at £4 1/- per ounce, that being nearly the market price of standard gold in bars on an average of the last three months:

That, on or before the 1st October, 1820, the Bank shall pay their notes in gold of standard fineness, at the rate of £3 19/6; and on or before the 1st May, 1821, as before-mentioned, at the ancient standard rate of £3 17/10½."

and for repeal of the prohibition of melting and exportation.

The third recommendation—"not as an appendage to the plan suggested, but as a public measure under any system of currency"—was the total repeal of the laws which prohibited the melting or exportation of the coin of the realm. The Committee conceived it to have been clearly demonstrated, by long experience, that such laws were wholly ineffectual for the object for which they were designed; that they offered temptation to perjury and fraud, and gave those who violated the law an unfair advantage over those who respected it.[2]

The advantages of paying in bullion.

On the following day, the second report of the Secret Committee of the Lords was presented. It was to the same effect, but dwelt, besides, on the advantages of permitting the Bank to pay in bullion instead of in gold coin. It established, equally with cash payments, the principle and the salutary control of a metallic standard, while it afforded the best prospect of avoiding many of the inconveniences which were by many persons apprehended from the measure. It exempted the Bank from providing a quantity of gold necessary to replace, in case the public should prefer coin to paper, all the smaller notes, to the amount

[1] It was to Ricardo, in his *Proposals for an Economical and Secure Currency*, that the device of payments, not in coin, but in gold ingots, was due.

[2] *Hansard*, xl. 152.

probably of 15 to 16 millions, which were now circulating in London and in the country. It continued to the Bank, and therefore to the nation at large, all the advantages to be derived from the employment of a capital equal to the amount of all the small notes in circulation, whether of the Bank of England or country banks, instead of merely making an addition to the dead stock of the country, producing neither profit nor advantage. It seemed probable, too, that, when the Bank was made liable to pay only in bullion, and that only in exchange for notes to a certain amount, it would be chiefly subject to such demands as might arise from the excess of the market price of gold above the mint price, and the consequent profit upon exportation.[1]

Peel, in moving the Resolutions,

On 24th May, accordingly, Peel moved the Resolutions for the resumption of cash payments.[2] It is impossible to summarise this great speech, but two notable passages may be quoted.

He was free to say that, in consequence of the evidence and the discussions on it, his opinion had undergone a material change.

confesses his change of opinions,

He was ready to avow, without shame or remorse, that he went into the Committee with a very different opinion from that which he at present entertained; his views of the subject were most materially different when he voted against the resolutions brought forward in 1811 by Mr. Horner. He now, with very little modification, concurred in the principles laid down in the fourteen first resolutions submitted to the House by that very able and lamented individual. He conceived them to represent the true nature and laws of our monetary system.

and asks "What is a pound?"

He quoted the evidence advanced by the one advocate for the indefinite suspension of cash payments who had appeared before the Committee. When he was asked whether this indefinite suspension was to exist without any standard of value, the witness had answered "No—the pound should be the standard." What was a pound? he was asked. "I find it difficult to explain it," he said, "but every gentleman in England knows it." Further pressed, he said: "It is something that has existed without variation in this country for 800 years—300 years before the introduction of gold." That was indeed the only definition he could give. It would be recollected, said Peel, that Locke, after elucidating the subject of identity, dispelling all the erroneous views with respect to innate ideas, and endeavouring to penetrate even the properties of eternity, could not, with all his power of reason-

[1] *Hansard*, xl. 198. [2] *Ibid.* 676.

ing and subtlety of disquisition, succeed in defining what he meant by an abstract pound. When Sir Isaac Newton entered on the examination of the subject, that great man came back at last to the old, the vulgar doctrine as it was called by some, that the true standard of value consisted in a definite quantity of gold bullion. Every sound writer on the subject came to the same conclusion, that a certain weight of gold bullion, with an impression on it denoting it to be of a certain weight and of a certain fineness, constituted the only true, intelligible, and adequate standard of value.

After very long and able debates, the Resolutions were agreed to, and the Bill embodying them duly passed.

Provisions of resumption.

Shortly stated, it came to this; that, after 1st May, 1823, cash payment of notes, on demand, in the legal coin of the realm should be resumed; and that, previous to that date, payment of notes could be demanded, in bullion only, at a successively reduced rate; namely, between 1st February and 1st October, 1820, at the rate of £4 1/- per oz.; between 1st October, 1820, and 1st May, 1821, at £3 19/6; between 1st May, 1821, and 1st May, 1823, at £3 17/10½. But this bullion should be given only in exchange for notes to the value of 60 oz., in the form of bars weighing 60 oz., fractional sums less than 40 oz. above that to be paid in the legal silver coin.[1] And the laws prohibiting the melting and the exportation of coin were repealed.[2]

As the time of the Budget drew near, there were several attempts to direct or correct the policy of the government in regard to the national finances.

Irish Window Tax.

A strong attempt was made by the Irish members to get the Window Tax removed from Ireland. A motion was made for a Select Committee to consider its repeal, on the old grounds that it was oppressive, that it was unequal in its incidence, that it was a war tax, that it was inquisitorial, that it was a tax on health,

[1] The Bank voluntarily anticipated the final resumption by giving coin for notes after 1st May, 1821.

[2] The wording of the Resolutions on which the Bill was based will be found in *Hansard*, xl. 802. The expectation of resumption had been so often disappointed that it is not surprising that some still doubted. The drawing of a gridiron, which headed Cobbett's *Register* from July, 1825, onwards, was meant to be a reminder of his statement in November, 1819: "I, William Cobbett assert that, to carry this Bill into effect, is *impossible*; and I say that, if this Bill be carried into full effect, I will give Castlereagh leave to lay me on a gridiron, and broil me alive, while Sidmouth may stir the coals, and Canning stand by and laugh at my groans."

that the indulgence given last year to reopen windows without payment was inoperative as the people "could not afford the expense of a new window"; finally, that it yielded only £200,000 a year. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was inexorable—asked how he could justify himself to England and Scotland for granting such an exception to Ireland—and the motion was lost by 150 to 73.[1]

Coal duties.

An attempt was also made to alter the distribution of the tax on Coal. The duty in London was 9/10 per chaldron; the maritime counties paid 6/- per chaldron for seaborne coal; and the inland counties paid nothing for coal produced at home. Many petitions were presented for and against, according to the interests affected. The general attitude of parliament was that any proposal to take taxation altogether off coal was worth considering, but that an equalisation duty—involving a tax at the pit mouth—was a different matter altogether. Finally, the Chancellor of the Exchequer ended the agitation by announcing that it certainly was not the intention of the government to propose an equalisation of the duties.[2] Later in the session, leave was asked and refused to bring in a bill to repeal the 6/- tax on seaborne coal.[3]

Salt duties.

The hardships occasioned by the taxation of Salt were brought up again on the reading of Resolutions by the old Salt Duties Committee, which had stated that the repeal of the laws on this subject was highly expedient, and that the then state of the finances alone prevented the Committee from recommending it. It was now moved that the earliest practicable opportunity should be taken for gradual reduction or total repeal. The arguments were the familiar ones; that this was a tax on the necessaries of the poor, raising the bushel of salt to forty times its value—40 lbs. of salt went to every stone of flour, amounting to 27/- a year to the common labourer; that it corrupted public morals by tempting evasion; that it handicapped our fisheries as compared with foreign fisheries; that, in short, it had no recommendation but the extraordinary revenue it produced. On the other side, it was argued that, in every state in Europe, there was a tax on salt—even in France it had been imposed again at so much consumption per head; that it yielded £1½ millions per year; that it fell alike on all classes; that its cost of collection did not

[1] *Hansard*, xl. 126.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxix. 205, 709, 769, 885, 895, 906, 992, 1071, 1264.

[3] *Hansard*, xl. 569.

exceed 2½ per cent.; that, as it was paid in small sums, its pressure was imperceptible; that it was approved by Adam Smith.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer refused to consider the subject. The circumstances were altogether changed from what they were when the Salt Duties Committee reported, and "the only effect of condemning a tax without repealing it would be to render it more oppressive and less productive." The motion, of course, was lost.[1]

Lotteries.

The lottery question was brought up by Lyttelton in a series of four Resolutions:

(1) "That, by the establishment of State Lotteries, a spirit of gambling, injurious in the highest degree to the morals of the people, is encouraged and provoked:

(2) "That such a spirit, manifestly weakening the habits of industry, must diminish the permanent sources of the public revenue:

(3) "That the said Lotteries have given rise to other systems of gambling, which have been but partially repressed by laws, whose provisions are extremely arbitrary, and their enforcements liable to the greatest abuse:

(4) "That this House, therefore, will no longer authorise the establishment of State Lotteries under any system of regulation whatever."[2]

In a most powerful speech he exposed some of the more patent frauds perpetrated by the lottery contractors. The question, he said, had been so often argued, and so often decided, that it might seem as if it would be well to abandon the attempt to put down this evil. But the former discussions had made such an impression on the public mind that perseverance alone was requisite to obtain ultimate success. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, with characteristic good humour,

Vansittart's reply

[1] *Hansard*, xxxix. 1482.

[2] *Hansard*, xl. 79. Lyttelton gave a quotation from "Mr. Davison's well-known treatise on the Poor-Laws" which seems worth preserving: "The efficacy of human laws may be cast perhaps into the following scale: their direct power to inspire men with the love of probity, diligence, and contentment, by positive command, is small; their power to restrain the opposite vices is far greater; their power to discourage or hinder good habits of character, by mistaken institutions, is greatest of all; because here they act at an advantage, and the institution and the bad part of human nature go together, whereas, in the other cases, they are opposed, and the enactment has to force its way."

replied that he did not mean to oppose the arguments which had been advanced, but that he could not now consent to renounce a sum the place of which must be supplied by some tax which would operate more oppressively on the people. The first resolution was lost by 133 to 84, and the others were negatived without a division. One is sorry to see Canning lending his powerful support to the lottery. They had been asked, he said, to repeal the salt tax because it was injurious to agriculture, commerce, and the morality of the people. They were asked to repeal the leather tax because it was highly injurious to the agriculture, commerce, and morals of the country. They were asked to abolish the spirit tax in Ireland as exceedingly injurious to the agriculture, commerce, and morals of the people. Even the window tax was thought to be equally hostile to the morals of the people. Now he wished that those gentlemen who were for repealing all these immoral taxes would take the trouble of putting their amount together, and see whether they could suggest a *pro rata* for the quota furnished by immoral statutes. He hoped that no taunts addressed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, as an individual, would lead him to forget that he had great public duties to perform, one of which was to provide for the exigencies of the state.

Canning's defence of immoral taxes.

Another step was taken—this time by the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself without compulsion—to curtail the perquisites of the Bank, and secure for the public the full use of its own money. On 8th March, he announced that the revenues received at the Bank for the purposes of the Consolidated Fund, which had previously accumulated till the end of each quarter, and were inapplicable to the general public service till then, would now be drawn on to the limit of £6,000,000—nearly as large a sum as, for the last four years, had accumulated from quarter to quarter. The sums thus taken would be replaced by exchequer bills as security, to be realised at the end of the quarter. The proposal simply amounted to this, that the country, instead of the Bank, would have the benefit of the interest on the sum taken.[1]

Another advantage secured from the Bank.

When a loan was seen to be imminent, Grenfell entreated the Chancellor of the Exchequer to consider seriously the propriety of taking the Sinking Fund to reduce the loan, dwelling on the absurdity of paying off old debt by a Sinking Fund when we

Attempt to use the Sinking Fund for the service of the year.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxix. 924.

were accumulating a new one, and contending that the whole theory of the Sinking Fund was based on an actual excess of income over expenditure. The Commissioners were sent four times a week into the city to purchase stock with borrowed money—"creating a new debt for no other purpose than to extinguish an old one; selling new stock cheap in order to buy old stock dear; buying at a very high rate of interest to pay off a debt contracted at a very low one." Or, as J. P. Grant put it: "it puzzled him exceedingly to understand how any benefit could be derived from borrowing money when the borrower had a sum in his pocket equal to what he borrowed." Vansittart's answer at this time was no other than the old one, that the regular purchases made by the Commissioners produced "a general steadiness of prices, which was extremely favourable to the operations of the money market. . . . Were it not for the regular purchases made by the Commissioners, there would be few real buyers, and persons under the necessity of selling would be at the mercy of stock jobbers." The very knowledge that there was a sinking fund of such dimensions kept up the public credit and enabled the nation to borrow at a cheaper rate. The motion for a committee of the whole House to consider was lost by 117 to 39.[1]

A fortnight later, Grenfell returned to the subject. His immediate criticism was that the loan so proposed was, if rumour was to be believed, so large—£30 millions—that the only tenderers would be a "junction of loan-contractors"—what we should now call a syndicate—and that this would prevent competition; whereas, if the fifteen or sixteen millions of the Sinking Fund were taken, the smaller loan would not be attended by such a disadvantage. On this occasion, the Chancellor expressed himself as having an open mind with respect to making use of the Sinking Fund for the service of the year.[2] Shortly afterwards, it was seen that Vansittart had at last acknowledged the wisdom of his critics.

Resolutions preliminary to the Budget.

The Budget this year was prepared for by a set of Resolutions relative to the Public Income and Expenditure, founded on the Reports of the Finance Committee.[3] The time had come, said Vansittart, to put an end to the temporary expedients for meeting current expenditure inevitable during the transition from war to peace, to adopt solid and permanent arrangements, and to effect

[1] *Hansard*, xl. 347. [2] *Ibid.* 840. [3] *Ibid.* 912.

such an augmentation of the revenue as might put our finances on a permanent peace establishment.

The Resolutions were as follows:

(1) That since the termination of the war in 1815, the property tax in Great Britain, and other taxes in Great Britain and Ireland, which yielded a revenue of upwards of £18,000,000 per annum, have expired, or been repealed, or reduced.

(2) That, by an act passed in the 56th George III., c. 98, the revenues of Great Britain and Ireland were consolidated from the 5th of January, 1817; and that, in the year preceding the said consolidation, the nett separate revenue of Ireland was £4,561,353, and the charge of the funded and unfunded debt of Ireland was £6,446,825, including therein the sum of £2,438,124, as the sinking fund, applicable to the reduction of the debt; which charge exceeded the whole nett revenue of Ireland by the sum of £1,885,472, without affording any provision for the civil list and other permanent charges, or for the proportion of supplies to be defrayed by that part of the United Kingdom; and that no provision has been made by parliament to supply this deficiency. (He did not mean to suggest that Ireland had not contributed according to her ability. But, when the Union took place, the fourteen years of uninterrupted and expensive war could not be foreseen. Ireland, unable to bear the imposition of war taxes, had to meet the extra expenditure mostly by loans, and now this huge Irish debt was thrown into the general mass of the debt of the United Kingdom, and produced a great additional charge.)

(3) That the supplies to be voted for the present year by parliament may be stated at £20,500,000.

(4) That the existing revenue applicable to the supplies cannot be estimated at more than £7,000,000, leaving the sum of £13,500,000 to be raised by loan or other extraordinary resource.

(5) That the Sinking Fund, applicable to the reduction of the national debt in the present year, may be estimated at about £15,500,000, exceeding the above sum necessary for the service of the year by about £2,000,000 only.[1]

(6) That, to provide for the exigencies of the public service, to

[1] In a paper presented to the House of Commons, the figures of the National Debt are given from 1786 to 1818. On 5th January, 1819, the total debt of Great Britain and Ireland amounted to £1,181,502,362; of which £389,637,049 had been redeemed, leaving the total unredeemed debt at £791,867,313. The Sinking Fund amounted to £15,815,000; and the total charge, including the Sinking Fund, to £45,749,296.

make such progressive reduction of the national debt as may adequately support public credit, and to afford the country a prospect of future relief from a part of its present burthens, it is absolutely necessary that there should be a clear surplus of the income of the country, beyond the expenditure, of not less than £5,000,000, and that, with a view to the attainment of this important object, it is expedient now to increase the income of the country by the imposition of taxes to the amount of three millions per annum.

A clear surplus as Sinking Fund.

The new taxes would be:

New taxes.

(1) an addition to the customs duty on various articles, realising £500,000—the chief being an increase of the duty on foreign wool from 1d. per lb. to 6d.;

(2) an increase of 50 per cent. on the existing excise on malt, making it altogether 3/6 per bushel, realising £1,400,000;

(3) an additional excise duty on tobacco, realising £500,000, on coffee and cocoa £130,000, on pepper £30,000, and an extra 4 per cent. on tea (making it 100 per cent.) £130,000;

(4) an additional excise on British spirits, producing £500,000.[1]

The duty on foreign wool he defended on frankly protectionist principles; the present duty was "too low to protect the interest of the home grower of coarse wool"—the new duty "would operate as a protection of the home grower of that article against foreign competition." The malt duty he justified by arguing

Justification of wool tax, and malt tax.

[1] It was in the *Edinburgh Review* of the following year that Sydney Smith wrote his immortal quip on British taxation: "We can inform Jonathan what are the inevitable consequences of being too fond of glory;—TAXES upon every article which enters the mouth, or covers the back, or is placed under the foot—taxes upon everything which is pleasant to see, hear, feel, smell, or taste—taxes upon warmth, light, and locomotion—taxes on everything on earth and the waters under the earth—on everything that comes from abroad, or is grown at home—taxes on the raw material—taxes on every fresh value that is added to it by the industry of man—taxes on the sauce which pampers man's appetite, and the drug that restores him to health—on the ermine which decorates the judge, and the rope which hangs the criminal—on the poor man's salt, and the rich man's spice—on the brass nails of the coffin, and the ribands of the bride—at bed or board, couchant or levant, we must pay.—The schoolboy whips his taxed top—the beardless youth manages his taxed horse, with a taxed bridle on a taxed road:—and the dying Englishman, pouring his medicine, which has paid 7 per cent., into a spoon that has paid 15 per cent.,—flings himself upon his chintz bed, which has paid 22 per cent.—and expires in the arms of an apothecary who has paid a license of a hundred pounds for the privilege of putting him to death. His whole property is then immediately taxed from 2 to 10 per cent. Besides the probate, large fees are demanded for burying him in the chancel; his virtues are handed down to posterity on taxed marble; and he is then gathered to his fathers,—to be taxed no more."

that the repeal of the special war duty had been a failure; it had not increased the consumption—indeed, it had not decreased the price of beer to the working-man—nor benefited agriculture, while the revenue had materially suffered. And he confidently asserted that the increase would not justify the brewers in raising the price of beer, particularly as both malt and hops had fallen heavily in price during the past year.

End of the Sinking Fund.

The chief proposal of the Budget, therefore, was at last to break in upon the sacred Sinking Fund, using it for the current expenses of the year all but £2 millions, and at the same time to affirm the absolute necessity of a sinking fund of £5 millions—this time of "clear surplus." If the Property Tax had not been repealed, it was hinted not obscurely, this necessity would never have arisen.

Criticism by Tierney

The Resolutions were attacked in a slashing speech by Tierney.[1] He was ready to admit that a very large proportion—nearly the whole—of the Sinking Fund might be given up to the exigencies of the country. But "it was too much to hear the necessity for this inroad on the security of the public creditor avowed by the right honourable gentleman without the least sense of shame, after all the boasting and exaggeration in which he had incessantly indulged; to hear him, after having brought the country to such a state, still vapouring and prancing in his old way, and with the same air of assurance and confidence as usual, asking only for three millions and that would infallibly set us all right again." For his part, he would rather content himself with the surplus revenue of £2 millions without new taxes than have £5 millions as a sinking fund on those terms.

and Brougham.

Brougham also, in caustic terms, approved of taking the Sinking Fund, as an unavoidable breach of faith with the public creditor, but he "would not consent that, at the end of such a war, and in the very infancy of peace, new taxes should be imposed on them, new burdens, new impositions which

[1] Tierney had now been appointed leader of the Opposition. But his career as such gives point to Creevey's remark on hearing of the proposed appointment: "I think you deceive yourselves by supposing the leader of the Whigs of England to be an article that can be created by election, or merely by giving it that name. A man must make himself such leader by his talents, by his courage, and, above all, by the excellence and consistency of his public principles. It was by such means that Fox was our leader without election, and that Romilly was becoming so, and, believe me, there is no other process by which a leader can be made" (i. 290).

they could not pay." The Resolutions, however, were passed by a majority of 197.[1]

Budget.

Two days afterward, accordingly, the Budget was brought in framed on these lines:

| | |
|---|---|
| SUPPLIES. | |
| Army, ordinaries and extraordinaries | £8,900,000 |
| Navy | 6,436,000 |
| Ordnance | 1,191,000 |
| Miscellaneous | 1,950,000 |
| Total Supplies | £18,477,000 |
| But to this fell to be added: | |
| Interest on outstanding Exchequer Bills | £1,570,000 |
| And sinking fund on same | 430,000 |
| Total | £20,477,000 |
| WAYS AND MEANS. | |
| Annual malt duties | £3,000,000 |
| Excise duties continued | 3,500,000 |
| Lottery | 240,000 |
| Old naval stores | 334,000 |
| Total Ways and Means | £7,074,000 |

This left about £13½ millions to be provided. But the government had agreed to repay £10 millions to the Bank of England in two years, which made it necessary to raise other £5 millions, and a further sum of £5,597,000 was required, according to the pledge of the government, for the reduction of the unfunded debt.

The total sum needed for the year, then, was £20,477,000, plus £10,597,000: in all £31,074,000, of which only £7,074,000 was provided for.

The balance—£24,000,000—would be got by a new loan of £12,000,000 raised that morning "by competition," and by "borrowing" £12,000,000 from the Sinking Fund.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer then went in detail into the £3,000,000 of new taxes, proposing that these should be applied "to strengthen the Consolidated Fund in order to enable it to support the charges of the loan of the present and of the last year."[2]

[1] *Hansard*, xl. 912. Brougham mentioned incidentally that France had a *bona fide* sinking fund of one per cent., accumulating at compound interest, on her debt of £170,000,000 (*ibid.* 959).

[2] *Hansard*, xl. 1000.

Strong opposition, of course, was made by the agriculturists, to the malt duty, and, by the manufacturers, to the wool duty—it would totally ruin the woollen industry; the wool driven from our shores would be manufactured by other countries, etc.—and all the new taxes were denounced as bearing almost entirely on the poorer classes. To this latter, however, Ricardo, strictly in conformity with his well-known economic theory, answered that "he could not agree that they fell on the labourer, because imposed on the objects he consumed. If, indeed, they were imposed on the luxuries of the labourers, they might in some measure diminish his comforts; but, the more the articles taxed approached the nature of necessaries, the more completely would they fall on those who employed labourers." He added the ambiguous statement that, "as to the particular taxes, it was unnecessary for him to state his sentiments, seeing that he was an enemy to taxation altogether." Subsequently he explained that he was not contending that the taxing of necessaries was not injurious to labourers, but that "it was no more injurious to them than any other mode of taxation. In fact all taxation had a tendency to injure the labouring classes, because it either diminished the fund employed in the maintenance of labour or checked its accumulation."[1] No changes, however, were made, and the Budget passed.

Ricardo on the incidence of the taxes.

In May, Grattan—as it turned out, for the last time—introduced the Catholic Claims, taking eight Roman Catholic and five Protestant petitions for text. That he was now seconded, in a speech of remarkable vigour and eloquence, by Croker, then Secretary to the Admiralty, is itself a proof of the change that was coming over the House in regard to the question. The attitude taken by Croker was that the very preservation of the Church of England—"that most glorious combination of the goodness of God and the gratitude of man; of divine wisdom and of human expediency, that ever was exhibited upon earth"—depended upon conciliating the political affections of so large a portion of the community as the Roman Catholics. The motion was lost by only two votes, but the similar motion in the Lords was rejected by 41.[2]

The Catholic Claims—Grattan seconded by Croker.

It was not far on in the year when the revival of trade, which had begun in the middle of 1817 and continued uninterruptedly throughout 1818, suddenly met with a check. Even by March,

Check to the revival of industry.

[1] *Hansard*, xl. 1214, 1220. [2] *Ibid.* 6, 386; *Croker*, i. 131.

there was general gloom. In April, the Yorkshire papers were noticing "an alarming decrease of upwards of 240,000 pieces of cloth in the manufacture of the year as compared with the last."[1] Large cargoes of cotton were still arriving, while every market for our commodities was reported glutted, and there was complete stagnation in the manufacture. All May, the Carlisle weavers were rioting against reduction of wages; a petition said that, working fourteen to seventeen hours per day, they earned only 5/- to 7/- a week—they did not blame their employers; it was only the depreciated state of the cotton manufacture—and they very respectfully urged that they should be assisted to emigrate.[2] In May, the *Annual Register* notes that "the spirit of emigration from Portsmouth continues unabated." Every packet for Havre conveyed numerous passengers destined for America, and 500 Englishmen were in that town waiting for a fair wind. In one week, 70 persons, chiefly artisans and mechanics, with their families, amounting in all to over 200 souls, had embarked in an American brig chartered for the purpose. The emigration from Scotland was as well marked. It is some evidence that the distress prevailed over a great part of Europe that many thousands were emigrating from Germany to the United States.[3]

Emigration

By June, Tierney was holding up to ridicule the Regent's statement of January, as to "the most flourishing condition of trade." There was, indeed, in every branch of industry, he said, a greater stagnation than was ever before known—there was nothing but distress in every class of our manufactures—the table was loaded with petitions from the agriculturists and with petitions from every quarter complaining of the insupportable burden of the poor rates.[4] In July, the framework weavers of Leicester, to the number of 3,000, struck; in Heckmondwike, the blanket-weavers did the same. In that month, the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed a grant of £50,000, for the purpose of enabling government to assist persons disposed to settle at the Cape of Good Hope—that colony being chosen as most suitable on account of its fine climate and great fertility. The grant was made—not without the time-honoured grumble that there were thousands of acres of waste land at home on which both corn and flax might be grown, and that the emigrants were a loss to

—grant of £50,000.

[1] *Annual Register*, Chron. 27.
[2] *Hansard*, xl. 671.
[3] 26, 40.
[4] *Hansard*, xl. 933.

the country.[1] By the beginning of November, it was announced that the applications had been so numerous that the lists were closed.[2]

Thus, before parliament rose in July, it was known that trade had fallen back as suddenly as it had risen, and that stagnation was universal. "If trade does not increase," wrote Sydney Smith on the day of Peterloo, "there will be a war of the rich against the poor."

Foreign trade.

The figures of foreign trade reflected the change. The imports fell by over six millions, the exports by nine millions, and the re-exports by something under a million.

The Official values were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports - - - - - - - - - - | £30,776,000 |
| Exports of British produce and manufactures - | 33,534,000 |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise - | 9,904,000[3] |

The Real value of the exports was £35,211,000.

The number of vessels built and registered in the several ports of the empire were: in the United Kingdom, 777; in the Isles

[1] *Hansard*, xl. 1549; N.S. i. 677.

[2] *Annual Register*, Chron. 91. We learn from a subsequent debate on 28th April, 1820, that the £50,000 had been considerably exceeded, and that upwards of 5,000 persons had been sent. It was officially stated at the same time that the reason why the Cape had been chosen, instead of our possessions in North America, was that Canada was already "overburdened with emigration," and had protested against more emigrants being sent (*Hansard*, i. 42).

[3] The chief of these imports and exports for the year ending 5th January, 1820, were as under. Value of imports into Great Britain from all parts (except Ireland), calculated at the Official rates:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Logwood - - - | £104,593 | Rice - - - - | £347,362 |
| Rhubarb - - - | 107,139 | Hemp - - - - | 402,325 |
| Quicksilver - - - | 109,866 | Oil, train and blubber - | 416,777 |
| Cheese - - - - | 120,785 | Indigo - - - - | 521,948 |
| Masts and spars, - - | 126,523 | Rum - - - - | 559,785 |
| Linen yarn - - - | 129,667 | Wines - - - - | 575,550 |
| Iron in bars - - | 136,675 | Raw silk - - - | 621,384 |
| Mahogany - - - | 137,708 | Tallow - - - - | 623,938 |
| Flax seed and linseed - | 152,055 | Piece goods of India - | 662,360 |
| Skins and furs - - | 193,376 | Sheep's wool - - | 692,345 |
| Brandy - - - | 195,854 | Rough flax - - - | 795,103 |
| Madder and madder roots | 206,551 | Corn, grain, meal, and flour - - - - | 1,613,024 |
| Borax - - - - | 215,590 | Tea - - - - | 2,375,041 |
| Ashes, pearl and pot - | 232,752 | Coffee - - - - | 2,450,979 |
| Hides, raw and tanned | 240,224 | Cotton wool - - - | 4,868,833 |
| Tobacco - - - | 258,901 | Raw sugar - - - | 5,568,235 |
| Fir wood - - - | 292,722 | | |
| Thrown silk - - - | 345,175 | | |

Value of the produce and manufactures of the United Kingdom exported

(Guernsey, Jersey, and Man), 20; in the British Plantations, 328; representing, respectively, 89,091, 1,381, and 21,701 tons.[1]

Thus closed the year in gloom. "The domestic annals of the year 1819," said the *Annual Register* in its preface, "are replete with subjects of deep, but, on the whole, of painful interest. Pecuniary distress has been nearly universal; the agricultural, the commercial, and the manufacturing interests have all laboured under depression and embarrassment seldom equalled, and none of them yet appear to have attained the crisis of their difficulties." Gloom.

from Great Britain to all parts (except Ireland) according to the Real or Declared value thereof:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Coal and culm | £99,004 | Haberdashery and millinery | £270,415 |
| Leather, saddlery and harness | 103,434 | Fish, all sorts | 278,904 |
| Tin unwrought | 104,083 | Lead and shot | 331,339 |
| Cabinet and upholstery wares | 110,536 | Leather, wrought and unwrought | 349,148 |
| Cordage | 126,590 | Earthenware of all sorts | 366,221 |
| Stationery of all sorts | 141,495 | Silk manufactures | 376,798 |
| Corn, grain, meal, and flour | 173,363 | Glass of all sorts | 531,347 |
| Salt | 174,585 | Brass and copper manufactures | 653,859 |
| Butter and cheese | 183,938 | Iron and steel, wrought and unwrought | 924,448 |
| Tin and pewter wares and tin plates | 187,811 | Hardware and cutlery | 1,149,510 |
| Soap and candles | 196,018 | Linen manufactures | 1,391,244 |
| Beer and ale | 224,058 | Refined sugar | 1,446,323 |
| Beef and pork salted | 228,555 | Cotton yarn | 2,519,782 |
| Hats, beaver and felt | 229,818 | Woollen manufactures | 5,986,807 |
| Plate, plated ware, jewellery, and watches | 230,169 | Cotton manufactures | 12,182,447 |

Value of foreign and colonial merchandise exported from Great Britain to all parts (except Ireland), calculated at the Official rates:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tea | £124,377 | Raw sugar | £593,343 |
| Wines | 135,202 | Indigo | 599,339 |
| Cloves | 146,180 | Rum | 708,061 |
| Rice | 147,764 | Cotton wool | 1,016,085 |
| Brandy | 160,562 | Piece goods of India | 1,070,127 |
| Pepper | 206,854 | Coffee | 2,670,580 |
| Tobacco | 360,607 | | |

In the above figures, it should be noticed that the exports alone are Real or Declared values, while the imports and re-exports are Official. The Official values of the exports is given in a separate table, and it is significant of the necessity of keeping these two classes of values distinct that the Official value of cotton manufactures is £16,361,708, of glass, £122,662, and of coal and culm, £200,556, as against the Real values of £12,182,447, £531,347, and £99,004 respectively (*Finance Accounts of the United Kingdom for the year ending 5th January*, 1820, 255, 261, 263).

[1] *Hansard*, N.S. v. Append. xviii.

Agriculture.

The farmer's year was a varied one; a very mild winter, an early spring and ungenial May, followed by a summer, in many places, of great heat, affected soils and situations very differently. There were accordingly greater local variations than usual in the productiveness of the harvest, and, from the vague and contradictory accounts we get from the different parts of the country, it was more difficult than usual to say how far it corresponded with an average. In Scotland it was pronounced "fully equal to a fair average of ordinary seasons." In England, while, in some parts, wheat and barley were reported inferior in quality, peas and beans a failure, potatoes and turnips less weighty, in others, the reports were very much better.[1] The ports were shut against wheat after 15th February, and against all sorts of grain after 15th August. The import of wheat and wheat-flour was no more than 625,000 quarters. Yet the price fell from about 80/- in January to 68/9 in June, and to 65/10 in December. The Board of Agriculture average was 74/6. The farmers, unable to explain it, said that it must be due to the excessive imports of the past year, and found in it another argument for more protection. Throughout the year, there were few complaints of want of employment; in some few places, there was even an advance of wages; but, in others, the old figure of 18d. a day is quoted.

A doubtful harvest.

Slave trade.

It will be remembered that those who had secured the abolition of the Slave Trade, and were now anxiously watching that the law should not be evaded, had for the past year been holding their hand, in deference to the feeling that the slave-owning colonies should be left as much as possible to work out the law. Grenville, in last session, had given notice that it would not be necessary to bring the subject of a Slave Registry before the House, as he understood that the local legislatures had such measures under discussion as would answer the purpose; in fact, in Jamaica, a bill for the registration of the slaves had been passed.[2] But it was now becoming clear that little could be hoped for in this direction, and, on 8th June, we read of a Slave Registry Bill being introduced. Not less than 50,000 slaves, said Wilberforce, were stated to have been imported into the Havannah in the course of the past two years. It would be all in vain to pass

Slave Registry Bill.

[1] Tooke pronounces it "a full average produce." In another place, he makes the generalisation that, during the war and the restriction, "there were not four seasons in succession without the occurrence of one harvest or more of decided and acknowledged deficiency."

[2] *Hansard*, xxxv. 1204.

Acts against the Slave Trade unless we followed them up by measures of the present kind. Nothing more is recorded of the Bill, but, in the list of Acts passed during the session, appears the following: "For establishing a registry of colonial slaves in Great Britain, and for making further provision with respect to the removal of slaves from British colonies."[1]

And, at the very end of the session, Wilberforce and Lansdowne carried, *nem. con.* an Address to the Regent, asking him to renew his beneficent endeavours, more especially with the governments of France and of the United States, to secure that more effectual measures were taken to carry out the laws against the traffic.[2]

Parliamentary Reform.

On the general question of parliamentary reform, there was one debate in July, introduced by Burdett, and supported, under reserve, by several members of the Opposition. Lord John Russell agreed as to the propriety of disfranchising such boroughs as were notoriously corrupt, and would give his consent to any measure that would restrict the duration of parliament to three years. But he would not support an enquiry into the general state of representation, considering that such an enquiry was calculated to throw a slur upon the representation of the country, and to fill the minds of the people with vague and indefinite alarm. Burdett, he said, had complained that the reformers were represented to be wild and visionary theorists, and had called upon the House to state where those wild and visionary reformers were to be found. For answer, he would refer him to those persons who had advised him (Burdett) during last session to bring forward his celebrated motion for annual parliaments and universal suffrage. The motion was defeated by 153 to 58.[3]

Beginning of Russell's campaign.

Grampound.

But, in November, Lord John began the movement which was to take the agitation for parliamentary reform out of the rash and intemperate guidance of Burdett and his few followers, and put it into the hands of responsible politicians. Sir Manasseh Lopes, member for Barnstaple, had been convicted of bribery at a previous election at Grampound, and was fined £10,000 and sentenced to imprisonment for two years. This Russell took as his text, and, in December, moved a set of Resolutions to the following effect:

Russell's Resolutions.

(1) That it is expedient that all boroughs, in which gross and notorious bribery and corruption shall be proved to prevail, should cease to return members to parliament.

[1] *Hansard*, xl. 976, 1581. [2] *Ibid.* 1542. [3] *Ibid.* 1440.

(2) That it is expedient that the right of returning members to serve in parliament, so taken from any boroughs, should be given to some great towns, the population of which shall not be less than 15,000 souls, or to some of the largest counties.

(3) That it is the duty of this House to consider of further means to detect and prevent corruption in the election of members of parliament.

(4) That it is expedient that the borough of Grampound do cease to send members.

In view of Castlereagh's promise that he would concur in the disfranchisement of Grampound and the transference of its representation, the Resolutions were withdrawn for the time being.[1]

Burgh reform in Scotland.

The general question of parliamentary reform was this year discussed in relation to burgh reform in Scotland. It was notorious that, bad as was the representation of England, that of Scotland was infinitely worse. There were no open burghs or open constituencies of any kind. The members for the counties were nominated by the great proprietors, and the greatest number of electors in any county was 240, of whom a considerable proportion were non-resident and without any property qualification. The story goes that, at an election for the county of Bute, only one of the twenty-one electors was present, and that he proposed and seconded himself, and was declared by the returning officer duly elected. So late as 1823, the aggregate number of persons entitled to vote for the 45 Scots members, including those for Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Aberdeen, was under 3,000.[2] But the present grievance attacked was the method of election for the burghs. A Scots burgh, said Lord Archibald Hamilton, was administered by self-elected magistrates. These magistrates were elected to their office for one year, and *de facto* went out of office at the end of the year; but, before doing so, they appointed their successors, and they took care to nominate persons who in turn would nominate them as successors. And these self-elected magistrates and council were paramount to all authority,

[1] *Hansard* xli. 301, 1091. Russell gave the following figures to show the growth of the manufacturing towns: "Manchester, which, in 1778, had only 23,000 inhabitants, is now supposed to have 110,000. Leeds had, in 1775, 17,117; in 1811, 62,534. Birmingham had, in 1700, 15,032; in 1811, 85,753. Halifax had, in 1764, 41,000; in 1811, 73,000. Sheffield, in which the first brick house was built in 1696, had, in 1811, 35,840 inhabitants" (*ibid.* 1097).

[2] May, *Constitutional History*, i. 295-298.

whatever injury they did in their capacity as magistrates—the dilapidation of funds entrusted to them, the contracting of debt, etc.—the inhabitants were without redress. It was by these common councils, thus elected, that representatives were chosen and sent to parliament. With certain honourable exceptions, such as Glasgow and Kinghorn, he did not hesitate to speak of "the general iniquity or improvidence which characterised the administration of the Scots burghs," and the exceptions, indeed, were to be attributed to individual character and not to the system itself.[1]

Petitions from Scotland.

Petitions were now pouring in from Scotland, asking that those who were interested in the expenditure of the burghs should have a control by annual election of the magistrates—as was done at this time in Stirling and Montrose alone. The population of the Royal Burghs, said Mackintosh, was 480,000. Of these 410,000 had petitioned for a reform in the existing system, and not one single petition had been presented against it. If ever there was a question on which the public voice of those interested in the issue was most unequivocally declared, it was this.[2] In May, accordingly, Hamilton asked for a Select Committee to consider of the petitions praying for a reform in the constitution and government of the Royal Burghs of Scotland. The opposition was extraordinarily violent; some speaking from affection for the traditional system, but most because it was clearly the thin end of the wedge to the reform of parliament by popular election. "All the proposer's observations," said Dundas, the member for Edinburgh, "were directed to prove the propriety of a change in the present system on which the members for Scotland were returned." He could on no account accede to it, said Canning; he was averse to any attempt to meddle with the Scots system of representation, entertaining, as he did, the utmost apprehension of the consequences of any measure tending to what was denominated parliamentary reform—to that reform, indeed, he would always be a decided opponent, whatever disguise it assumed, whether exhibited in the coarse, broad, gross, disgusting, tyrannical, and insulting shapes in which of late it had appeared in other places, or in the more plausible and less offensive but not less dangerous character in which it was occasionally laid before the House. The motion, however, was carried—practically against the government—by five votes.[3]

Hamilton's request for a Committee

—violently opposed—

but carried.

[1] *Hansard*, xxxix. 1275. [2] *Ibid.* xxxix. 1167; xl. 116. [3] *Ibid.* xl. 178.

Romilly dead yet speaketh.

The loss of Romilly was deeply felt in a series of debates on the subject to which he had devoted so much of his work in the House. As Fowell Buxton said, to him might be applied the simple inscription placed by the Carthaginians on the tomb of Hannibal: "We lament him at all times, but vehemently do we desire him in the day of battle." But, as it turned out, Romilly dead was greater than Romilly living, for now it seemed that the only matter of dispute was how best to do what he had failed to carry.[1]

Corporation of London repeats his arguments.

The subject of his long crusade was brought up first in a petition from the Corporation of London; that is, as Mackintosh pointed out, from magistrates accustomed to administer justice in a populous metropolis, necessarily possessing very great experience, and, moreover, a body of traders peculiarly exposed to those depredations against which capital punishment was denounced. The petition gave a terse setting of Romilly's arguments. Upwards of 2,000 crimes, very different in their degrees of enormity, were equally subject to the punishment of death. Crimes were increasing both in number and malignity, and must do so, (1) because, "overpowered by tenderness for life," injured persons refused to prosecute, and young offenders were suffered to advance from small offences to greater; (2) because juries refused to serve, or—assuming a discretion never intended to be vested in juries—to convict; (3) because even judges exercised their ingenuity to help the juries in evasion, and constantly recommended the convicted to mercy.[2] The evil was due, not to the administration of the law, but to the law itself, which produced, and must continue to produce, "evasions dangerous to the community, as they depend, not upon the sentiments of any individuals, but upon certain and general principles of our nature, upon the advanced state of civilisation in the country, and upon the diffusion of Christianity, by which we are daily taught to love each other as brethren, and to desire, not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live."[3]

[1] It will be remembered that all that Romilly had been able to carry were the Bills as to Privately Stealing from the Person to the value of Five Shillings, and as to Stealing from Bleaching Greens.

[2] "It is five to one he will not be detected, fifty to one he will not be prosecuted, a hundred to one he will not be convicted, and a thousand to one that the sentence pronounced by the law will never be carried out." Fowell Buxton (*Hansard*, xxxix. 819).

[3] *Hansard*, xxxix. 81.

Mackintosh had given notice that he would bring forward a motion on the subject on 2nd March. But, the day before this, Castlereagh moved for a Select Committee to enquire into the State and Description of Gaols and other places of confinement, and into the best method of providing for the reformation, as well as the safe custody and punishment, of offenders. The Select Committee on Gaols—

The enquiry into the gaols and other places of confinement was, of course, highly approved by everybody. Indeed, it was one of the subjects which could not wait. Crime, it seems, had increased twofold during the past three or four years; the prisons were long since overcrowded; the hulks were full; and, as consequence, the expedient of transportation had been more largely resorted to. Of the hulks as a satisfactory kind of prison, there was grave suspicion. The gaols were recognised as nurseries of crime. And it was a most serious thing that, over sea, one of our colonies should be growing up populated entirely by criminals and their gaolers, under a social, legislative, and executive system which was far different from that of the home country.

But, when the Government proposed to tack on to this great enquiry a consideration of the penal code, there was much reason to fear that little justice would be done to either, and that nothing at all would be done for a great number of years—even if the work of the Committee were not interrupted by a change of parliament. to consider also the penal code.

Castlereagh, of course, had some reason on his side when he argued that the revision of the death penalties involved the consideration of the punishments which were to be substituted for them—particularly transportation; that, if the reformation of the criminal was to take so great a place, nothing could be said definitely till it was ascertained what were the reformative possibilities in the existing modes of punishments—"parliament should not pronounce any verdict against the penal code until it were ascertained whether any and what remedy could be applied." But he let fall the remark that the enquiry into the gaols, etc., should precede any decision upon the penal code, and this may have been sufficient condemnation of the proposal for those who, like Mackintosh, thought that the abolition of the death sentence for trifling crimes was itself an urgent matter in the interests of justice.

Castlereagh, however, as Mackintosh observed, said a great deal

about the motion which he supposed he (Mackintosh) would make on the succeeding day, and very little about his own motion.

Thus, although the Committee was appointed on the 1st March, the interpretation of its remit was really left for discussion on the 2nd.

Mackintosh asks for another Committee.

On 2nd March then, Sir James, in asking for a Select Committee to consider of so much of the Criminal Laws as related to Capital Punishment in Felonies, delivered a most impressive and convincing speech.[1] In his long experience of the House, Wilberforce said, he had never heard a more splendid display of profound knowledge of the subject, and such forcible reasoning from the facts which that knowledge had called forth.[2] He opposed Castlereagh's scheme of remitting the subject to the Prisons Committee, first, because it was a physical impossibility that one committee should do justice to two such subjects in less than the duration of a parliament, and, second, that the remit of the Prisons Committee directly excluded the subject of capital punishment. Castlereagh had laid stress on three causes of the increase of crime—the swollen populations of the large towns, involving "some increase of moral corruption"; the disbanding of three to four hundred thousand men from the army, navy, and militia; and the severe economic distress. To these Mackintosh added three new, he hoped, temporary, causes of crime: (1) the Game Laws, (2) the laws which induced smuggling,[3]

Three new causes of crime.

[1] Sir James Mackintosh, born 1765, son of Captain John Mackintosh of Kellachie; educated at Aberdeen, and afterwards took his diploma in medicine at Edinburgh, but never practised; in 1791, published the *Vindiciae Gallicae* in reply to Burke's *Reflections*, and became honorary secretary to the "Friends of the People," but in later life retracted his revolutionary opinions; called to the bar, 1795, and joined the home circuit; defended Peltier, 1803; became Recorder of Bombay and was knighted, 1803; on his return, member for Nairn, 1813; in 1818, Professor of Law and General Politics at Haileybury. Mackintosh was almost as much beloved as Romilly. "He is a very great and a very delightful man," said Sydney Smith in 1810, "and, with a few bad qualities added to his character, would have acted a most conspicuous part in life"—"so mighty and so gentle too," said Byron.

[2] "Sir James Mackintosh made a splendid speech on the Criminal Laws; it was temperate and eloquent, and excited universal admiration. The Ministerial party spoke as highly of it as the Opposition themselves" (*Greville Memoirs*, chap. i.).

[3] (1) and (2) went together. "The cumbrous system of drawbacks and protective duties adds to the numbers of smugglers; and the poachers and smugglers reinforce the bands of depredators to which the increase of manufactures is said to have given rise. The State which does not seek to remedy these diseases is guilty of its own destruction. . . . I must

(3) the Bank Restriction, increasing the temptations to forgery.[1]

Mackintosh's object.

The object at which he aimed was "to bring back the letter of the law more near to its practice; to make the execution of the law form the majority and the remission of the law the minority of the cases. . . . It is one of the greatest evils which can befall a country when the criminal law and the virtuous feelings of the community are in hostility to each other. They cannot be long at variance without injury to one, perhaps to both. One of my objects is to approximate them; to make good men the anxious supporters of the criminal law, and to restore, if it has been injured, that zealous attachment to the law in general, which, even in the most tempestuous times of our history, has distinguished the people of England among the nations of the world."

It was well known that there were 200 capital felonies on the statute book; it was not so well known that, for the last seventy years, there had been only twenty-five sorts of felonies which were actually followed by capital punishment. This rapidly increasing discordance between letter and practice arose in the best times of our history, on the establishment of parliamentary government in 1688. For parliamentary government was attended by one inconvenience—the unhappy facility afforded to legislation. Every member of parliament had it in his power to indulge his whims and caprices on that subject; and, if he could not do anything else, he could create a capital felony. Burke was once called back to the House by a messenger—"it will not keep you a single moment; it is only a felony without benefit of clergy."

Apart from murder and murderous offences, where the law was invariably executed, and nine or ten other crimes, such as

express my surprise that, although we are now in the fourth year of a peace, not a single step has been taken to institute an inquiry into the necessity of continuing these endless regulations and prohibitory duties, which, besides their commercial inconveniences, are the nursery of crimes of the most atrocious and sanguinary description."

[1] It was in 1808 that the great increase in crimes took place—the year when the great issues began. It was at that time also that pauperism and the poor rates increased. Pauperism and crime go hand in hand. Both were propelled by the immense issues of 1808. "By those issues the value of the one pound note was reduced to fourteen shillings. . . . Can anyone doubt that this diminution of the income of so many individuals, from the highest to the lowest classes of society, was one of the chief sources of the increase of crime?"

arson, highway robbery and piracy, where the law was carried into effect in a great many cases—and on those two divisions he admitted that for the present it would be unsafe to propose any alteration—there was a third class of offences. Some of those were connected with frauds of various kinds, but others were of the most frivolous and fantastic description, amounting to about 150 in number, where the death punishment was never carried out. These capital felonies should be expunged from our statute book. Could any man think, for instance, that such an offence as that of cutting down a hop vine, or cutting down a young tree in a gentleman's pleasure ground should remain punishable by death? As no such punishment had been inflicted for seventy years, the statutes denouncing them were needless, and "I trust," he said, "I shall never live to see the day when any member of the House will rise and avow that a punishment avowedly needless ought to be continued."

There was a debatable ground here—larcenies and frauds of a heinous kind, although not accompanied with violence. He had no intention in any degree of interfering with the discretion of the judge in deciding upon any crime to which death should under some circumstances attach. But he wished to examine whether or not, upon a whole view of the subject, death should remain the punishment expressly directed by the law for offences which, in the administration of the law, were never, even under circumstances of the greatest aggravation, more severely punished than with transportation either for life or for limited periods.

**Should death be the sentence when transportation is the punishment?**

The late Lord Ellenborough had said that, if the punishment of death for certain crimes were inflicted only in one case out of sixty, yet the chance of having to undergo such a punishment must serve to impose an additional terror on the ill-disposed. He denied this, because this difference in the punishment of the same offence must naturally encourage a calculation, in the mind of a person disposed to commit crime, that if he did commit it, he was likely to escape capital punishment. "A single pardon," said Henry Fielding, "excites a greater degree of hope in the minds of criminals than twenty executions excite of fear."

He then went over the more worn ground that such severe punishments deterred persons from prosecuting, instancing the bleaching ground proprietors who supported Romilly, bankers who refused to proceed against forgers, the revenue officers who secured the Consolidation Act of 1812—Blackstone himself had

spoken of "the indispensable necessity under which juries frequently labour of committing pious perjuries,"[1]—and ended by moving for the Committee.

Fowell Buxton's support.

He was powerfully seconded by Fowell Buxton, member for Weymouth, who said, *inter alia*, that our whole system of criminal jurisprudence proceeded on the presumption that the law would be aided by the public, whereas, when a man notoriously criminal was acquitted, the whole court—judge, counsel, prosecutors, witnesses, spectators—rejoiced that the law had been defrauded of its victim. When the House divided between Castlereagh's proposal, which was supported by the whole force of government, and Mackintosh's committee, the latter was carried, amid repeated cheers, by 147 to 128.

One notices with pleasure in these debates the frequent references, from all sides, to Romilly—"while private virtue and public worth are distinguished among men, the memory of Sir Samuel Romilly will remain consecrated in the history of humanity"—and to the devoted woman who was now carrying on Howard's work in the prisons, Elizabeth Fry.[2]

Report of Mackintosh's Committee.

In July, Mackintosh presented the Report of this Committee on the Criminal Laws, in a speech which was warmly applauded and listened to with profound attention. Its enquiries had been directed to two great objects: to ascertain, first, the state of our national morality, and, second, what criminal laws were useless or mischievous and might conveniently be dispensed with. In regard to the first, the general conclusion was that crimes of an atrocious and violent character had very materially diminished. in regard to the second, the Committee had desired him to bring forward two distinct bills, one for the abolition of some thirty-five capital felonies, the other to consolidate and amend the existing law respecting forgery. As a whole, the Report was a triumphant vindication of the principles for which Romilly had fought so long and so vainly. The general and deliberate opinion of the public, gathered from witnesses, from petitions, from individuals, from corporations, from grand juries, and, in particular from the city of London, was unanimous in declaring that the

[1] Buxton noted the change that had come over juries of later times. Cardinal Wolsey, he said, observed of the juries of his day, that they were so addicted to blood that they would find Abel guilty of the murder of Cain!

[2] *Hansard*, xxxix. 777.

severity of the law ought to be mitigated. The Committee, however, did not propose to submit any proposition to the House at that late period of the session.[1]

Convict ships.

In another direction, the work which Romilly had begun made some further progress. Attention was drawn by a petition from Dr. Halloran—a man of considerable literary talents, sentenced to seven years transportation for forging a frank—to the unspeakable condition of the transports which conveyed convicts to Botany Bay. His cabin, for instance, was 12 feet square, and "twenty-one human beings were crammed into it, in cribs six feet and a half broad by five feet and a half long, into each of which six human beings were stowed." The only defence attempted—that the convicts were as well situated as the soldiers and sailors aboard these ships—was, one hopes, an exaggeration. Bennet moved for a committee to enquire into this, as well as into the state of the colony of New South Wales. This was negatived, as was also his motion for an address to the Regent to stay the departure of a vessel carrying female convicts to the colony. But Bennet got the opportunity of telling such a tale of the open prostitution on board such ships, as well as of the impossibility of the women earning a living otherwise when they arrived, as must, one thinks, have prepared the way for a revision of the whole system.[2]

The actual economic legislation of the first session of the year was not large in amount, but several interesting projects were brought forward and discussed. Strangely enough, the most important measure passed almost without notice, and, again, is not even mentioned in the *Annual Register*—the Factory Act for the protection of children.

Factory children.

The question of children in cotton factories was brought up again on 8th February, on petitions praying for a similar bill to that dropped in the previous session.[3] Lauderdale distinguished himself by disparaging the petitions, but Grosvenor voiced the objections to them. The cotton trade, he urged, was of the greatest national importance, and ought not to become the subject of a petty vexatious species of legislation: the dissimilarity between apprentices and free labourers made the legislation for the former class no proper precedent: the agitation would raise hopes which could not be realised, and promote disturbances

[1] *Hansard*, xl. 1518.
[2] *Ibid.* xxxix. 88, 115, 1433.
[3] *Ibid.* xxxix. 339.

like those at Manchester: there was already an improvement in the mills in consequence of the agitation—why not wait and see if the desired reforms would not come without legislation? etc. On 25th February, Lord Kenyon moved for a committee of the Lords to enquire into the state of children employed in the cotton factories with a view to the limitation of their hours of labour.[1]

Determined opposition to legislation.

The strength of the opposition now encountered strikes the modern reader most painfully. The Committee was refused by 19 to 6. The Lord Chancellor argued that there was no need of special legislation, as the offence of overworking children was one indictable at common law. The Earl of Rosslyn professed himself the friend of the children in objecting to the motion, for children were "improved in health, number (*sic*), and comfort by the free disposal of their labour. If their hours of working were reduced, their wages must likewise be reduced, and then they might be exposed to the hardship of want." Earl Grosvenor said that it would be an act of the greatest inhumanity to the children themselves, and would be fatal to the best interests of the country—the reason advanced for this being, apparently, that two-thirds of the workers employed in cotton factories were under the age of sixteen, and five-sixths under twenty. He was convinced that the limitation of hours might be effected without the interference of the legislature, and therefore such interference would be highly impolitic and dangerous. Lauderdale said that, in every part of the country where there were cotton factories, parents were anxious to send their young children into them, and imputed this to the fact that "they were better taken care of than in other industries." Sir Robert Peel, he said, had "never thought of this measure till Mr. Owen recommended it to him, and Sir Robert was much better qualified to judge of its merits than any other person"—an appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober, which sounds comical enough. And all this opposition was, not to a bill, but merely to a committee to enquire.

Peel's Bill passes.

Were it not, indeed, for its appearance in the list of Acts passed during the session, one would hardly gather from the parliamentary records that the Bill was passed in this year. It is mentioned, in a couple of pages of *Hansard*, that a Cotton Factories Regulation Bill came up in the Lords on 14th June, on the order of the day for commitment. Lord Kenyon observes that there is ample evidence to prove that children employed

[1] *Hansard*, xxxix. 652.

14, 15, and 16 hours a day in places heated to 80, 85, and nearly 90 degrees, suffer in health. Lord Rosslyn retorts that there is nothing in the Bill about heat—only about hours, and that passing out of the heat into the cold is likely to be as injurious after eleven hours of employment as after twelve; that parents should know what is good for their children, and that operatives in cotton mills grow up, on the average, stronger than those in any other kind of factory; that, under the existing system, the children have labour, food, and clothing—under the proposed one, they will have idleness, poverty, and wretchedness. The Bill goes through the Committee, and the next we know is its appearance in the list as 59 Geo. III. c. 66, "To make further provisions for the regulation of cotton mills and factories, and for the better preservation of the health of young persons employed therein."[1]

Usury Laws Repeal Bill postponed.

The Usury Laws Repeal Bill was re-introduced by Onslow and read a second time, but was finally postponed, on the objection that it was impossible for a certain time, in view of recent measures (the resumption of cash payments), to calculate what the value of the currency and what the rate of interest might be.[2] Onslow's historical summary is worth recalling. "The laws against Usury," he said, "had their origin in a blind and fanatical perversion of the words of Scripture; and the opprobrium which had been cast upon those who, in modern times, took more than the legal rate of interest, was formerly thrown on all those who took any interest for money lent. The term Usury, in fact, was applied to the receiving of any use or interest on money. The act of Henry VIII., the origin of the present usury laws, was not an act of restriction, but an act of enlargement; for, as it was found impossible to enforce the absurd prohibition on the taking of interest, the rate was limited to 10 per cent. In the reign of Edward VI., that act was repealed and the taking of interest prohibited; but the consequence was that the rate of interest, which before was below 10 per cent., rose to 14 per cent. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the law fixing the rate at 10 per cent. was revived, while, at the same time, the taking any interest was declared sinful and detestable. Since that time, the rate had been gradually reduced; but it was remarkable that, while the taking of interest above a certain rate

[1] *Hansard*, xl. 1130, 1577. See also *infra*, p. 719.
[2] *Ibid.* xxxix. 420, 436; xl. 998.

subjected the lender to treble penalties, it did not appear that the law prohibiting the taking of any interest had been repealed. The disapprobation of the habit of taking any interest on money was repeated in the act of Queen Anne, though in different terms."[1]

Sturges Bourne's Poor Law Bills.

There was considerable activity this year in introducing bills dealing with the Poor Law, but little came of them. Sturges Bourne got his Committee reappointed,[2] and at once obtained leave to bring in again the Poor Law Amendment Bill rejected in the previous session, but no further mention is made of it. A second bill to enact that Settlement should be acquired only by residence for three or five years—he thought it should be three years unless 90 days' absence over the whole period was proved—was thrown out on report.[3]

His third bill, the Poor Rates Misapplication Bill, was a little more fortunate. Its avowed object was to attack the evil of the payment of wages out of rates. As things were, a labourer having more than two children could represent that he was not able to support the surplus, and, by an evasion of the law, he obtained a money subsidy. It was now proposed that, in such a case, money should not be given, but that the surplus children should be separated from the parents, educated, and set to work, it might be in schools where industry was combined with education. And another provision of the Bill was that no relief should for the future be given to any able bodied labourer in employment.

Ricardo's criticism.

The occasion is notable for Ricardo's first pronouncement on the subject in parliament. The two great evils, he said, for which it was desirable to provide a remedy, were the tendency towards redundant population, and the inadequacy of the wages to support the labouring classes. The present Bill would afford no security against the first of these. Indeed, it would increase the evil; for, if parents felt assured that an asylum would be provided for their children, in which they would be treated with humanity and tenderness, there would be no check to that increase of population which was so apt to take place among the labouring classes. As regarded the other, the inadequacy of the wages, it ought to be remembered that, suppose this measure

[1] *Hansard*, xxxix. 421.

[2] In the debate, we learn that, owing to the relaxation of the laws, bastardy had enormously increased within a short period—from 1 in 28 a few years before, to 1 in 14.

[3] *Hansard*, xxxix. 612, 1153; xl. 284.

did raise wages, they would still be no more than the wages of a single man, "and would never rise so high as to afford provision for a man with a family."

Curwen's criticism.

On the second reading, the Bill was opposed by Curwen and others as removing the only effective bar against improvident marriages, and as pauperising the rising generation at the very outset of life. Curwen, however, was loud in his insistence that the whole question of the Poor Laws must be taken in hand by the government; the system was demoralising and pauperising the workers and swallowing up the revenue of the country.[1] Wages thirty years before, he said, were about 8/—equivalent in command of the necessaries of life to 16/- at the present time. Since then the price of necessaries had doubled, wages had advanced only one-half, and taxation had trebled. The augmentation of wages and the reduction of taxation were the only measures which could restore the labouring population to independence. "To destroy pauperism, the people must be allowed to live," and he hinted at the desirability of an experiment of a minimum wage in agriculture—though it would raise the price of produce, it could not affect consumption. Other speakers dwelt as well on the hardship of giving magistrates power to take children from their parents without consent. Ricardo again opposed the measure as tending to increase of population—"it was only the plan of Mr. Owen and carried to a greater extent." The Bill passed the Commons, but was thrown out by the Lords.[2]

Robert Owen's scheme.

In December, there was a debate of much interest on a proposal to appoint a Select Committee to enquire into Robert Owen's plan for ameliorating the condition of the lower classes. Owen[3] had communicated his scheme in a Report to the Com-

[1] The following statement of the amounts "expended solely on the poor" in the years named, for England and Wales, is given by *Annual Register*, 1820, i. Chron. 645 :—

| | |
|---|---|
| 1816 | £5,673,490 |
| 1817 | 6,850,992 |
| 1818 | 7,822,735 |
| 1819 | 7,468,384 |

[2] *Hansard*, xxxix. 1157 ; xl. 465, 1125, 1514.

[3] Robert Owen, born 1771 ; son of a Welsh saddler ; at nineteen, the successful manager of a cotton mill in Manchester ; in 1799, married David Dale's daughter, and settled down as manager and part-owner of New Lanark, which he speedily made a commercial success ; to carry out his philanthropic plans, formed a new firm there in 1813 (with Jeremy Bentham, among others, as partner)—the wonderful results need not be recalled here ; in 1813, published his *New View of Society*. Owen had just taken a great part in the factory legislation of the year.

mittee on the Poor Laws of 1817. The main thesis was that the principal cause of the distress was the unrestrained competition of machinery with human labour. His communities, or townships of 1,000 persons, were to be settled on farms of about 1,000 acres, and to be, so far as possible, self-contained; the settlers were to live in one great building, with private apartments for families, but with public kitchens and eating rooms. Parents were to have entire care of their children up till the age of three, after which the children were to be brought up by the community, although the parents were to have access to them at meal times and other occasions. The work was to be mainly agricultural, but variety of employments was favoured, and machinery was not banned, but used under due subordination to the good of the community. The plan excited much attention, and was favoured, not only by many leading men, but by the *Times*. The present Committee was proposed by de Crespigny; Lord Archibald Hamilton seconded, and Brougham supported the motion. Ricardo, although "completely at war with the system of Mr. Owen," gave his vote for the enquiry, "if only for the purpose of seeing whether it was probable that the advantages expected from the use of spade industry could be realised." The motion, however—perhaps through Wilberforce's strong protest against the House giving its sanction to an institution which did not acknowledge the Christian religion as one of its essential features—was rejected by a majority of 125.[1]

Friendly Societies.

On 25th March, Courtenay got leave to bring in a bill for the further encouragement and protection of Friendly Societies, providing that the formation of such societies should be under the more vigilant superintendence of the magistrates at quarter sessions, and that two or three of the principal actuaries in London should be employed to frame accurate actuarial tables to which these societies would require to conform. Leave was given, at the same time, to bring in another bill for establishing Parochial Benefit Societies, and compelling resort to them by refusing parochial relief to those who had not become members. Although no further mention is made of the former, there appears, in the list of Acts passed, an Act "for the further protection and encouragement of Friendly Societies, and for preventing frauds and

[1] *Hansard*, xli. 1189. A fascinating account of the rise and progress of New Lanark is given in Cullen, *Adventures in Socialism*, 1910.

abuses therein." The latter appears to have been read a second time, but it then disappeared.[1]

Sidelights on Savings Banks.

A curious sidelight is thrown on the status and reputation of Friendly Societies and Savings Banks at this time by two matters which cropped up in the House of Commons. One is a question put by Wilbraham Bootle. However ridiculous it might seem, it was, he said, of great importance to the labouring population of Lancashire: Would the Chancellor of the Exchequer contradict the rumour that the Government was about to seize the funds of the Friendly Societies and Savings Banks and apply them to the payment of the National Debt? The report had actually caused the break up of some Friendly Societies.[2] The other is a resolution passed at the meeting held on Hunslet Moor, near Leeds, on 19th July: "The Saving Bank scheme, which was instituted under a pretence of benefiting the working classes, when nearly three-fourths of them were out of employ, is an insult to common-sense and real understanding, and ought to be considered as what it really is—an engine to work the last shilling out of the pockets of a few old servants and retired tradesmen, to enable the bank and boroughmongers to pay the fractional parts of the dividends, and to create a sort of lesser fundholders of those who know no better than to make a deposit of their hard earnings to fill the pockets of those who are draining them of their last shilling."[3]

Illicit distilling in Ireland.

It was mentioned that, in 1814, as a means of preventing the great amount of illicit distillation in Ireland, parliament had fallen back on the ancient device of fining the inhabitants of the townlands where any article used in such distillation was discovered. So much complaint was now made of the effect of the Act on morals and as to its principle of "punishing the innocent for the guilty," that the Chancellor of the Exchequer was forced to confess his own dissatisfaction with the results of the system, and, it would seem, his willingness to abandon the fines in some cases. Ultimately he introduced a bill to the effect that, wherever an effective police was established, no townland fines would be levied—on the understanding that this was a

[1] *Hansard*, xxxix. 1159, 1478; xl. 1582. [2] *Ibid.* xli. 1391.

[3] From papers relative to the internal state of the country, presented to both Houses, 24th November, 1819 (*Hansard*, xli. 236). The article on Banks in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. II., published in 1817, concluded;—"taken by itself, it is at least a doubt whether Savings Banks may not produce as great a quantity of evil as good."

temporary measure, to be reviewed in the coming session. The Irish Still Fines Bill appears as cap. 98 of the Acts passed during the year.[1]

London Gas Light Bill.

Another London Gas Light Bill was brought in, and passed a second reading. The subject was not fully discussed in the only debate reported in *Hansard*, but one gathers that a new company had subscribed £100,000 and offered to co-operate with the other gas companies already chartered; that the price of gas varied in different parts of London from 5/- to 14/-; that by "rendering the streets, squares, and passages light as day, gas was highly advantageous to the police." The existing companies, it was said, had done all they could to oppose the present project, and the Bill was supported on the ground that it would introduce competition among the companies: hitherto "all the competition or rivalry which they produced was the rivalry of which should pull the pavement most violently to pieces." The Bill, however, was thrown out on the third reading.[2]

Smoke prevention.

It must sound almost ludicrous to modern readers to hear that, as early as 1819, it was proposed that the legislature should take strong measures against the smoke nuisance. It was Michael Angelo Taylor, the useful member who had secured the London Metropolitan Paving Act, who made the proposal. Steam engines, he said, were now so numerous that their smoke clouded the atmosphere and endangered the lives of his Majesty's subjects. He wished the legislature to compel them to consume their own smoke. He had made enquiries and found that it might easily be accomplished. Moreover, lawyers considered it a nuisance and an indictable offence. His actual motion, however, was more modest than his statements: it was for a Select Committee to enquire how far it might be practicable to compel persons using steam engines to erect them in a manner less prejudicial to public health and public comfort. If the motion were agreed to, it was his intention to "examine artists" on the practicability of the plan he had in view, and introduce a bill. The motion was agreed to, and the Committee appointed.[3]

[1] *Hansard*, xxxix. 1504; xl. 593, 1420.

[2] *Hansard*, xl. 451. The progress of the new illuminant is shown by a notice in the *Annual Register* that, in March, Southwark Bridge was opened, lit by thirty gas lanterns, and that, in June, pipes were being laid in the principal streets adjacent to Covent Garden, preparatory to lighting the whole of the parish by gas (pp. 20, 40).

[3] *Hansard*, xl. 976. This view of London smoke, however, was not universally shared. "Smoke is the everlasting companion of this great city. Yet

Frame-Knitters' Bill.

A Frame-work Knitters' Bill first appears in *Hansard* when passing the second reading in the Commons on 27th May, but it would be difficult to make out, from the short discussion, what it was about. It was "an experiment"—a "legislative interference" of which the gravest doubt was expressed—it "would prevent the manufacture of cheap hosiery" and throw 3,000 people out of employment—it was "necessary to support the character of our manufactures on the continent." Ricardo said that he did not altogether agree in the principle of the Bill, but would reserve his observations for a future discussion.

When the Bill came up to the Lords, however, we find that it was a measure designed to prevent the manufacture of web-stockings—a cheap article, which had been introduced, when the trade was in a depressed state, for the express purpose of finding employment for a number of workers. As Harrowby said, they might as well prohibit the making of all cheap articles. The Bill was lost, though only by a majority of 2.[1]

Distress among Coventry ribbon weavers.

The chronic distress in the silk trade was discussed on the presentation of petitions from the Coventry ribbon weavers, setting forth their sufferings from the reduced wages paid, and asking for the extension to them of the Spitalfields system—"a fraction of a farthing added by a legislative measure on each yard of manufacture to the produce of the weaver would remedy the whole distress." Leave was asked to bring in a bill for the Better Regulation of Persons employed in the Silk Manufacture, but the motion met with no support except, curiously enough, from Fowell Buxton, who argued that the source of the whole evil was the poor rates—"the evil would long ago have remedied itself had it not been for the poor rates; for either the workmen would have abandoned their trade and applied themselves to some other occupation, or the masters must have raised their wages." The motion, finally, was withdrawn.[2]

is the smoke of London emblematic of its magnificence. . . . In the spring, during a calm day, Vesuvius itself can scarcely exceed this display of smoke. It is pleasing to observe the black streams which issue from the different manufactories, sometimes darting upwards, while every trifling current gives graceful undulations; at others, rolling in slow movements, blending with the common mass. . . . When the sun breaks through this veil during the summer, its beams have a wonderful effect on the trees, and grass; the green is bright and inconceivably beautiful" (Malcolm, *London Redivivum*).

[1] *Hansard*, xl. 820, 1294. [2] *Ibid.* xl. 337.

In June, a Select Committee was asked to enquire into the nature of the distress among the cotton weavers. The enquiry was refused, but the "abstract idea" on which it was grounded is too curious to leave unrecorded. "It might perhaps be shown," said the mover, "that means did exist by which the industry of the working-classes might be rendered efficient, not only to support themselves but to augment the revenue of the country." There was at present a portion of machinery which wholly escaped those burdens which were imposed on machinery of a different kind—that kind of machinery one-half of which consisted of animal life. There was a machine called a "power-loom," which machine, even now, as well as during the war, was met in competition with the simple loom of the weaver; but with this great advantage, that all the goods which power-looms produced were exempt from the drawback necessarily created by the consumption of those articles on which the weaver was compelled to exist, and on which he paid a heavy rate of taxation. As it was rather an abstract question how far the two species of machinery should be placed on a level, he wished to have a committee to investigate it, and to consider whether the capital of the poor man, which consisted in the labour of his two hands, must bear the burden of taxation, since those articles, without which he could not exist, were taxed; while the large capital of the wealthy manufacturer, which he invested in a machine, was suffered to escape any contribution to the revenue. He did not wish to do away with machinery, from which incalculable benefits had been derived, but he wished to see whether the advantages which had been produced by it did not arise in a great degree from its being exempted from the consumption of articles which the poor weaver was obliged to use, and on which heavy taxes were laid. It was a matter for serious consideration whether capital, shut up in machinery, should be useless to the revenue, when, if it were not so shut up, it would, according to the laws of nature, be expended in animal labour. As Robinson replied, it was the first time, he believed, that the proposal had been made to submit the discussion of an abstract idea to a committee.[1]

A curious "abstract idea" in taxation.

It may have been noticed that, in the debates of former years, it was almost invariably assumed that combination of workmen was a bad thing—at least a thing of which all enlightened persons must disapprove. In a debate of this year, appears the first record of

Combination

[1] *Hansard*, N.S. ii. 116.

—a petition in its favour, more enlightened feeling on the subject. A petition was presented from a number of journeymen tradesmen and mechanics of Westminster, as follows: "That the petitioners are aggrieved by certain laws against combinations of workmen, inasmuch as those laws have a tendency to deprive them of the fair use of their skill, and of a just remuneration for their labour; that those laws, instead of preventing combinations, have in fact deprived the working-man of every means, except those of combination, of making arrangements with his employer, and of every chance of raising his nominal wages, however inadequate they may be to purchase the quantity of necessaries he has been accustomed to receive for his labour; that those laws, by forcing working-men into combinations, have destroyed all confidence between them and their employers, and have substituted in its stead universal distrust, jealousy, and oppression; that, in proportion as combinations among classes of workmen have been more or less perfect, and more or less permanent, so has been the amount of the remuneration they have received for their labour, thus making the well-being of a very large portion of the people depend upon an absolute breach of the laws; that, notwithstanding those workmen among whom the means of successful combination are most perfect, have received a larger compensation for their labour than those among whom those means have been less perfect, there has been for many years past a gradual deterioration in the condition of even those who have received the largest compensation; that, in the opinion of the petitioners, all laws which interfere with the wages of labour are injurious to the general prosperity of the country, of vast and continually increasing injury to the working-man, of no advantage to his employer, but that they are a means of constant hatred, litigation, and oppression among those whose real interest it is that a mutual good understanding should at all times prevail; the petitioners therefore pray that the House will cause inquiry to be made, and such relief to be given to them as may seem reasonable."

supported by Hume On this being read, Joseph Hume[1] said that it was now time that the Combination Laws were looked into. They were,

[1] Joseph Hume, the future leader of the Radicals; born 1777, son of a shipmaster in Montrose; in 1796, a Member of the College of Surgeons of Edinburgh; entered the service of the East India Company, first as ship's surgeon, then in the army; returned to England, 1808; and, after some years of travel and study, entered Parliament for Weymouth, 1812.

he conceived, mischievous. "He would put it to the feelings of every gentleman present whether it was just to give to the rich master the power of combining against the journeymen, and to punish the latter if he attempted to procure what he conceived to be a fair remuneration for his labour." Ellice, member for Coventry, offered his cordial support to a measure which would be the first step towards re-establishing the principle of free labour. Williams said that it had been the policy of master manufacturers and tradesmen, for some time back, to reduce the price of labour, and Lord Ebrington concurred entirely with the speakers. Those mentioned were all new members, and such opinions, one would think, must have very much surprised the House of Commons.[1] and others.

While children engaged in the comparatively healthy occupation of cotton-spinning were now taken under the protection of the law, the children employed in a much more questionable occupation were not. The Chimney Sweepers' Regulation Bill was again brought in by Bennet in February, the only change being that two years were to be allowed, instead of one, for the total abolition of the practice of sweeping chimneys by climbing boys. His argument was that the use of boys was now unnecessary; it was proved that practically all chimneys could be swept by machinery—if there were some exceptions, they were in the mansions of the opulent, who could afford to make a change. One chimney at the Tower had been swept in half an hour, which formerly required five hours to sweep, and in which a boy was once confined twenty-eight hours.[2] Chimney Sweepers' Regulation Bill

On the second reading, one member of the lower House was found to oppose the Bill, saying that the law gave the climbing boys sufficient protection, and that the machinery "was not found to succeed"; and, on the presentation of a petition from certain chimney-sweepers against the Bill, three others were found. What were the poor boys to do if deprived of subsistence; they were better employed in sweeping chimneys than in doing nothing. The suppression of them must increase the poor rate. Would the proposer bring in a bill to prevent boys from being sent to the mast-head of a man of war? If chimneys could be swept by machinery,

[1] *Hansard*, xl. 1290.

[2] *Hansard*, xxxix. 426. The Surveyor-General of the Board of Works had just reported that, out of 1,000 chimneys, only 10 could not be swept either by the machinery in use or by the ball and brush.

it was enough to state this to the public—they had humanity enough not to employ boys if they could do otherwise—and the self-interest of the master sweepers would do the rest. Surely parents might be trusted with the care of their own children. It would deprive parish officers of one of the opportunities of apprenticing boys out. "If a measure of this nature were adopted," said one, "a private man would hardly know what to do. With an Act of Parliament on one side and an attorney on the other, he would be perpetually embarrassed."

—passes the Commons

At this stage, an attempt was made to alter the age of prohibition from fourteen to eight, but this was rejected, and the Bill passed on.

When it came to the Lords, introduced by Lord Auckland, he said that, as to the argument that the measure would throw boys out of employment, he would only say that, before the period fixed for the Bill to come into operation arrived, the great majority of boys now employed in sweeping chimneys would be totally unfit for anything. Lauderdale, still unwearied in his bad activity, took up another line. As an economist, he had always emphasised the beneficent effects of the introduction of machinery. But here, he said, was a difference; this was not encouraging but enforcing the adoption of machinery, and this he would resist to his latest breath. He could only account for the attempts at such legislation by the fact that "every man who got into Parliament thought himself bound to propose some novel measure in order to become popular." Earl Grosvenor—who had shortly before spoken strongly against factory legislation—to his credit contended that this was an essentially different case; actual inhumanity was proved in the treatment of climbing boys.

The Bill passed the second reading by 17 to 14. But, on the motion for committal, the opposition had mustered their voting

but is lost in the Lords.

forces—for Lauderdale was the only speaker, and his arguments did not grow stronger.[1] He now shifted his ground again—said

[1] Lauderdale told rather a good story, however. In some parts of Ireland, it had been the practice, instead of employing climbing boys, to tie a rope round the neck of a goose and drag the bird up the chimney. This practice so much interested the feelings of many persons that, for the sake of protecting the goose, they seemed ready to give up all humanity towards other animals. A man in a country village, having one day availed himself of the aid of a goose, was accused by his neighbour of inhumanity. He answered that he must have his chimney swept. "Yes," replied the humane friend of the goose, "to be sure you must sweep your chimney, but why don't you take two ducks?" (*Hansard*, xxxix. 983).

nothing about "free labour," but dwelt solely on the danger of fire if the sweeping boys were abolished. The Bill was again lost, this time by 37 to 20.[1]

Another bill

Bennet, however, persevered. In March, he got leave to introduce another bill. This time he abandoned the attempt to get the practice abolished. His object was to regulate the trade—to put the parties under better charge and under better regulation than they had been—and his measure, he said, had the entire approbation of the master chimney-sweepers. No mention is made of the Bill in its passage through the Commons, but, when it came to the third reading in the Lords, under the conduct of Lord Auckland, we gather that it proposed to prevent the employment of boys under ten and of girls altogether; to prevent children being sent to "cry the streets for employment"; to limit the number of apprentices to each master to four; and to provide for summary convictions before two justices. But the Lords were not to be moved. The Lord Chancellor ridiculed the wording. Lauderdale surpassed himself. It was not fit for the legislature to lay down rules of humanity to individuals; by doing so the very principles of humanity were rooted up, for greater cruelties would then be practised than any which the Bill provided against. It was impossible without great injustice and public inconvenience to legislate on subjects of this kind. It was somewhat of the same nature with the Bill for regulating the labour of children in cotton factories, and with the poor laws. If the legislature attempted to lay down a moral code for the people, there was always a danger that every feeling of benevolence would be extirpated. It was like making a law to regulate the mode in which a painter was to execute his work; the painter might conform to the law, but his taste would be destroyed. And on logic like this, the House of Lords threw out the Bill by 32 to 12.[2]

—opposed by Eldon and Lauderdale

—is thrown out.

Sydney Smith on the matter.

It is curious to note that Sydney Smith, after an impassioned article on the inhuman cruelties practised on the climbing boys, could only come to this impotent conclusion: "After all, we must own that it was quite right to throw out the Bill for prohibiting the sweeping of chimneys by boys—because humanity is a modern invention; and there are many chimneys in old houses which cannot possibly be swept in any other manner. But the construction of chimneys should be attended to in some new building act;

[1] *Hansard*, xxxix. 448, 899, 981. [2] *Ibid.* 1269; xl. 668.

and the treatment of boys should be watched over with the most severe jealousy of the law. . . . We should have been very glad to have seconded the views of the Climbing Society, and to have pleaded for the complete abolition of climbing boys if we could conscientiously have done so. But such a measure, we are convinced from the evidence, could not be carried into execution without great injury to property, and great increased risk of fire." One remembers how a greater than Sydney Smith said "Deliver us these rickety souls of infants, and let your invaluable cotton trade take its chance."

The Game Laws.

As we saw in the debates of previous years, the one way of amending the Game Laws which commended itself to many, was to make game private and marketable property. The Committee which reported in 1816 had "sanguine expectations" that a bill founded on the principle recognised by the common law of the land —that principle being that the property of game was vested in the individual possessing the land on which it was discovered—might be advantageously resorted to; and therefore came to the resolution "that all game should be considered the property of the person on whose land such game should be found." In

Brand's Bill.

March, Brand accordingly asked leave to bring in a bill on those lines. The motive—at least one of the motives—of the Bill was "the interest, the happiness, and the moral conduct of the lower orders of society," to be attained by the discouragement of poaching. If he were called upon, he said, to determine what was the best and the shortest way to demoralise a whole people, he would answer;—"take an offence which has nothing in it of disgusting crime or of moral turpitude; let the habits of the country be favourable, and the property of the country not opposed to it; punish it in all its shades with the utmost degree of severity; and you will have, with all speed, the very demoralisation which you are wishful to effect."

He proposed to return to the ancient law of the country, namely, that the occupier of the land on whose property the game was fed and maintained should possess it, unless it had been specially reserved to the original owner of the soil, or leased by such owner to some other person for his use and enjoyment. His proposal would make game personal property, and this would have two effects: (1) it would introduce a certain sense of moral feeling among poachers—"when they heard individuals from day to day speaking of game as their property—property which they

might legally dispose of to the highest bidder—they would at length be checked by that natural feeling which deterred men from committing what was termed a robbery"; (2) it would reduce the price of game, and so lessen the temptation to poaching.

We next hear of the Bill when it passed the second reading,—amid strong opposition, indeed, on the ground that it would fail of all the effects anticipated by its mover; particularly that making it lawful for the tenant of the soil to sell game would make it so much easier for the poacher to dispose of it. It is not necessary, however, to go further into the arguments used, as the Bill was lost before the committee stage.

In these debates, one notices that a great many voices were raised for total repeal of the Game Laws, and a great many more for their amendment as being an intolerable wrong; and that the evil of tempting men to poach was more emphasised than the evil of poaching itself.[1]

Madhouses. In June, a Madhouses Regulation Bill was thrown out by the Lords, the reasons urged being that the visitation and inspection which it proposed would aggravate the maladies, and that the penalties, half of which were to go to the informer, would lead to abuse. It was granted, however, that great evils existed in the conduct of these houses, and a suggestion was made of a committee to investigate more fully and bring in a bill.[2]

Licensing. In May, Bennet again brought in the Licensing Bill which had been dropped, owing to the lateness of the session, in 1817. It now passed the second reading, not without considerable opposition, but we hear nothing more about it.[3]

The *Savannah*. Another advance in the progress of steam navigation was marked by the arrival of the *Savannah* in Liverpool. She left

[1] *Hansard*, xxxix. 937, 1078; xl. 374. In the course of 1818, some 1,200 persons were committed for offences against the Game Laws, not to mention those who ran away from their families for fear of commitment—"no slight quantity of misery." It is, indeed, very much to be wondered at that Englishmen should so long have suffered the insult to law presented by such placards as "If any person is seen upon the dykes or trees, he will be shot. Informers will be rewarded," or by the familiar practice of spring-guns and man-traps. As Sydney Smith said: "Nor are we able to distinguish between the guilt of two persons—the one of whom deliberately shoots a man whom he sees in his fields—the other of whom purposely places such instruments as he knows will shoot trespassers upon his fields: Better that it should be lawful to kill a trespasser face to face than to place engines which will kill him. The trespasser may be a child—a woman—a son or friend:—The spring-gun cannot accommodate itself to circumstances—the Squire or the gamekeeper may" (*Edinburgh Review*, 1819).

[2] *Hansard*, xl. 1344.

[3] *Ibid.* xl. 121, 660.

Savannah on 26th May and arrived on 16th June—the first steamship to cross the Atlantic. This, said the *Annual Register*, "displays the power and advantage of steam to vessels of the largest size, she being 350 tons burden"! [1]

Literature.

In the literature of economic science appeared Sismondi's *Nouveaux principes d'économie politique ou de la richesse dans ses rapports avec la population*, and Chalmers' *Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns*. In general literature, the year was a notable one. It saw the publication of Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale*, Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* and the *Cenci*, Byron's *Don Juan*, Scott's *Bride of Lammermoor* and *Ivanhoe*—the last "received throughout England with a more clamorous delight than any of the Scotch novels had been." Scotland was particularly interested in the very candid *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, written by a Welsh doctor: in spite of its many home-truths, *Blackwood* could say of it, "His book is a valuable present to the people of England and Wales, for it furnishes the only graphical and trustworthy sketches of the present manners and society of Scotland which they have it in their power to peruse."

MISCELLANEA.

The Foreign Enlistment Act was passed, after long debates, to prevent the enlisting of his Majesty's subjects for foreign service, and the fitting out in his Majesty's dominions vessels for warlike purposes without his Majesty's license. The Bill was instigated by the government of Ferdinand, and its passing was memorable for the "splendid impediment" of Mackintosh and others, who were opposed to any measure which would prejudice the cause of Spain's revolted colonies in South America. "It now appeared," summed up Mackintosh, "that the terms of neutrality were an unbounded supply of arms and warlike stores to the one party, and an absolute prohibition of them to the other." [2]

In 1819, the Duke of York, the king's favourite son, received a grant of £10,000 a year to enable him to visit his afflicted father at stated intervals—"a measure which gave more disgust than anything that had been done for a long time," said Lord King—"a solid act of baseness," Sydney Smith called it.[3]

[1] Chron. 41. [2] *Hansard*, xl. 362, 858, 867, 1084, 1118, 1232, 1377.

[3] *Hansard*, xli. 33; *Memoir*, ii. 177.

The barbarous, senseless, and obsolete law known as Wager of Battle was abolished, on the motion of the Attorney-General. It was explained that owing to the principle adopted by the courts of Scotland, of suffering laws to fall into desuetude, the present measure was unnecessary in that part of the kingdom.[1]

The *Annual Register* contains the following:

"The Marquis of Arboris Gattinars, of Bremen, has founded a premium of 3,600 francs for the best elementary treatise on Political Economy, calculated to be used as guide for the teachers of this science in the establishments of public instruction. The work may be composed in French, Italian, or English."[2]

[1] *Hansard*, xxxix. 415, 428, 434, 734, 1097, 1116, 1120. An interesting account of such a trial is given in *Hansard*, xl. 1204.

[2] Chron. 28.

NOTE TO PAGE 704.

The Bill was considerably modified and weakened in passing through Parliament. The following were the actual provisions: No child to be employed under the full age of nine years. No person under sixteen to be employed for more than *twelve* hours in any one day, such twelve hours to be between 5 a.m. and 9 p.m., exclusive of half an hour for breakfast, and one full hour for dinner between the hours of 11 and 2 o'clock; provided nevertheless that "if, at any time, in any such mill, manufactory, or buildings as are situated upon streams of water, time shall be lost in consequence of the want of a due supply, or of an excess of water, then, and in every such case, and so often as the same shall happen, it shall be lawful for the proprietors of any such mill, manufactory, or buildings to extend the beforementioned time of daily labour, after the rate of one additional hour per day, until such lost time shall have been made good, but no longer." In 1820, however, there was an amending Act (60 Geo. III. c. 4), providing that "on the event of one or more mills being suddenly destroyed by fire or other accident, the proprietors thereof, possessing other mills which are kept at work during the day, shall, for eighteen months from the day on which any such fire or other accident shall happen, be allowed to employ the persons who were previously at work in the mill or mills so destroyed, and employ them in the night time in any other mill or mills, for any period not exceeding ten hours in any one night." And the hour for dinner might be between eleven and four.

# CHAPTER XXXII

## 1819. PETERLOO

Radical agitation.

THE widespread depression of 1819 was taken full advantage of by the "Radical Reformers," as they were now being called. In June, many large meetings were held at Glasgow, Leeds, and Ashton-under-Lyne; one at Hunslet Moor, it was said, was attended by 35,000 persons. Not the slightest breach of the peace occurred at these meetings, but the language of the speakers was certainly very inflammatory. A Female Reformers' Society was formed at Blackburn for the purpose of co-operating with the men, in "instilling into the minds of their children a deep-rooted hatred of our tyrannical rulers." The ferment spread through Yorkshire, Lancashire, Cheshire, Nottingham, and Leicester. At Birmingham, a great assemblage took the extraordinary step of appointing Sir Charles Wolseley their "representative," or "legislatorial attorney," to advise the Prince Regent, and Wolseley was foolish enough to consent to the farce, and pledge himself to claim a seat in the House of Commons. The Manchester Radicals resolved to follow the precedent, but, warned that this would not be allowed, they contented themselves with organising a meeting at St. Peter's Field, on the 16th August, to petition for a reform of parliament. This was the Manchester Insurrection—the "Peterloo" immortalised by Carlyle.

St. Peter's Field.

All the forenoon, crowds to the number of 20,000 kept pouring in from the surrounding country, armed only with sticks, but in rude imitation of military formation of fours deep, carrying flags and emblems inscribed "No Corn Laws," "Vote by Ballot," "Equal Representation or Death," etc.

By one o'clock, there was a vast crowd, estimated variously from 50,000 to 80,000, on the field—a then unenclosed space of about three acres—among them about 150 female reformers

carrying a white silk banner. The magistrates, anxiously watching in a house adjoining, drew up a warrant for the arrest of Hunt and other speakers at the hustings. The arrests were made without difficulty by the police, reinforced by some forty of the Cheshire Yeomanry.[1] Some one, however, blundered; the forty yeomen were thought to be in danger, and the order was given to the dragoons and the rest of the yeomanry to charge; apparently losing their heads, they used the sabre in earnest.

The panic among the defenceless people, among whom were women and children, was dreadful. The ground was piled high with the stricken mob. Eight persons were killed and some 400 taken to hospital—most of the injuries, of course, being caused by the pressure of the people crowding on each other in the attempt to escape the trampling hoofs. The yeomanry charge.

Before nightfall,[2] all was quiet again—"the number of the slain and maimed," says Carlyle, "is very countable, but the treasury of rage, burning hidden or visible in all hearts ever since, more or less perverting the effort and aim of all hearts ever since, is of unknown extent."[3]

A few days afterwards, the Secretary of State communicated the thanks of the Prince Regent to the Cheshire magistrates and yeomanry for their "prompt, decisive, and efficient measures," and Earl Fitzwilliam—a man universally beloved and esteemed, and a constant friend of the Crown—who had concurred in calling a meeting at York to consider of the transactions at Manchester, was removed from his post of Lord-Lieutenant of the West Riding.[4]

[1] "Their ranks were chiefly filled by wealthy master manufacturers," said Sir William Joliffe twenty-five years after, "and, without the knowledge which would have been possessed by a (strictly speaking) military body, they were placed, most unwisely as it appeared, under the immediate command and orders of the civil authorities" (*Life of Lord Sidmouth*, iii. 254).

[2] "In ten minutes from the commencement of the havoc," says Bamford, "the field was an open and almost deserted space. The sun looked down through a sultry and motionless air. The curtains and blinds of the windows within view were all closed."

[3] *Past and Present*, Book I. chap. iii.

[4] The narrative is taken for the most part from the *Annual Register*, and from Castlereagh's speech (*Hansard*, xli. 142). A more detailed account will be found in Walpole's *History*, i. 506. Samuel Bamford, author of *Passages in the Life of a Radical*, petitioned to be examined at the bar of the House of Commons to prove, as one who had conducted a large number of men to the meeting, that many of the circumstances described as facts were grossly misrepresented, while the proceedings and intentions of the people were unfairly discoloured and distorted in many of the documents presented, and,

The Regent's alarmist Speech.

Parliament was called together again on 23rd November, and the Regent's Speech was most alarmist. The seditious practices so long prevalent in some of the manufacturing districts, it was said, had continued with increased activity during the recess. "They have led to proceedings incompatible with the public tranquillity and with the peaceful habits of the industrious classes of the community; and a spirit is now fully manifested utterly hostile to the constitution of this kingdom, and aiming not only at the change of those political institutions which have hitherto constituted the pride and security of this country, but at the subversion of the right of property and of all order in society." The necessity of affording protection to the lives and property of his Majesty's loyal subjects had compelled some addition to the military force, but the revenue, though it had undergone some fluctuations, appeared to be again in a course of progressive improvement. Some depression still continued to exist in certain branches of manufactures, but this depression was in a great measure to be ascribed to the embarrassed situation of other countries, and might, it was hoped, prove temporary. And it ended by saying that it would require the utmost vigilance and exertion of parliament, collectively and individually, to check the dissemination of the doctrines of treason and impiety.[1]

Grey on the crisis.

In the debate which followed, Earl Grey agreed as to the gravity of the crisis, but did not like the line of policy foreshadowed. He had heard no suggestion in the Speech of averting the danger by relieving the people of some part of the heavy burdens which oppressed them. If there had, indeed, been a change in the feelings of the people towards the constitution, was it not to be attributed chiefly to the distress? The surest way to prevent seditions, as Bacon said, was to take away the matter of them. He expressed astonishment that no notice had been taken in the Speech of the events which had occurred in Manchester on the 16th August. The meeting there, "ending as it did, was, he must say, by far the most important event that had occurred in the course of his political life"—a meeting called, indeed, for most absurd and improper purposes, but not illegal,

generally, to show that the sole design was to address the Regent, representing their various grievances. Bamford gives the numbers present as 100,000 men, women, and children. The Petition was printed and laid on the table (*Hansard*, xli. 509).

[1] *Hansard*, xli. 1.

had been dispersed with bloodshed. These events called for a separate, a full, and a solemn enquiry.

Erskine. Lord Erskine continued that, by the events at Peterloo, the rights of the people had not only been manifestly invaded; they had been wantonly trampled on and insulted. The object of the meeting, being to petition parliament, was legal; no overt act had been committed, and no conspiracy discovered to prove it a cover for rebellion or sedition. On the contrary, there was little ground for believing that violence or disturbance of any kind was contemplated, seeing that very great numbers brought their wives and children along with them. Lord King followed in the same strain.

Sydney Smith. Sydney Smith, no doubt, expressed the feeling of many when he wrote to Lord Grey: "Force alone, without some attempts at conciliation will not do. . . . The worst of it all is that a considerable portion of what these rascals say is so very true. Their remedies are worse than the evils; but, when they state to the people how they are bought and sold, and the abuses entailed upon the country by so corrupted a Parliament, it is not easy to answer them, or to hang them. What I want to see the State do, is, to listen in these sad times to some of its most numerous enemies—anything that would show the Government to the people in some other attitude than that of taxing, punishing, and restraining."[1]

Disregarding all this, Parliament at once passed severe legislation to suppress the alleged sedition.

The Six Acts. The Blasphemous and Seditious Libels Bill provided that any person having been tried, convicted, and punished for a seditious or blasphemous libel, should, on conviction of a second offence, be liable to the punishment of fine, imprisonment, or transportation.

The Misdemeanours Bill prevented unnecessary delay, by imparling or traversing, in cases of prosecution for such offences.

The Seditious Meetings Prevention Bill enacted that, if any persons should be desirous of meeting for the consideration of subjects connected with the church or state, their intention should be notified by a requisition signed by seven householders, and that it should be illegal for any persons not usually inhabiting the place for which such meeting was called to attend it.

The Training Prevention Bill prohibited military training, except under the authority of a magistrate or lord-lieutenant of the county.

The Seizure of Arms Bill gave the magistrates in the disturbed

[1] *Memoir*, ii. 187.

districts, on evidence which might afford a well-grounded suspicion of arms being collected for the purpose of being illegally employed, the power of searching for and seizing them, as also the power of apprehending persons carrying arms for such purpose, and of seizing the same and of detaining the individual on whom arms might so be found.[1]

The Newspaper Stamp Duties Bill provided that all pamphlets containing public news, or any remarks or observations upon any matter established in church or state, which should not exceed two sheets, or which should be sold at a less sum than sixpence, exclusive of the duty to be charged thereon, should be deemed to be newspapers and be subject to the like duties of stamps.[2]

The Six Acts, said Mackintosh, amounted to "an almost complete suspension of the constitution."

The voicing of the distress

But these gagging measures could not silence the cries of universal distress. In November, Lansdowne said, in the House of Lords, that, in all the great centres of the cotton manufacture, such as Manchester, Glasgow, and Paisley, earnings had fallen more than one-half. Even where the operatives were working additional hours, the masters could not afford to pay them more than 5/- a week. In Maybole, they had been compelled to reduce wages to 2/6 a week.[3]

—in Manchester, Glasgow, and Paisley;

In December, again, a Memorial sent to the Lords of the Treasury was presented to the House, relative to the distresses of the manufacturing part of the population of the county of Renfrew. The special bearing of the memorial was that, while the distress in that county was very great, no public works of general importance, such as had been provided in Glasgow, could be undertaken.[4]

—in Renfrew;

At the same time, Lord Archibald Hamilton presented a petition from the Presbytery of Hamilton to much the same effect: "The Chancellor of the Exchequer had last year obtained from Parliament the grant of £100,000 for building churches in Scotland, on the ground that the people were in want of such

—in Scotland generally.

[1] It is significant of the change in ideas since then that Bennet opposed this Bill "upon this principle—that the distinctive difference between a freeman and a slave was the right to possess arms" (*Hansard*, xli. 1130).

[2] *Hansard*, xli. 343, 378, 575. The full text of the six "Gagging Acts" is given in *Hansard*, xli. Append. The last of these was, of course, to strike at the cheaper broadsheets, such as the *Political Register*.

[3] *Hansard*, xli. 420. He gave on this occasion the proportion of manufacturing to agricultural families as 900,000 to 700,000.

[4] *Hansard*, xli. 1217.

churches, but there was a paragraph in this petition stating that the people could not go to church for want of clothing." [1]

In December, too, Bennet moved for a committee to enquire into the state of the manufacturing districts. This was refused principally because the compass of the remit proposed was too wide, and was likely to raise hopes that the government could do anything positive to relieve economic distress. But some things said in the course of the discussion are worth recording. Bennet asks for a committee.

Ever since the 16th August, said Bennet, an awful and portentous silence had marked the ordinary intercourse of the manufacturing districts. It reminded him of the old words, "neque populi, aut plebis ulla vox, sed attoniti vultus, et conversae ad omnia aures. Non tumultus, non quies, sed quale magni metus et magnae irae silentium."

Baring said it was "the strange but strong feature of the intensity of the distress that all classes, from the largest landowner to the humblest weaver, were in a state of great uneasiness and depression." The same distress was felt in America, brought about there, however, chiefly by the alterations in the currency. But he repeated his unpopular belief that the distress was due to the transition from war to peace—aggravated greatly by the want of tranquillity and security, due to the delusions so sedulously propagated by charlatans like Hunt.

We hear a good deal in Bennet's speech about Glasgow and Paisley. In Glasgow, particularly, the increase of cotton manufactures had been very great since the end of the war, and the free trade to India had given it a new stimulus—"sewed muslins and richly embroidered silk shawls are sent to rival those of Cashmere, and compete with native products." But, in Scotland generally, indeed, the growth had been very rapid. The manufacturing population was over 200,000. The spinners, who were in the proportion of one to three of the whole, were still comparatively well off. But the weavers—the great majority—were reduced to great distress.[2] Their wages, in Glasgow and neighbourhood, in 1803, when they were at their highest, were 25/- a week. In 1812 and 1813, they fell considerably. In 1816, they were as low as 10/-. At the present moment they were 5/- or 5/6 at most. In Paisley, wages were much lower; the first Glasgow and Paisley. State of the weavers in Scotland.

[1] *Hansard*, xli. 1393.

[2] It was said that, in England, the spinners were "very well off," while the weavers were in distress (*ibid.* 915).

class, who used to earn 25/- and 30/-, were reduced to 8/6; the second class, to 4/6; the third class could obtain no employment whatever. The working-classes in Scotland, Bennet could affirm, were thrifty and moral. In the good times, they had made considerable savings; "in short, they had altogether a higher and more respectable appearance" than the people of England. But they had been forced gradually to part with their furniture and clothes to the pawnbrokers—reducing even the pawnbrokers to the same distress—and were in a state of starvation. And, by the law of Scotland, no poor relief could be given to the able-bodied.[1]

The difference between spinning and weaving.

In the same debate, the Lord Advocate threw some light on the matter. The spinning was done by machinery, and consequently could not produce a greater quantity of thread during the hours of labour, nor employ a greater number of hands at one time than another. But the weaving was performed by the weavers at their houses, and, when the wages got lower, they endeavoured to supply the deficiency by working several more hours in the day, and this caused oversupply. Besides, when there was a scarcity of employment during the war, and troops were raised in Scotland, the greater part of the recruits had been drawn from Glasgow and other manufacturing towns, and, on the disbanding, these men had resumed their weaving, and increased the supply of labour at the same time as the demand for woven goods had decreased.[2]

It is noticeable, however, that although the greatness of the distress was admitted by everyone—wages in Manchester and Salford, *e.g.* being from 10/- down to 6/- per week for a fifteen hours day—there was almost no mention of a parliamentary grant, or even of relief works, although some approval was given by some to the establishment of a minimum wage. The argument for this, however, was based on different grounds from those used nowadays. Baring spoke of the "small capitalist, who cared nothing for what the world thought of him," and "got together the scrapings of the workhouse, whom he employed at 2/6 to 3/- a week." In other words, the minimum wage was thought of as a possible remedy for the incessant pressing down of wages made possible by the subsidy from the rates.

The minimum wage.

[1] *Hansard*, xli. 891.

[2] *Ibid.* 922. The same speaker said that, in Paisley, the weavers spent their Sunday forenoons in political discussions, and the rest of the day at their looms till a late hour in the night—"and this, too, with their windows open, to the horror and disgust of the passers-by."

# CHAPTER XXXIII

## 1820. DEPRESSION AND PARTIAL REVIVAL

GEORGE III. died on 30th January, at the age of 81, after a reign of 60 years.

When Parliament met, on 17th February, it was to receive a message from the new king, George IV., saying that, in consideration of the present state of public business, it seemed most conducive to the public interests and convenience to call the new parliament, which was now necessary, without delay. To this there was considerable opposition: Brougham, for instance, pointed out that, as one of those "most harsh and restrictive measures" which the government had thought fit to pass, "to put down the turbulence of the country," expired with the parliament, the proposal either showed that the necessity for it had ceased, or that the ministers were about to plunge the country into a situation which, not many weeks since, they had said was inconsistent with its safety. In the message of dissolution, on 28th February, the King commended the "prudence and firmness" of the repressive measures, and said that the flagrant and sanguinary conspiracy lately detected must have vindicated to the whole world the justice and expediency of those measures.[1] George IV.

In the early months of the year, there does not seem to have been any break in the cloud of depression. With the exception of Thistlewood's desperate attempt, the country was comparatively tranquil—not that the industrial conditions were any better, but that the coercive measures were effectual and, on the whole, were Continued depression.

[1] *Hansard*, xli. 1593 *seq.* The "horrid attempt" alluded to was the Cato Street Conspiracy of Thistlewood and others. The design was to murder the members of the Cabinet while dining with the Prime Minister, but one of the confederates was an informer, and the gang were arrested on the eve of the proposed crime.

approved. In Scotland, indeed, where Lanarkshire was "in an absolute state of destitution," there was one threatening of a serious outbreak in the beginning of April. A seditious placard, evidently emanating from England, was found posted over Glasgow and the neighbourhood, on a Sunday, calling on all labourers to strike work forthwith, and warning the manufacturers not to open their mills "till public order should be restored." The people took fright over the idea of a revolutionary outbreak all over the kingdom, and, on Monday, the curious spectacle was seen of all industry suspended; the streets filled with gazing crowds, strolling about in complete idleness, waiting with intent expectation for the announced revolution, to be begun at any moment and by persons unknown. But the military being strongly in evidence, nothing came of it, except that a few—some 40 or 50—who had gone to Kilsyth to take possession of the Carron Ironworks, and join the thousands who never came, encountered the yeomanry, and fought the so-called Battle of Bonnymuir. The arrest of several of the "members for organising a provisional government," and the execution of three of them in August, ended the revolution for the time.[1]

Battle of Bonnymuir.

Almost the only note of hope that we hear in the parliamentary debates of the session was the statement of Finlay (member for Glasgow), in May, that he was glad to see our commerce and manufactures reviving, and he hoped in a few months to see them flourish.[2]

General Election.

The elections, which were not accompanied by any unusual violence or tumult, were rather favourable to the government than otherwise. Lord Liverpool's new Cabinet included Eldon, Lord Chancellor; Vansittart, Chancellor of the Exchequer; Melville, First Lord of the Admiralty; Wellington, Master-General of the Ordnance; Sidmouth, Home Secretary; Castlereagh, Secretary for Foreign Affairs; Earl Bathurst, Secretary for War and the Colonies; Canning, President of the Board of Control for India; Robinson, Treasurer of the Navy and President of the Board of Trade. Outside the Cabinet, Palmerston was Secretary at War, Earl Talbot was Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and Manners Sutton continued Speaker. Another great statesman passed to his rest in this year. Parnell had given notice that

[1] *Annual Register*, Chron. 36.

[2] *Hansard*, i. 428. In Glasgow, indeed, there was some flicker of activity in the summer, but it soon died down again.

he would, on 11th May, move for the removal of the Roman Catholic disabilities, and Grattan had come to London again to voice the Catholic claims. But the veteran patriot was never able to take his seat, and died, on 14th May, at the age of seventy. The eulogium of that "immortal name" was pronounced by Mackintosh, in terms which would seem exaggerated if they were not borne out alike by friends and political enemies. "The purity of his private life was equal to the brightness of his public glory. . . . He was the founder of the liberties of his country. He found Ireland a province dependent upon England, and he made her a friend and an equal, gave her her native liberties, and a name among the nations of the earth—the only man recorded in history whose happiness and glory it was to have liberated his country from the dominion of a foreign power, not by arms and blood, but by his wisdom and eloquence." Death of Grattan.

> "Ne'er to those chambers where the mighty rest
> Since their foundation came a nobler guest;
> Nor e'er was to the bowers of bliss conveyed,
> A purer spirit or more welcome shade."

His dying message to his countrymen—taken down at his bedside and read to Parliament—was as follows:

"I wished to go to the House of Commons to testify with my last breath my opinions on the question of Catholic Emancipation, but I cannot. The hand of death is on me. I am not afraid of death, but I fear for my country if the object which I have so long cherished should not be accomplished. I sincerely wish the Catholics to be relieved from the oppression under which they have long been labouring, because I have always considered them to be loyal men, worthy to be placed upon a footing with the other members of the community, and to be allowed to worship God according to their own consciences. I wish the question to be settled, because I believe it to be essential to the permanent tranquillity and happiness of the country, which are, in fact, identified with it. The Catholics have behaved well under many trials. If their hopes should be again disappointed, I most earnestly deprecate any coalition, on their part, with the advocates of Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments. Were the friends of those doctrines to be successful in their object, nothing could ensue but the subversion of the constitution and the establishment of the wildest democracy."[1] His last message.

[1] *Hansard*, N.S. i. 1054.

The opening Speech from the Throne, on 21st April, deplored the distress which still unhappily prevailed among many of the labouring classes, but expressed satisfaction at the promptness with which the machinations and designs of the disaffected, leading in some parts of the country to acts of open violence and insurrection, had been suppressed.

Petitions for more protection to agriculture.

From the beginning of the session, Parliament was subjected to a flood of petitions—all the manufacture of one man,[1] said Lauderdale—urging the seriousness of the agricultural distress, and pressing parliament to find a remedy—the remedy, not obscurely hinted, being the further prevention of the influx of foreign grain. The object of the petitioners, said Ricardo, seemed to him to be nothing else than to get a monopoly of the English market.

The demand for the same protection as given to manufactures.

Again one is struck by the reiterated statement that the agricultural interests only asked for the same protection as was given to manufactures. Two explanations may be suggested.

One is that they had grown so accustomed, of late years, to the home price being in the neighbourhood of 80/-, that they considered this the normal average price of growing corn, unaware that it was not an average but the highest cost on the worst soils. (Till 80/- was reached, it must be remembered that England was growing her own corn to meet her own demand, and that, accordingly, corn was grown on land, however poor, so long as that price would show a profit without rent.)

[1] This was Geo. Webb Hall, of Gloucester, Chairman of the Agricultural Association, and, in this year, appointed Secretary to the Board of Agriculture. Some of the petitions, it would seem, were content with a general request for enquiry and "adequate protection"; but what was termed the General Agricultural Petition went far beyond anything that had yet been advocated in parliament. It laid it down as "impolitic to admit any productions similar to those of our own soil and climate into this country duty free, until the cultivation of our own soil should have extended itself to its utmost limit," and mentioned among such productions wool, flax, hemp, hides, tallow, seeds, butter, cheese, poultry, vegetables of all kinds natural to the climate, apples and pears. (The petition is quoted in *Farmer's Magazine*, 69.) So far the movement was not approved in Scotland, but it seems to have had the support of the farmers, as a class, in England. It appears, however, that there was diversity of opinion among the petitioners as to the form "adequate protection" should take. The Agricultural Association, which had an interview with Robinson on 25th February, asked boldly for a fixed duty of 25/- or 30/- per qr. on foreign wheat as representing the "difference of expense" at which wheat could be grown in most of the other states of Europe and in this country—the difference, it may be noted, being

The other is that it was all but impossible to compare the protection given to agriculture with that given to manufactures. Manufactures were protected by a fixed *ad valorem* duty ranging from about 37½ per cent. upward, whatever the home price; agriculture, by total exclusion till the home price was very high—at least what used to be thought very high—while, above that price, there was no duty at all. If, then, the duty on particular manufactures was such as to be actually prohibitive, these manufactures were, it would seem, in the position in which agriculture would have been if there was no free entry at 80/-, and agriculture was not so well protected. But, so far as this was not the case—if the foreign article was one which English consumers must have, whatever the price—agriculture was better protected. And if the article was one in which foreign producers had a great natural advantage over English makers, it might quite well be the case that the English manufacturers found that they could not compete—and so imagined that they were not "duly protected"—at a price which allowed the foreigner to pay the duty and still sell his goods. It is only a strong instance of the difficulties which a government must meet if it tries to give equal favour in protection to all the industries in the country.

A Select Committee proposed.

In May, in spite of the strongly expressed opposition of the Government to anything which would excite hope of increasing the protection to agriculture, a Select Committee was proposed, to which the several petitions presented to the House upon the subject of agricultural distress should be remitted. The debate was long and heated; it was evident that the protectionists had mustered all their forces, and that the Government was caught unprepared.

Arguments for

The various arguments used for raising the subject again were: that, since 1814, the deterioration of agriculture had been most rapid and alarming, while the landowners were bearing the whole of the Church establishment, the larger share of the poor rates, the whole of the county rate and highways; that, through fraud and falsehood in taking the averages, it appeared that the English grower received 78/- a quarter, when, in fact, he seldom received more than 72/-;[1] that the protection was

assigned to "tithes and charges." (See report of the interview in *Farmer's Magazine*, 1820, 67.)

[1] The meaning is that the declared price of 80/-, at which corn came in, was not the real price, but one manufactured by those whose interest it was to get the ports opened.

quite inadequate—corn from the Black Sea could be brought into our ports at half the price at which our farmers could afford to sell it; that the law of 1815 was intended to make the country independent of foreign supply, and that in this it had entirely failed; that, in all former corn laws, the importing price was always higher than the average price, whereas, when the 80/- was fixed in 1815, the average for the ten preceding years had been 93/-; and, finally, that depressed agriculture was the primary cause of the distress of the manufacturer.

—against. Against this it was urged: that the agricultural distress was not universal, and was, indeed, much exaggerated; that, of all the distressed classes, the agriculturists were least so; that the real cause of the distress was that the war had given an artificial stimulus to the cultivation of unsuitable land; that the price of corn in England was already twice as high as it was in the rest of the world; that the foreign importation (averaging annually for the last five years about half a million quarters) had not reduced the price below an average of 78/10—indeed, during 1817 and 1818, over 2½ million quarters of foreign corn had been imported, and the average price remained 89/6; that no foreign corn whatever had been imported since February, 1819, when there was not a single quarter of foreign corn in the warehouses, and that the present price, therefore, however low, could not be attributed to the inefficiency of the present law—indeed, if the importing price had been 100/-, the occupiers of land would have been in the same condition as they were at present; that, owing to the late change in the currency, the importing price of 80/- was really equivalent to what 100/- was when the law was passed.

Robinson's clear statement. Robinson put the principal argument very well thus: "It appeared to be thought by some that the natural level of the price of corn was that which would pay the cultivator of the worst land actually in cultivation. It was evident, however, that there was no land, however inferior in quality, which would not produce corn, provided a sufficient capital were expended upon it. But would any man say that it was possible the legislature could justly be called upon to adopt such measures as would retain bad land in cultivation, when the circumstances which had originally led to its cultivation were totally changed? It was not by any act of the legislature that that land had been called into cultiva-

tion, and it was not therefore to be expected that, by any act of the legislature it should be continued in cultivation." Or, as Ricardo put it:[1] "The agriculturists had contended that they had a right to be protected in a remunerating price for their produce, but they forgot that no remunerating price could be fixed. It was in vain to talk of fixing a remunerating price, which must necessarily change with circumstances. If, by preventing importation, the farmer was compelled, for the national supply, to expend his capital on poor or unprofitable soils, the remunerating price at which he could keep this land in cultivation must be very high, as compared with the price of grain in other countries, where the soil was better, and less labour was required. Open the ports, admit foreign grain, and you drive this land out of cultivation; a less remunerating price would then do for the more productive lands. You might thus have fifty remunerating prices according as your capital was employed on productive or unproductive lands. . . . The petitioners declared that they could grow as much as the home market required, and they demanded a monopoly of it. He would admit their statement to its full extent. He would even admit that our land was susceptible of a great increase of population, and that we could grow what would be sufficient to support that increase. But then, see what the inference of the petitioners was—they required that importation, therefore, should not be allowed. The answer to the whole of their system was plain. 'You can grow those articles, it is true, but then we can get them cheaper from other countries.' They could grow them, but was it expedient that they should under those circumstances? All general principles were against it. They might as well urge that, as in France, they could grow beetroot for the purpose of producing sugar, as grow grain sufficient for home consumption merely because it could be done."

Ricardo on the "remunerating price" of grain.

[1] It was on this occasion that Brougham used an expression which has stuck to economists ever since. The member for Portarlington (Ricardo) had argued, he said, "as if he had dropped from another planet; as if this were a land of the most perfect liberty of trade—as if there were no taxes—no drawbacks—no bounties—no searchers—on any other branch of trade but agriculture; as if, in this Utopian world of his honourable friend's creation, the first measure of restriction ever thought of was that on the importation of corn—as if all trades were on an equal footing, and that, in this new state, we were called upon to decide the abstract question whether or not there should be a protecting price for corn. But we were not in this condition. We were in a state of society in which we had manufactures of almost every description protected in every way, even

The Committee appointed;

In spite of overwhelming weight of argument, the Committee was appointed, the mover naively admitting that, on it, he had secured a fair majority for the views he held![1] But, in the opinion of many, its importance was altogether minimised by the clause which Robinson carried;—"that the Committee should confine their inquiry to the mode of ascertaining, returning, and calculating the average prices of corn in the twelve maritime districts under the provisions of the existing corn laws, and to any frauds which might be committed in violation of any of the provisions of the said laws."

its finding.

The Report of the Committee was laid before the House in July, when it was stated by Western that they had not discovered frauds to any extent in taking the averages, and that the lateness of the session would prevent any measure being taken upon the Report.[2]

Outside of the matters already dealt with, and the Free Trade movement which forms the subject of a separate chapter, the year was uneventful both in political and economic legislation. Practically all the time of Parliament between the beginning of June and the end of November was taken up with the trial of the Queen, and into its squalid details we are happily not called upon to enter.

Budget.

Vansittart introduced the Budget on 19th June.[3] The total Supply proposed was £29,723,300, made up as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Army Services | £9,422,000 |
| Navy | 6,586,700 |
| Ordnance | 1,204,600 |
| Miscellaneous | 2,100,000 |
| Interest on Exchequer Bills | 1,000,000 |
| Sinking Fund on same | 410,000 |
| | £20,723,300 |
| Repaid to Bank of England | 5,000,000 |
| In reduction of unfunded debt | 4,000,000 |
| | £29,723,300 |

to criminal enactments, to protect the raw material from going out of the country, in order thereby to assist the native manufacturer" (*Hansard*, N.S. i. 685).

[1] *Hansard*, N.S. i. 635, 705.

[2] *Farmer's Magazine*, 352.

[3] *Hansard*, N.S. i. 1161.

The Ways and Means were as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Annual malt tax | £3,000,000 |
| Temporary excise | 2,500,000 |
| Lottery | 240,000[1] |
| Old naval stores | 260,000 |
| | £6,000,000 |
| Loan | 5,000,000 |
| Loan from Sinking Fund | 12,000,000[2] |
| Exchequer Bills funded | 7,000,000 |
| | £30,000,000 |

At the same time he stated that the total income of the United Kingdom for the past year had been close on £53,000,000, as against the estimates of £54 millions, and confessed that there had been a deficiency on the Consolidated Fund of £3 millions.

Roasted wheat as a substitute for tea and coffee.

A curious petition relating to excise was presented from certain inhabitants of the city of Coventry. Many of the inhabitants of that city, it said, long suffering from want and almost starvation, had been using roasted wheat instead of tea and coffee, finding it more nutritious and wholesome. The petitioners had for some time past roasted wheat, ground it, and sold it retail to their neighbours. In April, to their surprise and alarm, they were served with writs, at the instance of the excise, and, having no money to employ lawyers, were in constant fear of being sent to prison, while their helpless families starved or went

[1] In consequence of Hume's criticisms, some objectionable clauses in the Lottery Bill were withdrawn.

[2] It had been asked (by Grenfell), said Vansittart, why, as the Sinking Fund now amounted to £17 millions, he did not borrow the whole sum from it. To this he returned the old answer that, although the amount of debt remaining unredeemed at the close of the year might have been nearly the same in the one case as the other, yet the effect upon the public credit and convenience would have been extremely different. The purchases of the Commissioners, by their equable and regular operation, in a degree regulated the market during the whole of the year, and prevented those sudden fluctuations which the accidental circumstances of forced sales and of the combinations of speculators might otherwise occasion. Whatever might be the necessity of an individual to bring his stock to sale, he knew that there was a constant and considerable purchaser in the market, and that he could not fail, at least with the delay of a few days, to obtain the fair current price of what he had to sell. It was also to be recollected for how many years the public had been accustomed to the constant practice of these purchases, and how much these feelings might have been acted upon, and their apprehensions excited, by the total cessation of an establishment which had always been deemed so beneficial.

to the poorhouse. They represented that they had never sold the wheat as anything other than wheat, thinking, indeed, that they were doing a praiseworthy action. They believed that, if roasted wheat were used in all families instead of coffee and tea, the consumption would amount to upwards of four millions of bushels, requiring 200,000 acres of land, giving employment to forty or fifty thousand now unemployed agricultural labourers, and yielding to the owners and cultivators of land more than two millions of pounds. They therefore prayed the House, etc. It is unfortunate that the prosaic *Hansard* says no more about the matter.[1]

Forgery of notes.

In February, the Commissioners appointed for enquiring into the best mode of preventing the forgery of bank-notes reported, recommending the plan which they had formerly approved, intimating that it had been adopted by the Bank directors, and that machinery was being pushed forward. But they ended by saying that no form of note could possibly be contrived which might not be successfully imitated. Meanwhile, the evil seemed to be growing. The Bank prosecutions for forgery increased at a frightful rate, and the hanging of two youths for the offence excited universal pity.[2]

Reform of the Criminal Law by Mackintosh.

This year saw the aftermath of Romilly's long labours. Mackintosh introduced six Bills, and got three of them through the Lords. The "Privately Stealing in Shops Bill," which had been twice carried in silence and once by a majority of two to one in the Commons, got through with only an amendment by Eldon, that persons stealing to the value of more than 10/- should remain subject to capital punishment.[3] The "Capital Felonies Repeal Bill" was passed with an amendment excepting persons assembling with blackened faces. And the "Capital Felonies Commutation of Punishment Bill" also passed, with the deletion of one or two clauses.[4]

Brougham's Education Bill.

In June, Brougham got leave to bring in a bill for the Better Education of the Poor in England and Wales, based on

[1] *Hansard*, N.S. i. 1042. [2] *Annual Register*, i. 172; ii. 760.

[3] "If their lordships," said the unconvinced Lord Chancellor, "were disposed to make a merciful exception, he should make no very strenuous objection. But if, hereafter, it should be found that shop-lifting became universal . . . he hoped it would be remembered that he had suggested the consideration whether this law, which had so long existed, was not wise and politic."

[4] *Hansard*, N.S. i. 227; ii. 137, 491, 524.

the two years' heavy labour of his Committee. In England, in the unendowed schools, there were 490,000 children; in the endowed, about 165,000. On the average, he said, only one-fourteenth or one-fifteenth of the whole population of England were "placed in the way of receiving education," as compared with one-twentieth in Wales and one-ninth or one-tenth in Scotland. In Scotland, every parish had one or more schools. In England, out of the 12,000 ecclesiastical parishes, 3,500 had not a vestige of a school; they had no more means of education than Hottentots. Middlesex was three times worse educated than the rest of England, and Lancashire came next.

Shortly stated, his scheme was that schools were to be planted everywhere, on complaint from duly qualified persons that there was not sufficient available means of education, and the superintendence of them was to be entrusted to the clergy of the Established Church. The fees were to be not less than 2d. and not more than 4d. per head per week, to be paid by the parish officers where the parents were too poor to pay. The parson was to be empowered to "fix the course of teaching according to the state of the parish": the Scriptures alone were to be taught, and no other religious book; no book of any kind to be used in the school without the parson's permission, nor any form of worship allowed except the Lord's Prayer and passages of Scripture. Reading, writing, and arithmetic were to be taught in all the schools. The salary of schoolmasters was to be not less than £20 nor more than £30, to be defrayed by a school rate. The expense of building the schools was to be advanced by the county, but to be replaced from the Consolidated Fund. The total expense, Brougham estimated at about half a million.

Owing to the pressure of time, the Bill did not get beyond the first reading, but already there was ample evidence that Brougham had quite underestimated the religious difficulty both on the side of the dissenters and on that of the church itself.[1]

**Suspension of banks in Ireland.**

In June, a great calamity befell Ireland. Of the fourteen banks in the south of that country, eleven suspended payment within a month. Parliament at once voted half a million to be put into the hands of commissioners, and by them lent, after enquiry into each application, and on good security, at 5 per cent.[2]

**Smoke prevention.**

In May, Michael Angelo Taylor again enlarged on the intolerable nuisance of the intense smoke produced by steam engines

[1] *Hansard*, ii. 49, 365. [2] *Ibid.* i. 1105.

and furnaces, asserting that London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, and other large cities were become almost uninhabitable, the employers in these towns being actually compelled to guard the health of their families by removing to hired houses at a distance from their works. The Report of his Select Committee on smoke prevention, now presented, showed that the evil chiefly arose from the construction of the furnaces, and could be corrected without injury to the persons engaged. In a factory at Warwick, there were three furnaces constructed to consume their own smoke, at no increase of expense, and worked with one-fourth less combustion of coal, and they sent out no more smoke than an ordinary chimney. This was confirmed by other members, and another Select Committee was appointed to enquire how far it might be practicable to compel persons using steam engines and furnaces to erect them in a manner less prejudicial to health and public comfort. On 5th July, this Committee reported that "the object of their inquiry had been completely answered," and Taylor intimated that he would, in next session, introduce a bill to prevent the nuisance from being continued.[1]

**Truck.**

The continued paying of wages by truck, instead of in money, was brought to notice by Lyttelton. There were already statutes in force imposing heavy penalties for this, but they were inoperative on account of the cost of an appeal to quarter sessions, and Lyttelton asked for leave to bring in a bill to render these laws more effectual. The House evidently sympathised, but there was more opposition to than support of the proposal, on the ground that there were already too many restrictions on the agreements between master and workmen, and that it would be better to repeal the restrictive acts altogether.[2]

**Exportation of machinery.**

That the laws against the exportation of machinery were not a dead letter, is shown by the following, which was thought worthy of a place in the Chronicle of the *Annual Register* for May: "In consequence of the repeated exportation of machinery to the continent, and the necessary injury to our manufacturing interests, the manufacturers of Nottingham have of late been very much on the alert to detect the persons by whom these mischiefs are effected. Information having been received that a man known by the name of Derbyshire, who stands foremost in the list of machinists in this country, was about to sail for France

[1] *Hansard*, i. 50; ii. 217. [2] *Ibid.* i. 768.

with some valuable machinery used in the manufacture of lace, steps were taken to arrest him in Dover. . . . They found their man and secured him. He had with him some of the necessary implements of his trade, and confessed that the rest were to follow. He was accompanied by his wife and child, and was going to settle in France."[1]

Effect of the Resumption on debtors.

The effect on debtors, as a class, of the rise in the value of the current money, due to the return to cash payments, is very well shown in a petition presented to the House in June, by one William Cobbett, a farmer in the county of Southampton. Between 1805 and 1813, he had expended the sum of £30,000 in the purchase and improvement of an estate, and, in 1813, raised a mortgage on it of £13,000. The mortgagee had now foreclosed, and he was like to be ruined. The value of the current money of the country, he contended, compared with the market price of the various productions of the land, had risen on account of the Resumption Act of 1819, and this measure could not possibly have been in the contemplation of the petitioner at the time when the mortgage contract was made, seeing that in 1811 the legislature had alleged that the money had experienced no change, and seeing that, of course, no laws were passed recognising the depreciation. In the six years preceding 1813, the average price of wheat was 104/-; in the six years after, it was 75/-: which was the same thing as to say that the mortgagee was getting £104 for every £75 lent, if the relative price of wheat alone were taken as the basis of calculation. But, as a fact, the price of other articles of produce had fallen much more; *e.g.* fat hogs, cows, colts, and ewes, had fallen on the average more than one-half. He thereof asked for relief, either by reducing the current money to the value which it bore in 1813, or by providing for a revision and rectifying of contracts.[2]

Parliamentary reform

Little was done this session in the direction of parliamentary reform. Lord John Russell brought forward his Bill for disfranchising the burgh of Grampound where the notorious bribery had been proved. On the disfranchising all were agreed, but dispute arose as to the disposal of the franchise. Russell in the preamble named Leeds: the Government objected that this was to suggest that a place of great wealth, population, and trade was not adequately represented and had a claim to representation on these grounds: in the end the Queen's trial put a stop to any further progress of the Bill.

[1] p. 142. [2] *Hansard*, N.S. i. 839.

—in Scotland

As regards Scotland, Lord Archibald Hamilton called attention to the fact that the qualification of voter in that country had no connection with property, and that its representation might be entirely in the hands of those who did not own a foot of the soil. But he contented himself with obtaining a return of the freeholders in the various counties, showing that they numbered 2,889.[1]

Foreign affairs.

The chief event in foreign political affairs was a revolution in Spain, when the worthless Ferdinand, after some plain speaking from the constitutional army, submitted, and swore to the Constitution of 1812. Within forty-eight hours, all political prisoners were liberated, a general amnesty for political crimes was proclaimed, the Inquisition abolished, and complete liberty of the press established. "The enlightened state of Europe, Senor," said the address of the army, "no longer permits nations to be governed as the absolute possessions of kings," and Ferdinand stooped to issue a decree that all children in Spain should be taught "the sovereignty of the people."[2]

In Sicily, also, there was a revolution, as result of which the king submitted and "swore to the constitution."

Partial revival of trade.

In the latter part of the year, there was an improvement in some trades. In the cotton manufacture both of Lancashire and Scotland, indeed, it was very considerable.[3] But the revival was by no means general. Birmingham particularly was in a deplorable state. Men were employed only three and four days in the week, and wages were not sufficient for subsistence without application to the parish.[4] This was proved by the diminished consumption of the necessaries of life; the grocers said that their occupation was gone—even the trade of the publicans in beer fell by one-third.[5]

[1] The roll for each shire is given in *Annual Register*, i. Chron. 447.

[2] *Annual Register*, Part I. Chron. 36, 169.

[3] "You will be sorry to hear," wrote Sydney Smith in October, "the trade and manufactures of these counties (round Manchester) are materially mended, and are mending. I would not mention this to you if you were not a good Whig; but I know you will not mention it to anybody. The secret, I much fear, will get out before the meeting of Parliament. There seems to be a fatality which pursues us. When, oh when, shall we be really ruined?" (*Memoir*, ii. 202).

[4] The *Farmer's Magazine* says the same about agricultural labour in February: "it is painful to have to state that there is no prospect of any immediate increase in the demand for labour, and that wages, except where they are paid in grain and other produce, will scarcely enable the labourer to support his family, low as prices are" (p. 98).

[5] *Hansard*, N.S. iv. 523.

In agriculture, however, one would have expected to hear that the depression was passing away. After the most severe winter for six years past, the weather became open in January; the spring was mild and dry; and, after a wet May, the summer was as fine as could be desired. In harvest, taking all kinds of grain together, the produce was at least a full average. No imports of wheat and wheat-flour had been taken out for home use since February of the previous year;[1] the farmers had it all their own way with the home market; and now prices fell. This is the last of three good crops in succession, wrote the editor of the *Farmer's Magazine* despairingly; the consequence has been a great fall of price, and according to all appearance, it must be lower still during the winter: "Such prices must be ruinous to the grower, and bring back all the calamities of 1815 when the productiveness of the crop was so great." Remarks like these tempted the amazed enquiry "what do these farmers want?—will nothing satisfy them but abundant crops and famine prices?" Their complaint, indeed, was not very articulate. "It is not easy to conjecture what will be the issue of all this," wrote the same authority; "a new Corn Law, if it were possible to obtain one, cannot be the remedy"; and he fell back on the remedy which Sir John Sinclair was voicing loudly, the return to paper money! "The evil proceeds from *paper* rents and taxes and *bullion* prices. To renew the suspension of cash payments, would probably afford the most immediate relief, but it might be only temporary; and whether this remedy would not exasperate the disease, we know not."

Agriculture worse than ever.

Between an extreme protective system, which had tempted them to offer high rents for unsuitable land, and a heavy fall in prices, the farmers under lease, it must be admitted, were in a pitiable state, and the wretched condition of agriculture generally was the theme of universal lament. The Poor Rates had now reached £8 millions.

The anticipation of low prices was fully realised. In the first part of the year, the price of wheat had been between 60/- and

Low prices.

[1] It is not a little surprising to find, from the Customs Tariffs blue book, that, although the ports were closed, 996,000 quarters of wheat and wheat-flour were imported during the year, and, presumably, warehoused. The abundance of the harvest was not realised at the time. But a witness before the Agricultural Committee of 1821 said, that it had been "one of the finest ever known in England." "It was not till the following two or three years," says Tooke, "during which wheat of the harvest of 1820 continued to appear in the markets, that the exuberant produce of that season became generally known" (*History of Prices*, ii. 82).

70/-; in the latter, it was about 55/.[1] The Board of Agriculture average for the year was 67/10. Meat and other provisions shared in the fall. Emigration continued active: some 3,000 were sent to the Cape.

Foreign trade.

In all the circumstances, it was gratifying to find the imports increased by over £1½ millions, the exports by nearly £5 millions, and the re-exports by over half a million. The Official values were:

| | |
|---|---|
| Imports - - - - - - - - - - | £32,471,000 |
| Exports of British produce and manufactures - | 38,393,000 |
| Exports of foreign and colonial merchandise - | 10,556,000 |

The Real value of the British exports was £36,423,000.[2]

The number of vessels built and registered in the several ports of the empire were: in the United Kingdom, 619; in the Isles (Guernsey, Jersey, and Man), 16; in the British Plantations, 248; representing, respectively, 66,691, 1,451, and 16,440 tons.[3]

In literature, appeared Keats' *Eve of St. Agnes*, De Quincey's *Opium Eater*, and Scott's *Monastery* and *Abbot*—Scott still writing as the "Author of Waverley."

MISCELLANEA.

The Association for the Encouragement of the National Manufactures in Germany approved in August of the following plan: "Each of the undersigned engages, on his word of honour, to purchase in future such of the articles enumerated below as he may want only of home manufacture: artificial flowers, cotton manufactures, woollen goods, linens, beaver or felt hats, lackered or japanned goods, cutlery, leather goods, cabinet, chaise, or coach-makers' work." But it wisely added: "It is left to every member of the association to convince himself by his own conscientious examination of the genuineness of the articles which he intends to purchase."[4]

The same economic conviction was held in England. Sir M. W. Ridley, in view of the Coronation, hoped that a due

[1] It is clear that, in the five years' experience of the new Corn Law, the steadiness of price confidently anticipated was as far off as ever.

[2] It is eloquent testimony of the distress that, for the first time, the Real were under the Official values.

[3] *Hansard*, N.S. vii. Append. xviii.

[4] *Annual Register*, Chron. 429.

regard would be paid to British manufactures. It was true, he admitted, that English velvet could not compete with that of Genoa, yet it was "equally handsome in appearance." Ricardo, of course, reminded him that Genoese velvet must be purchased with the produce of our own industries.[1]

"A most singular advertisement appeared in the *Lincoln Mercury* of Saturday, being an address to the electors of Grantham, signed H. Manners, requesting them to elect Mr. F. Manners of the Foot Guards, at the ensuing general election; the reasons given why they should choose him are that 'an artful, profligate, infamous woman' has eloped with him to Marseilles, and if elected, the Speaker's warrant, on a call of the House, would be the means of restoring him to his anxious friends."[2]

[1] *Hansard*, N.S. ii. 165. [2] *Annual Register*, i. 41.

# CHAPTER XXXIV

## 1820. THE BEGINNINGS OF FREE TRADE

At the same time as the agricultural interests were clamouring for a further increase of their "inadequate" protection, another interest made itself heard in the first articulate Free Trade manifesto.

The Merchants' Petition.

On the 8th May, was presented the famous Petition of the Merchants of London, the "originating impulse" of the Free Trade movement. As its language concerning reciprocity has often been misrepresented, as if the case for Free Trade rested on the expectation that other nations also would adopt it, it seems advisable to print it in full:[1]

"That foreign commerce is eminently conducive to the wealth and prosperity of a country, by enabling it to import the commodities for the production of which the soil, climate, capital, and industry of other countries are best calculated, and to export in payment those articles for which its own situation is better adapted.

"That freedom from restraint is calculated to give the utmost extension to foreign trade, and the best direction to the capital and industry of the country.

"That the maxim of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest, which regulates every merchant in his individual dealings, is strictly applicable as the best rule for the trade of the whole nation.

"That a policy founded on these principles would render the commerce of the world an interchange of mutual advantages, and diffuse an increase of wealth and enjoyments among the inhabitants of each state.

[1] *Hansard*, N.S. i. 179; *Annual Register*, ii. 770. It was an open secret that the petition was drawn up by Thomas Tooke, author of the well-known *History of Prices*.

"That, unfortunately, a policy the very reverse of this has been, and is, more or less, adopted and acted upon by the government of this and of every other country, each trying to exclude the productions of other countries, with the specious and well-meant design of encouraging its own productions; thus inflicting on the bulk of its subjects, who are consumers, the necessity of submitting to privations in the quantity or quality of commodities; and thus rendering what ought to be the source of mutual benefit and harmony among states, a constantly-recurring occasion of jealousy and hostility.

"That the prevailing prejudices in favour of the protective or restrictive system may be traced to the erroneous supposition that every importation of foreign commodities occasions a diminution of our own productions to the same extent: whereas it may be clearly shown that, although the particular description of production which could not stand against unrestrained foreign competition would be discouraged, yet as no importation could be continued for any length of time without a corresponding exportation, direct or indirect, there would be an encouragement, for the purpose of that exportation, of some other production to which our situation might be better suited; thus affording at least an equal, and probably a greater, and certainly a more beneficial employment to our own capital and labour.

"That, of the numerous protective and prohibitory duties of our commercial code, it may be proved, that, while all operate as a very heavy tax on the community at large, very few are of any ultimate benefit to the classes in whose favour they were originally instituted, and none to the extent of the loss occasioned by them to other classes.

"That, among the other evils of the restrictive or protective system, not the least is, that the artificial protection of one branch of industry, or source of production, against foreign competition, is set up as a ground of claim by other branches for similar protection; so that, if the reasoning upon which these restrictive or prohibitory regulations are founded were followed out consistently, it would not stop short of excluding us from all foreign commerce whatsoever. And the same train of argument, which with corresponding prohibitions and protective duties should exclude us from foreign trade, might be brought forward to justify the re-enactment of restrictions upon the interchange of productions (unconnected with public revenue) among the

kingdoms composing the union, or among the counties of the same kingdom.

"That an investigation of the effects of the restrictive system, at this time, is peculiarly called for, as it may, in the opinion of your petitioners, lead to a strong presumption that the distress which now so generally prevails is considerably aggravated by that system, and that some relief may be obtained by the earliest practicable removal of such of the restraints as may be shown to be the most injurious to the capital and industry of the community, and to be attended with no compensating benefit to the public revenue.

"That a declaration against the anti-commercial principles of our restrictive system is of the more importance at the present juncture, inasmuch as, in several instances of recent occurrence, the merchants and manufacturers in foreign states have assailed their respective governments with applications for further protective or prohibitory duties and regulations, urging the example and authority of this country, against which they are almost exclusively directed, as a sanction for the policy of such measures. And certainly, if the reasoning upon which our restrictions have been defended is worth anything, it will apply in behalf of the regulations of foreign states against us. They insist upon our superiority in capital and machinery, as we do upon their comparative exemption from taxation, and with equal foundation.

"That nothing would more tend to counteract the commercial hostility of foreign states than the adoption of a more enlightened and more conciliatory policy on the part of this country.

"That although, as a matter of mere diplomacy, it may sometimes answer to hold out the removal of particular prohibitions or high duties, as depending upon corresponding concessions by other states in our favour, it does not follow that we should maintain our restrictions, in cases where the desired concessions on their part cannot be obtained. Our restrictions would not be the less prejudicial to our own capital and industry, because other governments persisted in preserving impolitic regulations.

"That, upon the whole, the most liberal would prove to be the most politic course on such occasions.

"That, independent of the direct benefit to be derived by this country on every occasion of such concession or relaxation, a great incidental object would be gained by the recognition of a sound principle or standard, to which all subsequent arrangements might

be referred, and by the salutary influence which a promulgation of such just views by the legislature, and by the nation at large, could not fail to have on the policy of other states.

"That in thus declaring, as your petitioners do, their conviction of the impolicy and injustice of the restrictive system, and in desiring every practicable relaxation of it, they have in view only such parts of it as are not connected, or are only subordinately so, with the public revenue. As long as the necessity for the present amount of revenue subsists, your petitioners cannot expect so important a branch of it as the customs to be given up, nor to be materially diminished, unless some substitute, less objectionable, be suggested. But it is against every restrictive regulation of trade not essential to the revenue—against all duties merely protective from foreign competition—and against the excess of such duties as are partly for the purpose of revenue, and partly for that of protection—that the prayer of the present petition is respectfully submitted to the wisdom of parliament.

"The petitioners therefore humbly pray that the House will be pleased to take the subject into consideration, and to adopt such measures as may be calculated to give greater freedom to foreign commerce, and thereby to increase the resources of the state."

Baring presented the petition in a speech which was greeted with loud cheers from all sides of the House. While all other parts of Europe, he said, were recovering from the general suffering, Great Britain was the only country in which every branch of industry remained not merely as depressed as, but much more depressed than, it had hitherto been. All classes were loudly complaining of their respective distresses. After monopolising the trade of the world during the war, we had had peace for five years now, and all our industries were in a state of utter prostration. Our trade had been shared with the various countries of Europe; we were now surrounded by jealous rivals, every government endeavouring to aggrandise its subjects by commerce. France, among others, was making great strides. The only way of safety was to recur to those old-established principles and maxims to which the country first owed its commercial success, the principles of the freedom of trade. He would say nothing of the corn laws—it was not his intention to recommend, nor did the petitioners wish for, any immediate disturbance of these laws. But some of the immediate changes which should be

Baring presents it.

made were obvious. There was the removal of the duty on foreign wool—it was the first time in any country that such an impost on a necessary raw material had been attempted, and the wool trade had fallen immensely. There were the restrictions on timber. There was the doing away with total prohibitions as much as possible—they only encouraged smuggling, and the customs had fallen off by a million and a half very much on account of them. Then there was the abolition of the Navigation Acts and of the transit duty on German linen: there was alteration in the commercial relations with respect to France, and the extension of freedom of trade with India. All these alterations were practicable at once.

Robinson blesses it in theory.

Most of the speeches thereafter were eulogistic of the petition and its principles. Grenfell gave it his most hearty concurrence. Robinson blessed it in theory though he banned it in practice; admitting all the evils of restriction, it was "impossible all at once to alter our commercial system." He differed from Baring, however, as to the Navigation Acts; all the injury to our free commercial intercourse was "but a feather in the scale compared with the great advantage derived from these laws in the protection and safety of the country." The only thing that astonished Ricardo was that it was only now that those principles were put forward—that they should have taken so much time in their progress since they were first promulgated by Adam Smith. But, he admitted, there were difficulties. One was the revenue. A greater was the vested interests—capitals sunk on the faith of the continuation of the restrictive system; nothing could be more unjust than, by the immediate abolition of the system, to occasion the absolute ruin of such interests. He thought the House ought to do what was suggested by the Bullion Committee—spread the return to Free Trade over some years, allowing full time for capital to be turned into other channels. The petition, meantime, was laid on the table.[1]

Ricardo recommends a gradua return to Free Trade.

A similar petition from Glasgow,

On 16th May, a similar Free Trade petition was presented by Finlay from the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, praying for the removal of all restrictions upon commercial imports and exports, and saying that the distresses of the country were much increased, if not in a great measure caused, by them. For one thing, they had led other nations to the belief that it was to such regulations that our prosperity was due, and induced them to follow our

[1] *Hansard*, N.S. i. 165.

example. The petitioners were of opinion that the removal of the restrictions should not be contingent upon the conduct adopted towards us by any other country. Finlay ended by saying that, if Adam Smith had lived to see his doctrines thus expounded in the petition, it must have afforded him inconceivable pleasure.[1] On 19th May, still another petition was presented, from the merchants, manufacturers, and other inhabitants of Manchester, praying for the removal of those restrictions by which our commercial intercourse with other nations was impeded.[2]

and one from Manchester.

The general feeling of hopelessness and bewilderment in face of the distress seems reflected in a debate of 12th May, when a petition was presented from the manufacturers and traders of Birmingham, calling attention to the distress which prevailed in that town in consequence of the stagnation of trade. It was numerously and most respectably signed, and by people of all shades of politics. But they did not pretend to indicate any remedy; they only seriously hoped that the House would institute a solemn enquiry into the causes of the distress. Brougham, sympathetic and, indeed, anxious to support the motion that they should have a hearing, was compelled to say that a parliamentary enquiry, with a view to revising, altering, and amending commercial or agricultural concerns, was by no means the best mode that could be adopted for attaining the desired object. Ministers themselves were the persons who should devise remedies, and he did not believe that the present ministry was likely to go into an enquiry of this kind in such a spirit as the exigencies of the times demanded. No one party in the House, indeed, was at present sufficient to form an administration that could meet the situation of the country, and give confidence to the people. The reasoning, as it stands in *Hansard*, is obscure, and Brougham vehemently said that he did not mean what he was understood to say, and ended by expressing the hope that the petition would lead to ministers instituting such an enquiry, but it seems clear that Brougham and everybody else were equally puzzled by the problem.[3]

Hopelessness and bewilderment in face of the distress.

Even more pessimistic was the tone of the Lords when the same petition came before them. Liverpool said that he did not intend to make any proposition on the part of the Government; the executive should not come down and propose an enquiry

[1] *Hansard*, N.S. i. 424. [2] *Ibid.* 478. [3] *Ibid.* 338.

of this sort unless they were prepared with a cure, or distinctly saw some remedy which it would be in the power of Parliament to apply. Lansdowne, with the view of making the enquiry practical, proposed the appointment of a committee to investigate only the means of extending the foreign trade of the country, and Liverpool seemed disposed to agree to this. But the question came up whether it was to be confined to the manufacturing trade of the country and to neglect the agricultural. Darnley thought it would be better if no question regarding the agricultural distress were brought forward, as he did not conceive that any remedy could be applied to that. Erskine differed—thought that a remedy for the agricultural distress was much more easy to find than their lordships seemed to imagine. But he would make the two enquiries separate and distinct. Liverpool replied that he would not assert that something might not and ought not, to be done, but this he would say, that far more danger was to be apprehended from doing too much than from not interfering at all. Earl Grosvenor alone seemed to think that he knew the remedy —the application of the strictest economy to every branch of the public expenditure: but that was a remedy which the Government would not apply.[1]

**Lansdowne moves for a committee on Foreign Trade**

The movement towards Free Trade, or rather the growing recognition that the circumstances of the war had involved the country in an artificial system of restrictions and protections which it was dangerous to break through, and still more dangerous to let continue, was strikingly shown in the debate when Lansdowne formally moved for a Committee to enquire into the means of extending and securing the Foreign Trade of the Country. Premising that any measures adopted in this regard must proceed upon the principle of protecting all those interests which had made the country a great agricultural, commercial, and manufacturing nation, and that liberty of trade should be the rule and restriction the exception, he dwelt successively upon the points on which he thought relaxation should be made. There ought to be no prohibitory duties as such. The Navigation Laws should be relaxed to the extent of allowing produce from all parts of Europe to be imported without making it necessary that it should be imported exclusively in English built ships, or in ships belonging to the nation whence the produce came—expressly excluding from this relaxation, however, the import of colonial produce.

**—indicating the points on which relaxation should be made.**

[1] *Hansard*, N.S. i. 388.

There should be entire freedom of the transit trade, in order to encourage the warehouse system, and to make our ports a depot for foreign nations. The duty on timber from the north of Europe should be revised.[1] Arrangements should be made with

[1] The following passage shows a recognition of the true principles of international trade such as one does not look for at that date: "What was the reasoning of the shipowners in their petition against an abolition of this duty? He should be sorry to misrepresent their arguments, and would therefore read the statement from their own petition. They represented that, from the length and difficulty of the voyage to North America, the larger part of the value of the timber thence imported consisted of freight; that the American timber, being of an inferior quality to that from the Baltic, required a protecting duty; and that the mere circumstance of the proximity of the northern ports of Europe, by enabling ships to repeat their voyages frequently in the course of a year, would reduce the number of British vessels employed in the timber trade to one-third. What they said, therefore, was equivalent to this: that whereas it was expedient that they should be employed—and whereas they could not be so employed if they procured timber where it was cheapest and best—they therefore should import it of the worst quality, and from the greatest distance. . . . And let their lordships consider what the article was that was thus to be raised in price, while it was deteriorated in quality. It was not an article of luxury, the price of which was of no importance. It was the raw material of our houses, of our bridges, of our canals, nay, of our shipping itself. So inconsistent were the petitioners, that they asked parliament to continue duties which increased the expense of their own trade. A great part of the capital which they had vested in their business, and of the expense which they incurred, was rendered necessary by the high price of the article which they thus wished to increase by heavy duties. . . . Suppose it were stated by another class of persons, that cotton was grown in the East Indies, that they were our own colonies, and that the voyage was three times as long as to the West Indies or to any other part of the world from which we might obtain a supply; he did not see on what grounds those could resist such a statement who argued that we ought to import our timber from Canada rather than from Norway. The voyage would have the advantage of being thrice as long and the article might be tripled in price. Their lordships would find it asserted in the petition from Newcastle that, if the shipowners had the whole of the carrying trade from the Baltic, it would not be sufficient to employ one-half of the shipping now engaged in the trade with Canada. This was another singular mode of reasoning. If a person were to make an offer to carry all the mails of this country, using twice the number of horses that were at present used, would that be considered as a recommendation of the new proposal? . . . And with regard to the argument employed by them against renewing our intercourse with the north of Europe, namely, that those who supplied us with timber from that quarter would not receive British manufactures in return, it appeared to him futile and ungrounded. If they did not send direct for our manufactures at home, they would send for them to Leipsic and other fairs of Germany. Were not the Russian and Polish merchants purchasers there to a large extent and amount? But he would never admit the principle that a trade was not profitable, because we were obliged to carry it on with the precious metals, or that we ought to renounce it because our manufactures were not received by the foreign nation in return for its produce. Whatever we received must be paid for in the produce of our land and labour, directly or circuitously; and he was glad to have the noble earl's concurrence in this principle. We have long been in the habit of sending out the precious metals to the East Indies; but we purchased the gold and

France, in return for reciprocal concessions, to admit her wines on the same terms as those of Spain and Portugal (the existing duty was £143 18/- per tun, as against £95). There should be further restriction on the monopoly of the East India Company. The bond between the South American states and this country should be cemented. The most conciliatory measures should be adopted towards Ireland, as a country which could give great employment to our capital, and be a great consumer of our manufactured goods.

**Liverpool's fine speech.**

Liverpool, speaking sympathetically on behalf of the Government, said that, while he entirely agreed with the limitation of the enquiry, it was impossible for him to consider the question with reference to foreign trade alone. He must ask himself if the distress of the country grew out of or was evidenced by any diminution of the home consumption. There seemed no such evidence. In only one article was there a material reduction, wine. Taking the average of the last three years, there had been practically no diminution in the consumption of tea,[1] coffee, tobacco, malt, or spirits. It was the same with articles on which there had been no increase of taxation, consumed by all classes, such as candles, paper, hides, skins, soap, salt, bricks, etc. From this he concluded that, whatever local distress might exist in the country, our general wealth had not declined.

But, as regards foreign trade, there was in the last year a great falling off in the exports of British produce and manufactures as compared with the year preceding. This was not due to any extent to the trade with the continent, nor with Ireland—the Irish trade was increasing—but, to some extent, to that with the East Indies, and, to a very great extent, to that with the United States. In cotton goods, glass, earthenware, hardware, cutlery, and woollen goods—in short, in all the leading branches of our manufacture—there was a falling of in our exports to the United States of a full half as compared with the preceding year. This was a

silver thus exported with our manufactures sent to America. But the petitioners overlooked two points—the increase of the trade itself by the importation of cheaper and better materials, and the increase of the shipping consequent upon that. They had overlooked the fact that, if the raw material was better and cheaper, the shipping itself would be improved, and, in all probability, more employed in the north of Europe" (*Hansard*, N.S. i. 555).

[1] It is notable that Liverpool said that tea, next to bread, was the article of most general use amongst all classes of the nation, showing a consumption of over 22 million lbs. (*Hansard*, N.S. i. 569).

serious matter, for America furnished the best prospects of a ready market for our goods. But what was the cause of it? The peculiar circumstance of the times was that, great as was the distress in every country in Europe (and certainly it prevailed more or less in every country in Europe), it was nevertheless at the present moment greater in the United States than in any European country. During the war, America, as the principal neutral state, and, during part of it, the only neutral state, had increased in wealth, in commerce, in arts, in population, in strength, more rapidly than any other nation ever before increased. But now the world was at peace, and America must retrograde to a certain extent. He stated those facts to show that the distress which had fallen, not upon one or two countries but upon the whole world, was the result of political convulsions, and to show the nature of the distress existing. It could be remedied by time alone, and any rash measures adopted to satisfy a popular clamour would only continue, if not perpetuate, the evil.

**The distress was universal, and was the result of political convulsions.**

As to the proposed enquiry, he agreed with Lansdowne's general principle of the great advantage resulting from unrestricted freedom of trade. But, in our present situation, it was impossible for us—or, indeed, "for any country in the world but the United States"—to act unreservedly on that principle. The commercial regulations of the European world had been long established and could not be suddenly departed from. Certainly, looking at our absolute prohibition of the import of grain, our laws respecting the import of cattle, the export and import of wool—in fact all the laws for the protection of our agricultural interest—it was impossible for us to go to foreign countries on the principle of reciprocal advantage; they would answer with entire propriety, "if you value so highly the doctrines of your Adam Smith, show your sincerity and your justice by the establishment of a reciprocal intercourse. Admit our agricultural produce and we will admit your manufactures." As to the Corn Laws, whatever his opinion had been or was about them, he was convinced that, great as might be the distress under which agriculture was labouring, there was no more certain means of aggravating that distress than perpetually to tamper with it by the adoption of new measures and new laws. For the same reason, he would most strongly deprecate any alteration by parliament in the state of our currency as it was last settled by the legislature.

**The difficulty of reciprocity.**

As to Lansdowne's particular recommendations, he agreed that

our present system of protection might be relaxed, without much inconvenience, in respect to some articles but not to all. The cotton manufacture, for instance, in which we had acquired so great a superiority over other nations, need not fear anything from an abolition of all protection. He believed, indeed, that, if the laws which protected the woollen manufacture were repealed, no injurious effect would thereby be occasioned. But with respect to silk, well, he wished England had never had a silk manufactory; it was completely artificial; but, looking at the capital and the 50,000 persons engaged in it, he could not agree that it was possible to relinquish it. As to linen, could they contemplate the effect which would be produced on the linen manufactures of Ireland by a repeal of all the duties on foreign linen? The manufacture was too intimately mixed up with the capital, and habits, and prejudices of the Irish people to allow us to doubt that any measure subversive of it would destroy the peace and tranquillity of the most prosperous part of that country. Absolute prohibitions it might be desirable to get rid of, but it should be remembered that, in many cases, these would have to be replaced by duties so high as to be tantamount to prohibition. He entirely agreed with Lansdowne as to the benefit of extending the warehousing system and the abolition of the transit dues, and he had an open mind as regarded the timber duties and the wine duties—reminding the House, however, that, after the treaty with France of 1787, which was founded on just and fair principles of reciprocity, only a trifling amount more was exported to France than to Portugal. Finally, as to the East Indies, he was very doubtful if as much was not already selling there as that market could take, and if it would be wise to force a demand. In the end, committees were duly appointed by both Houses.[1]

The difficulty of Free Trade.

Reports of the Committees

The Lords' Committee on Foreign Trade reported on 3rd July, and Lansdowne, in presenting it, said that all the members were anxious that some measure should be founded on it, alike in the interests of the manufacturing and the commercial classes, the shipowners, the colonies, and, not least, the British consumers.[2] The Commons' Committee also adumbrated some considerable changes in the restrictive system. The general principle adopted by the Committee was that "all restriction on trade, of whatsoever nature, was an evil, only to be justified by some great political

—the general principle;

[1] *Hansard*, N.S. i. 546, 863. [2] *Ibid.* ii. 139.

expediency; and, where such expediency was not clear and manifest, that the restriction ought to be removed, so far as it could be done consistently with the good faith of the country pledged by treaties with foreign states, or by compacts with its own subjects, or with reference to the protection due to different branches of trade that might have grown up under the existing system and which protection could not be suddenly withdrawn without great injustice." The only specific changes recommended, however, were two: (1) revision of the vast and complicated mass of legislation by which the commerce of the country was regulated. In 1815, no less than 1,100 laws were in force, and many had been added since then. It was a just matter of complaint with the British merchant that, so far from the course in which he was to guide his transactions being plain and simple, so far from being able to undertake his operations, and to avail himself of favourable opportunities as they arose with promptitude and confidence, he was frequently reduced to the necessity of resorting to the services of professional advisers, to ascertain what he might venture to do and what he must avoid, before he was able to embark on his commercial adventure with the assurance of being secure from the consequences of an infringement of the law. And for the foreign merchant, of course, it was ever so much worse: (2) some relaxation in the Navigation Laws, so far as to permit any article whatever to be imported from any parts of the world, provided such importation took place in British ships. But "all alterations ought to be made gradually, with great caution, and a due regard to the interests which, having grown up under the present system, were placed under the protection of the good faith of the country.[1]

the two specific changes.

Meanwhile the great interest threatened by the evident intention to relax the Navigation Laws was not idle. Petitions were presented from the merchants, shipowners, and shipbuilders of London and Liverpool against the withdrawal of the duties on foreign timber.

All that could be said against the repeal of the duties on European timber was said by Marryat (member for Sandwich), and it may be worth while to recall his arguments.[2]

Arguments against repeal of the timber duties:

During the war, we had almost a monopoly of the carrying

[1] *Hansard*, N.S. ii. 545. The Report is printed in full in the *Annual Register*, ii. 773.

[2] The speech was published by the Committee of the Society of Shipbuilders.

trade of the Mediterranean. This was lost on the coming of peace, as all other European powers could navigate the Mediterranean with the same security as ourselves. But another trade opened up, the timber trade with the British Colonies in North America, which, in the past year, employed 1,520 sail and 17,600 British seamen. It might be supposed that, if that trade were cut off, this same shipping might be employed in the Baltic. But two things made this impossible:—while the trade with the colonies was confined to British ships only, that with the Baltic would be carried on chiefly in foreign ships; and the voyage to the Baltic was much shorter. The tonnage employed would fall to one-half, and, of that half, four-fifths would be foreign.

—it would curtail our carrying;

Our own people, not foreigners, had the first claim on us, particularly in this matter; for was it not in 1811 that the Baltic powers, under orders from Napoleon, confiscated every British ship in their ports, with their cargoes, to the value of £7,000,000? It was at that time that we took measures to make ourselves independent of them as regards timber and naval stores, by opening up the forests of Canada; it would be the part of dotards and idiots to sacrifice anything for those who wished now to regain what they had lost by their own ill-faith and injustice. Besides, these powers were all highly protective; they would gladly send us timber, but they would not take our manufactures in exchange. The only mart for our manufactures which we could hope to improve was our colonies and those distant nations who did not manufacture for themselves. Our home consumption and our colonies and dependencies took off seven-eighths of all our manufactures, and, to throw this trade open in order to have a chance of extending the other one-eighth, would be acting with the desperation of a gamester who would play with the odds seven to one against himself rather than not play at all.

—the colonies took more of our manufactures;

It was said that the colonial timber was much inferior. True, it was not so neatly squared—a defect which was gradually being remedied as the colonies gained experience—but much of the alleged inferiority arose only from its being applied to purposes for which it was unfit. Anyhow, the inferiority could not be great, considering that the demand had increased so much that the 80,000 tons of shipping required to carry it in 1811 had grown to 340,000 in 1819.

—colonial timber was not so very much inferior;

But, it was said, the timber is not the produce of Canada, but of the United States. Even if this were as true now as it was

—anyhow we got the freight;

about the beginning of the trade, he would say that, whether we procured our timber from one neutral power or from another, was a matter of indifference, but that the securing the freight of it to British ships was a matter of great importance. It had been wittily said that one might as well compel the colliers of Newcastle to go north about instead of coming direct to London. Such caricature was easy, but the disadvantage to the consumers was much exaggerated: "If brought from the Baltic, more money is paid for the timber and less for the freight; if from our own colonies in North America, less is paid for the timber and more for the freight, but the price to the consumer is not materially enhanced" (*sic*).

—we must employ our seamen,

But even if it were, Great Britain would only be following her old policy of keeping up a numerous and hardy race of seamen whose services she might command in time of war, and this she could only accomplish by so extending her carrying trade as to find them employment in times of peace. It was with this view that we gave encouragement to shipowners, paid bounties to the fisheries, and compelled the metropolis to buy sea-borne coal instead of getting it cheaper from the adjacent mines. More considerations than the mere prime cost entered into the question of whether articles were really cheap or dear.

and protect our own timber growers,

Nor should it be forgotten that British landowners also had a strong interest in the question; the duties on foreign timber protected them as well as the colonies—rightly, for the landowner was as much entitled to protection against foreign timber as against foreign corn.

secure our independence, and discourage emigration.

We should think too of the permanence of the trade. The colonies were under our control; in proportion as we extended our trade with them, we became independent. But our trade with other countries depended on the will and pleasure of other governments, and a change of policy might shut us out in a moment. This policy too would discourage emigration. Nothing could be more important to a country having a redundant population, without adequate means of employment at home, than to send her surplus numbers abroad to situations where their labours would still contribute to her advantage. To say nothing of the 50,000 individuals who had emigrated lately to Canada at their own expense, he understood that the tide of emigration, which ever followed encouragement, had set in strongly to our colonies from the frontiers of the United States since the establishment of this timber trade.

Adam Smith and the Abbe de Pradt quoted in support.

Finally, Adam Smith, of course, was quoted in favour of the Navigation Laws—"perhaps the wisest of all the commercial regulations of England"—and another Free Trader was cited in favour of maintaining our protection. The Abbe de Pradt, it seems, had been advocating Free Trade, with the avowed object of diminishing the national prosperity of England, and apportioning it among the other powers. Our maritime supremacy, he said, was so absolute that, unless the independence of the colonies and a free trade with them could be obtained, all Europe might as well burn their ships at once, as they were reserved for no other fate than to be carried in triumph to the Thames.

A motion of Baring for the appointment of a Committee to give the whole question due and deliberate consideration was ruled out of order, and the petition was laid on the table.[1]

Agitation against the late wool tax.

Before the Budget came on, there was considerable agitation to get the late tax on foreign wool taken off. Many petitions were presented from those interested. The woollen manufacture in Yorkshire, it was said, had diminished by one-sixth.[2] During the last year, the West Riding had milled only seven million yards of cloth; one would require to go back to 1794 to find as small a quantity. The distress among the workers, it was urged, was very great. In one parish of 7,000 or 8,000, 1,700 had, on the average, earned during the year only 11½d. per week each. The Chancellor of the Exchequer merely replied that there was no evidence that the distress among the wool operatives was worse than in other industries; that the greater part of the present distress was due to the falling off in the exports to America, which was suffering from currency embarrassments; that there was the same distress in France where no new tax had been imposed; finally, that time had not yet been given to see how the tax would affect either the trade or the revenue. In May, a motion to bring in a bill to repeal the tax was lost by 74 votes.[3]

Infant Industries principle.

The "Infant Industries" principle of protection was discussed in relation to a concrete case. A petition from the woollen cloth manufacturers of Keswick, complaining, one may assume, of the depression of their own trade, took occasion to

[1] *Hansard*, N.S. i. 845.

[2] The *Annual Register* says one-fifth to one-fourth in the course of the past two years. Part I. Chron. 136.

[3] *Hansard*, N.S. i. 72, 92, 165, 294, 612.

deprecate the intention which, they understood, existed of continuing the protecting duties upon Irish linen. This alarmed some of the Irish members: had Irish manufacturers not a right to as much encouragement as English? The Chancellor of the Exchequer then allowed it to escape that, although the subject was at present undergoing a special enquiry, the government did not propose the immediate repeal of the Irish duties, but intended to continue them for some years longer "on a principle of gradation," to afford the vested interests an opportunity of preparing for their final repeal. Ricardo, of course, said that twenty years of protection was surely quite long enough to have given the Irish manufacturers an opportunity of preparing for the repeal. Here, apparently for the first time, we have the doctrine of the Infant Industry laid down in parliament,—that protecting duties of this kind were only temporary, to be gradually taken off as the industries became firmly established. It will be interesting to see how the principle worked out in subsequent years.[1]

Irish protecting duties to be taken off gradually.

In the meantime, the Government, on 8th June, put forward a set of resolutions, which were agreed to, that the existing Irish protecting duties should continue till 1st January, 1825, to be gradually diminished, every five years, till, on 1st January, 1840, the duties should finally cease and determine, exception being made of the duties on salt, hops, and coals imported from Great Britain, which were to continue payable only till further provision had been made by parliament.[2]

From 1820 Free Trade was recognised as a practical policy.

From these records, it seems clear that 1820 may be taken as the year in which Free Trade began to be looked upon as a practical as well as an ideal policy. As the *Annual Register* said: "Upon the whole, if the discussions which occurred during this session on our commercial policy are read with some degree of pain, on account of the frequent statements of distress which they force upon our attention, every reflecting mind will, on the other hand, experience a countervailing pleasure in the contemplation of the liberal views of our national interests, adopted and proclaimed by the leading members, both of the Ministry and of the Opposition."[3]

[1] *Hansard*, N.S. i. 802. [2] *Ibid.* 1004. [3] i. 93.

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GLASGOW: PRINTED AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS BY ROB. MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD.