BRITAIN FOR THE BRITON

SIR WILLIAM E. COOPER

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BRITAIN FOR THE BRITON

CO-OPERATIVE WORKING OF AGRICULTURE
AND OTHER INDUSTRIES A NECESSITY

*AN EARNEST APPEAL FOR
LAND, INDUSTRIAL, ECONOMIC AND OTHER
VITAL REFORMS*

BY

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"SOCIALISM AND ITS PERILS," "THE MURDER OF AGRICULTURE,"
"A PLEA FOR AGRICULTURE," "ANOTHER PLEA FOR AGRICULTURE,"
"DRINK AND THE BRITISH PEOPLE," ETC., ETC.

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INTRODUCTION

IF ever there was urgent need for awakening the people of this country from their prolonged sleep of upwards of sixty years to a full realisation of the great national and other perils which await them, that need surely exists at the present time.

So deeply impressed has the author been with the terrible amount of ignorance, apathy, and criminal neglect which have wrought so much havoc throughout the United Kingdom, that he has been impelled to devote his energies to the task of endeavouring to place before his readers facts which, if properly considered, must convince them that it would be really suicidal to continue to live in the Fool's Paradise in which they have been content to dwell for more than half a century.

With this object in view he has deliberately cut himself adrift from all political parties that he might be free to urge, in season and out of season, the adoption of such vitally necessary reforms as are best calculated to give his fellow-countrymen that relief from the many evils which the irrational policy of the last sixty years has resulted in.

An attempt was made by the writer, in a work entitled "The Murder of Agriculture," to focus the attention of the people on the phenomenal, widespread, and yet unnecessary, poverty which existed in the United Kingdom as the inevitable result of neglecting the land industry, as well as on the uselessness of all effort, whether State or private, to relieve the terrible pressure on the nation, until that industry had been built up on a firm and solid foundation and maintained in a highly prosperous condition.

An earnest appeal was then made to them to awaken from their dreams of folly and indifference, and to realise the hopelessness of expecting a further development of trades and manufactures to relieve the existing pressure without developing, at the same time, the agricultural resources of this country; to think seriously of the ghastly incubus of legalised pauperism under which the country is staggering like no other nation in the world; and to reflect upon the expenditure of untold millions in private charity, and the immense burden entailed by the poor rates in the support of the flotsam and jetsam of

our population. Certain portions of that book which bear particularly on these questions have, therefore, been incorporated in this work.

Greatly encouraged by the very hearty reception accorded to that really unpretentious work, and the appeal made therein to the people to join in the crusade against the hydra-headed evils and injustices described in its pages, the author submitted for the further consideration of the public a later work entitled "Socialism and its Perils." The generous and sympathetically appreciative manner in which this book was received in every part of the United Kingdom, as well as in distant parts of the British Empire, especially in India, has induced the writer to produce another and a much more comprehensive work in order to assist his readers to fully grasp the existing critical condition of national affairs, and to free themselves from the paralysing restrictions to which they have been subject so many years.

It must be manifest to everybody, that if we are to maintain our old-time pre-eminence as a race, and our fame and prestige as sons of an Empire on which "The sun never sets," we cannot do so by shutting our eyes to hard convincing facts, and by hiding our heads, ostrich-like, in the sands of the past, especially when our supremacy is being so rudely and so vigorously challenged.

It is only by "taking stock" of our actual position and our power of productiveness as a nation, and by analysing our present ability to hold our own with foreign competitors, that we can hope to discover the weak joints in our national armour, and to strengthen them in view of future emergencies.

When we reflect on the marvellous results achieved by Japanese reformers, patriots, and statesmen during the last few decades, in freeing their nation from the thralldom of ignorance, prejudice, and insularity, and in placing it in the front rank in military, naval, commercial, and other branches of national development and achievement, we must realise the utter absurdity of being discouraged or daunted by faint-hearted pessimists, who assert the impossibility of rescuing our own country from the deplorable effects of a too-rigid adherence to obsolete systems and methods which are throttling and crippling British agricultural and industrial enterprise and advancement, and promoting the progress and enterprise of foreign rivals.

Fortunately, it is not necessary for us, as it was for the Japanese regenerators of their race, to start practically *de novo* on a crusade of administrative reconstruction and national reforms.

All that is required of us is to enter upon the task of investigation and recommendation in the spirit of true reformers,

and by probing to the root of existing evils and anomalies, discover the true causes and effect of our threatened national decline and decrepitude. Particularly so must we reject the ridiculously illogical idea, that because England has prospered in the past, she will, *ergo*, be able to continue to do so, notwithstanding the undeniable fact that foreign competitors have been making tremendous progressive strides in the past few years, and that they are evidently determined, and are planning, to overtake and even to pass her if possible in the near future.

Critical investigation becomes especially necessary in connection with the land, for of all economic questions this is the least understood. We talk glibly about sending the people "back to the land" as though the land of Britain, in times *lang syne*, had been under a condition of general cultivation. As a matter of fact Great Britain has never cultivated her lands as France, Belgium, Germany, and the other civilised States of Europe understand the meaning of the term. From the days of the Tudor Kings, and before their time even, to the time when such agriculture as we had was destroyed by Cobden and his followers, Britain cultivated just sufficient land to produce what she required to feed her comparatively sparse population—and no more, and to talk of sending the British people BACK TO THE LAND is to indulge in a huge misnomer. Truly, up to the Repeal of the Corn Laws, in the forties, the Country had far more wheat land under cultivation than it has now, and the necessity for importing corn from abroad was practically non-existent. Had these laws and the land tenures of the country been judiciously amended to meet the altered conditions, instead of being entirely swept away, the system of agriculture could have been gradually extended to meet the ever-growing requirements of the country.

The United Kingdom has a "CULTIVATED" area—save the mark!—of 49,000,000 acres of the very finest corn producing land in the world, with a reserve of about 12,000,000 to 16,000,000 of "uncultivated" land, most of which, if brought under the plough, would prove to be excellent corn-growing land. The fact that she has only 1,663,588 acres under wheat to-day out of this vast area, proves the INEPTNESS OF GOVERNMENTS past and present, the influence of VESTED INTERESTS, the impossibility of the present system of LAND TENURES, and the INSENSATE PARTY SYSTEM, rather than the incapability of British soil to grow wheat for British people.

It is, therefore, with the direct object of concentrating public attention upon the urgent necessity for bringing about, as quickly as possible, vital national reforms, that the author submits this work to the patient consideration of his readers,

and he does so in the fervent hope that the facts and arguments presented therein will commend themselves to their practical sympathy and support.

He has made no attempt to deal with the numerous questions involved in the problems, urgently calling for national consideration and practical settlement, in a manner which would commend the work only to theorists and statisticians, nor does he anticipate that his work will commend itself to such "scientific" economists who still affirm that it is more economical "scientifically"—to allow our splendid corn lands, among other things, to lie waste, to throw our people out of employment, to produce nothing of our own for their support, and then employ foreigners to grow our food for us—*than to grow it ourselves*.

He has long recognised that to create a separate entity for British national economics and then subject it to a separate course of rigid "scientific" treatment of the abstract order, without considering the number of concrete cases demanding altogether different treatment, is on a par with the physician who insists on treating his patient for a separate minor disease and ignoring graver complications which ultimately prove fatal. Our great industries, land and others, have been "scientifically" treated so long by political economists, and many others who have served their own interests rather than the people's, that the Country has taken the matter *au grand sérieux*, and has come to regard it as a perfectly natural course of treatment. Fortunately, however, vast numbers of his fellow-countrymen have at length realised that the entire question of British economics cannot be treated as a separate entity having no part in, and no connection with, other States and other systems of economics, and that Great Britain can no more afford to ignore what other countries have found the necessity of doing—as a means to national strength and prosperity—than a man can afford to be unmindful of the fact that his system requires the daily intake of certain food to prevent bodily waste and atrophy.

National economics ramify through the veins and arteries of public life in so many directions as to extend beyond the ken even of *true* economic science, and to apply one or two of its multitudinous laws to the requirements of a people and wilfully ignore the rest is to resort to economic quackery. To beg the question in this manner and to display such an amount of economic ignorance would be utterly ridiculous were it not at the same time fatal to public interests. Economic science, like everything else in this up-to-date practical world, must be free from Doctrinarianism, and unless it be tempered with a judicious admixture of common-sense, much of it, that might

otherwise be of real service in the domestic economy of the people, must necessarily remain inoperative and useless.

The author's real object is to reach the "man-in-the-street," the rate-payer and tax-payer, the voter and the elector, and to appeal, on common-sense grounds, in a straightforward practical way, to their reason and business-like instincts, for their verdict on the most crucial and vital questions of the day.

As the questions and problems involved are fully dealt with in succeeding chapters, and in the synopsis at the end, it is only now necessary to add that if they contribute, in any degree, to the carrying out of the great reforms pleaded for therein, the author will have been more than repaid for his exertions, which have indeed been a "labour of love" on behalf of his fellow-countrymen and fellow-citizens.

Hume Towers, Bournemouth.

September, 1909.

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“AND MAN SHALL TILL THE SOIL, AND IT
SHALL BRING FORTH ABUNDANTLY; AND
HE SHALL EAT OF THE FRUITS THEREOF,
HE AND HIS WIVES AND HIS LITTLE ONES,
AND IT SHALL BE UNTO HIM AN EVER-
LASTING HERITAGE.”

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BRITAIN FOR THE BRITON

CHAPTER I

THE BIRTH OF AGRICULTURE

IN that far-away time shrouded by the mists of an unknown past, when order was born of chaos and darkness was divided into night and day, it is conceivable that land and water arose out of the prevailing confusion and became the most conspicuous feature in the mighty plan of creation. Lofty mountains reared themselves far into the overhanging canopy of space, while vast abysses of appalling depth opened up at their feet and formed themselves into valleys and dells. Land and water, even in those days of unknown antiquity, formed the chief features of this terrestrial sphere, and were intended by the Creator to play the chief part in the economy of human life.

In the old story of the creation, so simply and yet so beautifully told in the first chapter of Genesis, we read that man himself was formed out of "the dust of the ground," and that the Creator's command to him was to "replenish the earth and subdue it." Further, it is said—

"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it."

In these days of educational progress and high intellectual culture many persons disbelieve the old story of the Christian Bible, and regard it altogether as a myth or as the picturesque imagination of some ancient Hebrew scholar; but the cardinal fact that stands out so prominently here is that, even in those days of hoary antiquity, the land, agriculture, husbandry, were evidently regarded as man's particular heritage, and that they were to be his chief concern and to form his chief occupation.

This fact established, it matters not whether this ancient Hebrew scribe wrote under Divine inspiration or from his own

convictions, because, either way, it remains obvious that his mind was at least inspired *with* that idea, and that if such an idea was not divinely inspired, it, at all events, faithfully represented the spirit and feeling of the times in which he lived.

“And God said, ‘I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed, to you it shall be for meat,’”

wrote the old Jewish seer, lawgiver, historian, or whatever he was; and whether he wrote by God’s direct command or not, he nevertheless believed that the earth, with its abundance of food, was given by a beneficent Creator for man’s use and enjoyment.

TRIBUTE OF THE ANCIENTS TO AGRICULTURE

He was, moreover, but a prefigurement of those who subsequently arose in other lands to offer their testimony to the bountifulness of Mother Earth, and his words have been echoed and re-echoed down the long vistas of the ages, awakening the peoples of all lands to a deep sense of gratitude for the plenteous gifts of Nature. Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, Medes and Persians, Greeks and Romans, Chinese and Hindoos, have all thankfully acknowledged the prodigality of the earth, and have paid their tribute and rendered their homage, all in their own way, to the Giver.

The Egyptians laid their acknowledgments on the altars of Isis; the Greeks and Romans sacrificed to Cybele and Ceres; while the Hebrews offered their first fruits of the earth to Jehovah. The ancients, indeed, were never unmindful of the bounteous gifts of Nature, and various were the means adopted to show their gratitude. The earth, with its never-failing store of benefactions, was regarded by them as the “gift of the gods,” demanding sacrifice and much celebration, and in their heathen way they showed much devoutness in their worship of those deities who were believed to cause the corn to grow and the fruit to ripen.

Ceres was especially respected because of her beneficence to mankind in respect to the fruits of the earth, and her worshippers were found in many parts of the pagan world in all the ages of the past.

CHRISTIAN OFFERINGS TO AGRICULTURE

These ancient prototypes of a devout belief in the beneficence of the great Giver have myriads of followers in every

civilised country to-day, for never a season comes round that men do not lay the first fruits of earth on the altars of their God. In every Christian country, and in nearly every Christian church, do Christian worshippers hold their harvest festivals and offer up their prayers to a beneficent Creator, and thus through the æons of time do we find that the human race has never ceased to gratefully and honourably acknowledge the supreme part that agriculture plays in man's earthly existence.

The earth and the fulness thereof were, then, intended for man's enjoyment, and this supreme fact has been gratefully recognised by the peoples of all times. It is essential to man's existence, for without it he cannot live, and he naturally regards it as his most cherished inheritance, since it furnishes him with every want of his physical existence. It supplies him with every necessary of life and with every luxury, with food and raiment, and wine and oil. It gives him his light and fuel and dwelling-place, and it furnishes the latter for him, either with the scant belongings of a poor man's cottage or the sumptuous deckings of a king's palace. It gives him his books and music, his pictures and his *objets d'art*; and all his many material possessions; his railways, telegraphs, telephones; his theatres and concert halls, his public buildings and his palaces. It supplies him with a multitude of occupations, and affords him the means of enjoying all his pleasures. Man himself is of the earth, earthy. From it he is taken; to it he must return.

BREAD THE "STAFF OF LIFE"

Man can live, and live well, without his costly palaces, his sumptuous raiment, his paintings, *bric-à-brac*, and the thousand and one luxuries which wealth enables him to gather together, but he cannot live without food. Bread is the staff of life, and man must have it or—die.

The only possible deduction from all this is that, as food is man's most pressing want, the production of food is the primary use that he should make of the earth, while the secondary aim of his life should be to work it so that it may yield all else that he requires for his subsistence, as also for his profit, or for the purpose of amassing wealth.

The logical conclusion of this reasoning is that so long as man inhabits the earth, food and the production of food should be his first consideration; that the proper cultivation of the soil should form the *chief* industry, and that all others should be regarded as subsidiary industries arising out of the primal industry—agriculture.

That this is the only interpretation of so obvious a condition is proved by the fact that every country in the world, civilised or uncivilised, and irrespective of colour, creed, or language, regards its agriculture as of paramount importance in the economy of national life.

ANCIENT AGRICULTURAL COUNTRIES

India, China, Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, and Japan—the last-mentioned till quite recently—are types of purely agricultural countries. It is true that they all possess certain internal industries, besides agriculture, which supply their people with such commodities, other than food, as are necessary to human existence, but agriculture is the *chief* industry and the great wealth-producer of all these countries. That these nations have existed for countless generations and have increased and multiplied, and have, moreover, subsisted chiefly on the “kindly fruits of the earth,” there is no question.

It is equally true that to-day in savage and semi-savage countries, many of which are included in our African and Indian possessions, agriculture, albeit in its crudest form, constitutes the principal industry of the people, and if bereft of that one industry these backward races would soon die out.

The more civilised States of Europe and the Western world afford, even in these days of feverish commercialism which fills civilised man with a consuming thirst for gold, still stronger proof, if possible, of the enormous importance which one and all of them attach to the maintenance of agriculture as the *chief* industry of their respective countries, the main source of national wealth, and the fulcrum upon which moves the lever of all human enterprise.

AGRICULTURE IN FRANCE

France, for instance, waged a relentless war against the feudal tyranny of the nobility for many long and weary years, and her struggle for agricultural freedom culminated in the bloody Revolution of 1789. To-day, the LAND rules the situation in France. About 36,000,000 acres—or considerably over one-fourth of the total area of the country—are under *corn* crops, while 24,000,000 of her population—or nearly two-thirds—are engaged upon, or subsist by, the great land industry. She is self-supporting, or practically so, as regards her food supply; her huge national debt, much larger than our own, is held chiefly by the agricultural classes, thereby assuring national stability; while the enormous war indemnity, exacted

by the Germans at the close of the Franco-Prussian war, was practically paid without apparent effort or sacrifice out of the *agricultural* wealth of the country.

GERMAN AGRICULTURE

In Germany, the many edicts and laws which were passed by the German legislators at the beginning of the last century, with the object of freeing the peasantry from those restrictions which interfered with the development of universal agriculture on a firm, stable basis, indicate with what importance those dead and gone statesmen regarded the land industry. It would serve no purpose here to dwell at length on these measures of reform, as numerous writers have already dealt very liberally with the subject. The establishment of a *national* agricultural system on a basis that would be equitable to the lords of the soil, and encouraging and even *stimulating* to peasant proprietors, were the chief factors employed in the circumstances, and the fact that both the landed nobility and the cultivating peasant proprietors have been benefited to an enormous extent by the arrangement, amply vindicates the legislative enactments of a hundred years ago.

Germany to-day possesses one of the finest agricultural systems in the civilised world. She is practically self-supporting in respect to her food; she employs and supports nearly 20,000,000 of her people on her agricultural industry alone; her agricultural wealth is prodigious, while she has found that her splendid land industry, instead of being a hindrance to the progressive development of her manufacturing industries, offers them, on the contrary, a powerful stimulus, owing to the enormous purchasing power of 20,000,000 of prosperous agriculturists in the midst of a thriving manufacturing country. But, here again, her statesmen's fostering care of the great *national* industry and their wonderful prescience is noticeable. When Bismarck saw that the welding of the many German States into a great homogeneous Empire must inevitably result in the rapid development of manufactures, and the subsequent physical deterioration of a town-bred and town-employed population, with possibly a decrease in the birth and an increase in the death rates, he steadfastly refused to permit the Fatherland to be dominated by manufacturing industries. He saw what had happened to England, and while not in any sense checking the natural growth of town industries, he directly and indirectly fostered and encouraged the rural industries so as to conserve, among other things, the physical health of the people, which he rightly regarded as a national asset of the first importance.

The fact that the proportionate increase in the population of the German Empire is the greatest in Europe to-day, while that of Great Britain is among the lowest, proves how wise were the measures of the Iron Chancellor.

HUNGARY—PROSPEROUS AGRICULTURE

Hungary offers another example of how carefully the Government of the country cherishes the national industry. Hungary has an area equal to Great Britain, and a population of about 20,000,000. Roughly speaking, about three-fourths of the entire population are engaged in and about agriculture, which is not only established as the chief industry, as the greatest employer of labour, and the greatest wealth-producer of the country, but is jealously guarded and conserved by the people, while every means of assistance is afforded by the State to facilitate agricultural education, as well as to promote the scientific and commercial development of the industry. The Agricultural Academy of Magyaróvár is one of the finest institutions of the kind in Europe; while the various agricultural colleges, the tillage schools, the educational institutions for special industries connected with agriculture, the numerous model farms which are interspersed throughout the land, together with a large itinerant staff of teachers and lecturers who are constantly moving about the country, imparting valuable information to agriculturists, testify to the enormous importance with which the State regards the great agricultural industry. Indeed, the Government of Hungary—recognising the fact that however important other industries may be in the national economy, agriculture must always play the chief part, and be, and remain, the dominant factor in the national life—wisely leads the way in agricultural reform, and does not wait till it is driven to it by the discontent of a people or by actual revolution.

Apart from the splendidly organised educational system which Hungary enjoys, direct State aid is given in every instance where it is justified. For the reclamation of land, among other things, special grants are made, while liberal loans to the numerous agricultural banks, and direct financial aid to agriculturists where there happens to be undue agricultural depression—for some reason or other—offers further testimony of the determination of the Government to allow no consideration of whatsoever nature to bar the way to complete agricultural success.

Every facility for agricultural co-operation in the collection, transport, and sale of agricultural produce is not only afforded

to farmers, but is actually the subject of much encouragement and direct support by the Hungarian Government in the shape of grants in aid to such co-operative undertakings.

Briefly, Hungary fosters in every conceivable manner the greatest of all human industries, and that she shows her wisdom in this is vouched for by the *collective* prosperity of her people and the magnificent physique of her sons and daughters, for, travel throughout the length and breadth of Europe, you will hardly encounter so fine a race as you meet with in the Magyars, and among the Croats and Slavs of the Hungarian plains.

GREAT BRITAIN STANDS ALONE!

Many other instances of the fostering care of Governments, and the jealous regard of the people, might be cited in favour of the universal esteem in which the agricultural industry is held in the civilised States of modern times, but it would serve no purpose were we to multiply the examples. Every country in the world wisely conserves and jealously guards the greatest asset in the national life, and this fact is universally known and recognised—*save in Great Britain!*

The land, then, is the people's heritage, the *summum bonum* of their existence, and the aphelion of their earthly ambitions. There are manufactures and mining industries, overseas commerce, and internal trade; there are professions and occupations of various kinds which claim the time and attention of millions; but the vast majority of the human race are, after all, either employed by, or interested in, or connected with, the land in some manner or another—directly or indirectly—and this being so, the land industry and all that it involves is to-day, and must always be, the most important employment-giving and wealth-producing agency of every country in the world, civilised or uncivilised.

PEACEFUL RIVALRY IN AGRICULTURE

In respect to other industries there may be, and there is, a diversity of ambitions, keen competition, bitter rivalry and clashing of interests; man vies with man and nation with nation, and not infrequently has "trade" been the means of provoking bloody conflicts between two countries whose commercial interests clashed one with the other; but so far as agriculture is concerned there are identical aims, common desires, and community of interests in every country on the habitable globe.

Each country looks after its own agricultural industry, and

works it to the best advantage of the commonweal without let or hindrance from foreign States. It is regarded by one and all as the common inheritance of the human race, and its prosecution, even to the most successful results in each country, excites neither jealousy nor the cupidity of other countries.

Since, then, successful agriculture has been from the earliest historical times, and is to-day, the ambition of statesmen and the hope of all countries, the following questions naturally arise :—

1. What induced Great Britain to cast aside her agriculture and so cut herself adrift from the congeries of nations?

2. Has so unique and perilous a step been justified by—
RESULTS?

The answer to these questions will be found in succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER II

HOW BRITISH AGRICULTURE WAS DESTROYED—ITS INCOMPATIBILITY WITH MANUFACTURES—WHAT FREE-TRADERS CONTEND

THE struggle for Trade-freedom dates further back in English history than there is any need to follow in these pages. The period which commenced with the outbreak of the war with France in 1793, and culminated in 1846 with the triumph of Free-traders over the crude Protectionists of that time is, perhaps, the most momentous in the economic history of the country, and that period will be taken in depicting the events which gave birth to the economic system, particularly in regard to agriculture, which has ever since been adopted by Great Britain in defiance of all international precedent.

For fifty years following the great war with France, British trade and British economical conditions generally were, no doubt, in a deplorable state. Business was bad, employment was difficult to obtain and hard to keep; wages, in many instances, were at starvation point; food and most other commodities were dear, and, on the whole, there were far more distress and suffering among the people than could be justified even by the enormous war expenses which, at the close of the war in 1815, reached the stupendous total of about £850,000,000. For several years succeeding 1815 little or nothing was done to relieve the strain on the people. Several Bills, it is true, passed through Parliament with the object of affording relief to the taxpayers, but as these either helped land-owners to keep up the price of corn and maintain high rents, or to relieve the well-to-do classes of a portion of their income-tax burdens, the poorer classes were left—as the poor generally *are* left in such cases—out in the cold.

HARD TIMES. NOBODY SATISFIED

Nobody was satisfied with the then existing state of affairs; the price of wheat was generally high, fluctuating between 60s.

and 120s. per quarter, yet, in spite of these phenomenal prices, farmers were dissatisfied because of the enormous rents insisted upon by land-owners, so that when the price fell below 40s. per quarter, as it did on a few occasions, they were practically ruined. Manufacturing industries suffered a considerable check during and after the war, and the hard times affected industrial workers as well as others. Among all classes of the community there was either actual distress, a feeling of discontent, or a sense of unrest, and, when the reformers of the "thirties" and "forties" of the last century entered upon their self-imposed task, they undoubtedly found congenial surroundings and an exceedingly fruitful soil to work in. Briefly, the period commencing with the French war in 1793, and particularly after its close in 1815, may be regarded as the most favourable period in English history for economical reform. Adam Smith, Ricardo, and other writers of the eighteenth century, had paved the way for coming events; Huskisson, Peel, Hume, and others pointed the direction; the Chartists rudely emphasised the necessity for reform, and Cobden and his followers put the finishing touch to the work that others had begun.

COBDEN'S STRENUOUS EFFORTS

Out of Cobden's strenuous efforts the "Anti-Corn Law League" sprang, and this in turn gave birth to the greater—Free-trade movement. Both of these movements had their centre in Manchester, and were largely supported by Manchester merchants and manufacturers, as, indeed, was the case throughout the Kingdom. The trade and industries of the country were in an unsatisfactory condition; men had sunk their money in commercial or industrial enterprises, and many of them were in a parlous state; their work-people were unemployed and in a starving condition, and who shall blame them if they fought hard for their respective interests? It has often been said of this "League of the Lords of Industry" that in so ardently championing the cause of the "Anti-Corn Law League" they were but playing their own game and serving their own interests. This grave charge is amply proved by Cobden himself, who, in a speech at Manchester in 1843, fully and frankly admitted that it was the case. He said—

"I am afraid that most of us entered upon the struggle with the belief that we had some distinct class-interest in the question,"*

and although the enormous importance of this fateful utterance has been whittled down and minimised by Cobden's biographers

* Cobden's speech in Manchester, October 19, 1843.

and apologists in all sorts of ingenious ways, nothing can ever really lessen the tremendous significance of its meaning in its relation to, and effect upon, the economic conditions of the country.

THE FREE-TRADE BANNER UNFURLED

The "Anti-Corn Law League" proved entirely successful, and when it had served its purpose it received decent burial at the hands of those who at once raised the Free-trade standard, and who subsequently marched under its wide sweeping folds to—"Economic victory."

As it would serve no purpose in this chapter to discuss the much-controverted question of Free-trade *versus* Protection, reference will only be made to those advantages which Free-traders allege have accrued from the adoption of Free-trade principles.

Among the most prominent advantages may be cited the impetus which, it is said, Free-trade gives to the mechanical and manufacturing genius of our countrymen, and the freer facilities for the development of the mineral wealth of the country, in consequence of which there has been marvellous progression in the material comfort and wealth of the people. It is claimed that statistics reveal a remarkable change in the status of the working classes, it being shown that, with easier work and shorter hours, wages have, nevertheless, increased, and that the labouring man enjoys anything from 65 to 90 per cent. more of the necessities of life than he did fifty years ago. It is further contended that practically the whole of such economic advantages as have accrued from the beneficent effects of Free-trade during the last fifty years have gone to the working classes, and, while they have almost exclusively reaped these substantial benefits, they have also participated largely—more so, indeed, than other classes—in the general prosperity of the country.

WHAT FREE-TRADERS CLAIM

It is then held that, under the aegis of Free-trade, inventions, scientific discovery, and the development of technical and practical knowledge became possible, and that, in consequence, the people have been enabled to enjoy a standard of life hitherto unattainable in the history of the nation, and hitherto inconceivable by the people. These wonderful inventions and scientific discoveries which have, it is said, peculiarly benefited Great Britain, could never have been possible save under Free-

trade, nor could the vast industries of the nation—cotton, wool, iron, coal, machinery, leather, and the rest of them—have been developed under a system which compelled the country to produce its own food and excluded the agricultural products which are now purchased by means of these industries.

Free-trade, it is contended, “was therefore a necessity prior to the full and profitable expansion of those industries which have enriched Great Britain during the last fifty years.”

Then it is claimed that, as the history of the period covering the thirty years from the close of the Peninsular war to 1845 was a record of distress and privation, with starving labourers, ruined farmers, riots, and general misery, the thirty years following the abolition of the Corn Laws and the establishment of the Free-trade system was, on the other hand, an era of progressive prosperity wherein the advance of the people in comfort and national well-being had been continuous and marvellous. It is also held that this progressive prosperity could by no possible means have been experienced had Great Britain continued to grow her own food supplies, because the chief part of her labour and capital would, in that case, have been devoted to agriculture, and as this industry had failed, prior to the repeal of the Corn Laws, to yield a fair standard of comfort to those engaged in it, it was extremely improbable that its continuance as a great national industry, subsequent to the introduction of Free-trade, could possibly have ensured to them a greater measure of prosperity.

THE ONLY WAY

The only possible way was to become a great manufacturing nation; the freest scope was to be given to the rapid development of the manufacturing and mineral resources of the country; to trade; mechanical application to every conceivable form of industry; and no limit of whatsoever nature was to be placed upon the efforts of Great Britain to secure for herself the greatest possible wealth by such means, as also by international trading; and to this end the inauguration and the establishment on a stable basis of a general system of widespread Commercial-Industrialism was to be set up at all costs. International communication through the medium of a vast mercantile marine, the rapid construction of railways and telegraphs, the development of the postal system and every means to that end were to be undertaken, so that the way might be made clear for British manufacturers. British gold was to be poured out lavishly in furtherance of these objects, and, as a matter of fact, British capital of such colossal proportions found

its way into foreign countries that to-day Great Britain receives about £100,000,000 annually in interest on her foreign investments.

AGRICULTURE INCOMPATIBLE WITH GROWTH OF POPULATION

It was contended that the maintenance of Great Britain as a *self-supporting country* was altogether incompatible with the growth of her population, and that if agriculture were persisted in as a great national industry, "her population must have remained smaller," while her resources in other industrial directions could not have been utilised.

It is now claimed for the British system that the statistics of wealth, commerce, savings, and rates of wages, as also of revenue and the expansion of the staple trades of the country, offer, in themselves, irrefutable evidence of the enormous benefits of Free-trade; and we are constantly reminded that these benefits, together with that inconceivable standard of comfort now enjoyed by a free people, could not possibly have been secured by other means. British trade, which aggregated but £160,000,000 in 1845, reached the enormous sum of £738,000,000 in 1896, and this instance of progressive commercial expansion is held to offer indubitable proof of the phenomenal and peculiar advantages which attach to the Free-trade system.

Coupled with the great trade expansion which the country has experienced since the late Queen Victoria ascended the throne, the enormous development of the railway system of Great Britain is claimed as one of the results of Free-trade. It is pointed out that while in 1845 there were but 2400 miles laid down, fifty years later this had been increased to upwards of 21,000 miles. Then the increase in the mineral wealth of the country is also said to be due to the adoption of the new conditions of trade which came in after the repeal of the Corn Laws, coal and iron being especially cited in support of the contention. The capitalised wealth of the country, which has risen from about £400,000,000 in 1840 to over £1,100,000,000 in 1896, is next cited as one of the results of Free-trade; while the value of house property, which has increased about fourfold during the same period, is also pointed out as another of the results of Great Britain's unique economic system.

CRICKET AND FOOTBALL AS A RESULT OF FREE-TRADE

The increase in Savings Banks deposits, which advanced from £24,000,000 in 1841 to £176,000,000 in 1897, offers, it is said, proof of the thrift of the working classes and evidence of

their progressive prosperity, while the introduction of the penny post, the passing of the Education Act in 1870 and free education, the amazing growth of the Press, the mass of cheap literature, the steady diminution of crime, the holiday clubs of the work-people, the growth of hospitals and dispensaries, the amount expended by the working classes upon pleasures and athletics—football, cricket, cycling, and the rest of it—are all taken as evidence of the many remarkable and widespread benefits that the people of Great Britain have derived from the adoption of Free-trade principles. Indeed, it may be said that whatever progression has been made by the people of this country during the last sixty-two years in education, literature, in trade and manufactures, in the accumulation of wealth, in work as in play, or, in other words, in the broad fields of religion, ethics, and economics, which are, again, all included in that comprehensive term, “Sociology,” is due to the civilising and beneficent effects of Free-trade.

From the foregoing considerations it becomes abundantly clear why Great Britain withdrew from the rest of the civilised countries and set up for herself a system of economics which forms the subject of so much discussion at the present day, and which must necessarily become the most momentous question of this age to the British people, because in it lies wrapped up their weal or their woe. Free-traders sing pæans of praise to a system which they created, and of which, for various well-known reasons, they are excessively enamoured; but there may, however, be detected two uncertain notes in this jubilant song, which mar its harmony and create a feeling of uneasiness.

Said one great Free-trade advocate—

“The only extensive industry which was not advanced during the Victorian era is agriculture.”*

And, later on—

“That the problem of poverty yet remains, and that there is a residue of helpless, shiftless poor in our large towns, and that many classes are yet ignorant, and struggling for a wretched subsistence, hidden away in back streets and alleys, these, and facts like these, only prove that there are weighty social questions still unsolved, and that moral and economic reforms have to penetrate to a much lower level.”†

These two brief sentences exactly describe the position, and as they happen to coincide with the views of their Tariff-reforming adversaries, it will perhaps be as well to devote a separate chapter to the consideration of Tariff-reform contentions.

* “The Free-Trade Movement,” Armitage Smith, p. 139. † *Ibid.*, p. 144.

CHAPTER III

HOW AGRICULTURE MIGHT HAVE BEEN SAVED—THE CONTENTIONS OF ANTI-FREE-TRADERS

IT is in the two discordant notes in the Free-trade "Hymn of Praise," referred to at the end of the last chapter, that all who do not belong to the Free-trade party are intensely interested, and it is this part of the question that will be dealt with first.

Anti-Free-traders contend that not only did agriculture not *advance* during the long Victorian era, but, on the contrary, that it showed considerable and alarming retrogression; and it is held that because of this destructive backward movement—and *only because of this*—has that dread mantle of poverty been flung over those "who are hidden away in back streets and alleys," encircling these unfortunates with its foul folds as the constricting serpent enfolds its victims in its deadly embrace. It is maintained that in sacrificing agriculture on the altars of Commercial-Industrialism, Cobden made his first false move and committed his great fundamental blunder, an economical error which has become monumental.

AGRICULTURE NECESSARY TO SUPPORT OTHER INDUSTRIES

It is pointed out by anti-Free-traders that the greatest of all industries should have been carefully conserved and nourished by every conceivable means; that it is, and must be, regarded, even in Great Britain, as the primal industry; as the people's chief source of employment, the mainspring of national wealth, and the birth-place of national virility. It is held that there was not the slightest necessity to have sacrificed agriculture, or even to have subordinated it to manufacturing industries, when developing the internal resources of the country and building up the great home and foreign trade: the great land industry should have been run side by side with manufactures, both of them being interdependent, and, therefore, necessary to each other's existence. It is said that, had agriculture been

maintained as the chief industry, the curse of poverty and unemployment could not possibly have overtaken the country, because the land would have drawn so many millions away as would have left labour at a premium, instead of being, as at present, at a discount, and a drug in the market.

BRITISH SYSTEM IMPERFECT

It is, then, contended, with reasonable insistence, that this must be the case, because all civilised countries in the world—*except our own*—having arranged their economical systems on this plan with uniform success, *both in respect to labour and fiscal questions*, proves that the British system is by no means the perfect thing it is said to be by its supporters.

To give up the substance for the shadow is certainly foolish, and to yield up a valuable asset in your life's affairs without first ascertaining whether you are going to get a more valuable one in return, is not sound business, but partakes of either folly or gambling.

Free-traders urge against what they term "Protectionists" that they are narrow in their views where they should be broad and tolerant, and that they defend their system rather upon political than economical grounds. It is said that their policy is either advocated to serve some particular existing industry; to launch into existence and foster some new industry which may become a source of individual wealth—although such a policy may involve consumers and tax-payers in loss—or that it is held to be necessary on patriotic grounds so that the country may become self-supporting in the event of war. Both of these lines of defence are said by Free-traders to be based upon imperfect observation of the many circumstances surrounding this vast economical question, and that the conclusions of the "Protectionists" are consequently fallacious.

ANTI-FREE-TRADERS MISREPRESENTED

These "Protectionists," while admitting the necessity of making the country self-supporting against war, flatly deny that they defend their position on such narrow, feeble lines, and add that this mean, distorted view of their policy no more represents the broad generous sweep of their propaganda, than the single ray of sunshine that finds its way into the narrow attic of the poor seamstress represents the vast streams of light and heat poured forth with such prodigality by the sun.

To the onlooker it seems as though Free-traders committed a grave blunder in refusing to recognise the cardinal fact

that there are two sides to the great question of what is the best economical policy for Great Britain, as there are to every question in this world, yet so enamoured have they become of their own policy that they now stand charged even with dishonesty and disloyalty to their fellow-countrymen. Anti-Free-traders hold that the appalling poverty, the constant and ever-growing unemployment of the people, and the many evils which beset them, are the direct and inevitable result of running the fiscal arrangements of the country for 62 years along the lines laid down by Cobden. That great reformer's followers ignore these misfortunes as being connected with the movement with which they are inseparably associated, but their adversaries point to the indubitable fact that the widespread evils that have overtaken the British people, and which have been spared to other countries, must necessarily be an outcome of the system with which Free-traders are indissolubly bound, and which has dominated this country since 1846, for the simple reason—that *the country has known no other system.*

THE ANTI-FREE-TRADE PARTY DESCRIBED

Before dealing specifically with the views of those who are opposed to Free-trade, let it be made clear what this great party is. Free-traders dub all those who are opposed to their policy as "Protectionists," but this term is altogether too bald and incomprehensive to describe a great movement which includes all classes outside the narrow and ever decreasing circle of Free-traders. Tariff-reformers, Land-reformers, Fair-traders, Reciprocity advocates, those who favour the *lex talionis* principle in trade, the great mass of agriculturists, and that vaster mass of loyal and patriotic section of the British people who prefer to see the fiscal and economic systems of their country run along lines that would offer the freest possible facilities for the successful conduct of *all* British industries, instead of the present destructive policy which favours the few at the expense of the many, are included in this great anti-Free-trade party. Many manufacturers too, discerning that Free-trade has wrought considerable havoc with their interests, have at length joined the crusade, and as the reactionary movement is gaining strength daily in proportion to the enlightenment of the people, the near future will doubtless witness many interesting encounters between the opposing forces.

POLICY OF ANTI-FREE-TRADERS

The policy of this party is broad, generous, and comprehensive; it favours no particular industry, trade or interests, nor does it aim at serving any particular section of the community. It advocates no class legislation, nor does it profess to serve any political party. Men of every shade of political thought are included in the ranks of this great anti-Free-trade movement. Its sole object is to remove from British trade at home and abroad the many disadvantages with which the Free-trade policy has handicapped it, and which disqualifies it in competition with foreign countries; to guard and conserve British interests in every possible manner and, generally, to establish and maintain an economical system which, while not being in any way hostile to foreign States, aggressive or provocative, would essentially aim at *running all British industries for British people*.

This powerful anti-Free-trade party holds that the contentions of Free-traders are in the main fallacious because the Free-trade of 1909 is not the Free-trade dreamed of by Cobden in 1846. "*I believe that if you abolish the Corn Laws honestly, and adopt Free-trade in its simplicity, there will not be a tariff in Europe that will not be changed in less than five years to follow your example,*"* said the founder of the Free-trade movement, but as the nations have *not* come *our* way in all those years, it is reasonably contended by present day reactionists that they must have had excellent reasons for their uniform abstention from Cobden's new scheme of economics. The present social and economical conditions which obtain in every civilised country in the world, and which compare only too favourably with our own, are then held to offer both explanation and justification for the persistent refusal of foreign nations to follow Cobden's lead in embarking in new and unknown economic adventures, and out of this imbroglio naturally arises the question—how long?

INVENTION AND DISCOVERY NOT DUE TO FREE-TRADE

Meanwhile, feeling is running high, and much bitterness is engendered; albeit the question is more an economical than a political one. There is not a Free-trade contention that is not vehemently assailed by its adversaries. They indignantly deny that Free-trade has had aught to do with invention, scientific discovery, the development of technical

* Cobden's speech in the House of Commons, January 15, 1846.

and practical knowledge, the opening up of the mineral resources of the country, the progressive increase of manufactures, and the enormous expansion of home and foreign trade. Nor do they admit that the better wages, shorter hours, and higher standard of comfort, which, by the way, they contend are only enjoyed by certain sections of our workers and *not by all of them*, are a result of Free-trade, because the working classes of all "Protected" countries have experienced similar improvements in *their* social and economical conditions, while with them *all sections* have shared in the benefits.

The opening up of the railway system, the freer facilities for transport, the development of the penny post, the construction of telegraphs and the laying down of ocean cables, are, it is contended, but the natural expansion of human enterprise owing to the many civilising influences of the nineteenth century; while the mass of cheap literature, and the rapid growth of the press, are nothing but the looked-for results of a better system of education. It is pointed out here that Germany set the example of universal education nearly a hundred years ago, and that while other continental nations and the United States followed Germany's lead, Great Britain lagged behind for many years, in spite of her Free-trade.

A FUNDAMENTAL ERROR IN ECONOMICS

In regard to the enormous increase in *national* wealth, anti-Free-traders maintain that it is more individual than collective, and this fact, they contend, is proved by the widespread poverty of the British people and the vast unemployment which is known to exist; while the contention of the Free-traders that Great Britain, as practically a self-supporting country, would be incompatible with the development of British trade and manufactures, is held to be a fundamental error in economics.

Generally speaking, there is a wide cleavage between the two parties, and as the rift is more likely to increase than diminish because of the hopelessly irreconcilable nature of the differences, all that can be done meantime, and before we form our own conclusions, is to continue to set before the public further objections of the anti-Free-traders.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT ANTI-FREE-TRADERS THINK OF FREE-TRADE AND OF THE PHENOMENAL POVERTY AND GROWING UN- EMPLOYMENT

FROM the foregoing chapters it becomes clear that FREE-TRADE is responsible for the dethronement of agriculture as the Queen of Industries, and it is to Free-trade that our attention should be chiefly directed. In it are involved enormous issues; out of it have already proceeded remarkable and unlooked-for results; and surrounding it are many vital questions upon which depend the weal or the woe of the British people.

The FREE-TRADE case is, then, up for judgment; and as this particular case, like all others in this world, should be measured by the infallible standard—RESULTS—and judged solely upon the evidence before the court, and, moreover, as the time for weakness and sentiment is long past, let our judgment be free of bias and scrupulously and inflexibly JUST.

It is contended that one of the fundamental errors of Free-trade, and, indeed, the greatest, is in separating Great Britain from the concourse of nations and treating her as a separate entity requiring special economical treatment and a separate existence. This regrettable departure from a natural economical law, which applies with equal force to Great Britain as to other countries, was no doubt due to that overweening pride with which Cobden and the manufacturing-reformers of his time regarded the *puissance* of British trade. The national trade was then emerging from a period of comparative inaction, and Cobden and other smart business men saw the enormous potentialities opening up before it. The immense mineral wealth of the country, lying at that time practically untapped, the development of manufactures, the rapid construction of railways, the application of steam to ocean craft, and the freer facilities thus offered to overseas trading, together with a host of other equally important considerations, all point to the fact that the times were prolific of large material results, as well as pregnant with

tremendous possibilities; and if those who were in the thick of the fight lost somewhat of that level-headedness which, as a rule, characterises our business men, and in their arrogance, begat of their country's commercial and industrial world-supremacy, took a wrong turn, there would certainly be "extenuating circumstances" to plead.

WHAT EVERYBODY ADMITS

Everybody will admit that it was absolutely essential in the interests of the country that the freest possible scope should have been given, at the time, to the development of trade, manufactures, mining industries, progressive science, and the application of mechanical contrivances to various industries; as, indeed, to the free development of all new ideas of a nature to advance national interests and conduce to the permanent prosperity of the people. There is, however, not a single man to-day, who stands outside the ranks of the more conservative section of Free-traders, who would agree that, in the necessary accomplishment of all these desires, there was the slightest need to create for Great Britain a separate economic existence, and, in so doing, destroy the greatest of all industries—Agriculture.

This unique departure from a perfectly natural law, which, by-the-by, no nation or individual can set aside with impunity, is now regarded as the monumental error of Cobden and his followers; and although enormous loss has resulted therefrom, as will be subsequently shown, the blame for this rests, it is held, rather with those up-to-date Free-traders who, it may be for selfish motives, bolster up a system which is now known to be inimical to national interests rather than with those who, sixty-two years ago, forced upon the country a new and untried fiscal system.

RESULT OF A FUNDAMENTAL BLUNDER

Out of this great fundamental economical error has, it is contended, sprung many a minor error that has served the purpose of perpetuating the blunder. Free-trade economists, in tabulating the economical statistics of the country, commit the serious mistake of treating Great Britain's trade as a separate thing and quite apart from that of other civilised States, when, as a matter of fact, British trade, and the results thereof, belong to, and form part of, the greater World Trade which is being carried on and participated in by other nations besides our own. Trade expansion, industrial progression, the development of mineral resources, invention, scientific

development, the universal use of mechanical contrivances, the accumulation of vast wealth, the raising of the standard of comfort of the working-classes, the higher wages and shorter hours enjoyed by them, the spread of literature, the beneficent results of the civilising influence on the people of all these improved conditions, and the steady progression of national prosperity which other countries have enjoyed equally with our own, all testify to the plain fact that there *are* other nations besides Great Britain on the habitable globe, and that they too have shared in this wonderful "trade expansion" which in this country Free-traders make too much of. Then many people hold that *British* enterprise, *British* prosperity, the colossal proportion of *British* trade are always well to the front on every occasion when Free-traders trot out their hobby-horse, but that the results of *foreign* trade, of *foreign* enterprise, and the serious effects of *foreign* competition are kept too much in the background. In this it is easy to discern that Free-traders impair the usefulness of their conclusions, and so invalidate their own case.

National statistics of the kind indulged in are of little use unless they are *comparative*, and the moment British trade statistics are brought into juxtaposition with foreign trade returns of a similar nature, it becomes at once clear that in many respects British trade is *not holding its own with certain of our foreign competitors*. These are ominous words, but it is held that they are, unfortunately, only too true. Succeeding chapters will reveal the true state of affairs.

AN UGLY FEATURE IN FREE-TRADE

Another remarkably ugly feature which Free-trade opponents declare is kept well in the background by Free-trade enthusiasts, but which has grown out of, and synchronises with, the Free-trade movement, is the phenomenal pauperism of the British people, which finds no parallel in any civilised country on this planet. Pauperism that is rampant and aggressive and widespread among the people, and that has become legalised into a vast State institution demanding for its direct and indirect maintenance and support as much, or more, than the country spends upon its costly yet inefficient army, or even upon its magnificent navy, is budgeted for by the Government of the day with the same aplomb with which they ask for money for the necessary public services. So accustomed have the public become to this familiar item in the annual national estimates that not a man in ten thousand stops to ask himself if this huge tax, which amounts to the stupendous sum of £35,000,000 yearly, *is really necessary*. This question, however,

is being asked by an increasing number of people year by year, and it is being asked with increasing persistence; and when it becomes more generally known that in no country in the world—save our own—does the necessity exist for raising enormous sums annually to support a vast pauper population, those who are responsible for this phenomenal poverty must answer the question.

PAUPERISM—UNEMPLOYMENT A RESULT OF FREE-TRADE

Appalling pauperism, a mean, sordid condition for literally *millions* of our people, a condition that is totally unnecessary and therefore absolutely unjustifiable from any point of view—ethically, socially, or economically—are, it is contended, some of the results of Free-trade.

Growing UNEMPLOYMENT, that has assumed such proportions as to become one of the burning questions of the day, the bug-bear of each successive Government, a standing menace to the nation, and a source of general feeling of discontent and political unrest, is also an ugly growth that has sprung out of, and clings to, the Free-trade system with the same pertinacity that the foul sea-growths cling to the sides of a great ocean liner. Pauperism certainly existed prior to the abolition of the Corn Laws, but as it is claimed by its supporters that Free-trade was invented to, among other things, banish poverty, relieve distress, and give work to the unemployed, the fact that poverty and unemployment exist to-day as a curse to the people and a menace to the commonweal, *after sixty-two years of trial*, proves, it is said, how illusory was Cobden's promise and how unsuited was his system to the requirements of the British people.

JUSTIFICATION FOR GRAVE CHARGES

That there is justification for these grave charges seems but too true. One of the first things that strikes a foreign visitor to our country is the prevailing POVERTY, which is easily discernible in every one of our great towns and throughout the length and breadth of the land; and if this evil is so easily seen by a chance visitor, how much more apparent is it to every British subject who does not voluntarily shut his eyes to what is undoubtedly an outward and visible sign of mal-administration—somewhere? And, this being so, it is reasonably held that *something* or *somebody* must necessarily be responsible.

Without wishing to prejudice the Free-trade case, it must be admitted by every fair-minded man that the poverty of the

people of the United Kingdom is as widespread as it is phenomenal; it presents one of the most difficult social problems to the Government of the day, and its solution puzzles and confounds all the great political parties. Poverty is the fundamental basis of Social agitation, and out of it springs most of that political unrest which is the marked characteristic of the times. It breeds turmoil, discontent, and sedition, and it is the source of revolutionary propaganda. It is, in short, the most dangerous factor in the political situation of our country, and yet it is either treated with more or less indifference by each one of the political parties which in turn assumes the reins of government, or, for other reasons, it remains outside the sphere of their operations.

PHENOMENAL POVERTY

The poverty of our country is as all-embracing as the tentacles of the giant octopus, and millions of our unfortunate countrymen and women and children are caught in its embrace as the years come round; nevertheless, nothing is done, or next to nothing, to relieve the people from its deadly grip.

Poverty naturally forms the thesis of all Socialist effort, and, if in their determination to ameliorate the sad plight of the poverty-stricken masses of their fellow-countrymen they have suggested means which, in themselves, are repugnant to perhaps the majority of the British people, the blame rests rather with those who are responsible for the wrong than with those who seek to redeem it.

Speaking of the poverty of the people, one of the Socialist organs has the following:—

“To-day there are twelve millions on the verge of starvation. There are twenty millions very poor.”*

Be this as it may, there is without question sufficient poverty among the people to justify far more energetic measures in grappling with it than have hitherto been taken by any Government of modern times, and unless those who are responsible for the commonweal show a keener interest in this vitally important question, and form a truer appreciation of its magnitude and its enormous potentialities for evil than they have hitherto done, they will be but perpetuating a great wrong and inviting a social cataclysmic upheaval. Poverty has become positively aggressive, and being for ever with us it has assumed a dread haunting shape that overshadows the legislature and

* *The Clarion*, January 10, 1908.

frightens and appals the people—while it affords so wide a scope for charitable effort that philanthropists have begun to despair of ever being able to grapple with it effectually.

FUTILE PARLIAMENTARY MEASURES

Many an Act has been passed by Parliament, and many a relief measure undertaken by the multitude of small municipal authorities throughout the country, with the object of improving a position of affairs which to-day is admittedly as bad as, or even worse than, it was five, ten, or twenty years ago, but as these were of a half-hearted, tinkering nature they have been in vain. In a word, vast sums of public money have been thrown away on measures that have not proved even palliative.

Poverty has, indeed, cast a deep gloom over the whole nation, and not even our legislators and municipal councillors may hope to escape from its paralysing influence. All sections of the community are, therefore, naturally enough, interested in the question and desirous at least of studying it from a point of view that will enable them to help in its solution.

The entire question relating to the poor of this country is in a most unsatisfactory condition, and it is certain that unless the British tax-payers look at the matter from a totally different point of view from that from which they have hitherto been accustomed to regard it, and demand a complete change in the administration of the laws relating to the subject, their millions will continue to be spent annually to no purpose, save to maintain the upkeep of an enormously costly administrative staff which does no real good.

Ample justification for the most drastic change in the Poor Laws in the first place, and then in their administration, will be found in the simple fact that, in spite of the enormous amount of public money spent annually by the State in its endeavour to meet the requirements of the case, poverty still exists in a widespread and most acute form; poverty and its offspring—dull apathy, drunkenness, and that nerveless inertia which is so hard to stir.

POVERTY NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS

Poverty is no respecter of persons—it is the common lot of millions of our fellow-countrymen. It is to be found in the homes of the poorly paid clerk, the typist and dressmaker, the shop-assistant and small tradesman, as readily as in the slums of our big centres of population; while among the poor gentle-folk who quietly starve and perhaps die, some of the saddest cases of the kind are to be met with.

It is an evil which is ever growing; a curse which has fallen on the people as a deadly blight, and the evil is not to be uprooted and cast out, or the curse removed, by the adoption of ordinary methods.

We must battle with poverty as with a mortal foe, but we must realise and frankly admit that the old methods of warfare have failed, that our weapons are obsolete, our tactics faulty to a degree, and that unless we draw up a new and altogether different plan of campaign, and arm ourselves with modern and more effective weapons, we shall never carry the war to a successful issue.

But before we take the field against the foe let us ask why he is there, why Poverty exists at all, and if Poverty is really a necessary result of human life.

There is always a good reason to be found for the existence of a thing if we look deep enough; if we seek for Cause rather than for Effect. Poverty exists as an Effect, and it is because we have hitherto attempted to deal with *effects*, instead of seeking out and uprooting the *cause*, that we have signally and persistently failed.

MILLIONS SPENT ON POVERTY

Who, for example, knowing that sixteen millions of the public funds are spent by the State annually in the relief of only the most acute form of pauperism, and that still vaster sums are given every year by philanthropists and the charitably disposed (embracing all classes of the community), can say that we are right in dealing with Effects instead of Causes, *when it is seen that the people still suffer from Poverty, and the results of poverty, more acutely than ever they did?*

If, then, we regard poverty as a result of something else, and then regard that something else as a thing to be sought out and fought with, we shall, at all events, have got on the right track at last.

We may take it for granted that, as a rule, a man does not become poor because he likes it; on the contrary, he struggles against poverty with all the strenuousness he is capable of, and generally makes a good fight of it till he is fairly beaten. His most persistent foe, in nearly all cases, is want of work, and this lack of employment, he finds to his cost, is pretty general, for *the supply of labour is always greater than the demand*.

But *why* is the supply of labour always greater than the demand? Why is it that in all professions, trades, and industries, when we advertise for one man we get applications from

hundreds? Why is it that the building contractor, who puts up a notice outside his works at eight o'clock in the morning that "Hands" are wanted, replaces it by another at noon the same day, intimating "No more hands wanted"? The reply will be found in the indisputable fact that our present means of employment—our professions, trades, manufactures, and other industries—are *totally* incapable of affording full employment to those vast masses of the working population which now necessarily depend upon such sources of occupation. The labour market is, therefore, always congested and must remain so.

GLUTTED LABOUR MARKETS

The clerk, typist, dressmaker, milliner, shop-assistant, "Hands" in textile factories, navvies, and dock labourers are all subject to the pressure which congestion of labour involves; they have been sufferers from it for many years as they are suffering from it to-day; and it is absolutely certain that unless other, readier, and more stable forms of employment are found for that large section of the working community, which existing professions, trades, and manufactures cannot employ, and will not be able to employ in the future, the congestion must continue and the people must suffer.

It is affirmed by Free-trade adversaries that views such as these are held by so vast a number of people nowadays that the alarming features of the situation can no longer be hidden from the public who have hitherto regarded the phenomenal poverty of the people, and the widespread increasing unemployment of great numbers of our workers, as a simple result of an intelligible economic law, and as an inevitable consequence of human life, and, therefore, as a NECESSITY.

CHAPTER V

POVERTY NOT A NECESSITY—CONTRASTS IN HOME AND FOREIGN STATISTICS—THE PEOPLE'S ERROR AND THE PEOPLE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

THE *necessity* for poverty referred to in the preceding chapter may be put to many tests, but perhaps the most practical way of dealing with it will be to compare the poverty of Great Britain with that of other nations, because, if other countries do not recognise any *necessity* for its existence it follows that there must be something wrong with *our* administration of national affairs. This anti-Free-trade method of dealing with the case certainly has fair play and common-sense to commend it.

The poverty of the United Kingdom, with its population of about 43,000,000, costs proportionately more than it costs any other civilised country in the world.

The State spends upwards of £16,000,000 annually in relieving *only the most acute cases of distress*, apart from help of a private and personal nature which amounts to colossal proportions and which will be referred to later. Let us, however, compare our pauper expenditure with that of our near neighbours across the Channel.

France has a population of 39,000,000 and spent, in 1908, under her Pauper Act of 1905, 59,800,000 francs (£2,392,000) of State and Communal funds. Other relief of a private nature, similar to that referred to in Chapter XI—Private Charities—is also afforded, but State funds are not used for this purpose.

Germany has a population of upwards of 60,000,000. No statistics have been compiled since the year 1895, but there is very little actual pauperism outside of the capital, Berlin.

Holland, with a population of 5,591,695, spends £1,629,201 on her paupers.

Switzerland, with a population of 3,250,000, spends about £635,000.

Austria-Hungary, with a population of 46,000,000, spends about £1,156,000 on the poor of the country.

Denmark, with a population of 2,588,919, spends about £464,000.

Italy, with a population of 32,966,307, spends about £1,240,000, although, strictly speaking, there is no pauper rate and no pauperism.

Leaving the Western States of Europe and going across the Atlantic, we find that, although the United States of America have Poor Laws, they are not bothered with poverty; in fact, the whole question over there is of such insignificance as to be hardly worth recording. The expenses of the Alms-houses is given at something over 2,409,000 dollars or about £481,000 annually. The population is about 80,000,000.

FOREIGN STATES REGARD PAUPERISM AS UNNECESSARY

If we then turn to the other side of the Western world and seek for comparison in the United States of America, for example, we still fail to find anything like a parallel to our own case, or the least justification for the belief that poverty, as it exists in our country, is an inevitable result of human life, and therefore a NECESSITY. On the contrary, both in Europe and America, the general belief is that, although there is bound to be a certain proportion of necessitous people, chiefly consisting of the old and infirm, the sick and young children—orphans principally—anything like widespread poverty is an anomalous condition, and therefore *unnecessary*—an *accident*, in short.

It is interesting to note in this connection that in Holland mendicity and vagabondage are treated as a crime, and persons convicted of it can be placed in a State work establishment. The Dutch, at all events, are no believers in poverty being a *necessary result of human life*. And we notice that there is very little pauperism in those countries where mendicity and vagabondage are criminal, and treated as such!

The first great lesson to be derived from these statistics is that ours is the only country in the world which has set up an elaborate and costly system of pauper administration, whereby, by legalising unlimited pauperism, we actually increase poverty by encouraging improvidence, thriftlessness, and a careless disregard of individual responsibility. The feeling that has been engendered in a very large section of the British working classes by this legislation of wholesale pauperism is this:

“I’ll do what I can to get a living, but if I don’t succeed—well, there’s always the ‘House’ to fall back upon, which is a blessing. At any rate there’s always State aid for the asking.”

HOW BRITAIN EMASCULATES HER MANHOOD

Now, if there is anything in life calculated to rob a man of grit and backbone, of stamina, energy, and stalwart independence, to entirely deprive him of that masculine vigour which is his pride, it is the feeling that the State is always ready to dry-nurse him, to supply him with food, raiment, and light work the moment he feels inclined to accept such aid.

Such knowledge reduces a man, bit by bit, to a poor, feeble, inert creature, only fit to be cast up as a fleck of frothy scum from the sea of human workers. Men of this type, and there are plenty of them in the great army of toilers, soon fall out of the ranks and drift onward to the workhouses and casual wards, or seek outdoor relief from the many Poor Law offices scattered broadcast all over the kingdom. Thenceforth these flabby specimens of humanity fasten themselves on to these institutions and become a lifelong burden to the rate-payers and tax-payers of the country.

Then there is a great lesson to be learned from the wastrel type: your slouching, dirty, public-house-corner loafer, the frowsy tramp, professional beggar, *et hoc genus omne*. These creatures muster in their thousands; they are a curse to the tax-payer, a shame to all honest workers, and a scandal to the country.

The working man is forced to rub shoulders with the loafer daily, and he cannot escape his touch. He swells the ranks of the honest unemployed in their labour demonstrations merely for what he can get out of it, but he has no intention of doing any harder work than this. He makes a brave show in all such processions, because of his rags and tatters, and because his name is legion, but the real working man knows him to be a fraud and a sham, and would willingly rid himself of his presence if he knew how. The British working man holds in supreme contempt this despicable wastrel, and would loyally support any measures that would get rid of him.

HUMAN SCUM

These human specimens are lost to all sense of shame; they whine and cringe, or bully and bluster; they cajole and flatter, twist, turn, and dodge; they will do anything for a living, from house-to-house begging and petty theft up to highway robbery, but they will not *work*: that is the only thing they will *not* do; and yet our comprehensive and lavish system of giving away public money applies equally to this human scum as to

the deserving poor. The law is: "No man shall starve," and although this law, under proper conditions, may be merciful, just, and even a necessary one, let us, in the name of common-sense, safeguard the position by seeing that these conditions are of a nature that are at least fair and equitable to those who supply the funds—the British tax-payers—while not being hard and impossible to the poor. The present system is one-sided and unjust to the country; it enables an army of loafing vagabonds to fatten on misspent public funds; it encourages vagabondage among a certain section of the working classes, which, in this unfortunate country, finds employment hard to get and still harder to retain, and it is a disgraceful scandal to the nation.

Our present Poor Laws would be open to widespread abuse, and therefore unsuitable, even under conditions where every honest worker in the kingdom could find employment at fair wages, which would enable him to live comfortably and without fear of the future on the proceeds of honourable toil; but even under such conditions it would be found that that section of the community, which will *not* work under any circumstances, would still be able to live in idle vagabondage just as easily as it does to-day.

These Poor Laws, although they were framed in a spirit of generous philanthropy and administered in foolish indulgence, have, nevertheless, brought nothing but shame to the working classes by sapping their manhood; and gross injustice to the tax-payers, by imposing upon them heavy burdens which serve no purpose but to pamper the thriftless and encourage the worthless.

POOR LAWS—MISTAKEN GENEROSITY

Anti-Free-traders now point out that when our forefathers framed these Acts, they were full of the same Utopian ideas that filled Richard Cobden's ardent breast. They held the idea that we were to be the manufacturing lords of the earth, and that our great and ever-growing industries would find lucrative, lasting employment for all our workers. They were full of beliefs in our greatness, in the phenomenal prosperity that would attend their country; and, being full of these pleasant thoughts, they were as broad in their views, and as generous in their impulses as is a man after dinner, when he is filled with the good things of this life. But, alas! their ideals were foredoomed to failure. Had these generous legislators known that pauperism, which they had provided for with such lavish liberality, would grow into one of the biggest items of public

expenditure, the present Poor Laws would never have come into existence.

Poor Laws we want, because every great country should support its poor. But Poor Laws, like all other laws, should be drawn up with the nicest consideration for every section of the people. Let our Poor Laws be comprehensive and even generous, but let them provide only for *the support of the aged, infirm, and deserving, those who have been rendered poor by no fault of their own*. Let us provide liberally for this class of paupers, but here let our provision cease.

It may be said, "This scheme of yours is as Utopian as the one you condemn, because it presupposes a condition of employment for all which does not exist." Precisely! this is exactly what it *does* presuppose, replies the anti-Free-trader. Castles are always built first in imagination before they can assume material form in stone and wood and iron, and every condition in the material economy of human life is but the crystallisation of human thought. You must first of all *presuppose* a condition, otherwise it is not likely to come into existence. To presuppose is often to create, and this is exactly what must be done here. The condition whereunder the people would find relief from all their trouble *must be created*; and the way to create it is to think about it.

THE PEOPLE TO THE RESCUE

The people, and the people alone, can encompass these things if they choose to do so, but they must first of all recognise past errors and go back on their tracks. They must admit that their mandate to Parliament of sixty years ago, although considered the best at the time, has turned out badly; that while building up their great manufacturing industry there was no need to have sacrificed their still greater agricultural industry. This is the great cardinal fact, and the only one they need to recognise, and once the recognition be made, realisation of all that it means to them and theirs will soon do the rest. Once public opinion in favour of working our land for all it is worth—as all other nations do—be set in that direction, land reform of a rational character will soon follow, and once this be brought about, the waste—*yet splendidly fertile*—lands of Great Britain will soon be converted into highly tilled soil that will produce food for, and give employment to, *millions of our fellow-countrymen and countrywomen*.

THE PEOPLE'S ERROR

But the people must recognise their responsibilities, and accept them in a frank, manly manner. They must realise that *they* are responsible for the present highly unsatisfactory condition the country is in owing to their wrong mandate of "lang syne," and then repair their error by giving a right one. The PEOPLE claim to possess the chief electoral power in the country, and so they do. Good! Let them exercise it. This power was wrongly exercised in the days of Bright, Cobden, and that fervid band of manufacturer-reformers who persuaded the people to adopt certain fiscal and other measures which particularly favoured their own industries, and which are responsible for the present unenviable state of affairs. Let them now exercise that same power in directions that will relieve the intolerable strain and give their fellow-countrymen prosperity and peace. This can be done, and easily done, if that vast section of the electorate body which is widespread among the masses of the people of this country could but be made to see it. The power is in their hands if they choose to exercise it. Then let that other vast section of the body electoral to be found in the great middle-classes do the rest. They and the working-class section form between them practically all the elective power in this country; but any one who takes the trouble to study the attitude assumed by these puissant bodies will find that their power is potential rather than active.

DISSIPATION OF WORKING-CLASS ELECTORAL POWER

The working-class sections dissipate a good deal of their power in organising strikes, fighting capital, brooding over what they are pleased to term class-tyranny, siding with those who foment political agitation and social unrest, and in doing much that is foolish and unprofitable, instead of devoting the great political power, which they undoubtedly possess, in righting that which is wrong in the *economic* conditions of the country. Unless they are prepared to do this, all the invectives and fierce denunciations of this, that, and the other which the more revolutionary sections of the great working-class electoral body love to indulge in will not help them or relieve the situation one whit. Their great trades unions offer ample evidence of their splendid organising powers once their individual interests are touched; let them, then, exercise that

power now. Let them frankly admit that, as trades, manufacturing industries, professions, and every other form of occupation combined have utterly failed to result in aught else but widespread and ever-growing unemployment and consequent destitution, in ever-congested labour markets, in uneven distribution of wealth, and generally in a state of affairs which is as inimical to the workers as it is disgraceful to the country, they should now have recourse to the only remaining industry—the LAND.

ELEVENTH-HOUR REPENTANCE A NECESSITY

If, at this eleventh hour, they prefer to cling to their old phantasms that the situation will be relieved by manufactures, by LABOUR fighting CAPITAL, by joining the Socialist ranks, or by the hundred and one dodges and resources that have hitherto utterly failed them, they may do so. This is a free age, and the working-classes are free agents as other men are; but they must accept the consequences of their folly as others have to do in this world.

The situation can be relieved, as is clearly shown in other chapters of this book, but it can *never* be relieved either by the foolishly hostile attitude assumed by a large section of the working-classes towards existing conditions, by antagonising Capital and Labour, by class conflict, or by other violent measures.

MIDDLE-CLASS APATHY

Referring for a moment to the great middle-class section of the body electorate, it is held that they have, by their apathy and indifference, developed into a really negligible quantity in the political economy of their country. They grumble and growl and write irascible letters to the newspapers from time to time; they are full of complaints against the injustice of certain taxes, the non-necessity for others, the ever-growing burden of pauperism and the rest of it: but there it ends. The working-classes *do* unite and organise; they have their trades unions and other institutions; they have certain definite aims and a political policy, albeit much of it is misdirected: but the middle-classes do absolutely nothing but quibble. Overt action in regard to organising some system of co-operation to express their political views, and to impress them clearly and unmistakably on the minds of those who represent them in Parliament, is lacking, and the enormous political power which they really possess remains a potentiality rather than a living, moving force.

The present unhealthy social and economic condition of the body politic is as much the result of disobeying Nature's laws as are the thousand and one diseases generated in the *corpus humanum* by similar disobedience. Nature is a beneficent mother, but she brooks no disobedience, and he who overrides her laws and sets them at naught must of necessity suffer.

DISOBEDIENCE OF NATURAL LAWS

Nature intended that man should cultivate the soil. The British people sixty years ago threw aside their agricultural industry and took to other pursuits. In this they disobeyed one of Nature's greatest laws and—they suffer.

This is the simple fact underlying the entire situation, and in it alone will be found the solution of the riddle and the key to the position.

The British people have it in their power to right a self-inflicted wrong; but if they will not do so—well, they must continue to bear the burden.

Meanwhile, all classes share in the suffering, and herein lies an injustice so palpable and widespread as to need no demonstrating here. Every rate-payer and tax-payer in the country has been fully cognisant of it for years, and has chafed under the soreness which this shameful and yet altogether unnecessary burden causes. But nothing of any *practical* value has been done. The recent victory of Reform over Progressive Socialism in the London County Council, in other municipal councils, and amongst Poor Law Guardians, may check reckless expenditure in certain directions, and thus give some relief; but the great scandal of POOR LAW EXPENDITURE has not been touched, and millions of the taxpayers' money are, in the meantime, being squandered annually.

Why is it, in spite of the fact that the Government and all classes of the community are fully aware of this gross scandal, that it is allowed to go on year after year, and decade after decade, unchanged? Why is it that each successive Government finds the necessity of providing in their budget the prodigious sums that are spent annually on pauperism?

ONLY ONE ANSWER

There is only one reply: Because in sacrificing its greatest industry—agriculture—to a selfish fiscal system, the greatest trading and manufacturing country in the world, with its mighty Empire stretching to the confines of the earth, and thus possessing all the inherent properties of phenomenal wealth

and general prosperity, has been compelled to recognise the necessity for poverty and the legalisation of pauperism as a national institution.

Anti-Free-traders then naturally ask the question: "Why should we alone of all civilised nations in the world be in this inglorious position?" And their answer is: "Because in our unwisdom we listened to the false doctrines of those who were only capable of looking at a great fiscal question from one narrow point of view, instead of studying it from the many sides which so broad a question always presents."

Every question in this world has more than one side to it, and because we, in our blind credulity, obstinately refused to acknowledge this cardinal fact, we have wrought incalculable injury to the whole nation. The masses and the classes, employer and employed, capital and labour, Radical and Conservative, are all equally involved in the general loss, and none have escaped the blighting influence of our folly.

They then add: "Let us recognise the fact that we *have* erred; that in our desire to improve the position of the people we have cast away the substance for the shadow; that certain alterations are essential in our fiscal arrangements, and we shall soon retrieve our position and build upon sure foundations a great structure of national prosperity. If we neglect to do this, poverty and distress will increase, and our ruin as a great nation will surely follow."

CHAPTER VI

MORE ANTI-FREE-TRADE OBJECTIONS—LOSS OF AGRICULTURAL WEALTH—SHRINKAGE IN TAXABLE AREA—HEAVIER BURDENS ON TAX-PAYERS

ANTI-FREE-TRADERS further maintain that the Free-trade system is such a record of losses all along the line that it is difficult to plumb the profundity of their depth. For example, they point to the enormous capital loss which agriculture has sustained during the last thirty or forty years as affording another instance of the destructive nature of the Free-trade policy. They point out that in this busy workaday existence of ours there is a kind of ceaseless barter going on, and each one of us should be careful in ascertaining, beforehand, that we shall get fair value in exchange for that which we give up. But in spite of this we often neglect these little points on which so much depends, and then we suffer in mind, body, or estate. The same precaution should be taken by nations as by individuals.

DID WE COUNT THE COST ?

When we were offered a change in our fiscal system over half a century ago—a change which was to do such great and wonderful things for us as a people, and among others, convert Great Britain into a land flowing with plenty of everything and lots to spare—did we count the cost ? Did we sit in judgment on the case and calmly sift the evidence for and against, and then proceed to pass a well-considered decree ; or did we too readily believe what we were told by one party to the suit, and then pass a hasty, ill-considered, *ex-parte* judgment ? These are questions we might reasonably put to ourselves.

That we took the last-mentioned course is unfortunately too well shown by the many evils which have grown out of our actions ; evils which, at this late period, are so widespread among the people as to demand our best and immediate consideration and decisive action.

In the latter part of the first half of the nineteenth century

there was, it is contended, perhaps as much need for reform in the fiscal administration of the country as there is to-day ; few of us, therefore, would care to carp and cavil at honest attempts to relieve a strained position ; but as the best and surest way to arrive at the true value of a thing is to measure it by the amount of success it yields, let us test what our forefathers did for the country by this standard.

THE FAILURE OF COBDEN'S SCHEME

To prove the utter and complete failure of the scheme thrust upon us over half a century ago, we should calmly view the position from all points, without prejudice and without political bias, because *if we attempt to adjudicate on this momentous question with a mind tainted by the faintest tinge of partisanship we shall surely fail.*

There is no need for elaborate statistical tables or reference to official documents to prove our case here, for the facts are patent to all ; and these facts, unpalatable though they must be to those who uphold in its entirety our present fiscal system, declare the utter worthlessness of a policy which was going to give the people of this country full work and general prosperity, good times all round, and employment for everybody.

As a matter of fact, the scheme was so badly devised, so unsuited to the fiscal policy of Europe, and therefore quite impracticable, and altogether so unhealthy, that it carried with it, from the period of its inception, the germs of its own destruction. How could any scheme of the kind succeed that aimed at the destruction of a GREAT NATIONAL INDUSTRY, an industry which is as essential to the people's existence as water is to the thirsty soil ? But *experimentia docet.*

There is, it is pointed out, ample evidence on every side that there is not work enough for the people ; that distress and poverty abound, and that the standard of living among a large section of the working-classes is far too low ; far below what it need be—a standard of living with not a ray of hope or comfort in it, and of so mean a nature as to be a positive injustice.

In every trade, profession, and industry the supply of labour *always largely exceeds the demand*, and this means general *precariousness* of employment, a low wage standard, and certainly a case of NO WORK for many.

INCREASED COST OF LIVING

Owing to the increased cost of living, the uncertainty of employment, and the domestic necessity of “making both ends

meet," women have entered the labour market as competitors in many branches of employment which till quite recently were exclusively reserved for men. Recognising that the employment of women is a necessary part of the economic system of the country, and that it is sure to increase rather than decrease, it is therefore essential that the field of labour should be generally enlarged so as to prevent that overcrowding which rendered labour conditions so hard in the past, which does so at present, and which will make them absolutely hopeless in the future.

It then becomes clear that other fields of labour must be sought out, and as the land is the only industry not worked "for all it is worth," the land should be re-established as the *chief* industry. Give every industrious tiller of the soil the opportunity, under equitable provisions, of acquiring proprietary rights, and with reasonable assistance from the State in certain directions, the land would not only be capable of giving profitable employment to the *whole of our English workers*, but would, at the same time, relieve the congested labour conditions of all other industries and professions, and result generally in those obvious advantages which equilibrium of supply and demand in the labour market involves.

It is also clear that the establishment of a balance of power between employer and employed means, among other things, greater independence of labour, full *permanent* work, better wages, and, generally speaking, a higher standard of comfort for workers.

AGRICULTURE AND OTHER INDUSTRIES SHOULD CO-OPERATE

We want co-operation between agriculture and manufactures.

Mr. Ernest Williams, in one of his works on the subject, "Our National Peril," says—

"Agriculture is not only the greatest wealth-producer amongst all the departments of industry, but the manufacturing industries themselves depend upon it. . . . Agriculture and manufactures, living side by side, support each other even physically as well as economically, as the most elementary chemistry will explain to you; and when they are wedded in the same community, wealth and economic well-being are produced and conserved to an extent which is not possible when they are divorced."

The unfortunate policy that the country was committed to by a band of fervid but misguided people, a generation or more ago, has, it is said, as surely encompassed the destruction of the

people's great source of wealth—agriculture—as the Zealots of Jerusalem, nearly nineteen hundred years ago, brought about the destruction of their country.

Among other things, anti-Free-traders point to the tremendous loss of agricultural wealth as affording one of many examples of the utter inimicality of Free-trade to national interests. Here is an estimate from the pen of one of our great statisticians—

Diminution in Owners' capital	£1,000,000,000
„ „ Farmers' „	100,000,000
„ „ Farmers' profits	500,000,000
	<hr/>
	£1,600,000,000*

Appalling though this loss is, there has also been far-reaching loss, which can only be guessed but hardly estimated, to all who depended upon agriculture for their support—agricultural implement makers, mechanics, labourers, harness makers, carpenters, blacksmiths, masons, all of whom have had to leave the rural districts for the urban, and helped to swell the already overcrowded ranks of labour in our centres of population.

The State then comes in as a great loser, whose tale of losses is counted by many millions annually, and the ultimate result of it all is that the entire burden of our folly or madness falls, as such burdens always must fall, *on the people*—the working-classes and the tax-payers.

It is obvious that if a man loses a portion of his capital, his income shrinks generally in exact proportion to the shrinkage of capital, or, to put it in a more concrete form, it is clear that a man trading with £10,000 is sure to derive a larger income from that amount of capital, other things being equal, than he would from £5,000.

AGRICULTURAL WEALTH—APPALLING LOSSES

The loss of £1,100,000,000 (*eleven hundred millions sterling*) in landowners' and farming capital means, at only 4 per cent. profit, an annual loss of income amounting to the colossal sum of £44,000,000 (*forty-four millions sterling*) to landlords and farmers alone. The loss of £500,000,000 in farmers' profits is little short of a national disaster.

The next loss is to the State Exchequer, or in other words—the tax-payers. We all know that if a man be taxed on his

* Sir (then Mr.) Inglis Palgrave (in a paper read before the Royal Statistical Society in February, 1905).

net income the State revenue decreases in the exact proportion to the decreased income. If landlords' and farmers' income has decreased to the extent of £44,000,000 annually, it is clear that a great shrinkage in the taxable area of the country must have taken place, while the Government revenue from income-tax must also have decreased with it. This means, at one shilling in the pound, an annual loss to the State of £2,200,000 (*two millions two hundred thousand pounds sterling*).

It has already been pointed out that the first shock of all this falls on the people, who feel it in the form of shortage of work, reduction of wages, a lowering of the standard of comfort, followed by distress and increasing poverty. It then falls upon the tax-payer who is and must be ultimately responsible for every penny lost by mistakes in fiscal policy or inept imperial or municipal administration.

SHRINKAGE OF TAXABLE AREA

Some writers who defend the present system maintain that if the taxable area has shrunk in one direction, the general area is larger than it was by several hundreds of millions. This is true, but the argument applies to every country in Europe, because of the growth of the population, the increase of wealth, and the natural expansion of the taxable area; but this, as is pointed out by anti-Free-traders, is an altogether fortuitous circumstance which cannot be used to serve the purposes of Free-trade, since it applies equally to Protected countries. It has been shown elsewhere that Germany, for example, which has *not* sacrificed her agriculture, has, during a similar period, increased her taxable area by 71 per cent., while Great Britain has only increased hers by 27 per cent.

The working-classes bear the first shock of this terrible reaction; afterwards it reaches the tax-payer, and ultimately assumes the proportions of an intolerable burden. The tax-payer, in many instances, displays phenomenal ignorance of the question, and is such an anomaly that he does not really know that what the State spends comes out of his pocket. How often it is said, "Oh, it does not matter, the State will have to shell out"! as though the State derived its income from sources altogether apart from the direct and indirect taxation of the people.

THE PATIENT TAX-PAYER

He is, however, forced to realise at last that this attitude of indifference has induced the building up of a system of

expenditure in respect to Poor Law administration, and similar subjects, so lavish and wasteful, and withal so useless and ineffectual, as to amount to a public scandal and a positive injustice to every tax-payer in the kingdom.

He is also forced to recognise that his apathy in regard to fiscal affairs has resulted in maladministration to such an extent as to cause widespread loss to State, land-owners, and farmers, as well as poverty and misery to the working-classes; and it has cast upon the tax-paying community far heavier burdens than there is the least necessity for, burdens of which all are heartily sick and tired, because they know, from bitter everyday experience, that all effort is futile, and that these burdens are borne without affording the least real relief to those for whose benefit they were imposed.

He sees that the whole question is becoming more difficult and menacing each year, that the poverty of the people has become so prevalent as to demand more and more attention and support from the State and the charitable public, and that it has, in fact, become the most important question of the day. It looms largely in the Government programme of work in every session; it forms the basis of all Socialist agitation and enterprise; it is a favourite war-cry of all the people's "champions," and he is so accustomed to its presence that he has come to regard it as an integral part of the social fabric, *a necessary result of human life*.

POVERTY, THE HERITAGE OF TAX-PAYERS

Looked at, then, from any point of view, the destruction of agriculture by Cobden's unfortunate policy has wrought incalculable harm all round—to landlords, farmers, the State, and the people; and Poverty reigns where Prosperity should rule. Poverty, indeed, has been with us for so long that we have come to regard it as a "heritage of the ages"; it always has been and always must be, and there is no use in trying to get away from the fact. Poverty, we say, is just one of the effects of human existence, as wealth is another; it always has existed and always *will* exist, and there is really no use talking about it.

"No use talking about it!" exclaim Free-trade opponents. "Is there not?" Nevertheless, *let* us talk about it in order to see if what we say in this respect is not one of those human fallacies which are as plentiful as blackberries in autumn, and only require a little pricking to prove what airy bubbles they are in reality. We think there is no use talking about the question of poverty, because it is a common belief that it

cannot be done away with; we think like this, in other words, "because everybody thinks so."

For thousands of years everybody believed that the earth was the centre of the universe, and that the sun revolved round this planet until Copernicus and Galileo proved to us that the very opposite was the case.

Who believes to-day in this fallacy?

These are but a few of the many objections of the great anti-Free-trade party to the present fiscal and agricultural conditions, which might be multiplied *ad infinitum* did space permit.

CHAPTER VII

WHAT ONLOOKERS THINK OF FREE-TRADE

HAVING devoted much space to the consideration of this most important question from the point of view of both Free-traders and anti-Free-traders, it should now be examined from the standpoint of those who prefer to assume a perfectly independent attitude in their treatment of the subject.

The question, however, is of such magnitude and covers so much of the broad field of Sociology that it is impossible to do more than deal briefly with a few of the many important considerations involved.

To that great mass of British subjects who have hitherto posed as spectators in the vast national auditorium, one of the most striking parts of the play is its inconsistencies and paradoxes. On the one hand there is colossal individual wealth, and on the other—collective poverty. There is a vast home and foreign trade, and yet widespread—unemployment. There is a huge area of the finest and most productive agricultural land in the world and no—agriculture. There floats upon the broad bosom of the world's waters the mightiest fleet of merchant vessels which a single nation has ever collected together under one flag, and yet, with immense numbers of our people seeking work up and down the country, the crews are composed largely of—foreigners. With our marvellous and almost unique mechanical and manufacturing skill—which amounts really to genius—coupled with our rich and practically inexhaustible mineral wealth, which together offer tremendous possibilities of local production and home employment, we nevertheless encourage foreigners to make for us that which we could make better for ourselves, and so—force our own people to seek work in other lands. With numbers of able men of good position and independent means, men of noble purpose and full of patriotism who would serve their country loyally, either on the municipal councils or in the Imperial Parliament, the “seats of the mighty” are, with some notable exceptions, mostly filled

by place-hunting and time-serving political hucksters, whose everyday acts proclaim them to be degenerate sons of a great nation.

INDEPENDENT OPINION

These and many other incongruities which mark the course of national affairs lead this vast body of independent men, who have hitherto taken no part in the business of the country—save to vote for the party to which they incline, and pay their rates and taxes—to conclude that there is so much that is wrong in the administration of public matters as to demand searching inquiry and drastic changes.

The present conditions of widespread and ever-increasing unemployment, prevalent destitution, the need of enormous State and private charities—among many other evidences of national failure—offer direct proof that whatever else the present fiscal system may have done for the country, it has not prevented these misfortunes befalling the people; and it may, therefore, be safely asserted that, if after sixty years, this system of working our fiscal arrangements so signally fails, it is not a good, practical, up-to-date and everyday system. It may be an excellent system for merchants, shippers, bankers, manufacturers, and many others who *individually* profit by it, but the evidences of poverty, distress, unemployment, and that political unrest which is always born of a people's degradation, and never of their *elevation*, prove that it has operated to the utter undoing of the masses.

PARLIAMENTARY WINDBAGS

Then, they are wholly dissatisfied and alarmed by that wordy warfare which is for ever raging round every national question which comes up before Parliament, resulting in nothing but *copia verborum*. Session after session passes by, and yet the country is not the richer in wise statutes, nor the people benefited by remedial legislation. Each political party plays that game which best serves its own interests.

The Tories don't want drastic Land Reform, because it would interfere with *their* interests, while the Radicals want it but are afraid to act up to their convictions for fear of offending the "aristocracy" of their own party, as also for other reasons. The Labour Party want everything to come *their* way, and their entire policy is characterised by pre-eminent selfishness. Labour must be free, dominant, supreme, and every interest must be subordinated to that end. Socialists and Irish Nationalists are

simply Irreconcilables, and nothing more need be said about them.

Up and down the line there is no loophole of escape; political parties, Governments, political economists, have all got their private axes to grind, and, between them all, national affairs suffer. Party and policy rule the situation. Every man, before he enters Parliament, must first learn some political creed, and that creed binds him, body and soul, to his Party. Independence is lost; initiative is dead; he may have ideas, but he never voices them, albeit in this he is of use to his Party: he falls into what somebody has called "the general mush of concession," and his usefulness to his country is lost.

NO HOPE FROM "BUSINESS" MEN

Turning to our business men, there seems little help in that direction.

The prevailing idea is that if we hold out a helping hand to our industries, assisting one of them in this direction and another in that, and generally put them in a position to fight on more equal terms with their foreign rivals by setting them free of those shackles with which they are so sorely hampered to-day, we shall overcome all difficulties; but in this we are mistaken.

By altering our laws so as to give the country a wise, well-considered fiscal system, we shall, without doubt, do some good, but beyond that—nothing. Our industries may absorb a few thousand more "hands," wages may even slightly rise; in certain industrial sections there may be less uncertainty of employment and less distress; but the main question—the poverty of the general body of the people—will remain untouched.

It is not so much the thousands that we want to assist as the *millions*.

The surplus thousands may be absorbed by manufactures, but the surplus millions only by the LAND.

This is the great central fact around which the entire question rotates; it is the keystone of the arch, the pivot on which the fulcrum works; and yet, strangely enough, it is persistently left out as a factor of no importance at all, by all the Governments of the past, by publicists, speakers, and by most of the Press. Study The National Statute Book for years past, and see how barren it is of effort to relieve the situation by means of the land, save in one or two attempts to afford partial relief. Listen to the rhetoric of platform orators, and

mark how carefully they avoid all reference to the land as a factor in the most burning social question of the day.

It is patent enough to the poorest intelligence that there is something fundamentally wrong with the system upon which our social and economic arrangements work.

It is seen that, in spite of all effort on the part of Government, of all social and industrial effort on the part of the people, of the enormous contributions from the public purse, and of the still greater aid from private sources, poverty of an alarming type still falls upon the people as a curse; that work is difficult to get and hard to retain, and that the entire social and economic condition of the people is deplorable.

It is seen that in Germany and other European States there is very little poverty, that work is abundant, wages good, and the general condition of the people, in these respects at least, far better than with us.

It is noticeable that this difference is due to the fact, and to one fact only, that in all these countries the LAND is the staple industry, and all others are subordinate to it.

INTOLERABLE STRAIN OF PRESENT SITUATION

It is patent to all men that the intolerable strain of the present situation can never be relieved by perpetuating the wrong-headed policy of the last fifty years or so.

Seven hundred and twenty millions sterling in poor-rates have been *raised* since the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 came into operation, and who shall say that the country is better for these squandered millions, or that the position of the people has improved? *

Will Government give tax-payers a substantial guarantee that the three to four hundred millions that they will exact from them during the *next* ten years will do more good than the two hundred and ninety-six millions which they have paid into the State coffers during the *last* ten years?

Can Government give the country any assurance, worth the paper it is written on, that Bills of the type of their *Scottish Small Holdings Bill*, or their *Small Holdings Bill for England*, would really and permanently relieve the poverty of the people, generally improve the position, and reduce, even by a trifle, the heavy burden of poor-rates?

Is there a single statesman in Parliament, or out of it, who, calmly and dispassionately viewing the position and nicely

* Mr. John Burns stated in the House of Commons on September 29, 1909, that £597,000,000 had actually been *spent* on poor relief during the last seventy-five years.

balancing in his far-seeing mind the many impossibilities of the case, can conscientiously assure us that under the existing conditions of our economic administration and the peculiarly enervating effect on the people of our Poor Laws, there is the very faintest chance of permanently improving the position so as to find work for all, and do away with the necessity for poverty ?

SEVENTY YEARS' BITTER EXPERIENCE

After the bitter experience of the last seventy years, and the many sad manifestations of condign failure which are, alas, too abundantly spread around us to-day, is there a man in the kingdom who, apart from party bias and political influence, can honestly say that, if the poor-rates be increased from £35,000,000 annually to £45,000,000, these added ten millions will do aught else than temporarily relieve an ever-present and *ever-growing* demand on the tax-payers' pockets ?

The Government's own figures show how poverty and pauperism have flourished under State protection, and how, in spite of enormous trade expansion and industrial progress and of the vast accumulation of individual wealth, it has grown into an insatiable monster which administrative effort cannot appease, nor national sacrifice satisfy. Governments have done their best under an unhealthy system which engenders its own agents of destruction, while tax-payers have flung their millions into these fathomless quicksands of pauperism without avail and without hope.

In order that the position may be the better understood, some statistics bearing on the question are appended for easy reference—*

Year.	Population.	Amount raised in Poor Rates.	Incidence per Head of the Population.	
		£	s.	d.
1834	24,028,584	7,000,000	5	9
1895-96	39,221,109	26,331,700	13	5
1900-01	41,154,646	30,126,236	14	8½
1904-05	42,793,272	34,926,280	16	2¾
1905-06	43,221,145	37,170,449	17	2
1906-07	43,661,092	37,530,473	17	2

THE POOR LAW INCUBUS

These figures will show that even in the dark days of 1834, that dreary time when poverty was considered so excessive as

* Cd. 4258, Parliamentary Blue Book, 1908.

to demand a change in our Corn Laws, only about seven millions were raised in poor-rates, while the incidence per head of population was only 5s. 9d.

In 1895-96 the amount raised was over twenty-six millions, and the incidence per head rose to 13s. 5d.; in 1901 it was found necessary to raise as much as thirty millions with an incidence of 14s. 8d.; in 1904-5 nearly thirty-five millions were required, with a still higher charge per head of population of 16s. 2d.; while in 1907 thirty-seven and a half millions were raised, with a charge per head of population of 17s. 2d.

And it is ever thus: growing pauperism, increased unemployment, rising taxes, and no hope at the end of it all.

HOW WE HAVE BLUNDERED

That we have gravely blundered in the management of our affairs there is no doubt. That we are perpetuating the blunder by continuing to hold on to a policy that has failed, is also clear. That the strain will continue, the condition of the people remain unimproved, and the tax-payers' millions be squandered in vain, becomes a matter of certainty. Two things may intervene to avert this undesirable and monstrously unjust state of affairs—a recognition by Parliament of the necessities of the situation, and a combination of the two great dominating parties to relieve the position, or a general awakening of the great Middle-Classes party to a becoming sense of their own power and responsibilities and to the necessity of combined action in self-defence.

That the country will witness a coalition of political parties in the House, or out of it, *so that the people's interests might be served*, is as unlikely as that oil will mingle with water; and any hope in that direction would, therefore, be futile.

MIDDLE-CLASSES TO THE RESCUE

That this vast Middle-Classes party may at length assert itself is not so improbable. It has, it is true, hitherto been wedged between the eternally opposed forces of Aristocracy and Democracy, and has thus been a negligible quantity in national politics, but there are many indications to-day of its awakening; and when this immense body changes its potentialities into a mighty moving force, who shall say what may not happen?

This Middle-Classes party has hitherto been a scattered mass, lacking coherence, and as voiceless in the councils of State as a deaf mute; but bind the scattered parts together by affinity of interests, weld them into a whole by the mutual instinct of self-defence; drill, discipline, and train them to combined action in

Imperial interests, and many national evils will soon disappear, and many a stain on the escutcheon of national honour will soon be wiped away.

They must, however, learn the maxim, "The surest help comes from within," because no aid can come to them from without. Many modern Conservatives are as averse to real reform that would benefit the people as were the old-fashioned Tories. The Radicals' fiscal legislation is notoriously predacious, and directed entirely against the great Middle-Classes. Labourites and Socialists hold the *bourgeoisie* in supreme contempt, and would, if they had the power, render them as extinct as the Dodo; and so—the *Middle-Classes must learn to help themselves, as the Labourites and Socialists have done, by their strong right arms and stout hearts.*

USELESSNESS OF POLEMICS IN PRACTICAL INDUSTRY

Then, once more, this great body of men who discern grave dangers in existing conditions to national integrity, recognise the senselessness of the mass of polemics that are hurled at the very simple question of how to cultivate our waste fields and make the most of our industries. These rudimentary questions, which were settled by our Continental neighbours long ago, and which never give their "professors" a moment's thought to-day, are treated by many people in this country as though they constituted in themselves some new discovery in the broad fields of science. In regard to agriculture, all the civilised States of the world, and the uncivilised as well, long ago discovered the golden rule that it is better to cultivate your fields than to allow them to lie waste and unproductive, and they simply cultivated them. In regard to trade and industries, they discovered another golden rule, namely, that these should be conducted along lines that would insure the best possible national results, and also conduce to the comfort, wealth, and prosperity of the people generally. This is practically a universal *law* with all the chief nations of the world.

With us it is different. The subject of whether we should or should not cultivate our fields is a controversial question. The result is, we do *not* cultivate them, and therefore there is enormous loss. The question as to how to run our trades and industries is also a matter for endless controversy; the result being enormous pauper taxation, unemployment, unfair foreign competition, immense poverty, discontent, political unrest, and a general state of *exactly what we deserve for our folly!*

HOW "CHEAPNESS" MAY PROVE A CURSE

Another alarming feature in our present-day system, which strikes this great body of independent onlookers, is the reckless manner in which every interest in the kingdom is sacrificed to CHEAPNESS. That every reasonable care should be taken by the national administration to secure the best possible terms all round in regard to the price of commodities, so that *all* classes of the people may be equally benefited, is quite sound; but if cheapness, *per se*, be the prime motive of those who set up this procedure, then it stands to reason that in securing certain low-priced goods many other interests would have to be sacrificed that would conceivably outweigh the single advantage of CHEAPNESS.

A cheap loaf, for example, might not, it is held, be the boon and blessing to *all* classes of the community that Free-traders would have the people believe, because in securing it you must necessarily deprive a number of people of the means of buying a loaf at all, cheap or dear. In legislating for this "cheap loaf," *so called*, it is known that agriculture had to be sacrificed, and, in sacrificing agriculture, millions of people—and here it should be understood that *millions* were included in the ruin and not *thousands*—were thrown out of employment and—*had to leave the country to avoid starvation.*

EXHAUSTING EMIGRATION

If a man has to leave his native land to avoid starvation because the laws of his country deprive him of his occupation, it follows that those laws are either unwise or unjust, or both. If the people have to leave their native land in their *millions and tens of millions*, it follows that those laws are not only unwise and unjust, but highly dangerous to the stability of the nation, in that they constitute an exhausting drain on the manhood of the country which is depleting it of its virile strength. Not less than 3,205,897 of the best, hardiest, and most enterprising of our people emigrated from these shores during the fifteen years 1893–1907,* while upwards of 14,000,000 souls found the necessity of fleeing from their mother-country since Free-trade set up its system, because of the unwisdom and injustice of these measures.

Now it follows in natural sequence that, if national affairs

* "Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom, 1893–1907" (Parliamentary Blue Book).

are conducted on the principle of securing some advantages for certain sections of the people at the expense of certain other sections, class legislation must be resorted to and the interests of the commonwealth endangered.

This reckless method of dealing with grave political matters has, it is contended, resulted in the worst possible effects on the national life, which are only too manifest in every town and village in the country ; and whatever else may be claimed for Free-trade, this single fact in itself constitutes so serious a charge as to condemn it on the grounds of its lacking in those essentials which every national system of economics must possess before it can secure the best possible results to *all* classes of the community.

ONLOOKERS DENY ADVANTAGES CLAIMED BY FREE-TRADERS

Looked at from the point of view of public utility, this vast band of independent spectators see no more reason to invest the Free-trade system with those wonderful enlightening and civilising influences claimed for it by Free-traders than do the more direct antagonists of the movement—the Tariff-reformers. That enormous trade expansion, the development of manufacturing resources, the building of railways, telegraphs, and the opening up of all means of internal and foreign communication, have taken place during the last fifty years or so, there is no question. The cheapening of certain commodities, the spread of education, the freedom of the Press, the enormous increase in cheap literature, the extension of the cheap postal system, and a host of other benefits too numerous to mention, are also freely admitted ; but to affirm that these are the results of Free-trade is to advance a proposition which is demonstrable only by the measure of its own absurdity. That food and certain other commodities are cheaper than they were is due almost entirely to the general application of steam to seagoing craft, the enormous extension of the railway system in every country of the world, the tremendous facilities offered throughout the world for the rapid and cheap handling and transport of goods, and the universal application of mechanical contrivances to manufactures. Wheat, for instance, can now be carried from the United States to Liverpool three or four times as cheaply as it could be conveyed seventy years ago from London to Liverpool.

BENEFITS SHARED EQUALLY BY ALL NATIONS

The benefits owing to this universal progressive development in every department of economics have been, and are being, shared alike by all civilised countries, most of which have raised up for themselves high walls of "Protection"; and to elaim that Great Britain obtains her share through, and by the means of, "Free-trade" is to affirm that which is not only absurd but untrue.

CHAPTER VIII

WHAT ONLOOKERS THINK OF FREE-TRADE—*continued*

ONE of the strongest cards played by anti-Free-traders in this game of national economics, and one which is bound to impress the onlooker, is the frankness with which they appeal to the people. "Don't take what we say as gospel truth, but judge for yourselves. If the results of Free-trade are as beneficial as Free-traders declare them to be, the people should be enjoying a time of plenty and gladness. Let your judgment be formed only upon the basis of practical illustrations as afforded by *existing* conditions," say they, "and if you find these to be all that you desire, all that you deem to be necessary in the interests of the people, then continue your Free-trade system by all means, for our efforts will have been made in vain."

To those among us who are really desirous of putting the case to such reasonable tests, there is unfortunately too much evidence forthcoming of widespread havoc—a ruined land industry and all that it involves, a terribly congested labour market, lost manufacturing industries, dearth of employment, and vast masses of unemployed, exhaustion of national energy by the constant drain of compulsory emigration, and a mass of pauperism the like of which is not known in any civilised country in the world.

INDUSTRIAL HUMILIATION

The incident of the 3000 English dockers at Hamburg in the spring of 1907 shows the ease with which foreign markets can be supplied with the overplus of British labour, while the discharge of artisans from the Woolwich Arsenal about the same period, and the immediate recourse to emigration which followed, proves how precarious employment is in this country, and how difficult it is to get fresh work.

Here is what the *Daily Mail* said on the subject of the Hamburg strike on April 13, 1907—

“Whatever may be the ultimate result, the struggle incidentally will have the effect of enabling some 3000 English professors of the theoretical cheap loaf to earn their daily bread for a few days longer. I am becoming accustomed to the spectacle of the English *Arbeitwillige* (glad of a job) gladly picking up the scattered crumbs of Germany’s industrial prosperity, but still it seems to me a strange plight for Englishmen to be reduced to. . . . The men were working willingly. They had, for once in a way, a job which English industrial conditions failed to provide, and one could only feel glad to see them still cheerfully employed. But quite half the crates and packing-cases of German manufactured goods they were cheerfully loading for transport over sea bore in stencilled black letters the familiar legend, ‘Made in Germany,’ which indicated that they were destined either for England or for English Colonies. Displaced English labour reduced to getting a living by helping to displace English manufactures.”

What a depth of bitter humiliation and cruel irony there is for the English people in that last sentence! *Displaced English labour reduced to getting a living by helping to displace English manufactures.* And, alas! it is true. Not only is it true, but if Germany, or other countries which have built up a solid wall of hostile tariffs against our manufactures, wanted English labour by *tens of thousands*, they would get it with the same ease with which Hamburg got her 3000.

Let us now find out what this means, for we are face to face with a strangely anomalous position. On the one hand, we have the Government and Free-traders pointing to the expansion of national trade as indicating national prosperity; and on the other, the Tariff-reformers pointing to congested labour markets, the masses of unemployed, the precariousness of employment, lost industries, and the phenomenal pauperism of the country (compared with every other civilised country in the world), as indicating commercial atrophy and national decline.

This sums up, approximately enough, the exact position of the two great contending political parties of the State, and we will now settle the matter by the sure test of practical common-sense.

In order that the writer may have an active and perfectly unfettered mind on this subject, as also on other matters affecting the commonweal, he has, for some years past, cut himself adrift from every political party in the kingdom because he realised the utter impossibility of striking a course along which he, among others, might travel with advantage, so long as he found himself pulled this way or that by some political influence or other.

If the people of this country would but follow the same path, social and economic affairs would soon alter for the better.

NECESSITY FOR POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE

The names of political parties are rapidly becoming meaningless terms to a vast number of people nowadays, and the sooner they declare that Liberals, Liberal-Unionists or Radicals, Nationalists or Socialists are nothing to them so long as they get a Government that will work in their true interests, the better it will be for all classes.

The country requires a Government that will remove once and for all those evils from which it is suffering to-day, and which good government in the past would have entirely obviated; and it is becoming clearer, day by day, that the present system of party politics is extremely unlikely to bring about these changes which are essential in the public interests.

Here is presented a strange spectacle—the people of the greatest trading and manufacturing country in the world gladly accepting employment, even for a few weeks, from our greatest commercial and industrial European rival, because they cannot find work in their own country. Couple this fact with others of a like nature—widespread distress, the congested state of labour in all professions, trades, and industries; the existence of phenomenal pauperism and the necessity of legalising it as a State institution; the stupendous sums spent on pauper relief each year; the cruel drain on the virile energy of the nation by the constant and ever-increasing stream of emigration—and the very natural and common-sense conclusion is arrived at that the social and economic condition of the people *is as bad as it can be*: that our fiscal administration is fatally wrong, and that unless we alter and amend it, irrespective of the feelings of this political party or that, we shall simply bring about the disintegration of the Empire.

INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS ATTACKED

Political parties and political economy enthusiasts will, no doubt, say that this method of reasoning is faulty and the conclusions wrong. The individual reply to this, of every man who writes himself "Independent," is obviously: "*My* social and economic position has been rudely assailed; *my* interests are at stake here; *my* pocket has suffered; and in spite of what these gentlemen tell me I am going to settle this matter at last *in my own way*. I will take my own course in spite of the fact that our import and export trade is apparently in a

flourishing condition, because I find that this one thing alone does not, and cannot, constitute in itself all the many factors that are essential to ultimate success and prosperity. I find that the wonderful cry of the party in power, that great trade expansion means NATIONAL PROSPERITY, is as false and misleading and as fatal to the real interests of the PEOPLE, and therefore to *my* interests, as such political cries and catchwords usually are.

"I find that trade expansion, despite the wonderful things claimed for it, means prosperity to a comparatively small number of manufacturers and commercial men, and to the "aristocracy" of industrial labour, but the same dead level of *non-prosperity for the masses*; the same sordid, narrow, mean, half-fed, struggling existence for millions of workers, and therefore for myself; and my faith in the *universal* benefits that are said to come out of the great trade expansion is dead; killed by the falseness of its own doctrine.

"I find that the great party war-cry of the CHEAP LOAF, for example, is as false as it is destructive, because, despite its attractiveness, it has done no more for the PEOPLE than has any other political catchword. I look around me on all sides, and instead of finding thriving, prosperous conditions and a fair average standard of material comfort among the masses, I find, on the contrary, there are excessive poverty and a general average of wretchedness, denoting a precariousness of life which has no parallel in any other country.

THE "CHEAP LOAF" CRY A MOCKERY

"The scheme which was going to bring about NATIONAL prosperity and which adopted the CHEAP LOAF cry as its watchword, has, in reality, robbed the people of the means of earning the so-called *cheap loaf*, and the cry is nothing but a mockery and a delusion.

"What is the use of promising a man cheap bread if you deprive him of the means of earning money to buy it with? If the promise were worth anything, would hundreds of thousands of our workers be on the brink of starvation to-day? Would work be so difficult to get and so hard to retain?

"Would the great UNEMPLOYED question be so prominent, pauperism so rampant, poor-rates so high, excessive emigration so necessary, and widespread despondency among our working classes so pronounced, if there were anything of value in this often used and much-vaunted cry?"

Then he would proceed—

"I find among my fellow-countrymen an amount of political

unrest which should not be there, and when I come to determine what this means, I find it springs out of discontent at the unfavourable, and yet unnecessary, condition which the vast army of British workers are undoubtedly in to-day. I find this discontent in many instances has assumed the form of passive and active hostility, not only to the governing body, but to the entire administration of the country; while it also evinces deadly antagonism to all existing social and economic conditions which would at once be swept away if the malcontents ever gained the ascendancy."

PRESENT UNSATISFACTORY CONDITIONS QUITE AVOIDABLE

"I find that every one of the undesirable conditions which have brought about this undisguised hostility to existing forms of national administration is quite unnecessary, and that they could have been easily avoided had the political parties of the country not betrayed the people by constantly putting Party interests before National needs, and so sacrificing the people's good to party gain."

"I lastly find that so long as this terribly unjust and undoubtedly suicidal system obtains, so long will the country's legislators—irrespective of whichever party they may claim to belong—merit the just execration of the people."

Such replies as these will be found in the mouth of every person in this country, be he working man or tax-payer, who has thought out this matter in a rational manner.

When we look about and carefully note the sad state to which our people have been reduced since they commenced to follow after these wretched phantasms of political catchwords, we wonder if there be a man among us who, in his heart, really believes that the *cheap loaf*, for example, is anything more than a party cry raised for the purpose of catching the voter?

Does our great array of workers who, although in employment to-day, may—owing to the uncertainties which enshroud the labour market question—be out of work to-morrow, really believe in the efficacy of this political war-cry?

British workmen of late years have taken a keen interest in national politics, and quite right too, for they have a considerable stake in the commonwealth, and it is fitting that they should look after their own interests. They are stalwart fighters and loyal partisans, and constitute in themselves a powerful division of the great political army; but quite apart from the faintest trace of political bias can they honestly say, that even if the cheap loaf cry were capable of conferring on the people the *one benefit of a cheap loaf, it has not, at the same*

time, deprived them of quite a number of economic advantages which enormously outweigh the single benefit of cheap bread?

This purpose cannot be served better than by referring here to the Report of what is called the "Gainsborough Commission." *

It will be borne in mind that a "Commission" of working men was formed in 1906 at Gainsborough to study the conditions of labour prevailing in German workshops and the social status of German work-people.

Six men were elected by ballot from among their co-workers. Their names are: T. W. Mottershall, J. Mann, G. W. Brown, G. Proctor, H. Beilby, and H. Calvert, and they were employed by Messrs. Marshall, Sons and Co., Rose Bros., and Edlington and Co. (all of Gainsborough).

Some of them were recognised Free-traders. The object of the journey was *entirely unpolitical*, it being intended, mainly, that certain fallacies prevailing in England, concerning the rate of wages and mode of life of German workmen, should be rectified.

RIVAL LABOUR CONDITIONS IN GERMANY

The working men were conducted through Germany by Mr. J. L. Bashford, the editor of the book, "Life and Labour in Germany," which contained an account of their investigations.

The necessary facilities for carrying out such a task were most readily given by the Secretary of State of the German Imperial Home Office, by the Prussian Minister of Trade and Commerce, by a number of manufacturers and others connected with industry, and by the organising authorities of the Social Democratic Party.

The members of the Commission represented more than one phase of political thought, hence the reports deal with the various questions from several points of view.

Throughout the tour the men applied themselves assiduously to their arduous task, and were determined to carry out their inquiry in as thorough a manner as was possible in the short time at their disposal, namely, six weeks.

On their return to England each delegate handed to Mr. Bashford a written statement of the impression made upon him in Germany—a faithful reproduction of his own views on all he saw and heard—extracts from which are appended.

* "Life and Labour in Germany" (Reports of the Gainsborough Commission).

Mr. Proctor said—

“We found that Germany raised tariffs against every other country, and that France, America, Russia, South America, Spain, Italy, Austria, and other countries in Europe, raised tariffs against her; but this did not stop the expansion of her trade with other countries.”

Mr. Beilby wrote—

“During the whole six weeks I was in Germany I only came across one case of drunkenness. This state of temperance must, I am convinced, be an important factor in the prosperity of the country.”

Mr. Brown stated—

“The German workman seems to be more sober and steady than our own work-people, and he dresses well. When he gets employment, he seems to like to stop where he is, instead of always changing.”

Mr. Mann wrote—

“I went to Germany with an open mind with regard to tariff reform, but had not gone far before I found that something would have to be done to protect our industry at home. It is reasonable to suppose that when the people of England get thoroughly awakened to the losses naturally incurred by them in consequence of the high tariffs imposed by foreign countries, they will ultimately come to the conclusion that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, and will ask that foreigners shall pay for the use of the British market just as foreigners make British manufacturers, through their high tariffs, pay for the use of their markets.”

Mr. Calvert said—

NO LACK OF EMPLOYMENT IN GERMANY

“It cannot be asserted with any degree of truth that the social conditions of the German workman, taken generally, suffer by comparison with our own, nor can we say that at present there is a lack of employment.

“In the elementary schools there is no raggedness, nor sign of starvation, as we were led to suppose we should see. This is not to be wondered at, when we remember that the Empire is at present subject to a wave of general prosperity.”

Mr. Mottershall said—

“A citizen of the German Empire is accepted by the State as a responsibility, and is taken in hand from childhood, with a view of

obtaining from such citizen the best results possible for the benefit of the Empire as a whole.

"It is reasonable to suppose that when the English people awake to the losses actually incurred by them in consequence of the high tariffs imposed by Germany and other foreign countries, that it is necessary for the protection of the English workmen, that the foreigners should pay for the use of the English market."

Some extracts from the general body of the Report bear with singular significance on the case we are considering.

COMPARATIVE POVERTY OF ENGLAND AND GERMANY

Crefeld, the seat of the German velvet and silk industry, was the first great town visited by the Commission, and what the delegates found there may be taken as the keynote of the entire question respecting the COMPARATIVE POVERTY of Great Britain and Germany.

"There is no penury to be seen in the streets of Crefeld," said the delegates on visiting that place, and they saw no reason to change this note during their extended tour through industrial Germany.

"The general condition of the working classes in the industrial town of Crefeld impressed us. Wherever we came into contact with them we were struck by their genial character, general physical health, cheerfulness of demeanour and freshness about their work. No sign of extreme poverty meets the eye; the problem of the unemployed obviously does not weigh upon the municipal authorities at the present juncture."

In Rheinhausen and Essen, Bechum, Dortmund; in Selingen, Dusseldorf, Cologne, Frankfort-on-Maine; in Bavaria and Saxony; in Leipzig, Hamburg, Berlin, the same experiences are met with.

WIDESPREAD POVERTY DOES NOT EXIST IN GERMANY

"Widespread, pinching poverty, in the worst sense of the word, does not exist under the present conditions of the labour market. There is a demand for labour, not a scarcity; the working classes here are receiving wages which, even if not quite up to our British standard, are not illiberal, and are certainly above the standard we were led to expect they were before we left England."

"The question of the unemployed does not exist here."

"The men in this neighbourhood earn good wages, so that it is not necessary for the women to go out to work."

"We could, however, see no trace of want. There is no lack of employment, and all the works here are fully occupied."

“It cannot be said that the municipality is troubled here with an ‘Unemployed’ question on a large scale.”

These few extracts sufficiently emphasise the startling fact that poverty, as we know it in this country, is practically unknown in the German Empire.

Another phase of the question which this very practical and intensely interesting Report invests with remarkable significance—the prosperity of the German working classes, as evidenced by the State Savings Banks—is dealt with in an extract from the Report, showing what the German work-people have been able to do towards making provision for the future—

ENORMOUS SAVINGS OF GERMAN WORK-PEOPLE

“The statistics of the Prussian Savings Banks, just published, bear out all that we have been able to notice concerning the improvement in the condition of the working classes. The amount of deposits almost doubled between 1894 and 1904. In 1894 they amounted to 4,000.67 millions of marks (£196,111,275), in 1904, to 7,761.93 millions (£380,485,300). The total amount in the whole of the German Empire of the deposits lying in the savings banks, is said to be about £598,000,000.”

Similar statistics for the United Kingdom provide the following figures:—

	1894	1904
Post Office Savings Banks*. . .	£89,266,006	£148,339,354
Trustee Savings Bank . . .	43,474,904	52,280,861
	<hr/> £132,740,910	<hr/> £200,620,215

These figures show that for every head of the population in Germany there is a sum of £10 12s. 2d. in the savings banks while for the United Kingdom there is but £4 15s. 7d., or less than one-half.

While in Germany also the deposits of the working-classes had about doubled in the *ten years ending 1904, they had only increased in this country by fifty-one per cent. in the same period.*

In this commercial world we generally measure a man's prosperity by his bank balance, and if we apply this practical standard to the working-classes of Great Britain and Germany, we shall find that our own people suffer considerably by the contrast. It supplies a scathing condemnation of the economic and fiscal system, for it proves its utter unsuitability to the present needs of the country, while it serves no purpose but to

* Savings Banks only have been taken in both countries.

spread wealth and prosperity among foreign nations at the expense of our own countrymen. We do not grudge foreign peoples that measure of success and prosperity which the wiser fiscal laws of their country enable them to enjoy, but we bitterly resent the continuance of inept fiscal laws in our own country, which serve only to limit the success of the British people and deprive them of that prosperity in which it is their right to participate.

The consideration of this part of the question might be suitably closed by the following extract from the Report:—

GERMANY'S PROSPERITY SYNCHRONISES WITH PROTECTION

“Whilst proceeding from town to town in this busy and prosperous district of the German Empire, we have been forced to face the fact that it has been during the period following upon the introduction of protection duties by Prince Bismarck, in 1879, that Germany has ceased to be poor and has become well-to-do; that her work-people have received a large increase in wages; that the general social condition of the latter has improved; that Germany's industry has developed; that she has succeeded in extending her foreign trade and in acquiring ready markets for her continuously developing industry.

“We showed in our report about Essen, that in that district wages had increased by 61 per cent. since 1871, and by 267 per cent. as compared with what they were seventy years ago.”

It is, of course, impossible to do justice in this brief chapter to so vast a question as is involved in the consideration of international fiscal laws, but this one example will at least serve to show that widespread pauperism, with vast masses on the verge of poverty, general unemployment and the necessity for constant emigration, do *not* obtain in Germany.

On the contrary, it conclusively proves that poverty—as we know it—is unknown there, that labourers are scarce, work plentiful, and wages good, while there is general prosperity among the working-classes and no need for emigration.

Whatever else this may indicate, one fact stands out with remarkable clearness, and that is—if our political parties had not sacrificed the commonweal to their own narrow, sordid interests, the people of England would to-day be in the same enviable condition as their German *confrères*.

CHAPTER IX

THE PAUPER QUESTION IN ENGLAND AND IN GERMANY : A COMPARISON—FREE-TRADE ECONOMISTS FAIL TO EXPLAIN CAUSE OF INCREASING DESTITUTION

OTHER evidence of the failure of the Free-trade system may be found in comparing the nature and extent of our pauper establishments with those of Germany, for example.

This is what the "Gainsborough Commission" says about the German poorhouses and their inmates—

"As regards the workhouse, we have in vain looked for one ; and in very deed the ' House ' plays no great rôle in these parts."

"In this connection it may be briefly noted that the workhouse in Germany is an institution of a penal nature under the supervision of the police, to be distinguished from the poorhouse or the shelter for the homeless."

"The poorhouse, too, is intended for old and infirm persons, rather than for those that are able-bodied."

"Further, there are no over-filled workhouses here, for there are not even any workhouses to fill with able-bodied men and women. The poorhouses and homes for the sick and aged poor in Germany are for those that are disabled and unfit for work ; the workhouse, or German Arbeitshaus, is for the vagrant and the outcast, who will not work, and is, therefore, condemned to a life of correction."

Speaking of the Berlin night refuges, which are distinct from our workhouses, the Commission says—

"The inmates of these refuges are divided into two classes. One class consists of those who constantly make use of them ; the other of those who are forced to do so by temporary circumstances. The former consists of individuals who never seem to care to look out for regular occupation.

"If it is discovered that they have no inclination to work, they are handed over to the police and sent to a house of correction."

NO PAUPERISM IN GERMANY

These extracts, although brief, are really a summary of the impressions of the six members of the Commission in respect to the German "Pauper" question. There is admittedly a certain number of destitute people in Germany who have to be provided for by the various municipal bodies, and there are poor in every country in the world; but pauperism, as we have it, legalised into a State institution, exacting from the pockets of the tax-payers the enormous sum of upwards of £34,000,000 annually in POOR RATES, £16,000,000 of which are actually spent each year in maintaining the most aggressive forms of pauperism, is nothing but a monstrous growth on the civilisation of a great country and a standing reproach to our legislature.

Anti-Free-traders call attention to these evils, and many others from which the body politic are suffering, as remedial, but add—

"If the people of this country really want to rid themselves of this incubus and establish those conditions which would enable them to make the most of their trades, industries, and internal resources and ensure a fair amount of collective prosperity instead of vast individual wealth, they must take a more intelligent interest in the question."

It is declared by many writers and speakers that widespread pauperism is unnecessary, that poverty is avoidable, and reasonable prosperity is within reach of all; but if a thing is worth having it is worth working for, worth fighting for even, and the people of this country must really arouse themselves to the necessities of the situation.

By their apathy and indifference, but chiefly through their ignorance, they have, in truth, divested themselves of all real political power and have handed it over to almost any smart politician, who, for the time being, caught their fancy with some attractive political catchword; but this happy-go-lucky method of dealing with grave political questions, which affect their individual lives and incomes, must be abandoned if they are really desirous of getting the best results for themselves out of the commonwealth.

Politics, like most other things in this world, are capable of being used to one's own advantage or disadvantage, according to the way we look at the matter, and if we are foolish enough to hand over our chances to the first unscrupulous speculator who happens to come along, and we lose all our political capital, we must accept the results of our folly and indifference.

DISSIPATION OF VALUABLE POLITICAL POWER

The British people have all the political power necessary to ensure work for all as well as national *prosperity*, but they have hitherto regarded that power so lightly as to hand it over to a host of tricky politicians who have utterly wasted it in the senseless strife of party warfare, instead of conserving and using it for the public good.

A more forcible illustration of this fact could not possibly be found than in the Report of this self-constituted Commission of working-men—

"As regards the workhouse, we have in vain looked for one; and in very deed the 'House' plays no great rôle in these parts," said this small band of working-men who travelled through many parts of the German Empire with their eyes very widely open to evidences of poverty and unemployment.

*"Widespread, pinching poverty, in the worst sense of the word, does not exist under the present conditions of the labour market." **

"The question of the unemployed does not exist here." †

"We could, however, see no trace of want. There is no lack of employment, and all the works here are fully occupied." ‡

Indeed, the Report shows that there is in Germany no such poverty as we know it; no workhouses as we have them, scattered over the length and breadth of the land; no such unemployment as we have it, causing demonstrations, discontent, political unrest, loss to the commonwealth, and standing forth as a menace to the peace of the nation: *and yet all this is easily avoidable*, as the evidence of the times conclusively proves.

"Poverty and pauperism, my dear sir," say some people, "are the necessary outcome of human life, and there's no use trying to get away from the fact."

Then, in regard to the land, they say, "Everybody knows that agriculture doesn't pay, and you'll be an uncommonly clever man if you can make people believe otherwise."

"Do you mean to tell me, if there is money in the land, that it wouldn't have been worked for all it's worth long ago, or that Government wouldn't have made the most of it?"

"Don't you believe it, my dear fellow. Agriculture's as dead as a kippered herring, and, take my word for it, there's nothing in it."

* "Life and Labour in Germany," Report III. pp. 23, 24.

† *Ibid.*, p. 29.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

THE PLATITUDES OF THE PUBLIC

These are the sort of platitudes one hears constantly in the mouths of men who really believe what they say because they have been born and bred in a country which encourages poverty and institutes a huge system of pauperism, and which, two generations ago, threw overboard its agriculture and became entirely dependent upon its trades and manufactures. Briefly, the people of England are so accustomed to rub shoulders with paupers that they see nothing anomalous in their existence. They are also so accustomed to look to foreign countries for four-fifths of their wheat and flour, and a vast quantity of their other food-stuffs besides, that they hardly regard their own land as a factor in the situation at all; and, therefore, when a man comes along and tells them this land of theirs *is* a factor, by far the most important one in the entire social and economic conditions of their country, and that it is more intimately woven into the very fibres of their own lives than any other factor in this world, they can hardly be brought to realise the truth. When, however, the people of this country can grasp these living truths, the destruction of that insensate party warfare and political trickery, which has brought incalculable harm to the country, will commence.

It is pointed out nowadays by many writers who prefer to determine such matters, as we are considering, by the aid of the practical manifestations afforded by the actual conditions under which the people live rather than by the light of "economic science," that some professors of economics seem to be more jealous of the dogmas of their particular beliefs than mindful of the people's real interests.

ECONOMIC PLATITUDES

One writer, in defending the present fiscal system of the country, pointed to "the enormous advantage of fifty years of Free-trade imports, as manifested in the prosperity of the country and in our high standard of living," in order to prove that it is the best for the people. The *people*, on the other hand, who rightly prefer to reduce this question to concrete examples and apply them to their individual lives, take quite a different view. They very naturally point, in the first place, to ever-present unemployment, to increasing destitution and growing pauperism; to the pressing necessity of enormous State and private charity; to social unrest and political agitation; to the growth of Socialism and of revolutionary doctrines

which threaten to uproot and destroy all existing social and economic conditions, as a *result* of the present fiscal or economical system.

Then they absolutely deny that "the prosperity of the country" and "our high standard of living" applies to them. They admit enormous national wealth, but they say it is *individual* rather than *collective*; it is in the hands of the few and not of the many, and, this being so, it becomes startlingly obvious that the present system under which the business of the country is carried on, while yielding golden results to a few favoured individuals, keeps the great masses of the people in a mean condition of semi-destitution, out of which grows all that is undesirable in the national life and all that is dangerous to national interests.

Whatever else may be deduced from this reasoning, one supreme fact stands out prominently, and that is, Economics is not an *Exact* science, and, therefore, it has no well-defined, immutable laws by which you can shape and guide the economical requirements of a people. In economics you may theorise and deal in mighty abstract problems to your heart's content, but once you split the science up into a number of concrete examples, and attempt to apply them to the individual needs of the people, you find they are totally unsuited to each man's domestic requirements.

ECONOMICS FAIL TO EXPLAIN THE SITUATION

This country is full of paupers, with almshouses, unions, relieving officers, and a multitude of State and private institutions to deal with the heavy and ever-growing burden of poverty, and Germany is not—nor is any country in Europe in such an unenviable condition. Why is this? Economists, in dealing with the matter, generally touch with a light hand all those parts of the vast question which impinge on increasing unemployment, growing destitution, and phenomenal pauperism, because they find that economic science offers no solution of the problem. How can it? How can the cold dicta of science satisfy a people when they deprive them of employment and, as a result, of the first necessary of life—food. Bread will fill a man's stomach and satisfy his hunger, but science will not; and it is here that political economy fails. The people ask for employment; for a reasonable measure of prosperity; for immunity from that terrible precariousness of life which treads on the heels of so many millions of our fellow-countrymen, constantly whispering into their ears the message of Poverty which is following close in their wake. They ask that they

should be relieved from this haunting shape ; and "economists" reply by pointing to trade expansion and the wealth of the country as vindicating the truth of political science and in proof of the unreasonableness of the people's demand. The people ask for bread, and they got a stone.

All this, and much more besides, is, as anti-Free-traders insist, ever in evidence in favour of sharp drastic reforms in the system which has produced results so disastrous to the people, and of bringing every available acre in the United Kingdom under the highest possible form of cultivation. It is pointed out that instead of progress we get reaction, while the reactionists are ever ready with numerous plausible arguments showing that the unfortunate position which the country has drifted into is due to every conceivable cause other than those which are known to be responsible for it. There are, however, signs of a great awakening, and it is to be earnestly hoped that the people will be aroused to the dangers which threaten them, and to a realisation of their own wrongs, sooner than the reactionaries think.

CHAPTER X

PROBLEM FOR THE BRITISH TAX-PAYERS—PAUPERISM UNNECESSARY—WILL THEY CONTINUE TO SUPPORT IT?—HOW TO DEAL WITH VAGABONDAGE

WHILE the social and economic troubles of the British people offer overwhelming evidence of social and economic maladministration resulting more from the unsuitableness of the Free-trade system than anything else, anti-Free-traders contend that one of the most practical, up-to-date ways of dealing with this big question of the poverty of the British people, among others, is to ask the British tax-payer whether he would prefer his money being wasted in bolstering up national pauperism or usefully spent in developing national industries?

This, at first sight, seems a ridiculous question to ask, but there is more in it than meets the eye.

The British tax-payer has really a choice between pauperism and prosperity, but he must look at the whole question from quite a different standpoint from that from which he has hitherto been in the habit of viewing it.

So long as he regards the poverty of the people, as he knows it to-day, and the host of paupers bred therefrom, as a *necessary* outcome of economic "*laws*," so long will the civil administration of the day call upon him to hand over the £35,000,000 annually, which it costs to support and maintain this belief; but the moment he realises that he has been throwing his money away on false ideas, and that he has really done more harm than good by his misplaced lavishness, the necessity for raising this colossal sum, at least for that purpose, will cease.

Reduced to its proper denomination, all this poor relief, whether by State aid or from public or private sources, is nothing but a STUPENDOUS CHARITY, and the moment we begin dispensing *charities* we must "go slow," or we shall do more harm than good.

MISPLACED CHARITY

In private life the common experience is, the moment you establish a reputation for philanthropy, you are "got at" by men and women of all sorts and conditions, and, despite every possible precaution, you are deceived in hundreds of cases. There is a veritable host of people, of both sexes, always on the look-out for a "soft job," and this is certain, that so long as widespread, misplaced State and private philanthropy exist, so long will this array of loafers, tramps, and ne'er-do-weels, this human scum, that batten on the poor-rates like leeches, and wax fat on the silly credulity of the charitably disposed, grow and multiply.

There is no getting away from this fact, and it applies equally to *all* charities, whether private, public, or State.

Before we finally decide what we, as tax-payers, are to do in this matter, let us see if our millions have really done any good to the cause to which we have so liberally contributed for the last fifty years or more; and as this thing, like everything else in life, should be measured by *results*, let us apply that infallible standard to it.

ENORMOUS PAUPER TAXATION

Appended are some figures showing the total sum expended on paupers in Great Britain and the cost per head for several periods from 1865 to 1906, compiled from the Reports of the Royal Commission on Depression of Trade, and those of the Local Government Boards for England and Wales and Scotland—

ENGLAND AND WALES

Year.	Amount Expended. Annual Average of.	Amount per Head of Paupers. Annual Average of.		
		£	s.	d.
1865-69	6,967,096	7	4	10
1880-84	8,221,092	10	8	11
1900	11,567,649	14	12	0
1904	13,369,494	15	19	2
1905	13,851,981	15	13	3
1906	14,035,888	15	12	6

SCOTLAND

Year.	Amount Expended. Annual Average of.	Amount per Head of Paupers. Annual Average of.		
	£	£	s.	d.
1865-69	832,702	6	7	1
1880-84	895,961	8	18	8
1900	1,109,619	11	4	6
1904	1,300,743	12	8	0
1905	1,402,354	12	19	2
1906	1,406,489	12	16	10

If there is anything in this world calculated to arouse British tax-payers to a sense of their own peril and to a realisation of the cruel wrong they have suffered for long weary years from this pauper yoke, it is the fact which is here disclosed.

Not only has the cost of each pauper in England and Wales risen from £7 4s. 10d. in 1865-69 to £15 12s. 6d. in 1906, or considerably more than doubled, and will increase as much in the future as it has in the past, but the most galling and humiliating feature of this wretched business is the consciousness that every penny of the hundreds of millions that have been wrung from rate-payers has been spent in vain. The greedy pauper maw is always wide open to swallow up the hard earnings of many a poor rate-payer, who can hardly support himself, and that the latter should be compelled to contribute yearly to support this foul growth on our civilisation is nothing but a monstrous injustice.

Another alarming feature that must be added to this tale of wrong-headed administration is the significant and ever-growing increase in the number of able-bodied paupers who prey upon the easily rendered millions of the complaisant British tax-payer.

INCREASE OF ABLE-BODIED PAUPERS

Here is an extract from the *Daily Express* of May 28, 1907—

“And here let me point to an alarming feature in this expansion of organised pauperism. It is the increase of the able-bodied pauper. He and she are thronging into the workhouses in ever-increasing numbers, for while the paupers who are described as temporarily disabled have increased 28·6 per cent., those who are described as being actually in good health have increased 49·6 per cent. in number. Their own temporary illness or accident has brought less

than half of the whole to the workhouse, and the illness of members of their family, and drink, idleness, and want of work have reduced the rest to pauperism. What an illustration of the need for thrift!"

So far as we have gone, the results are significantly disappointing, but let us carry our investigation further.

It is easy enough to give, and give lavishly, when Governments find the British public so yielding; but to give judiciously, to give with wisdom, and in a manner that will help a man to become prosperous and not pauperise him, is quite another matter.

Mr. Andrew Carnegie, in returning thanks for the Freedom of Abergavenny, conferred on him on May 31, 1907, said: "The true sense of money is to help those who help themselves." And we may depend upon it that that shrewd millionaire knew what he was talking about when he gave utterance to that pithy sentence.

HELP THE POOR, NOT INJURE THEM.

If it is necessary to call upon the British tax-payers for £35,000,000 annually, of which about £16,000,000 are spent to support their needy compatriots, let us use that colossal sum in a way that will *help* the people and not injure them.

The writer of a letter which appeared in the *Daily Express*, on May 28, 1907, over the signature of "B," said—

"If, however, the object of all sane citizens is not to pauperise, then it follows that poor relief must not be a system of largesse, for largesse inevitably converts the merely poor into the pauper pure and simple. On the other hand, it is a national question, and not a question for the individual. The State provides against destitution—and the Poor Laws are really laws for the destitute—mainly in self-defence and for its own purposes. It follows that it is not to the advantage of the State that this relief should be easy to get or pleasant to retain, and that in any case the relief should itself be as far as possible a remedial process.

"As a matter of fact, however, the present system is going all in the opposite direction, and just in the proportion in which it goes in this opposite direction, so does the pauperising of the people proceed.

"The vast sums of money now being expended help the respectable poor but little; they are squandered by various bodies of bumbledom in fostering and encouraging thriftlessness, idleness, dissoluteness. Public money, hard-earned and often ill-spared, is thrown broad-cast over those whom drink or laziness, or the neglect of those legally liable to maintain them—and capable of maintaining them—have rendered destitute. This money is not spent; it is wasted. And it is being wasted yearly by extravagant and

irresponsible persons—for the boards of guardians spend practically all the money devoted to indoor and outdoor relief—in ever-increasing quantities, and with the deplorable result of an ever-increasing body of pauperised people. It is high time to call a halt to this waste of public money, and to the futile folly of gilding and stereotyping the pauper.”

The same journal which, by-the-by, deserves the grateful thanks of the tax-payers for keeping the scandals touching the doings of certain poor law guardians prominently before the public, had the following references to the reckless squandering of public funds:—

“PLEASURES FOR PAUPERS”

“The inmates of Romford Workhouse are to be entertained on various Sunday evenings during the summer to music by the Beacontree Heath band, and they will be permitted to promenade the grounds during the performance of the programme.”*

The same paper for June 4 says—

“LUXURY FOR PAUPERS”

“The Risbridge (Suffolk) Guardians, having received offers of old potatoes at £3 15s. per ton, and New Jersey potatoes at 10s. 9d. per hundredweight, accepted the latter for the consumption of the paupers.”

The same edition of the above paper also contains the following:—

“WORKHOUSE BATHS AT £14 EACH”

ARCHITECT’S REMARKABLE ADMISSIONS

MANY PROFITS

“Mr. Albert E. Gough, architect of the Hammersmith Workhouse, made some astounding admissions at the resumed Local Government Board inquiry yesterday, concerning the allegations of extravagance, which have been levelled against the Guardians.

“He confessed that he had not placed the plans of the alterations and additions before the Guardians before proceeding with the work. He took a free hand in the matter.

“With reference to the £836 spent on the opening ceremony, he said the amount was dealt with in his certificate, as had been done ‘hundreds and hundreds of times.’

“‘As a result of dealing with it in that way,’ said the Inspector,

* *Daily Express*, May 31, 1907.

'the builder gets 10 per cent. commission, the quantity surveyor 2½, and you 4 per cent., making 16½ per cent. in all?'

"'Yes, sir,' Mr. Gough replied. 'I see the point, but I never took that view before.'

"'How came you, as an architect and a man of position, to pass an account of £836 for the opening ceremony, and issue your certificate?' Mr. Robb asked. 'It is the usual thing.'

"THE USUAL THING.

"'Is it the usual thing to hoodwink the auditor?'

"'There was no hoodwinking.'

"'What possible means has the Local Government Board auditor of going behind your certificate and ascertaining the real nature of the transaction?' 'I see it now.'

"'If there were any hoodwinking of the Local Government Board auditor, the Guardians were privy to it?' 'I suppose so.'

"'Another item referred to was fifty-nine porcelain baths at £14 each, exclusive of profit, carriage and fixing. They were chosen by a committee of the Guardians.'

"'Could you not get a suitable bath of enamel at £7?' Mr. Robb asked. 'Yes, but enamel wears off.'

"'But doesn't porcelain split?' 'Not the best porcelain.'

"'And nothing but the best porcelain is suitable for the lucky inhabitants of Hammersmith Workhouse?' Mr. Robb retorted. 'You paid three times as much for baths for the paupers as the small householder, the man who pays for the paupers, can afford to spend on a bath for himself.'"

RESULT OF WASTE

The result of this cruel waste of public money is that in spite of a reduction in the expenses of the Hammersmith Borough Council of one penny in the pound, they have been compelled to add *fourpence in the pound* to the rates, which means a net loss of *fivepence in the pound* to the rate-payers.

Here is what a London paper said on the subject in May, 1907—

"COST OF PAUPERS' PALACE"

"The Hammersmith Borough Council has been compelled to add fourpence in the pound to the rates, although the borough council's expenses would justify a reduction of one penny in the pound.

"The Council gives the following explanation in the notice to ratepayers :—

"Special attention is drawn to the fact that the large increase in the rate of fourpence in the pound is due solely to the increased requirements of the late board of guardians over which the borough council has no control. The amount to be raised for that body is £16,500 more than in the last half-year, representing a rate of over

fivepence in the pound, while the borough council's expenses have been reduced by a sum equal to a rate of one penny in the pound.

"An emergency precept of £12,000 was served unexpectedly on the council by the late board of guardians."

There are numerous instances of similar needless extravagance in other parts of the country, but these will suffice for the moment.

THE AUGEAN STABLE

These disclosures are most disheartening to rate-payers, and many of them will, no doubt, think that the publicity which has been given to them, and the severe terms of imprisonment inflicted on the West Ham culprits, will clear out the Augean stable and serve to afford the necessary protection of public moneys.

But do not let them indulge in such fond delusions: there is more here than meets the eye.

The fact is the whole pauper administration stands on an unsound basis, and is rotten to the core.

The attitude of Government, and that of the municipal administrations, the tax-payers, and the people is as wrong-headed as it possibly can be, and unless we, as a nation, assume a sensible, practical, and healthy attitude towards this unsatisfactory and eminently unsavoury question, no help will be forthcoming.

Government will do nothing so long as the country does not give them what they call a *mandate*. They, the Government, will contend that pauperism has to be provided for according to the laws of the land, and in raising millions in rates and taxes they are simply obeying the *mandate* of the country. "If you want something different, you must give us another mandate," say they.

The municipal administrations, poor law guardians, and the rest of the spending official bodies, simply follow the lead of the Imperial Government. Their duty is to *spend* the millions subscribed by the tax-payers, and recent disclosures show how they do it.

The tax-payers, not as yet fully realising that pauperism in our country is no more a natural result of economic laws than is drunkenness, have hitherto yielded up their millions with certain misgivings that something was wrong, but what that something was they couldn't quite make out. They have recently learnt that vast sums of their money have been shamelessly squandered rather than spent, but that fact seems to reveal corruptness or incapacity in the spending administration

rather than the rottenness of the entire system of which these bodies are but an outgrowth.

PUBLIC ATTITUDE TOWARDS PAUPERISM

The people rarely think about the matter at all. Pauperism was a recognised State institution before they were born, and they accept it at that ; if it is wrong, "Show us how to put it right," is what they say.

This, in a nutshell, is the attitude adopted towards pauperism by the people, the tax-payers, and the Government, and a more sickly, unhealthy, harmful attitude cannot be conceived.

The whole nation has somehow contrived to set up a sort of *belief* in the NECESSITY for this plague spot on our civilisation, and this weak, flabby spirit of acquiescence in a positive evil has wrought incalculable harm in every direction.

The enormous pauper homes all over the country, many of them of costly architectural design and palatial aspect, with elaborate and luxurious fittings which will hardly be found even in the homes of the wealthy classes, only serve to show that bumbledom, at all events, has set pauperism up as a FETISH, while the scandalous waste of public money which has been and *is* going on, proves that poor law guardians freely offer up the tax-payer's gold on the altar of their god.

These newspaper extracts put the case very clearly and in a manner that will appeal, not only to the tax-payer, but to every section of the British people, save that comparatively small body of wastrels who will *not* work.

WORST POOR LAWS IN EUROPE

There is no getting away from the fact that our Poor Laws, taken all round, are the worst and most unsuitable that could possibly be devised. They are the worst in Europe, in the world, and so long as the people of this country submit to them, so long will the poor continue to be pauperised, degraded, and brutalised.

The philanthropists of three-quarters of a century ago meant well by urging upon Government the necessity of amending the Poor Laws, but their efforts have resulted in disaster to the cause they championed, and pauperism of a monstrous and degrading type has grown out of that mild indulgence which the Governments of the past threw over their legislative measures when dealing with this question.

In legalising pauperism we have given every able-bodied man and woman in the country the constitutional right to put

his or her hand into the pockets of the British tax-payer, and worse than this, we have given all Poor Law authorities in the country, all bumbledom, in fact, the same constitutional right to spend as much of the tax-payers' money as they choose. Budgeting for *paupers* is as common in all official estimates as budgeting for the Army, Navy, and Civil Services; the Poor-rates item is one of the biggest in the national accounts, and all officials, whether of the Imperial Government or the Poor Law officers of small rural councils, have come to regard pauperism as a National Institution upon which millions upon millions may be spent without fear or reproach—meritoriously, in fact.

Pauperism has been with us for so long that we have become quite accustomed to its presence, and there are few among us who would care to question the validity of its claim upon the public purse, or consider the possibility of ridding ourselves of its burden altogether. Yet this overgrown monster, like many other monsters that have been subdued in past times, can be defeated and overthrown with comparative ease.

SLOTHFUL IDLENESS MUST CEASE

Let it, however, be thoroughly understood that we will no longer support a huge host of able-bodied men and women in slothful idleness, and that we will not be deterred by that squeamish, sickly sentimentality which has hitherto guided and governed the administration of this question. Let us say, firmly and unhesitatingly, that we are tired to death of this loathsome disease which has fastened on to the British people, that our treatment of it has been wrong from the first, and that it has done nothing but develop its growth and increase its virulence. Let us frankly admit that, with the best intentions possible, this pandering of Poor Law guardians all over the kingdom to pauperism has only had the effect of increasing the vast hordes of dissolute poor, who fatten like vampires on the very life-blood of the tax-payers. This advance of the pauper hosts has become a national peril, and it is time to cry "halt."

Let us make it as clear as daylight that we are tired to death of seeing our money spent to no other result than to encourage the worst and most dissolute type of pauperism that the world can show to-day; to engender a spirit of wasteful extravagance on the part of poor-law officers; and to establish a feeling of apathetic indifference on the part of the Government for the time being.

At the moment it is nobody's business to take any action that would relieve the country of this loathsome incubus.

There is a general grumbling all along the line of that vast array of people who are compelled to hand over their rates and taxes to the State coffers, and this means every householder in the country, rich or poor; but they only grumble and growl. Let us, however, cease growling, and *do* something. Let us make up our minds, since it is necessary for State purposes that we should be taxed, that these taxes be wisely *spent*, not *wasted*. Let us insist that our millions be laid out in a manner that will encourage the people to cultivate habits of self-help, thrift, and industry, and not in a way that brings upon them the degradation of pauperism.

Let us make it abundantly clear to Government and all concerned, that every penny we yield up in rates and taxes must be spent along utilitarian lines, and that the system of relief to the people must be practical and *co-operative*, *i.e.* if the State finds it necessary to call upon tax-payers to help the people, they in turn ask that the State set up some practical system of relief, whereby those requiring aid may be helped to become self-supporting citizens, and so, in time, find themselves in a position to pay back to the State, in direct or indirect taxes, the sum spent on them in their need.

But before this can be accomplished there must be established throughout this country a great and proper appreciation of this pauper question on the part of all concerned. Government, tax-payers, and the people must put a wise, practical interpretation to its meaning, and not the sickly, mawkish, and exceedingly unwise one it bears to-day.

THE OLD, INFIRM, THE BLIND, AND CRIPPLES ONLY, TO BE RECIPIENTS OF STATE AID

They must at length determine that the only kind of paupers who have any claim upon the public purse are those who really and truly are unable to work, the aged and infirm, those of feeble intellect, and young children.

These poor items of the great human race have just claims on State charity, and no others. Even for cripples and the blind suitable light work can be found, and there is no need that this unfortunate section of the community should become altogether dependent upon State aid. Let these unfortunates have the same opportunities for self-help as are offered to others, and even *they* will be the better for it.

For the rest, let work be found, and found in such abundance as will afford no possible excuse for idleness and vagabondage.

Provide them with suitable work, and then make it a

penal offence punishable by imprisonment if they will not work.

That work can be found in such abundance as would absorb not only the flotsam and jetsam of the labouring classes, but a good many more millions besides, is so amply proved in nearly every chapter of this book, as also by other writers on the subject, that it would be a supererogation to dwell further on the means.

It is, however, necessary to realise at once that we have to deal with *two* groups of labour—

1. Those who *will* work ;
2. Those who *will not* work ;

and while there will be no difficulty in providing work for all, it will, in spite of this, be found exceedingly difficult to deal with the latter group because of their utter worthlessness. It is not work that *they* want, but a state of precariousness in the labour market which produces anxiety and unemployment among the *real* workers, and a certain amount of destitution. The more labour is congested the better it suits this scum which is for ever floating round the seething mass of honest toilers, because the greater the unemployment, the greater the sympathy of philanthropists and the material aid of the State, upon which these wasters thrive.

From this section, and it is a large one, is drawn most of that which is repulsive to national life. It is the source of much drunkenness and of the many evils born of drunkenness. The criminal classes draw from it many of their most dangerous members ; it hangs over society as a menace ; it is a curse to the nation, and the ugliest blot on our social system. If it is allowed to remain it will be a further disgrace to national administration and a grave injustice to society at large, and particularly to the tax-payers of the country. It is one of the most important factors in the social problem, and therefore demands careful consideration.

The first effort should obviously be made in the direction of helping and uplifting this class, and they should be taught that work is noble, and that sloth and idleness are degrading. They should be made clearly to understand that work is provided for them, honourable work, and that they will be expected to do it. They should be made to realise that workhouses are for the aged, infirm, and feeble, and that the parish rates are not for them, nor are the casual wards to be used as boarding-houses by tramps and vagabonds.

PUNISHMENT TO BE THE LOAFER'S REWARD

They should realise by personal experience that there is no refuge left for them save in the State labour centres, and that it is there they should apply for help. They should also learn by experience that a fair day's work will earn a fair wage, and that loafing or insubordination will be paid for in another way. Let them work side by side, first of all, with industrious honest men, who will show them what honest toil is, and if they fail to take their chance, they should then be drafted to other work of a less honourable nature, which could be easily found to suit their special peculiarities.

There should be no hesitation, no weakness or uncertainty in dealing with this human scum; and, while not resorting to unduly harsh measures, they should be made to feel acutely and without delay the great difference between honesty and dishonesty, honourable labour and loafing vagabondism, between sobriety and drunkenness, and clean wholesome living and a foul, vicious life. This unsavoury and intractable section of humanity must be caught and trained to become respectable members of the community; they must be made to understand that the State will stand no nonsense, that tax-payers will support them no longer, and that they must work, whether they like it or no. They should further learn that as there is no provision made in the State finances for their maintenance in idle vagabondage, work is their only chance of support, or, failing this, the State penitentiaries, where their lot might conceivably be harder than in the State labour centres. The laws dealing with this section of the community should be stern, repressive, and comprehensive, and there should be no sickly sentimentality about them. They should be so framed that not even the sharpest and most experienced vagabond would be able to evade them, or drive the proverbial "coach and four" through their provisions. They should be unmistakable in their meaning, easy to administer even by the most inexperienced of our many inexperienced, unpaid magistrates and poor-law guardians and officers. They should not be ferocious, but merely inexorable. There should be no escape for the filthy scum of humanity which is thrown off by the heaving mass of honest toilers in every big city, and which exists but to poison the atmosphere which better men delight to breathe.

FOR THE REST—WORK AND PLENTY

For the rest there will be no difficulty once a sensible system of agriculture is set up, whereunder the enormous areas

of magnificent land of this country will be converted into producers of wealth and employers of labour, and not remain, as now, sterile wastes, or, at the best, producing nothing but a few sheep and cattle, and providing little or nothing for the people.

For the moment, it must be confessed that the present state of affairs gives that large vagabond class, which elings to the skirts of honest labour as the foul ocean growth clings to the sides of the great ship, the opportunity it requires to maintain it in all its native impurity. "You give us work," say they, "It's our right to work," and the rest of it; but they have no more intention of doing an honest day's work than has the familiar "Weary Willy" of our country highways.

They swell the ranks of the honest unemployed in their labour demonstrations merely for what they can get out of it, but they have no intention of doing any harder work.

Nevertheless, as the *real* unemployed have a sore grievance against the present economical system because of lack of work, it serves the purpose of this wastrel class to make common cause with them, at least in *clamouring* for employment, and in this way they are entirely serving the mammon of unrighteousness.

Let employment for all be forthcoming for the asking, and there would at once be an automatic separation of the goats from the sheep, when the State would find no difficulty in apportioning to this human scum their due reward.

These reasonable conclusions are, it should be borne in mind, not suggested by Free-trade economists, but by the doctrines of anti-Free-traders; and it seems as though they are likely to appeal with considerable force to that vast body of Englishmen who are now disposed to look at this matter from a broad, rational, common-sense point of view, rather than from the narrow standpoint of any of the existing political parties.

CHAPTER XI

NATIONAL PAUPERISM AND TAXATION—COLOSSAL AMOUNT OF PRIVATE CHARITIES—HOW PHILANTHROPISTS UNCONSCIOUSLY BOLSTER UP FREE-TRADE

ANTI-FREE-TRADERS are no longer inclined to ignore the importance of private philanthropy as a factor in the Free-trade movement.

The Free-trade system should, they contend, now be put to a moral test to show how largely it depends upon *private charity* for its maintenance, and how it has been *unconsciously bolstered up* by millions of philanthropists of all ages and degrees of society. This is a view of the position that has hitherto been ignored, but those who are opposed to the present economical conditions are inclined to regard it as an important factor in the case. The question of National Pauperism which, apart from State aid, requires stupendous sums annually from *private* charities, should now be considered by all classes of people from this point of view, particularly by that section of the community which is especially benefited by this constant outpouring of spontaneous philanthropy.

THE PUBLIC FAMILIARISED WITH PAUPERISM

We, as a nation, have become so familiar with this widespread poverty and its dire results, that the heavy imposts of Government and the stupendous efforts of the philanthropic public in aid of the poor are regarded as a necessary item in the economy of life; while the poor themselves look upon the prodigious charities, to which we shall presently refer, as a matter of course, indeed, as a right.

It is shown elsewhere to what extent tax-payers are called upon by the State to assist in relieving our pauper population by *direct* taxation; let us now form some estimate of the extent to which the well-to-do people of our country help the poor in a more general, though in a less direct manner.

It is impossible to arrive at anything like accuracy in respect to the value of this indirect aid, because of the lack of statistical information on the subject, and also because those who give do not care to talk of their charities; we must, therefore, fall back upon a process of deduction which will enable us to form some general idea of the immense importance of the well-to-do classes as the most valuable asset in the national life.

Let us take Hospitals first, for in this branch of philanthropy we have Burdett's "Hospitals and Charities" to guide us.

THE EXTENT OF HOSPITAL CHARITIES

In 1903 the income of our Hospitals amounted to £2,500,000 annually.

This vast income, with the exception of "Contributions from Work-people" and "Patients' Payments," which represent six per cent. of the income, comes annually from the philanthropic well-to-do, either from annual subscriptions, donations, legacies, or investments of moneys originally left to hospitals by charitable persons.

Capitalise this annual income, and we shall find that at four per cent. it comes to about £62,500,000. The well-to-do classes of this country have, therefore, set aside the stupendous sum of over sixty-two millions sterling out of their wealth, so that the poor and needy, the sick and suffering among their fellow-countrymen, may have the same benefits of medical and surgical skill, and be as tenderly cared for under their bodily afflictions, as they are themselves.

OTHER ORGANISED CHARITIES

Then there is a large number of charities, apart from Hospitals, such as—

Church Organisation Societies.

Ambulance Associations.

The Salvation Army.

Church Extension Association.

Aged Pilgrims' Friend Society.

Hundreds of Societies of various kinds for benefiting the poor.

Orphanages by the score.

Industrial Homes of various kinds.

Asylums for all sorts and conditions of poverty, and Benevolent Associations of every imaginable description.

After dealing with one hundred and eighty-six of these

institutions out of the multitudes that are in existence, and leaving out of calculation all those that—

- (1) devote their funds to spiritual aid to the poor;
- (2) are partially self-supporting by payment from inmates;
- (3) are in any way connected with trades or professions,

it will be found that the aggregate annual income amounts to the colossal sum of £1,533,821.

Capitalise this in the same way as the income from Hospitals, and there is the enormous sum of £38,455,525 as a further contribution from our well-to-do countrymen, in aid of the poor, the needy and the destitute, the outcast women, the poor little waifs and strays, the afflicted and the suffering, and all that human flotsam and jetsam cast up on the shores of our land by the turbulent waves of human life.

THE GREATEST OF OUR MANY CHARITIES

Now we come to the greatest of all these prodigious charities, the like of which cannot be found elsewhere in any civilised country in the world, not so much because our foreign friends are lacking in the quality of mercy and benevolence, but because there is no *necessity* for it in other countries.

These far-reaching *private* charities ramify through all classes of society, and yet show no sign of their presence. This is the charity that “vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up”; it does its work silently yet surely, and it seeketh no reward.

This form of charity is practically universal in our land, and its power is potent and far-reaching. It commences where the great organised charities stop; it takes up the work they are unable to do, and enormously supplements, in a quiet, unobtrusive, unseen manner, that work in the broad field of philanthropy which the visible charity organisations are not destined to touch. This form of charity is as widespread as the ocean and as all-embracing as the sun's light and warmth; it extends to all sections of the community, and none are neglected or forgotten. Its donors are to be found in their millions, for all classes are engaged in the good work. From the small shop-keeper or the needy clerk, the poorly-paid shop-assistant, from the artisan and working-classes themselves up to the King in his palace, and even from the little children who are encouraged to give their pence, does this constant stream of charity flow, and it may be truly said that one-half of the people of this country is engaged in helping the other half.

EACH ONE OF US GIVES SOMETHING FOR CHARITY'S SAKE

That this is literally true may be proved by the test of individual experience. What man or woman is there among us who does not give even a trifle in charity? We know that practically every one of our friends does something for charity's sake.

"I can't do much, but, thank God, I can do something to help," is a saying common even among really poor people, while among the wealthier folk philanthropic work, in its many ramifications, is a recognised form of daily duty.

The writer's own personal experience tells him that there is no family, or one or more members of a family, who are not engaged, directly or indirectly, in some form of charitable work.

Hospitals, homes, asylums, and the multitude of charitable institutions, together with the numerous bazaars, concerts, dramatic performances, street collections and entertainments of various kinds, which are in constant evidence, are but the outward and visible sign of that deep current of public sympathy with poverty, which flows on silently yet irresistibly, carrying on its broad bosom a message of love and material aid to those who, but for it, would be poor indeed.

THE MIGHTY POWER OF CHARITY

Charity so unostentatious, so unobtrusive and modest, so silent and yet so universal, is obviously difficult to discover, and more difficult to tabulate and chronicle, yet it is a mighty power in the land, exercising a widespread, powerful influence over those poor stricken ones of this country who are in sore need of that material aid from their fellow-creatures, without which their lives would be but a living death.

TWENTY MILLIONS OF DONORS

Wine, beef-tea, jellies, soups, fruit, tea, coffee, and other articles of diet innumerable, together with tobacco, coal, clothing and other material comforts, are among the many gifts bestowed on the poor and needy, daily and hourly; and as this form of assistance is liberally supplemented by monetary aid from about *one-half of the population of the country*, the donors probably amount to upwards of twenty millions of people.

Some of these are too poor to give more than a few pence now and again, or a little food; others give more liberally,

according to their means, while others give their hundreds and thousands of pounds, many of the wealthy setting aside a certain part of their vast income for this unostentatious work, quite apart from their great public gifts to hospitals and other charitable institutions which are blazoned abroad in the newspapers.

From the following examples we may be able to deduce something that will enable us to form a crude idea of the colossal proportions of that beneficent shape called CHARITY, whose radiant form is ever brightening the homes of those who are in sore need of her ministering grace.

The table is compiled from information, supplied by personal friends, of what they pay in Poor-rates and what they give annually in private charities.

SOME OF THE DONORS

The persons enumerated may be regarded as representative, as it will be seen that they are drawn from many grades of society; while the amounts paid in Poor-rates and Charities are the average of several years:—

Occupation.	Amount paid in Poor-rates.	Amount given in Charities.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Domestic Servant	None	1 10 0
Artisan	None	15 0
Small Shop-keeper	3 14 0	2 10 0
Bank Clerk	None	4 0 0
Private Secretary on small salary .	None	2 10 0
Lady of small means	5 1 1	25 0 0
Country Gentleman, moderate means	6 4 5	21 0 0
Novelist	4 18 3	81 10 6
Retired Military Officer	9 10 0	45 0 0
Bank Manager	13 8 4	53 15 6
Manufacturer	40 5 0	1,270 19 11

These figures prove that a vast amount of money must come from the pockets of the British public every year, although the actual amount may never be ascertained.

We may, however, partly by a reference to statistics, and partly by a process of deduction, arrive at a fairly approximate total.

ELOQUENT PRIVATE CHARITY STATISTICS

In regard to the distribution of national wealth, statisticians are agreed as to how a part of it, at all events, is divided among

the people, and the following tables, compiled from well-known works on the subject, will show how much of this wealth is accounted for.

Census returns also indicate how the people fall under the various age groups. The last statistical information on the subject shows that while 360 persons in every thousand fall under the age of 15 years, 640 in every thousand of the population were of 15 years of age and upwards.

The estimated population of the United Kingdom to-day exceeds 43,000,000, and on this basis we have an adult population of 27,520,000.

Deducting from this total the paupers, say 1,200,000, and another two millions of necessitous people who have nothing to give, and we have a residue of 24,320,000.

Then cut off your misers, curmudgeons and persons of that ilk, who will not part with a penny under any circumstances, and number them at the odd 320,000, and you still have upwards of 24 millions of good citizens who help their fellow-beings according to their means.

The following statement shows that 435,614 of the large philanthropists are accounted for:—

* INCOME OF PRIVATE PERSONS					INCOME OF FIRMS			
Income Exceeding	and not Exceeding	No. of Persons Assessed.	Estimated Amount set aside for Charity.	Total Amount for Charity.	No. of Firms Assessed.	Average Amount of Income Asses.ed.	Estimated Amount set aside for Charity.	Total Amount for Charity.
£	£		£	£		£	£	£
50,000	...	25	4,000	100,000	101	102,015	500	50,500
10,000	50,000	213	2,000	426,000	960	18,614	300	288,000
5,000	10,000	446	500	223,000	1,737	7,140	200	347,400
4,000	5,000	302	200	60,400	886	4,580	100	88,600
3,000	4,000	523	100	52,300	1,463	3,500	100	146,300
2,000	3,000	1,385	50	69,250	2,771	2,559	50	138,550
1,000	2,000	5,941	20	118,820	7,046	1,540	20	140,920
...	1,000	368,505	10	3,685,050	44,264	382	10	442,640
		377,340		4,734,820	58,274			1,642,910
No. of Firms Assessed . . . 58,274					Total Amount of Charity from Firms . . . £1,642,910			
No. of Private Persons Assessed 377,340					Total Amount of Charity from Private Persons £4,734,820			
Total . . . 435,614					Total . . . £6,377,730			

* Compiled from Whitaker's Almanack, 1907, p. 397.

WHAT THE DONORS DO

We have now to deal with about 24 millions who are always ready to do something for *charity's sake*. But it is just here that we must resort to some process of deduction, because this good work remains unrecorded and untabulated.

Divide the 24,000,000, say, into four groups of 6,000,000 each, *i.e.* those who give £7 10s., £5, £2, and 10s. each, and the result is—

		£	s.	d.		
6,000,000	at	7	10	0	=	£45,000,000
6,000,000	at	5	0	0	=	£30,000,000
6,000,000	at	2	0	0	=	£12,000,000
6,000,000	at	10	0	0	=	£ 3,000,000
Total	24,000,000					£90,000,000

It may be contended by some that the estimate of £7 10s., £5, £2, and 10s. for the four groups respectively has been put at too high a figure, but careful inquiries will prove that the estimate is, if anything, too low.

ONE HUNDRED MILLIONS IN PRIVATE CHARITIES

We will now weld all these figures into an intelligible whole. Here is the statement:—

1. Income of Hospitals	£2,500,000
2. Income of Charitable Institutions	1,533,821
3. Income from Bazaars, Concerts, and other entertainments (estimated)	200,000
4. Amount contributed by private persons and firms assessed by Government	6,377,730
5. Private charities (unrecorded)	90,000,000
Total	£100,611,551

Contributions in kind, such as food, clothing, coal, etc., have been purposely left out of consideration, because of the difficulty of arriving at a fairly approximate amount, but the total annual value would be enormous.

Now in regard to these stupendous figures, it will surely be said by most people that it is impossible our private charities can amount to such an appalling sum; but when one begins to ponder over this matter it will be seen that although it comes as a startling revelation, it is not only possible but a simple fact, which can easily be verified by any one who cares to take a little trouble.

We all know that charity has many claims upon our time and purses, and that each one of us gives according to his

means. Children give their pence and sixpences, youths their shillings; older people give their half-crowns, half-sovereigns, and sovereigns, while others again give their tens and their hundreds. Briefly, charity is ever present with us in some form or other, and her needs are endless.

We are quite alive to the fact that each one of us gives his individual quota, and we also know that this practice applies to our friends, but rarely do we think of the matter further or attempt to carry it to a logical conclusion. Were we to do so we should soon find it assuming enormous dimensions, and the donors increasing by hundreds of thousands and by millions and tens of millions; and when we once realise this it becomes evident that our pence, shillings, and sovereigns must soon be multiplied into many millions of pounds.

THE INDIVIDUAL DOLE MULTIPLIED BY 24,000,000

The sound of a single human voice would scarcely be heard in the vastness of the Crystal Palace, for example, but many of us who have listened to the four thousand singers at the Handel Festivals have been fairly startled by the enormous volume of vocal sound; multiply the volume *six thousand times*, and the effect would be appalling. The individual dole seems insignificant enough, but multiplied 24,000,000 of times over it becomes of mighty magnitude.

The truth is, people are far too busy with their own affairs to devote time to the study of such out-of-the-way questions; but when somebody comes along who has been exploring unfrequented regions and puts his discoveries before the public, they are quite ready to believe. To arrive at the magnitude of our charities we should bear in mind that the givers number about 24,000,000, and, when this is stated, the amazing results arrived at, although startling, become quite understandable.

Whitaker's Almanack, for example, for the year 1907, shows that sixty testators alone left as much as £4,486,440 in charities in 1906; while the *Daily Telegraph* of December 31, 1907, and other London journals of that date, reported the fact that upwards of £11,000,000 had been left by various testators for charities and other public uses during the previous two years. Then in regard to the many millions of our compatriots whose ear is never deaf to the voiced or mute appeal of the poor and needy, where is the man who can say: "I don't believe they give so much as you try to make people imagine!" This giving, however, is, thank God, as widespread as the heavens, and as life-giving and comforting as the warmth we get from the blessed sunbeams.

But the question has to be asked: What is this stupendous charity worth? What real lasting good does it do to those whom it is our readers' desire to help on in the world, when vast masses of our people remain sunk in the slough of poverty?

We have contended elsewhere in these pages that the £16,000,000 of State funds spent on pauperism is, in itself, a monstrous injustice to the British tax-payer, particularly so because there is no real necessity for poverty at all in our country; but what is this comparatively insignificant sum when set side by side with the stupendous amount subscribed annually by a philanthropic public? Oh! the shame of it all, that our Governments and our political parties have permitted this foul thing to fall upon our people as a deadly blight, because, forsooth, the righting of the wrong would have clashed with party interests, and perhaps unseated the Government that attempted it!

The British people and the British tax-payers have a deep-seated grievance, and they should wage a bitter, deadly feud against that principle in our political life that has only served the narrow selfish policy, on the one hand, of building up a few individual reputations, and in amassing large individual wealth; while on the other it has resulted in nothing but poverty and degradation to the great masses of our countrymen and countrywomen.

The main point, however, that is under consideration here is the part all this prodigious State and private charity plays in the Free-trade movement. That it *is* a factor, and an important one, there is no room for doubt, and that it has been hitherto ignored by all parties alike, is also true. The State expenditure of £16,000,000 annually on the most acute forms of pauperism is a prodigious one, but when it is found necessary to supplement that amount by something like £100,000,000 annually out of that characteristic philanthropy of the British race, *to keep the people from starvation*, it is clear there must be something fundamentally wrong with the fiscal and economical system of the country. The system of economics on which the country has been working for many years is based upon the principles of Free-trade, and anti-Free-traders reasonably hold that if this system requires something like £116,000,000 annually to keep the people from literal starvation, it is faulty to a degree, unsuited to the requirements of the country, socially cruel, and economically suicidal.

These are truly grave charges to bring against Free-trade, but as results certainly appear to justify them, anti-Free-traders are content to abide by the issue.

CHAPTER XII

SHORTAGE OF WORK IN OUR TRADES AND MANUFACTURES—INCREASE IN MANUFACTURING WEALTH MEANS LOSS OF AGRICULTURAL WEALTH—IN OTHER WORDS, CLASS LEGISLATION !

It would now be interesting to subject this Free-trade system to one or two other reasonable tests just to see how it comports itself when brought into contact with the practical requirements of the everyday needs of the people.

Among other things, anti-Free-traders maintain that enormous loss of agricultural wealth and a still heavier loss in the virile strength of the nation, owing to the enervating effects of ceaseless emigration, are plain results of Free-trade.

This is how it appears to those who are inclined to look at the matter from a non-party point of view.

That there is shortage of work, among other things, and an ever-growing surplus of unemployed is obvious to the entire nation.

That our present means of employment fail to absorb our workers is admitted by all.

That this increasing residue of unemployed naturally adds to the burden of pauperism from which the country suffers, is likewise true.

That something is fundamentally wrong with our social and economic system there is no room for doubt.

FAILURE OF INDUSTRIES TO EMPLOY AND SUPPORT THE PEOPLE

That as our trades, professions, and industries—manufacturing or otherwise—together with all the other forms of occupation to which our workers resort, cannot employ, support, and feed our people, it is evident that the defect should be sought for in the only remaining industry, namely, the LAND.

That the land is primarily intended for man's use, and for

his occupation and support, there can be no doubt ; while it is also certain that the land is capable of, and does, produce all that is necessary for his subsistence. It is also true that no other industry is capable of doing this.

The land industry must, therefore, be regarded as the greatest of all industries. It is a natural industry, and, in relying upon it as his chief means of support, man is but obeying a natural *law*. Neglect the land, and he is bound to suffer, because he thus sets up an artificial economic existence for himself which is sure to have dire effect in time.

In the land, then, lies man's chiefest good and the nation's pabulum.

Many of our publicists, however, elated with the expansion of our national trade which, after all, is nothing more or less than our legitimate share of that great national expansion of the world's trade which is being experienced and shared by every country, and fondly believing that commercial and industrial prosperity alone will bear us along to a haven of rest and security against all our social and economic troubles, point to this trade expansion as a sure means of relieving the situation. Even so high an authority as Mr. Balfour, in his speech on the introduction of the Scottish Land Bill on March 20, 1907, speaking of the Repeal of the Corn Laws as a means of stimulating manufacturing industries, said—

“It was deliberately intended by its authors to stimulate that great growth of the manufacturing population which I view without dismay or regret, because I recognise it is the only possible mode in which the population of this country can largely increase or its wealth augment, to meet the great Imperial needs with which we have to deal.”

It is clear from this that Mr. Balfour still believes in our manufactures as the national pabulum, the only source from which we may hope to draw those ever necessary supplies of men and money, upon which depends the existence of the Empire.

That that statesman's views in this connection have not changed since he uttered those fateful words is shown from the following excerpt of his speech to the House on February 19, 1909 :—

“If this country is to grow in population, in wealth, and in prosperity, the greater part of the growth, owing to questions of the area and size, must be on the side of the manufacturer. . . . Whatever you do with agriculture in this country, if every particle of available land is cultivated up to the highest capacity, it will still

remain a limited area, and the extension must take place in manufactures. Unemployment stands in the forefront of the problem."

This continued disbelief in agriculture, as a powerful factor in the situation, is a bad augury for the future, as it seems to evince a determination on the part of this prominent statesman to ignore facts.

Many eminent writers have taken pains to show what the lands of the United Kingdom are really capable of under suitable land tenures, an up-to-date system of agriculture, and a reasonable fiscal policy; while the irrefutable evidence offered by France, Germany, and every other country in Europe of what *their* land is capable of, is testimony of a nature that the Leader of the Opposition—and a potential leader of a future Government—should not imprudently cast aside as of no moment. This country is just as capable of employing, supporting, and feeding from ten to fifteen millions of its population by agriculture as France is of providing for 24 millions, or Germany 20 millions of their people (see Chapter XXIV); and if Mr. Balfour will not admit the fact, if he and his party still persist in refusing to give to Great Britain an agricultural system that would enable her to make the *most* of her land and then deride her capabilities as a labour-employer and wealth-producer, the responsibilities of this incomprehensible attitude and its fateful results to the people must rest with that statesman and his followers, and not with those who have called public attention to these plain facts.

Let us, however, put these regrettable utterances to the test of experience. Reversing the order and taking the question of increased wealth first, the following is the interpretation that unbiassed people will put upon it:—

INCREASE OF INDUSTRIAL WEALTH MEANS BUT LITTLE

That the wealth of Great Britain has increased during the last ten, twenty, or fifty years there is no doubt, but this fact proves nothing because the wealth of every country in Europe has similarly increased during the same period. What is of greater moment to us is this—has our wealth increased as much as it ought to have done; as much as it *would* have done had we not only maintained our agriculture but adopted the same wise measures of establishing *universal* agriculture as have been adopted in every country save our own? A prosperous, widespread land industry, during all these years, would have resulted in an enormous increase of

agricultural wealth, but it is a matter of common knowledge that enormous *loss* has resulted.

LOSS OF AGRICULTURAL WEALTH MEANS MUCH

It has been shown in a former chapter that the loss of agricultural wealth has been estimated at £1,000,000,000 to £1,600,000,000, and although this estimate differs considerably, which is inevitable in the circumstances, owing to the many difficulties attending the investigation, immense wealth has undoubtedly been lost; but whether the country is poorer, through the destruction of its land industry, by 500 millions more or less, is not of so much importance as the fact that the country and the people *are* poorer, and considerably poorer, than they would have been had agriculture been spared to them.

There is much more evidence from equally reliable sources, but this single instance is sufficient to show that so far as agricultural wealth is concerned a truly stupendous sum has been lost to the country, and as it is equally clear that vast national wealth cannot be lost without individual and collective loss to the people, it becomes obvious that the community must have suffered considerably.

If the axiom holds good that the people cannot become impoverished without the State Exchequer suffering, owing to the shrinkage in the taxable area of the country which must inevitably result from such a condition, then it seems clear enough that, in building up our manufactures at the expense of our agriculture, the State must have lost vast sums since we commenced to neglect our great land industry; it will, perhaps, never be clearly demonstrated what we *have* really lost, but the sum is a colossal one.

MANUFACTURING WEALTH NO COMPENSATION FOR LOSS OF AGRICULTURAL WEALTH

It may be contended that the increased manufacturing wealth will compensate for loss of agricultural wealth, but this could not be maintained, because, quite apart from other considerations, the demand for manufactured goods naturally expands as the world's population increases, and prosperity spreads. It therefore follows that had British agriculture remained in a prosperous condition, or, to put the true interpretation on the matter, had our legislators put agriculture in its proper position and maintained it as the chiefest industry and the chiefest wealth-producer of the nation,

manufacturing wealth must have been greater than it is now, because in the place of a small, poor, struggling agricultural population we should have had many millions of prosperous agriculturists whose purchasing power would have been enormous. Indeed, it is quite easy to conceive that the purchasing power of a great prosperous agricultural community of our own people, interspersed throughout our own country, must necessarily have been greater than that of many of the agricultural communities of those countries from which we had hitherto drawn our food supplies. The purchasing power of the Russian agricultural peasant or the Indian ryot, for example, cannot be very great, but a prosperous British agricultural community, well planted in their own country, would certainly require and consume more commodities than their *confrères* in those countries.

Looked at from this aspect it appears that, in order to increase the *manufacturing* wealth of the country, enormous loss of *agricultural* wealth was involved in the process—a method of “augmenting” the *collective* wealth of the nation which will hardly appeal to the mind of independent, un-biassed men. Nor can this “robbing Peter to pay Paul” method of conducting public business be defended upon the basis of equity and justice, because, when reduced to its last denominator, it is nothing more nor less than running the economical affairs of the country on a deliberate and unequivocal system of—CLASS LEGISLATION!

What else is it or can it be?

“I am afraid that most of us entered upon the struggle with the belief that we had some distinct class-interest in the question,”

said Cobden, with commendable frankness, sixty-four years ago, and although his followers are not bold enough to-day to avow that the policy which was inaugurated by the manufacturer-reformers of Cobden’s time, *in class-interests*, is now maintained by the Manchester School for that purpose, and *only* for that purpose, it nevertheless remains an indubitable TRUTH.

The Liberal-Unionist party have it in their power to right a grievous wrong, but if they fail to do so, if they continue to regard the stimulation of manufactures as

“the only possible mode in which the population of this country can largely increase or its wealth augment,”

they will but be following in the footsteps of Cobden and his Manchester School, following in bolstering up Class Legislation

of a nature that will surely result, sooner or later, in the disintegration of the British Empire.

Owing to her peculiar facilities, Great Britain must, in any circumstances, have maintained her position as the foremost manufacturing country in the world; at any rate this must have been the case for the last sixty odd years, while she must necessarily have shared in the tremendous expansion of the world's trade which has naturally been experienced during that period, owing to the application of steam to ocean navigation, the development of railways in every country, and easier communications and freer facilities all round for international trading.

So fortuitous a circumstance cannot be made a contention that to enable Great Britain to so strengthen and equip her manufacturing industries that she might share in this very natural trade expansion, it was necessary for her, first of all, to sacrifice her agricultural industry; but it would appear that such a contention *has* been set up in the case we are considering. Many political economists, indeed, gravely affirm that the two could not grow up together and subsist side by side, and that it was therefore essential to sacrifice our agriculture so that our trades and industries might have free scope for expansion; but as this remarkable contention will be particularly referred to in succeeding chapters there is no necessity to dwell further on it here.

MR. BALFOUR'S "ONLY POSSIBLE MODE" FAILS

Now in regard to manufactures being, as Mr. Balfour declares—

"The only possible mode in which the population of this country can largely increase,"

the actual facts of the case appear to be in direct opposition to the contention.

The Government Emigration Records show the following figures:—

From 1853 to 1904, when trade was not so flourishing as at the present time, 9,773,704 persons emigrated from Great Britain and Ireland, of which Great Britain accounted for 6,294,954, and Ireland for 3,470,750, or an annual average for that period of 187,956 persons.*

Later figures show that during the five years ending 1907, 1,514,279 people of British and Irish origin, or an annual

* "The Statesman's Year Book, 1907."

average of 302,456, emigrated from our shores to countries out of Europe; while in 1907 the enormous total of 395,680 persons of our own flesh and blood emigrated from the United Kingdom.*

During the same period, *i.e.* for the five years ending either 1906 or 1907, according to figures available, but 1,183,064 persons of the nationality of the following countries found it necessary to take leave of their native land.†

1. Norway	114,216
2. Sweden	117,315
3. Denmark	40,638
4. Holland	12,549
5. Switzerland	19,628
6. Belgium	72,049
7. Portugal ‡	113,699
8. Spain §	495,151
9. The German Empire	155,139
10. France 	42,680
	<hr/>
	1,183,064

This means that, with the exception of Austria-Hungary, Italy, Russia, and some of the minor States, the total emigrants from the rest of Europe, for five years ending 1907, were 331,215, or one-third of a million souls short of the enormous number of British and Irish emigrants who were compelled to leave the shores of the United Kingdom during the same period.¶

If these figures prove anything it is this, that despite the vaunted trade expansion and the growth of our manufacturing industries, the people of this country find the necessity of emigrating in alarming numbers every year, while the millions that are left behind experience ever-growing difficulty in obtaining employment. It therefore becomes evident that the contention of the leader of the Opposition, in this connection at least, cannot be maintained.

* "Statistical Abstract for the U.K." 1893-1907. (Parliamentary Blue Book.)

† "Statistical Abstract for Foreign Countries." (Parliamentary Blue Book, Cd. 4265; 1908.)

‡ Figures available only for five years ending 1904.

§ Besides emigrants proper are included soldiers and Government officials proceeding to Spanish Possessions, tourists, etc.

|| No figures are available for France since 1893. The figures given are based upon the total emigrants from that country from 1876 to 1893, viz. 153,651, or 42,680 for five years.

¶ The difference of treatment adopted in European countries in arriving at Emigration Returns makes a really accurate table of comparison difficult. The figures given, are, however, near enough to illustrate the enormous difference between the numbers emigrating from the United Kingdom and the countries enumerated.

Mr. Balfour is an able debater, a capable and astute leader of a great party, and he is, moreover, no mean, pettifogging politician, but a wise and far-seeing statesman who compels the respect and admiration of even his political opponents; but he is, nevertheless, human, and liable to human fallibility. In this instance he has obviously committed an error of judgment.

In discussing so momentous a question as that involving the welfare of a nation, the people should not permit their judgment to be influenced against their own convictions, even by so great an authority as the ex-Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

MR. BALFOUR'S CONTENTIONS MEASURED BY GENERAL RESULTS

Let us now look at the matter from one or two other points of view, to see if general results support Mr. Balfour's contentions.

Success is a standard by which we may fairly measure most things in this world; and if a work yields good substantial results, and stands satisfactorily the practical tests of ordinary life, it may safely be called a success.

Mr. Balfour's "only possible mode" of dealing with the question has, as is well known, been tried for the last thirty years or more, and it has failed so unmistakably as to result, firstly, in acute and widespread poverty and overflowing workhouses; secondly, in a huge surplus of unemployed, which is the bugbear of each successive Government; and thirdly, in a still greater mass of necessitous people of all classes who, but for the continual effort and material aid of that multitude of philanthropic people who give untold millions annually, would surely starve and die.

It may be contended that although these are facts plainly stated and legitimately quoted, they nevertheless need not necessarily apply to the future, because the expansion of national trade would be so phenomenal and so abiding as to preclude the possibility of its failing us as a sure means of affording employment for every worker in the country; but it is obvious, from the experience of the past, that such a contention would be as unreliable and dangerous as it is specious and misleading.

Our national trade has passed through periods of phenomenal expansion and great prosperity time and again during the last fifty years or so; but what has it ever left behind save periods of reaction and depression, of lack of work and widespread

distress, wherein Government aid on a liberal scale has been found necessary to save people from starving, and private charities have been sorely taxed to help the helpless?

NO INTENTION TO MINIMISE INDUSTRIAL IMPORTANCE

Nobody despises our trades and manufactures, nor has the writer the slightest intention of under-estimating their enormous value as highly important and essential factors in the common-weal; indeed, it must be admitted that they are as essential to our welfare as the sun's influence is to the planet on which we live. But here we must draw a firm line of demarcation. Trade and industries are certainly among the highest essentials to our existence as a great nation; but they are not the only ones. If we trust entirely to them we fail, as we have seen, and we must not fail any longer. We must supplement these means of wealth, greatness, and prosperity by other and surer means that are not subject to outside influences, and that will afford unfailing employment to all who adopt them, quite irrespective of market fluctuations and trade depressions.

These means are to be found in the land, and only in the land. The land in every country but our own forms the staple industry, and constitutes the chief means of employment, with the result, in every case, that there is no such thing as widespread poverty and a huge mass of pauperism, as we know it.

Do not let us pass by this obvious fact without considering what it means, for upon it hangs the welfare of the British nation.

We are, generally speaking, an untravelled people and a busy people. If we go abroad for our short summer holidays, we go for pleasure, and do not bother ourselves about the institutions of the country we travel in, or its trade, industries, or constitution. If we go to Belgium, for example, we are more interested in the splendid Palais de Justice at Brussels, and the weird collection of paintings at the Musée Wiertz, than in the wonderful agricultural system of the country.

But when observation becomes necessary and comparison essential in national interests, we must no longer ignore, as of no moment, what other nations have felt constrained to do in the common interests of the people; if we do, we shall become wilfully negligent.

EUROPE RECOGNISES NECESSITY FOR UP-TO-DATE AGRICULTURE

There is not a country in Europe but has recognised long ago that the highest form of universal agriculture is as essential

to the welfare of the people as rain is to the growing plants. They have seen that although commerce and industries are valuable and even necessary factors in building up the prosperity and greatness of a country, the land is even a far greater factor. The land is the source from which life itself springs, and it must therefore form the basis of all human effort. Neglect the land, and the real wealth of a country at once declines. Cultivate it highly, and real abiding wealth increases, full lucrative work is found for the people, prosperity develops, and poverty disappears. This is not a theory of economics but a NATURAL LAW, and those who care to study the matter for themselves will find that it is a law which knows no change.

We alone of all nations of the Western World have thought fit to deride that law and to set it at naught. Years ago, in the pride and full plenitude of our commercial and industrial success, we cast aside, almost scornfully, the nation's great agricultural industry, and opened our Free-trade flood-gates to the world's earth-productions. "We will manufacture for the peoples of the earth, and wax fat thereby; they shall grow our corn; they shall be our hewers of wood and drawers of water," said we in our arrogance. We were to be lords of manufacture and they—slaves of the soil.

A singularly bold idea was this of Richard Cobden, and had it been realised our position would have been unique in the world's history; but "the best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley." Other nations also saw the necessity of developing *their* manufactures, and they would not have *international* Free-trade, and so this great scheme was foredoomed to failure. Among other things, we have let in free the land-products of other nations, but in so doing we have killed the people's greatest industry, and we shall presently see how terribly we have suffered in consequence.

Mr. Balfour's "only possible mode" will not then be found in manufactures, but in the LAND, and only in the land.

Such views as these are the outcome of independent observation and anti-Free-traders would seem to have the best of the argument so far.

CHAPTER XIII

HOW OUR PUBLIC MEN MISS THE WAY—PAUPERISM AND UNEMPLOYMENT A RESULT OF EXISTING CONDITIONS —A PROPER APPRECIATION OF CAUSE AND EFFECT ESSENTIAL

“FREE-TRADE and Pauperism,” and “Free-trade and Unemployment” are often bracketed together by anti-Free-traders, and the facts which follow would seem to offer irrefutable evidence of the justness of the charge.

The people know only too well that abnormal poverty dogs their footsteps with the pertinacity of a bloodhound, and, turn whichever way they will, this fell presence is always on their track.

They have realised for many years that every trade, profession, and industry in this country has been so over-crowded, that EMPLOYMENT has been hard to get and difficult to retain, even by skilled men, in what are regarded as safe positions—witness the comparatively recent discharges from the Woolwich Arsenal, and the necessity for immediate exodus to Germany and other countries which followed, because firms in the same line of business could offer the men no employment.

They know that every Government for the last fifty years or more has been at its wits' end to decide what to do with the ever-increasing burden of pauperism, which has settled upon the country with crushing effect, and yet the burden grows, and its weight becomes heavier.

TAX-PAYERS RECOGNISE “NECESSITY” FOR POVERTY

The tax-paying community have seen that, owing to its constant presence in their midst, the people have actually come to regard this foul thing as something that *must* be, even, indeed, to accept it as a *necessity*, and beyond grumbling at the financial strain which their acquiescence in the matter

involves, they do nothing to relieve themselves of this monstrous incubus.

The Government of the day, seeing this unfortunate attitude on the part of the people and the tax-payers, and moved thereto by Machiavelian political considerations, naturally shape their course accordingly by imposing upon the latter those heavy burdens called POOR-RATES, which now amount to the stupendous sum of £34,926,280 (nearly *thirty-five millions sterling* annually), half of which is actually expended yearly on the upkeep of our pauper establishments.

The people have assumed this strangely anomalous attitude in regard to PAUPERISM, because every Government that has been in power since the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 has led them to believe that pauperism is there by *constitutional right*, and cannot be done away with.

The Government of that day thought they had improved the Pauper Laws by their new Act, and perhaps they had; but they had never dreamed that future Governments would take out of the pockets of the people the colossal sum of thirty-five millions sterling annually for pauper relief. Nor did the people for a moment realise that in LEGALISING POVERTY, PAUPERISM would, in the next generation, grow into one of the biggest NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, demanding for its maintenance several millions more than are spent on the Army, and even more than is spent on our Navy—the most powerful in the World.

Here is a monstrous anomaly, and yet the thing goes on because of the self-interest of Governments and the ignorance and apathy of the people.

It has been truly said that—

“It is the people who really make the laws of the land; so it is the people who have first to be influenced, and then the necessary laws will come into being.”

THE PEOPLE MUST FIRST BE CONVINCED

Convince the people that pauperism, as we know it, is nothing but a foul growth on the body politic; that *poverty* even is preventable, and the country will soon witness a wonderful change, not only in our Poor Laws, but in the attitude of the people themselves towards the entire question.

Poverty, in an acute form, is no more necessary than drunkenness is a necessity, and it is time we recognised this fact.

Make it clear to the people that, if the two great parties in the House would but sink their differences for a brief space

and act together for once for the public good, the many difficulties which beset the workers of this country would speedily disappear. The pressure of public opinion thus set up would soon prove too strong even for that powerful party spirit which exercises so baleful an influence over national affairs.

Hitherto the concentrated weight of party influence has always kept in subjection that scattered, although infinitely greater power—public opinion—but if the British people are wise they will insist upon a complete reversal of this abnormal and destructive state of affairs.

We can prevent poverty and kill pauperism with the greatest possible ease, but we must first of all discover the source from which poverty and its attendant horrors spring, before we may hope to cut off the evil. We have looked for, and are still looking for, the source of these curses to our country in the wrong direction, and we have failed to find it.

HOW PUBLIC MEN MISS THE WAY

Statesmen, writers on political economy, publicists, Members of Parliament, and Ministers of Government, are all seeking for the solution of the problem in unlikely spots, trying to unlock the door with a key that will not fit; and they might just as well abandon the task.

Mr. Balfour, in speaking against the second reading of the Small Landholders (Scotland) Bill, April 30, 1907, is reported to have said—

“They (the Government) increased the difficulty by bringing people, in the ordinary phrase, ‘back to the land,’ because when agriculture went through a period of depression it was inevitable that the people would have to seek other occupations in other places. It was a result of simple and well-known economic causes, which, although of the greatest possible importance in the consideration of this subject, were constantly left out of account.”

It is very clear from this that that eminent statesman does not regard the deplorable state of labour and the whole question affecting employment and poverty as anomalous, or due to anything else than—

“A result of simple and well-known economic causes.”

Mr. John Burns, who took part in one of the meetings of the Imperial Conference at the Colonial Office on April 25, 1907, proposed—

“That it is desirable to encourage British emigrants to proceed to British Colonies rather than Foreign countries; and that the Imperial Government be requested to co-operate with any Colonies desiring immigrants in assisting suitable persons to emigrate.”

And the Conference passed the resolution unanimously.

Here, then, we have two notable examples of how statesmen regard this matter.

Firstly, we have the Leader of the Opposition encouraging belief in the selfsame remedial measures that have persistently failed the country for more than half a century; and then we find a Cabinet Minister suggesting the only remedy *he* can think of—the suicidal course of emigration—as a solution of the problem.

Here is what a political economist has to say on the subject. In the *Daily Mail* of September 8, 1908, we find this:—

UNEMPLOYMENT

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE PROBLEM AND ITS VICTIMS

“Here is a huge question affecting the vitals of the nation—a question forcing itself within the scope of practical politics and upon the treatment of which must largely depend our industrial efficiency and political purity—and yet it is evident that few, if any, of our statesmen, politicians, or reformers, possess any true conception of the problem, or any intimate knowledge of the conditions and needs of the victims. This lack of knowledge is dangerous, for it may result in the application of some false and mischievous remedy. Let the fallacies be cleared up and the facts stated.”

“It is not wild exaggeration, but a sane and sober statement of a demonstrable fact to say that we starve, pauperise, exile, and drive to suicide more willing workers than any other country.”

“This is a human as well as an economic problem, and unless we recognise and admit the cardinal points involved it is useless to attempt a solution. To lessen unemployment we need expansion of our productive industries, and to mitigate the evils of unemployment we need insurance.”

The article is too long to quote *in extenso*, but it is evident that the writer feels his subject keenly, and is earnestly desirous of removing this curse of unemployment, and all that it involves, which has descended as a deadly blight upon the British people. His REMEDY, however, would prove as ineffectual as such remedies always *have* proved, because he relies upon PRODUCTIVE INDUSTRIES for *help, and upon them alone*.

PRODUCTIVE INDUSTRIES NO AVAIL WITHOUT AGRICULTURE

Is it not clear to every living soul who is not swayed by party considerations, and who is determined to look at this vital question from a rational, common-sense point of view, that it is because our *productive industries* have failed us we are in this sad plight; because our trades, professions, and our productive industries combined have failed to afford employment to our men and women that this dread thing has come upon us?

And yet, when a reformer comes along, when an economist takes up his pen to aid in the solution of the problem, we get nothing but the old platitudes about the necessity of *improving and developing our productive industries*.

Here are a few more references to the subject.

"The Board of Trade Returns show that unemployment, more especially in the shipbuilding and engineering centres, is already great and is on the increase. Two years ago the percentage of unemployment in the shipbuilding trade unions was 7·2 per cent. In July of the present year it had risen to 21·9—more than three times as high. . . . It is possible for the Government to provide some measure of alleviation for this deplorable state of affairs." *

The foregoing is an extract from that journal's leader of that date entitled, "Matters of Moment."

THE NAVY AND UNEMPLOYED

The article then advocates a more liberal war-shipbuilding programme as a means of affording employment and relieving distress.

Another of our London dailies suggests similar remedies.

"'The question of unemployment,' it has been said, 'is at the root of all the social reforms of our time,' and it is, therefore, not surprising that it should have engaged so much of the attention of the Trades Union Congress. At Nottingham yesterday that body passed a resolution declaring that the Government must find 'work of public utility' for all sections of unemployed men and women. The position will be admitted by all to be serious. The depression in the shipping trade, and the sudden cessation of orders for new ships, have caused immense suffering in the great cities on the sea-board. In Liverpool, according to official returns, one man in ten of the working population is without work. In Glasgow the proportion is even higher. The monthly reports of the Board of Trade show that the tide of distress is steadily rising, and in July more

* *Daily Express*, Sept. 11, 1908.

than eight per cent. of trades unionists, the aristocracy of labour, were unemployed."

"It would further relieve the distress in those centres where the suffering is greatest, and would relieve it in the best way, by giving work to the industrious and independent artisan. Each Dreadnought built means an outlay of two millions, four-fifths of which goes directly in wages to the worker. Finally, such a course has the advantage of economy. Materials are now at the lowest figure, contracts could be cheaply placed, and the work could be executed with expedition."

"It is surely the duty of any Government to place its contracts in such a way as to minimise unemployment. The winter before the country must, it is to be feared, in any event prove a black one. But the worst suffering would be alleviated by large orders for the Royal Navy. We want ships, yet we have thousands of shipwrights unemployed. It would be wiser and kinder to set these unemployed to build the ships, rather than to lavish money upon schemes providing artificial work which is not really required, and which the men in question cannot accomplish because it is not one of the kind to which they are accustomed." *

ANOTHER EXAMPLE. FLIGHT FROM ENGLAND

Here is another contribution on the same subject:—

"FLIGHT FROM ENGLAND

TEN BRITISH EMIGRANTS TO ONE GERMAN

"The extent of unemployment in the United Kingdom, and its inevitable corollary, emigration, is shown in a striking article in yesterday's *Pall Mall Gazette*, which declares that in the last few years, in proportion to population, for every man who has emigrated from Germany ten have left the United Kingdom.

"The following table, which shows that in the last eight or nine years the percentage of unemployment among trade unionists, and the number of emigrants, has more than doubled, is an overwhelming answer to the Cobdenites:—

	Trade Unionists Unemployed.	Emigrants.	Paupers Relieved July 1st.
1900	2.9 p.c.	168,000	761,000
1901	3.8 "	171,000	778,000
1902	4.4 "	205,000	798,000
1903	5.1 "	259,000	806,000
1904	6.5 "	271,000	836,000
1905	5.4 "	262,000	869,000
1906	4.1 "	325,000	865,000
1907	4.2 "	375,000	868,000
1908 (First half)	7.2 "	—	—

* *Daily Mail*, Sept. 11, 1908.

"While we have been shedding our people at the rate of 5000 a week," says the *Pall Mall*, "the United States has been absorbing immigrants at the rate of 20,000 a week.

"As a matter of hard, indisputable fact, in no other country possessing an industrious and skilful population, has it been possible, in recent years, to find so many unemployed, so many beggars, so many paupers, or so many persons preparing to emigrate, as in the Free-trading United Kingdom." *

We may now cull one or two references to the subject from the doings of what is called the "aristocracy of our workers," the Trades Unionists, to see if there is any hope in that direction of a just appreciation of the causes which lie at the root of these difficulties and dangers which are causing so much concern to them and to the whole country besides.

HOW TRADE UNIONISTS MISS THE WAY

The following is from the reports of the Trades Unions Congress at Nottingham (September, 1908):—

"Mr. Pete Curran, M.P., said the industrial world was face to face with one of the most pathetic sights that has ever been experienced during the industrial history of this country. 'We have trade in its normal state,' he went on, 'and at the same time, in the month of September, we have hundreds, nay, thousands, of men all over the country clamouring at the doors of municipal buildings and demanding that the local authorities shall do something to find them employment. If that state of affairs exists in September, what may we expect during December and January?'

"'If the Government is not prepared to do something, then there is a probability that, owing to the indifference of the Government, thousands of hungry men, anxious and willing to work, may attempt to do something for themselves. If anything of that character occurs, we in the House cannot be blamed. We have done our utmost on every conceivable occasion to point out to the Government the seriousness of this great problem.'

"Many workmen believed the present state of affairs to be purely a matter of trade depression, and that when that was past the unemployed would again be absorbed. 'Don't labour under that delusion,' cried Mr. Curran. 'The industrial problem cannot be settled except the machinery of legislation is utilised for the purpose.'

"Mr. Will Thorne, M.P., said the resolution did not say a single word about the cause of unemployment. The reasons were the speeding up of machinery and the introduction of new inventions. One of the best palliatives was a reduction of hours in all trades. (Hear, hear.)

* *Daily Express*, August 11, 1908.

“‘Eventually,’ exclaimed the hon. Member for South West Ham, ‘the workers will have to tackle the question of machinery—not to destroy it, but to capture it, and have it worked and controlled for the benefit of the whole community.’” *

Mr. Shackleton, M.P., Secretary of the Darwen Weavers’ Association, has the following:—

“Dealing with unemployment, he (Mr. Shackleton) appealed to all who think well of their country to join in ‘finding some plan by which the man and woman willing and able to work may be permitted to provide that which is required to maintain them in reasonable comfort.’”

SHORTER HOURS

A loud cheer endorsed Mr. Shackleton’s next observation—

“I cannot help feeling that the first step to real and effective alteration must be in the direction of reducing the hours of labour of those who are in employment. A sincere effort should be made to stop all systematic overtime. A few hours overtime a week in a great industry means thousands going without work entirely.” *

NO GLIMMERING OF THE TRUTH IN ANY DIRECTION

From none of these references to what might justly be regarded as *the most momentous question of the day* do we catch even a glimmering of the truth. Neither from politicians, political economists, statesmen, nor from the leaders of the great Labour Party of the country; nor from journalists or other shapers and leaders of public opinion, is there the faintest indication that the source of our troubles has been discovered. We go on dealing with effects without concerning ourselves at all with the cause, and we simply—fail! So surely as the tides return, so do these labour troubles return to confound us year by year, and yet the *fons et origo* of unemployment remains unsought and uncared for.

Is there no power in this world that will arouse the people of this country to a sense of the utter incongruity of the entire question; to the eternal unfitness which characterises every feature of the grotesque figure we have contrived to create out of our perplexities in dealing with POVERTY and the UNEMPLOYED QUESTION?

Shall we never learn to understand that if we do not cultivate our garden patch it remains sterile and unproductive,

* *Daily Chronicle*, September 11, 1903.

producing neither food for, nor affording employment to, any member of the household. If we do cultivate it, it yields its constant supplies of spring onions, radishes, cabbages, and potatoes, and affords lucrative employment for at least one member of the family during his spare hours.

Cannot we be brought to realise that if we do not cultivate our fields, those thousands and millions of fertile fields which are now lying broadcast but sterile over the length and breadth of the country, or at all events, producing nothing but grass, we shall neither produce food for, nor afford employment to, the people?

It is estimated by the most competent authorities that the agricultural industry of this country employs, supports and feeds about 5,000,000 of people, and that if our fields were cultivated, as they are in Germany or France, they would employ, support and feed from 12,000,000 to 16,000,000 of the population.

Does it not then become startlingly clear that if our land industry provides for but 5,000,000 of our people, when it ought to provide for, say, 14,000,000, something abnormal *must* happen?

NO EMPLOYMENT. PEOPLE MUST EMIGRATE OR STARVE

Does it not also become apparent that these millions which the great land industry ought to absorb, but does not, must necessarily be thrown back upon the remaining forms of occupations—the trades, professions, manufacturing and other industries; and does it not follow in logical sequence that if these other occupations cannot absorb and find work for these millions let loose from agriculture they must either emigrate or—starve?

That they do both is proved by the statement of emigration and pauperism just referred to, while it is beyond dispute that the *primum mobile* of the fierce propaganda of modern Socialism is to be found in the unemployment, degradation and misery of the people.

And yet, in spite of all these things; in spite of the vast array of facts and arguments in favour of the people “coming into their own”—the land and all that it yields, all that it means to them and theirs; in spite of the deadly peril there is to the country in this everlasting unemployed question and the eternal discontent that proceeds therefrom; in spite of the ever present menace to the commonweal, which springs out of that political unrest born of the wrongs of a nation: the *people's* interests remain neglected.

The Tories will not have drastic land reform because of *their* vested interests; the Liberals will not bring it in because they fear they might be unseated in the process; the Labourites never refer to it as forming a prominent part of *their* reform programme because, in their fight with Capitalism, their eyes are blinded to facts; and the Socialists will only have it provided they can "boss the show" by forcing holders, small or great, to become State tenants at will.

And so Demos, instead of reigning as sovereign, postures as—slave.

MR. BALFOUR'S EXTRAORDINARY CONTENTION

We might here consider Mr. Balfour's extraordinary statement that—

"They (the Government) increased the difficulty by bringing people, in the ordinary phrase, back to the land," etc.

Now, of all charges that may be brought against the party, this surely is the most remarkably illogical one that could be devised. How are we to have agriculture unless we begin by putting people on the land?

How are we to increase and develop it unless we supply it with workers?

How are we to have our manufacturing industries unless we build our factories and put "hands" into them. And how are we to increase our existing industries and trades unless we send to them the necessary complement of labour?

To predict difficulties in agriculture because we supply that industry with one of the essentials to success—labour—is, *ceteris paribus*, to prophesy evil to our manufacturing industries, because we supply them with the necessary workers. Mr. Balfour cannot blow hot and cold with the same breath. Agriculture, like every other industry in this world, must take its chance, and bear its ups and downs like everything else in life. What we have to do is to start it on its way, give it every chance of success, and then let it run alone. Mr. Balfour and his Party need have no misgivings on this point, because agriculture is not only capable of drawing off all those who are unemployed to-day, but millions of the population of this country besides.

There is, however, a note in Mr. Balfour's utterance that is far more alarming than his ill-grounded predictions about difficulties arising through sending the people "back to the land," and that is the baneful effect of his own policy when he and his Party are again in power.

If Mr. Balfour, in opposition, sees danger in developing agriculture, what course is Mr. Balfour, as Prime Minister, likely to take? If Mr. Balfour, as Leader of the Opposition, denounces "back to the land" as a harmful measure, Mr. Balfour's Government is hardly likely to take those steps to put the great land industry of the country in that position which it must attain before the people can find relief from the sore troubles that beset them.

If Mr. Balfour is really sincere in believing what he stated, or was reported to have stated, and has, moreover, the courage of his convictions, then it is as clear as daylight that if that gentleman is returned to power, and provided his Party share his beliefs, a black day will dawn for England. The only hope for the people is through the land, and, if the way be barred—God help them.*

The following appeared in a former work by the writer, and was applicable to the early part of 1907. We reproduce it in proof of the ever-recurring nature of this wretched unemployed question, and in evidence of the fact that in seeking for a solution of the difficulty, the press generally ignores agriculture as a factor in the situation.

THE WOOLWICH ARSENAL INCIDENT

"In connection with the Woolwich Arsenal, the *Daily Express* published the following article, which is given *in extenso*, to show how severely the land is left alone as having no part in the labour question :—

FREE TRADE

WHAT IT HAS DONE FOR THE MEN OF WOOLWICH

A CONTRAST

NO WORK TO BE HAD IN ENGLAND

PROTECTED AMERICA WANTS MEN

STRIKING LESSON

"Remarkable developments have arisen in connection with the unemployment at Woolwich.

"*The Express* dispatched yesterday a number of telegrams to private engineers on the Government list, in the hope of finding work for the discharged mechanics and labourers.

"The firms communicated with were among those in the engineering branches mentioned by the Prime Minister on Monday as enjoying especially good trade.

* Mr. Balfour's present policy, as declared in his Birmingham speech of 22nd September, is in favour of considerable extensions of the *peasant-ownership* principle, which is satisfactory so far as it goes.

"The replies were of a very significant character, and form a strikingly unfavourable commentary on the Prime Minister's statement. There is no work for additional men ; in fact, in most cases, men are being dismissed.

"We print by way of contrast with the telegrams, a striking dispatch from our New York correspondent, on conditions in the American engineering trade. It is stated that the unemployed British skilled workmen could find plenty of work in the United States."

NO WORK

The message telegraphed to the firms in question was in the following terms :—

"Could you find employment for one hundred skilled workmen from Woolwich ?"

Sir W. G. Armstrong, Whitworth & Co., the celebrated engineering firm, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, wired back the following reply :—

"We regret the suggestion is at present impossible, as we are obliged to pay off hands every week."

Messrs Kynoch, of Birmingham, replied—

"In reply to your telegram, we have to say that, in consequence of Government action, there is more scarcity of employment, and consequently more suffering among our own people than is the case at Woolwich."

"Can you provide employment for five hundred of our skilled workpeople ?"

Messrs. Vickers, Sons & Maxim reply from their works at Erith—

"No. We are discharging men, owing to slackness of work."

The same firm's headquarters at Barrow state :—

"We cannot find work for men from Woolwich, because, if Government demands continue as at present, we fear we cannot help the men we already have employed."

The Woolwich labour troubles offered a splendid thesis for an academical work on the subject, but the Press failed to grasp the opportunity.

Whichever way we turn, we are met by the same trend of thought in respect to labour—the manufactures and trades are regarded as the *only* means of employment, in spite of the fact that they persistently fail us, and so—we go on missing the way.

WHAT OTHER NATIONS DO

Let us now turn to other countries to see what they do there.

Much is made by economists of the marvellous industrial prosperity of Germany, the United States, and other civilised countries, and with very good reason. Phenomenal progress

has been made in these countries, but *we* can also point to enormous commercial and industrial expansion. Considerable expansion has, in fact, been experienced during the last few years in practically all the great trading States of the world, and, *per se*, this is neither remarkable nor significant.

There are, however, certain factors in the position which *are* of remarkable significance, and we must not ignore them if we are determined to sift this matter to the bottom.

Industrial expansion in Germany and the United States is not attended by permanently congested labour markets and consequent *permanent* unemployment, *because such a condition would be impossible in those countries to-day.*

In both Germany and the United States, industries are *united* to agriculture, and each assists the other. In Germany, for example, we find from "The Statesman's Year Book, 1906," that her farms supported 18,066,663 persons, of whom 8,156,045 were actually working upon them.

The land industry provides for *eighteen millions* of the population, and the rest is simple enough. Agriculture, in short, draws away so many workers that *all other industries find it difficult to obtain the necessary supply of labour.*

In these countries, as in all other countries of the world, agriculture is the *chief* industry, and all others are subsidiary to it.

In our country the land is not so regarded; agriculture and manufactures are not allied, but *divorced*. They are not sister industries helping each other by natural affinities, but living apart and working independently of each other. There is no bond of sympathy and strength between them, and because there is no unity the nation suffers.

We are the only people in the world who have attempted to make manufactures rank first in the national industries and placed agriculture as of secondary importance in the economy of life. Ours is the only country in the world that has attempted to alter the course of a natural LAW by making the great LAND INDUSTRY subservient to minor industries.

That we have signally failed, as we deserved to fail, needs no further proof than is afforded by the many signs of the times, which are manifest enough even to the most casual observer.

Ours is a nation that stands apart from all others, in that we have been infatuated enough to believe that we should find *universal* riches and prosperity in Cobden's singularly bold idea that we should become the lords of manufacture, and that we could live and become great on these alone.

Richard Cobden's was truly a lofty ideal, but only an ideal.

He left out of calculation the simple fact that before we could become lords of manufacture we must first of all become lords of the earth—and that we are a long way off that consummation needs no emphasising,—and because we are not lords of the earth we must obviously fail in compelling the nations to come our way, to do as we do—to do, in fact, as we should like them to do.

That we have failed all along the line; that our splendid schemes and soaring aspirations after a unique position in the history of the world have burst like airy bubbles, is, alas! only too visible to even the meanest intelligence.

WIDESPREAD POVERTY INSTEAD OF UNIVERSAL RICHES

Instead of universal riches and prosperity, we have reaped widespread poverty and distress. Instead of becoming lords of manufacture, our country is the common “dumping-ground” for the manufactured wares of our foreign rivals. Instead of good wages and general employment, there is “sweating” and *unemployment*. Instead of home industries supporting our own people, they are obliged to seek work in Germany and elsewhere. And, worst of all, instead of the Mother Country holding out a helping hand to the best and readiest, the strongest and fittest of her sons and daughters, they are obliged to leave the land they love, and seek their bread in lands that are free from these old worn-out ideas which have wrought such incalculable harm to the British people.

This is the central fact that runs right through the position like the warp of a piece of cloth, and crosses and recrosses it like the weft, and unless we pick up these threads and weave them together in a practical manner, we shall never succeed in doing good work.

Governments, statesmen, publicists, and economists have all missed the way, because for various reasons they have never gathered up the right threads into their hands; and it is certain that until they do so, and then dexterously manipulate the shuttle, *they will continue to fail*.

What is wanted here is a broad, lofty conception of PATRIOTISM; that noble feeling which will make a man get up in his place in Parliament and declare boldly what is in his heart, and not a narrow slavish adherence to party.

We have now carried this part of our subject far enough to show there is no indication that this all-absorbing question has been understood by any or all of those who, providing they could be made to see the gravity of the case, and assuming that they would even then care to do so, have

really the power to right the wrong from which the people are suffering.

The Government, the Opposition, and the other political parties in Parliament and out of it, the press, political economists, and the great army of speakers and writers who never fail in suggesting remedies, may spend huge sums in useless relief works, or still vaster sums in endowing our warship industry with fictitious energy; philanthropists, struck with the pathos of the situation, may increase their generous doles; public and private charity may multiply its beneficence, and between them all many extra *millions* may be raised annually; but all this mighty effort will be of no avail, because we are still dealing with *effects* rather than *causes*.

DISEASE TOO DEEP-SEATED TO YIELD TO PALLIATIVES

There are diseases in the body politic, as in the corporal body, that yield readily to certain treatment, while there are others which defy treatment by the usual processes of the *materia medica*. The question we are considering is a case in point; this disease of unemployment and poverty is too deep-seated in the national body to be relieved by the many palliatives that are constantly being tried: and yet we go on trying them year after year.

This form of treatment is not only futile: it is wrong and cruel. It is wrong, nay, well-nigh criminal, to spend millions of the tax-payers' money year after year with reckless disregard of consequences, and with the knowledge that it is spent in vain; while it is cruel to keep vast bodies of men and women in a state of semi-destitution and unemployment, when a just appreciation of the requirements of the case would at once supply the remedy.

NO HOPE FOR THE PEOPLE IF THEIR RULERS IGNORE FACTS

Attention is again called to the fact that the land of the United Kingdom employs, supports, and feeds 5,000,000 of the population, when it ought to maintain from 12,000,000 to 16,000,000 (according to the system of agriculture employed); and if the public men of this country, who shape its destinies, will persist in ignoring this supreme verity which governs the entire position, there is really no hope for the people, now or in the future. There is no chance of saving the man who, before he casts himself into the sea from the deck of an ocean liner, swallows a deadly dose of poison, nor is there any chance of saving a country whose rulers and public men are possessed

with the same insensate ideas as the unfortunate suicide. Sanity among the rulers is of more importance and a greater necessity than it is among the ruled, and before the former cast their stones at the latter for drunkenness, thriftlessness, and the rest of it, they should be sure that they themselves are free from blame.

The great agricultural industry of this country has been, and is being, left out of all the calculations of Governments and politicians, and until they bring it *into* their calculations, and make it the pivot upon which turn all national affairs, and then regard it as the people's chiefest good and the nation's pabulum, they will, as of necessity they must, fail to find a remedy for the evils of unemployment and the curse of poverty.

CHAPTER XIV

UNEMPLOYMENT—CONGESTION IN TRADES, PROFESSIONS, AND INDUSTRIES—CAUSE AND EFFECT—WHO AND WHAT ARE TO BLAME ?

EMPLOYMENT and all that it involves is one of the most important factors in the domestic economy of the human race, and yet it remains one of the least understood problems of daily life. With the exception of that comparatively small section of what is called the—favoured few ; that is to say, that gilded band of monied idlers of whom it may be said—"work is not their earthly portion," every human entity is personally and particularly interested in this vast question of EMPLOYMENT. This ubiquitous quality has the mercurial properties of quicksilver, and it will be found in every grade of society running hither and thither, touching every human being and trickling over into every highway and byway of human life. The Bank Manager and the Chief Secretary of a great public company are as much interested in this all-embracing question as the poor typewriter or the shabby clerk ; while the Board of Directors, sitting in their sumptuously appointed Board room, shaping the destinies of vast industrial enterprises, are not a whit less affected by it than the sweating, toiling thousands in mill or factory whom they control.

WORK—MAN'S PORTION

LABOUR is man's portion, and it is a good and a fitting portion ; for a man without work is like a ship without a rudder. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground," said the old Commandment ; and whether or not we believe in the old story of man's first disobedience and the "curse" which followed it, the fact that our lot is—TOIL, is patent enough to all. The millionaire and the beggar, the pauper and the prince, noble and simple, the poor matchbox makers and the *grande dame*, the miller and the

miner; our workers in every trade and industry throughout the country; clerks, shop-assistants, actors, artists, barristers, doctors, parsons, and every man, woman and child in the kingdom, are all more or less touched by, and personally interested in, this great question of LABOUR; WORK; EMPLOYMENT, or whatever term we prefer to use, and yet—although it be as widespread as ocean and as essential to human existence as the air we breathe—it is, alas! as little understood by the vast majority of the people as though it were some abstruse astronomical problem, or some far away—unknown quantity.

Work and employment have, at all events, been accepted by man as a fitting destiny, and, as a rule, it may be said that the lot has been cheerfully accepted and courageously borne, while it may be truthfully added that—it is not labour man fears, but the lack of it; not employment that he dreads, but—UNEMPLOYMENT.

Employ the people, and let the employment be lucrative and universal, and peace—as far as it is humanly possible to ensure that blessed quantity in this turbulent world—reigns supreme; but create *unemployment* by the means of unwise laws and fatuous administration, and DEMOS becomes restive, discontented and dangerous.

WHO ARE LABOUR'S ENEMIES?

Work, then, is man's destined lot; his inheritance, and his—RIGHT, and, this being so, it is necessary that every precaution should be taken by one and all, especially by those charged with the government of the country and the administration of popular affairs, to ensure for the people the means of employment, as well as of its stability. To encompass this condition, which is essential to the well-being of the body politic as food is to material man, it becomes obvious that no means to this end should be neglected, no source of employment overlooked, and no trade, profession or industry sacrificed. Everything that in any way tends, directly or indirectly, to help in the creation of new sources of employment, or the maintenance of old ones, should be carefully noted and jealously conserved, and no earthly consideration should be permitted, for a single instant, to influence, even by a hair's breadth, those who are entrusted by the people with the management of the people's affairs. Any measure that may be taken by those in authority, for the time being, that would tend to deprive them of employment, would be inimical to the people themselves, and therefore, *de facto*, an act of hostility to the commonwealth. Every unrepealed Act standing on the national Statute book to-day,

which is known to be working injuriously to national interests, is as much an injustice and a grievous wrong to the people as though the rulers of the land took horse and foot and swept the country, spoiling the people of their possessions and rendering "Right to work" impossible. Every member of Parliament, whether of the Lords or Commons, knows full well the difficulties which beset labour, the ever-present menace of UNEMPLOYMENT, and the grave dangers to the national prosperity and the national peace arising therefrom, and yet—he makes no sign! In this negative attitude he evinces no desire to relieve the situation, and therefore shows a callous disregard of the people's wrongs amounting to positive inimicality to their interests. Every economist, and "scientific" writer on this vast yet simple question of the people's employment; every "learned professor" who makes his home among cults and "ologies" and "isms" of all sorts and conditions; and every man who, out of the subtlety of his own intellect, his love of contention, or who for any other cause helps to still further increase the difficulties with which this elementary subject has been already invested by a host of controversialists: would be as much an enemy of the people of this country as though he deliberately plotted their destruction.

LABOUR QUESTION SORELY MISUNDERSTOOD

This perfectly simple question of—*how to employ the people*, has, during the last two or three decades, been made the centre of so much disputation, political trickery, and class interests; it has been so pulled and hauled about to serve the interests of this party or the other; it has been made so to serve the Free-trader at one time and the Protectionist at another, and has become so battered and disfigured in the process, that no man now-a-days recognises it for the question it really is. It has been lifted entirely out of its native region and planted amid surroundings that are as foreign to its nature as the arid wastes of Sahara would be to the Alpine rose.

It has been pointed out in these pages that the trouble arose because we disobeyed one of Nature's simple laws—a fundamental error in simple economy which can be remedied with perfect ease. In other words, we foolishly cut off, sixty years ago, the people's chief source of employment—agriculture—and from that time the mischief commenced. Year by year, more and more land went out of cultivation, and more and more people were thrown out of employment. For a time all went well, because our growing trade and expanding manufactures absorbed the overflow of labour from the land; but now it is

clear that both trade and manufactures have got to the end of their tether, and plainly declare that—*they can absorb no more labour as every department of both trade and industries is terribly congested, and that they themselves have been obliged to disgorge, and will in all probability have to disgorge still more of the assimilated labour, as the competition of foreign nations in the world's market is seriously interfering with British trade.*

A SIMPLE SOLUTION OF THE LABOUR PROBLEM

This is the question, and surely a simpler problem was never propounded to the human race. If you draw away millions of the agriculturists for your manufacturing industries, and after a time find your trades and manufactures are incapable of employing, supporting, and feeding all your town-bred and added rural labour, then in the name of all that is wonderful why don't you send them back to the land? This is, naturally, the only question that another country, for example, would ask of the one in the position indicated; indeed, what other question *could* they ask? It is the question they would put to themselves if they were in our plight. It is the question that one man would put to another if a friend were in a similar plight. It is the question we ought to put to ourselves, not once, but often; not one day, but every day. It is the question that should ever be on our lips and in our hearts; it should ring out at all times and at all seasons with the clearness of the clarion and with the insistence of the alarm bell. It should be thrust before the noses of politicians by the people, till Parliament, out of very shame, would have to yield to the popular tumult, and then—*the people would come into their own, but not till then.*

THE QUESTION ANSWERED

This is the answer to the question, the solution of the problem, yet, withal, a problem of so simple a nature, that a child, even, might have solved it, were it not for the thousand and one difficulties with which it has been invested by a multitude of people with a multitude of interests to serve.

This unfortunate question has been made the subject of such a mass of polemics, of such wide controversy; has become the centre of so much intrigue; of political strife and party warfare; of unseemly wrangling and "scientific" speculation; while it is moreover, so little understood, even by the vast majority of the better class people, that there is no wonder it is to-day the pivot upon which turns most of the political and social unrest

of the times. That it has assumed an air of importance that would be as ridiculous as a screaming farce, were it not fraught with a danger so menacing as to threaten to overturn much of the established order of things, there can be no question; and unless the people themselves recognise the true position of affairs and supply the remedy by insisting, once for all, on—*the cultivation of the soil*, no relief will be forthcoming.

It is, then, the soil, the land, agriculture, that can relieve the strain, and give to the people of this sorely misgoverned and party-ridden country, that stable and lucrative employment which is more their right to have and to hold in perpetual possession, than it is the right of those set in authority over them to withhold it from them. The land is the chief source of employment in every country in the world but ours, and the chief source of wealth-production; and, what is better still—*the chief means of its even distribution*. Unless the people insist on agricultural conditions being set up here similar to those which obtain in every State in Europe—conditions which ensure universal and profitable employment, this UNEMPLOYED question, which is a rank injustice to the masses, a sore burden to tax and rate-payers, and a veritable curse to the country, will not, and cannot, be relieved.

UGLY COMPARISONS

Here is a statement showing how carefully other countries use their land as a means of employing and supporting the people, and how recklessly and shamefully we neglect and abuse it, and although this is but a reiteration of what has been said on the subject in another chapter, the gravity of the situation will excuse the repetition.

Country.	Acres under cultivation Including Permanent Pasturage and Forests.	Number of Persons Employed.	Persons Employed per every 100 acres.
United Kingdom . . .	49,611,589	2,262,452	4.58
Germany	99,759,326	8,156,317	8.20
France	107,992,900	8,430,059	7.80
Belgium	4,362,766	449,902	10.30
Hungary	56,850,276	6,055,390	10.65

Amid general misunderstandings and unnatural surroundings, then, this simple question is made to exist, and most unnatural means are resorted to in regard to its treatment. Nobody seems to recognise that employment is a simple result

of something else, a mere matter of—CAUSE and EFFECT. It is generally regarded as a foul but inevitable growth of modern life, requiring special treatment, and all sorts of novel and costly experiments are constantly being tried in the hope that the evil may be removed. It is just here that well-meaning philanthropists do incalculable harm by failing to perceive that their generous efforts to mitigate an ever-present and ever-growing evil only serve to maintain a grievous wrong done to the people in 1846, a wrong which all the Governments since that day have done nothing but perpetuate.

No Government of the past has cared—or dared—to tackle the question in a frank, whole-hearted manner that would open the eyes of the public to the *real* source of unemployment and acute distress, and no Government of to-day, or to-morrow, will be found a whit readier to tackle it, because of VESTED INTERESTS. The *landed* interest is well represented in both Lords and Commons, and where shall be found an Administration, whether Radical or Conservative, courageous enough to beard the lion in both Houses of Parliament? Every Government—Tory or Radical—is ready enough to devote large sums of public money in mitigation of a public nuisance, and is willing enough to encourage philanthropists to the same futile line of action, because by these means they have been enabled to stave off the evil day which they knew must dawn sooner or later. A general awakening is, however, at hand, and the Government will have to render an account of its stewardship.

Let us call to our aid some of that sapience which is said to be among the characteristics of the British race, and put an end to this crass ignorance of a simple question, which is both grotesque and lamentable; and above all, let us sweep away that miasmatic atmosphere of chicanery and deceit which many politicians have created around it to obscure their own designs.

HOW TO REDEEM THE WRONG

No help of a real, comprehensive and abiding nature can possibly come to this unemployed question save through—AGRICULTURE, and the sooner this simple fact is generally recognised, the sooner will come the people's redemption from a great wrong.

It is said by those who bolster up the present system, that other countries have their labour difficulties, and they cite our two great industrial competitors—Germany and the United States—in proof of their contention.

That both of these countries suffer at times from congestion of industrial labour, and that every country in the world which

has manufacturing industries, similarly suffers, is an indisputable fact; but to say that Germany, or America, or any industrial country in the civilised world suffers as acutely as Great Britain does, is to affirm that which is simply *untrue*.

These staunch advocates of a policy, under the ægis of which poverty has grown into a curse, and unemployment assumed the form of a national menace, should perceive, for example, that Germany's unemployment, commercial depression, and the bad time her trade is, or may be, passing through, are the inevitable results of commercialism and industrialism; and the more these expand the more labour will be drawn away from the land to meet the growing requirements. It naturally follows, then, that the more labour you import into industrialism, the more occupation you will have to provide for it; and if such occupation proves to be of a less stable nature than that of the industry from which you draw your supplies, *your trouble in respect to unemployment will be in exact proportion to the extent of your urban industries*, these being less stable than agriculture.

LABOUR DIFFICULTIES INCREASE PROPORTIONATELY TO INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION

This fact is being exemplified every day in every civilised country in the world that has "gone in" for manufacturing-industrialism, the most recent examples being in Germany and the United States, and whatever else may happen, it is certain that in such countries labour difficulties and unemployment will, moreover, be in almost the exact proportion to the *expansion* of such industries. This is not a paradox, but the result of a natural law.

If this section of the political world could be brought to look at this simple matter from a purely common-sense point of view, instead of from that which serves some purpose outside the broad interests of the country, they would at once perceive that any labour difficulties which arise in Germany, the United States, or any other *industrial* country, only serve to emphasise the necessity there is for the widest possible recourse to the land as—*the sole means of preventing them*. Labour troubles, it should be borne in mind, are born of urban industries rather than of rural pursuits, and whilst agriculture plays little or no part in them, it yet offers the sole means of their solution.

Here are a few headline specimens taken from the daily papers in the autumn of 1908, showing that we are once more face to face with the perilous condition caused by widespread

UNEMPLOYMENT, and that, with summer barely over, the distress is acute, and the entire position more fraught with difficulties than ever.

“ UNEMPLOYED DEMONSTRATORS RIDDEN DOWN
BATONS AS WEAPONS ”

(*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, Sept. 11, 1908.)

“ WORKLESS AND FOODLESS
SAD PLIGHT OF LIVERPOOL'S UNEMPLOYED
THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE ”

(*Liverpool Courier*, Sept. 11, 1908.)

“ 20,000 WORKERS IDLE AT LIVERPOOL ”

(*Yorkshire Post*, Sept. 11, 1908.)

“ £17,000 A WEEK LOST IN WAGES
STEADY DECLINE IN WORK IN THE CHIEF INDUSTRIES
GLOOMY FIGURES ”

(*Daily Express*, August 17, 1908.)

“ RUSH OF MEN SEEKING WORK
STARVING CHILDREN ”

(*Daily Mail*, Sept. 15, 1908.)

“ TWELVE MONTHS OF HORROR ”

(*Daily Telegraph*, Sept. 14, 1908.)

NOSTRUMS FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

Then we are treated to the usual nostrums which largely partake of expensive, useless, and unproductive *relief* works, which but add to the burden of tax-payers and rate-payers, without doing an atom of real good. Here are some references to these *relief measures*.

This is what the London County Council is doing :—

“The London County Council passed motions or accepted tenders for work which will enable the immediate expenditure of £160,000 for providing work for the unemployed.

“‘No subject has occupied our minds so fully since the Council resumed its sittings as the question of unemployment. It is a matter of the utmost anxiety to all of us,’”

said the Hon. William R. Peel, the leader of the Reform party in the Council.

Loans, which would provide work for the unemployed, increased by £1,703,959 between August 1 and November 21 this year, as compared with the same period of last year. The figures are—

Year.	Number.	Amount.
1907	24	£52,464
1908	307	£1,756,423 *

The Lewisham Borough Council, in reply to the suggestion of the Army Council that a supply of leaflets should be distributed on the subject of affording encouragement to the unemployed to join the Special Reserve, recommended—

“that the War Office be informed of what has been done with reference to its posters and leaflets, and that this Council is of opinion that it is necessary that the Territorial Forces should be properly and efficiently armed with modern artillery, and that proper ammunition columns should be provided; and that if this were carried into effect, employment could easily be found in this direction for about two thousand men in the Arsenal and dockyard at Woolwich, thus materially lessening the number of unemployed in that and the neighbouring boroughs.”

Philanthropy now comes in with a “Ball in Aid.”

“A ball in aid of the distressed unemployed will be held at the Empress Rooms, Kensington, on the 8th inst., commencing at half-past nine o’clock, under the patronage of the Countess of Westmorland,” etc.*

Here is another recent example which is referred to in no cavilling spirit, but partly with the object of pointing out how unlikely is all this philanthropic effort to afford anything but partial temporary relief to a national disease which is too deep-rooted in the lives of the people to be cured by such simple palliatives, and partly to emphasise the attitude of negation assumed towards this vital question by members of the House of Lords.

At a meeting of the “Church Army” at Lansdowne House, on December 1, 1908, Lord Lansdowne and Lord Cromer, in referring to the Unemployed question, said, respectively—

* *Daily Express*, November 23, 1908.

"It was an effect of a great many different, and in some cases, of obscure, causes, to try and unravel which was the business of Parliament."

"Unemployment had puzzled some of the most acute brains and warmest hearts."

It may be that this philanthropic meeting was not considered a fitting time and place by these eminent peers, to say a word that would help the position; but when brought face to face with it, as they were on that occasion, and they utter a few words which may mean anything or—nothing, it bodes ill for the settlement of a question than which there is none more important in this or in any other country.

NOSTRUMS EVEN FROM TRADES UNIONS

When we get right down to the bed-rock of labour itself, we find no more hope there than elsewhere. The Trade Union Congress at Nottingham, last September, were as bewildered in regard to an abiding cure for the disease as are other people. The feeble palliative of SHORTER HOURS was the only thing they could think of. Mr. Shackleton, M.P., the President of the Congress, dwelt on the necessity of—

"finding some plan by which the man or woman willing and able to work, may be permitted to find that which is required to maintain them in reasonable comfort. I cannot help feeling that the first step to real and effective alteration must be in the direction of reducing the hours of labour of those who are in employment. A sincere effort should be made to stop all systematic overtime. A few hours' overtime a week in a great industry means thousands going without work entirely."

This proposal of the President of a great "Labour Congress" was received with a *loud cheer*, denoting how completely the members were in agreement with the President's views.

LABOUR CONGRESS REMEDY AN ECONOMICAL ERROR

At first sight there seems to be nothing fundamentally wrong with this very natural proposal, nor does it seem to point to the existence of a huge economical blunder; but when it is examined closely, it becomes clear that it is based upon a misconception of certain economic facts, and it therefore involves an economic error of the first magnitude. To state that the vast, yet simple, problem of unemployment depends upon, and can be regulated and put right by curtailing the working hours, or by closing the overtime tap, is to affirm that you could empty the mighty waters of the ocean with a child's sand-bucket; and as long as the labour leaders and the labour party maintain this impractical and ostrich-like attitude, so long will

the trouble continue. To talk as the President of this Congress is reported to have done, is to "beg the question" in the first place, and then to reduce it to a dead level of absurdity. Most people who study the question nowadays know perfectly well that labour does not begin and end with those urban industries in which Mr. Shackleton and the Labour Party are chiefly interested, but that it ramifies through every section of workers, and roots deep down in the—LAND. The *land* is the source of all the troubles which beset labour, as it will be found to be the source of all remedial action, and the ultimate cure of the disease. It is to the LAND, then, they must direct their attention, and if they ignore this supreme fact which dominates the entire position, they simply—beg the question.

SHORTER HOURS AND NO OVERTIME NO REMEDY

Then to suppose that remedy lies in SHORTER HOURS or stoppage of OVERTIME, is to attack the leviathan with a knitting-needle. Congestion of labour exists because there are too many labourers and too few industries. To shorten the hours and to stop overtime is to reduce wages all round, and if you reduce wages you do not lessen the evil but *increase* it.

Not only do you add to the difficulty, but you destroy the freedom of the individual, and once you do this you interfere with a man's constitutional rights. One of the Socialist war-cries of the day is "The Right to Work." What answer have Mr. Shackleton and the Labour Congress to give when they, in solemn conclave, deliberately do that, or propose that, which, by the regulations of the Trades Union, would deprive a man of this "Right" to work. These Trades Union Rules are, to the labour world, as binding and as arbitrary as were the old laws of the Medes and Persians, and that it is now proposed to apply them to regulate the conditions of labour, is rather to protect labour against congestion than to defend it from the tyrannous cupidity of the employer. Two serious questions are involved here. First, the grave admission that: *Labour requires palliative treatment owing to its congested condition.* Second: *Because of the congested state of Labour freedom is destroyed, a man's earnings being determined by the laws of a Labour Society rather than by his own skill and capacity.* This arbitrary and unjust condition exists to-day, and under the present state of the labour market it seems a necessary condition, but that it is a state of affairs that will sooner or later end in DISASTER, there is no doubt.

MR. SHACKLETON'S PLAN A NOSTRUM

What is wanted are more industries and fewer workers, but the Labour Congress have no scheme which would ensure

these essential conditions. It becomes evident, therefore, that Mr. Shackleton's plan is but a mere nostrum, and that it reduces the whole question to the level of absurdity.

These are but a few examples of the multitudinous efforts that are being made by Municipal Councils, by public and private effort, by public philanthropy and private charity, and notably, through the up-to-date practical Trades Unions, to solve a hopeless problem.

Such remedies as these are, after all, but dealing in palliatives, and this disease of acute distress and corroding unemployment is too deep-seated to be affected by measures of this description. These, and numerous other remedial measures of many kinds, have been tried over and over again during the last quarter of a century and more; and the one simple fact that the evil has grown and developed, and the disease spread to such an extent as to endanger the entire body politic, *is the best proof that such remedies have proved an unmitigated failure.*

And so they will always prove a failure, because in asking trades and manufactures to come to the people's rescue, when they have for years past persistently and uniformly failed to afford them full employment and support, is to ask that which is obviously impossible; and if we will but take the trouble to think the matter out for ourselves, this fact becomes startlingly apparent.

The folly of expecting such sources of employment to help our workers in the present and in the future, when they have failed to do so in the past, is to rely upon a broken reed, particularly so as it is beyond dispute that British trade is not only not holding its own with foreign competitors, but that it has *in reality lost its place in international proportional progression.*

In order that the public may know to what uses national statistics are put by certain newspapers to buttress a falling structure, a specimen of the subterfuges resorted to is appended.

The following statement of six months' trade appeared in the *Daily Chronicle* of August 21, 1908:—

IMPORTS				
	1906.	1907.	1908.	Percentage of Increase or Decrease.*
Germany . . .	198,287,000	213,603,000	204,554,000	+ 3
Belgium . . .	64,087,000	73,380,000	68,077,000	+ 6
France . . .	113,949,000	127,388,000	121,944,000	+ 7
United States . .	132,783,000	156,516,000	108,844,000	- 18
United Kingdom	256,131,000	276,807,000	269,010,000	+ 5

* The percentages of increase and decrease are worked out by the author.

The export figures are as follows :—

Germany	140,478,000	162,581,000	160,805,000	+ 14
Belgium	47,373,000	51,846,000	50,507,000	+ 6
France	100,957,000	111,325,000	104,327,000	+ 4
United States . .	175,967,000	192,833,000	180,153,000	+ 3
United Kingdom	180,594,000	206,317,000	189,993,000	+ 5

That paper commenting on these figures, has the following :—

“BRITAIN LEADING

OVERSEA TRADE COMPARISONS FOR PRESENT YEAR RETURNS OF FIVE NATIONS ”

“The oversea trading of the great commercial nations of the world during the last six months is the subject of a series of summary tables issued by the Board of Trade.

“A comparison of the total figures is possible in the case of five countries ; and it shows that, except in the case of the imports of the United States, which is feeling the prevailing depression very severely, the trade of these nations was higher in 1908 than in 1906, but lower than last year, when the boom culminated. The following is the comparison of the imports extending over the first six months of each of the last three years :—

“It should be noted that the returns referring to Germany, which are provided by the Imperial Statistical Department, are only estimated. They are accurate as to quantities, but estimated as to values.

“Britain is still first, far in front of any other country, and well ahead of her own record in 1906.”

Two notable features are distinguishable here, namely, how prone Free-traders are to catch at any straw that may, perchance, support a sinking cause, and the careful suppression of the significant fact that the small increase of our import and export trade has been exceeded by some of our foreign competitors who are *not* Free-traders. It will, moreover, be discovered, by those who take the trouble to look into the matter, that British trade ten years ago was, in comparison with that of other competing nations, much greater proportionately than it is to-day ; while thirty, and forty years ago the proportion in favour of great Britain was even greater.

As a matter of fact—*we have fallen behind every one of our great competitors in the PROPORTIONAL expansion of both our import and export trade ;* ample proof of which will be found in other chapters.

These facts reveal a grave position, and they are far too important and too solemn to become the sport of every political writer who juggles with them in a manner to serve

the turn of the particular political party he happens to be associated with.

The volume of our trade to-day is greater than that of any other nation in the world. Good! but what does it prove? Nothing!

The world's trade grows necessarily in proportion to increased population and the freer facilities offered for the interchange and transit of commodities; and if our trade shows an increase, this country, *in common with all others*, is but sharing in the natural trade expansion resulting from these causes.

This one fact, however, should not elate us, nor should we accept it as an infallible sign of national prosperity. We should rather keep a keen eye on our *proportional* increase, to see if we are holding our own with foreign competitors; for it is this, and this alone, which is the key to the position, and if we hold it we are safe.

DECADENT TRADE SUPREMACY

That we *not* holding our own with most of the foreign States, particularly with Germany and the United States, there is no question, because every return furnished by the Board of Trade proves it.

To state that "Britain is still first, far in front of any other country," is to mislead by dealing in half-truths; but it has been found over and over again that half-truths often serve political ends where whole truths must fail.

"BRITAIN LEADING" is on a par with the "BIG LOAF" brand of political catchwords, and unless the people are more on their guard in respect to these shallow political tricks, they will be just as liable to be deceived now, and in the future, as they have been so many times in the past.

The UNEMPLOYED question is but one of the results, as excessive POVERTY is another, of a policy which demands the sacrifice of agriculture on the altars of Commercialism—and until this grave fundamental error in our national economy be recognised, and then remedied, there is no more chance of real relief coming to this UNEMPLOYED evil, than there is to the swimmer, who has been cast overboard a thousand miles from land, of reaching the shore.

This wretched question is ever present with us, and as surely as the seasons come round in their appointed course, so does this unfortunate business crop up as trade fluctuates, or the fashion for a certain class of goods changes or dies.

For a brief period, a wave of industrial and commercial prosperity returns, and the particular political party interested

in the maintenance of the *status quo ante*, sing pæans of praise about the expansion of British trade and the might and glory of England's dominant industries, and the "man in the street" believes that everything is well with us.

THE MUTABLE BASIS OF TRADE

The mutable basis, however, on which all trade rests, renders an ever-changing condition necessary, and it is a matter of fact that the tidal wave of commerce ebbs and flows with almost the same regularity as the tides of ocean.

A wave of prosperity in the early part of this year bore us a step or two towards fancied security; but we are now going out to the Great Unknown, as it were, on the ebb tide, for in the *Daily Express* of June 14, 1909 we read:—

"During the same period (*i.e.* the first five months of this year, 1909) there was a fall of £16,041,845 in the foreign trade of the United Kingdom—£2,217,964 in Imports and £13,823,881 in British Exports."

In the autumn of 1908 we were standing on the brink of a grave danger, because of the condition of our diminishing trades and manufactures, and no man could foretell the future.

The Trade Union Congress, which met at Ipswich in the early part of September, 1909, predicts—"A time of terrible suffering for thousands of men, women and children," during the coming winter, and urge the Government to take "immediate steps to promote large and comprehensive schemes of work of public utility."

Again the LAND, as the greatest factor in the situation, is left out of consideration, and until Mr. Shackleton and his *confrères* realise that this trouble exists because the people have been allowed to fall into the error of believing that agriculture, being the greatest of all industries in this country, or any other, could for a moment be sacrificed to any superior or more important consideration which the economic world is capable of producing, so long will this UNEMPLOYED evil continue.

MAN'S CHIEF CONSIDERATION

There is not, nor can there be, any greater consideration in this world than that by which a man lives, and moves, and has his being. The soil is the source of all sentient and insentient life on this planet, and it is the source of man himself. It furnishes him with every thing he requires for his comfort and support—fuel, means of creating heat and light, houses, carriages, clothing, money, every conceivable

luxury, and provides him also with the staff of life itself—food.

To neglect the land, then, would be to neglect *those means of subsistence*, which are as essential to the human race as are light and air to the growth of plant life, and yet this is precisely what we, as a people, have been doing ever since Cobden and his followers set up in this country a system of economics as unsuited to the needs of human beings—in this or in any other country—as the poisoned rivers of a manufacturing town are unsuited to all forms of fish life.

How can it be otherwise? How can man thrive when he deprives himself of his chief means of subsistence? He may, by resorting to this or that expedient, dodge for a time the certain results of his ignorance or folly, but, however much he may twist and turn, the inevitable will overtake him at length.

The inevitable has overtaken this country, and its people have suffered, and are suffering, as no people in these civilised times should be expected to suffer. They are suffering through no fault of their own, but solely through the misguided zeal of a band of manufacturer-reformers, who, chiefly for motives which conduced to *their* personal interests, sixty odd years ago, persuaded the people to their own undoing. Then, their sufferings are being perpetuated by the followers of a pernicious fiscal policy, who, to serve political purposes, bolster up an effete agricultural system which has wrought untold harm to national interests, but which, under other conditions, would be capable of conferring unquestionable benefits on the people, and of solving once and for all this miserable unemployed question which has settled on the face of the country as a deadly blight.

If there is, however, one thing more than another which should warn the people of the danger they are running, in trusting to trades and manufactures as a solution of the UNEMPLOYED problem, it is, or should be, the fact that for the last sixty years *these means of occupation have utterly failed to solve it.*

If there be additional proof required, it should be the startling fact that—*Great Britain is not holding her own with other nations in the race for the world's trade.*

But as there is “a silver lining to every cloud,” so is there hope in the LAND if the people will but realise it. The land can aid them as no other power on this earth can—if they will but trust to it—but if they will not do so, if neither this hope, nor the manifestations of national danger just referred to, fail to rouse them to a sense of the gravity of the position; then a dark day will, indeed, dawn for England.

CHAPTER XV

THE "CHEAP" LOAF CRY—PRICE OF BREAD—ENGLAND AND OTHER COUNTRIES—HOW THE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN MISLED

FREE-TRADE should now be put to one or two other sharp tests which the people can easily determine for themselves by their own everyday experience.

A favourite trick of modern electioneering is to invent some political catchword calculated to tickle public fancy for the time being; and it is doubtful if, in the history of political contests, a cleverer party catchword was ever uttered than that of the Liberal "Big Loaf" cry at the last general election.

This catchword was conceived of a subtle brain, and launched on its course with every certainty of success. It gained more votes for the Liberal party than any other single item in their smart electioneering programme, and even to-day it is still believed in by a number of voters.

So effective, indeed, has it been, that it was even tried again at the Newcastle bye election as late as September of last year, and with some degree of success.

It is rare in the annals of political warfare that a party catchword endures for so long, and the fact that the "Big Loaf" cry has preserved its potency, is not because it was based upon the principles of indestructible truth, but because those whom it has deceived have never taken the trouble to dig down and lay bare its shallow and unstable foundations.

It is indeed true that so many events are crowded into modern life; so many dishes are now prepared and served to the body electorate by the various political parties that are ever contending for place and power—each with its own garnishing of *sauce piquante* to suit the particular taste of the hour—that the electors hardly ever get down to the real flavour of the thing.

Neither at the time this meretricious cry was first raised, nor at any previous or subsequent period, was there even the

slightest substratum of truth in it, yet it has served its purpose so well among a certain section of voters, who will *not* think matters out for themselves, that the Liberal party still endeavour to win votes by its aid.

So much light, however, has been thrown upon this simple question by writers and speakers of many political denominations, and the price of bread itself offers so fitting a reply to the "Big" and "Cheap" loaf pretenders, that the wonder is there is a single individual in the Kingdom foolish enough to believe there is anything in the cry save its utter meretriciousness.

A COMMON DODGE OF FREE-TRADERS

One of the commonest dodges of those who, for personal or other considerations, buttress Free-trade, is to tell the people that if they want cheap bread they must give up growing their own wheat and let others grow it for them, and then let it come into their ports duty free. By such means, they are told, they are bound to secure a *big* and *cheap* loaf, much more cheaply, indeed, than in those countries which grow their own corn and put a duty on imports.

This "Cheap Loaf" cry is, however, an old electioneering ruse, and much was made of it even in Cobden's time.

Mr. Jesse Collings, in his book "Land Reform," has a good deal to say on the subject. Here is one reference to it—

"During the Corn Law agitation the question of bread was ever to the front. A general impression was given that, by the repeal of the Corn Laws, bread was to be more plentiful and much cheaper; but it is a noticeable fact that the actual price of *bread* which ruled during the contest was rarely, if ever, alluded to. The cry of 'Cheap Bread!' was used for political purposes then, just as the cry of the 'Big and little loaf' is being used now, and was equally false."*

Mr. Collings now refers us to the prices of wheat and bread prevailing before and after the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, so that the reader may judge for himself as to the value of this much used *Cheap Loaf* cry.

"The following table shows the relative average prices of wheat and bread for a period of years immediately preceding and directly following the beginning of free imports:—

		Wheat per Quarter.	Best Quality Bread per loaf.
Average price for 7 years, 1842-48	. .	54/10 $\frac{3}{4}$	7 $\frac{3}{8}$ d.
"	" 1850-56	. . 55/6 $\frac{3}{4}$	7 $\frac{7}{8}$ d.†

* "Land Reform," the Right Hon. Jesse Collings, p. 337.

† *Ibid.*, p. 338.

BREAD DEARER FOR THIRTY YEARS AFTER FREE-TRADE THAN BEFORE

The following table brings the matter more up to modern times:—

“Taking decennial periods the average prices for the same articles work out as follows:—

	The “Hungry Forties,”					
	1840-49	1850-59	1860-69	1870-79	1880-89	1890-99
Wheat per Quarter . .	54/1	53/3	51/8	51/4	36/11	28/9
Bread per Quartern Loaf	7 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.	7 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.	8d.	8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	7d.	5 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

“This table shows that for thirty years after the beginning of free imports, the average price of bread was higher than it was during the “hungry forties”; and for fifty years after free imports (including the years when wheat was specially low) the average price was only about one farthing a loaf lower. Moreover, in the earlier years the weight of the loaf was 4 lb. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. It was afterwards lowered to 4 lb.; and in comparing prices this difference in weight should be reckoned.”*

Bringing this important question still more up-to-date, Mr. Collings says—

“Even in September of the present year (1905), with wheat about 30s. per quarter, the mean price of bread throughout Great Britain was 5·43d. (say 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.) for the 4 lb. loaf, while in 1867 and 1868, when wheat averaged 64s. 7d. per quarter, or just double, the price was only 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in London, and no doubt less throughout the country. In Edinburgh, in March of the present year, the price was 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per quartern loaf, as against 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ d. (or about the same) in the bad year of 1843, when wheat was 50s. per quarter.”†

Speaking of the “Bread Riots” of the “Hungry Forties,” Mr. Collings is fortunate enough to be able to quote from his own personal experience, which naturally adds value to the testimony.

“The writer was in daily association with the poorer classes during the ‘hungry forties.’ He witnessed one or two of the bread riots and raids on bakers’ shops; but he cannot remember a single occasion when the *price* of bread was the subject of complaint. The cause of the distress was not the price of the loaf, but the want of money wherewith to buy it.”‡

“Land Reform” is indeed full of valuable information on this little understood subject, but space forbids further reference to this single work.

* “Land Reform,” the Right Hon. Jesse Collings, p. 339.

† *Ibid.*, p. 340.

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 337, 338.

FURTHER EVIDENCE AGAINST FREE-TRADE CHEAPENING BREAD.

Here is, however, the evidence of another writer, who is honestly striving to point out to the people of this country the danger they are incurring in running after this *cheap* loaf spook—

"Anti-Fiscal reformers are never tired of reiterating that Free-trade gave the people cheap food; heart-rending pictures of the misery of the people under 'Protection' are painted; in nearly every village some old inhabitant remembers 'when bread was a shilling a loaf,' and firmly believes, and states, that 'Protection' was the cause. As a matter of fact, they remember the price of bread during the Crimean War, when it reached a price not attained since 1814, with the one exception of the single year 1847—the year *after* the repeal of the Corn Laws. The following information, taken from the 'Agricultural Returns of Great Britain,' shows what a small effect on prices the repeal of the duties had. The average price of wheat for the three years prior to the repeal of the duties, viz., 1843-4-5, was 51s. per quarter, and bread for the same period ruled at 7·85*d.* in London, and at 6·75*d.* per loaf in Edinburgh. For three years after the repeal, viz., 1847-8-9 wheat averaged 54s. 10*d.* per quarter, and bread in London 8·66*d.*, and Edinburgh 7·50*d.* A considerable advance in each case. Excluding the three years of the Crimean War—1854-5-6—when wheat reached the abnormal average of 72s. 1*d.* per quarter, and bread 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ *d.* per loaf, the average prices from 1847 to 1877, both years inclusive, were for wheat 50s. 9*d.* per quarter, or just 3*d.* per quarter below the prices before the repeal, and bread—mark this well—was higher, at 8·13*d.* per loaf. When thirty-one years of Free-trade could show no better result than this, it is surely reasonable to attribute the subsequent decline to other causes. What really reduced the price of wheat was the opening up of fresh sources of supply in Russia and America, the tapping of those supplies by railways, the replacing of sailing ships with steamers, the introduction of agricultural machinery and elevators; in short, to the all-round cheapening of the means of production, handling, and transit. If, however, you do not adopt Fiscal Reform and stimulate production in your own Empire, your food will touch higher prices in the near future than the present generation has known. You procure nearly a quarter of all the wheat and flour you use to-day from the United States; within a very short time, if the present rate of increase in their population is maintained, the United States will require all the grain they produce to feed their own people."*

TARIFF-REFORMERS ON "CHEAP BREAD"

In further corroboration of the folly of still believing in this shadowy phantasm of *cheap bread*, the following is taken

* "Imperial Prosperity and its 'Open, Sesame,'" pp. 7, 8.

en bloc from one of the Tariff-reform periodicals for August, 1908:—

“‘FREE-TRADE’ AND THE PRICE OF BREAD

“The fairy tale that Free-trade gave us the ‘cheap loaf’ continues to be so industriously circulated by our Neo-Cobdenites, that we make no apology for what may appear to some of our readers very like ‘flogging a dead horse’ in reproducing the facts on the subject as set forth by Mr. Tom Neill, of Exeter, in a recent letter to the *Devon and Exeter Gazette* (July 28).

“‘Free-trade,’ says Mr. Neill, ‘did not give us cheap bread, or even bread cheaper than it was under Protection. The very fact that the price of bread did not become cheaper, but was actually dearer for over a quarter of a century after the adoption of ‘Free-trade’ than it was under the severe Protection of the 1842 Corn Act, is conclusive proof that ‘Free-trade’ did not make bread cheap.

“‘As this is so contrary to the current belief engendered by the persistent deception of the people by the ‘Free-traders’ during the last two generations, perhaps you will allow me to prove what I say. The following figures have been compiled from the Board of Trade Returns:—

AVERAGE PRICE OF THE 4-LB. LOAF

Under Severe Protection.

	In London. Pence.	In Edinburgh. Pence.	Duty per qr. of 480 lbs. Wheat 18s. 6d.
1842-45—4 years	8·25	7·16	

Under ‘Free-trade.’

1849-75—27 years	8·32	8·09	Free-trade
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AVERAGE PRICE OF WHEAT IN GREAT BRITAIN

Under Severe Protection.

		Duty per qr.
1842-45—4 years	52s. 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.	18s. 6d.

Under ‘Free-trade.’

1849-75—27 years	52s. 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.	Free-trade
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“‘So that the 4-lb. loaf was the turn cheaper in London, and almost a penny cheaper in Edinburgh, and wheat also was the turn cheaper throughout Great Britain, during the last four years of the Corn Laws than it was for seven and twenty years after the adoption of ‘Free-trade.’

“‘That bread did become cheaper in the 80’s is quite true, but

your readers can see quite easily for themselves that as bread did not fall in price for over a quarter of a century after the adoption of 'Free-trade,' the subsequent cheapness, which set in five and thirty years after the abolition of the duties on corn, must have arisen from some cause other than 'Free-trade.' The other cause, of course, was that the prairies in our Colonies, and in the United States and the Argentine, were opened up by railways and were put under the plough, and the newly-invented ocean 'tramp' brought the wheat at a mere fraction of the freight that had to be paid even for many years after the abolition of the duty.

"For instance, there has been a drop in the rate of freight of wheat from Chicago to Liverpool of 12s. per quarter since 1870. It was the application of steam power to transit, both by land and sea, that gave us cheap bread, not 'Free-trade.' " *

Then we have the weighty evidence of the Gainsborough Commission, quoted in another chapter, which tells us that, when it visited Germany in the autumn of 1905, bread was practically the same price both in Germany and in this country, in spite of the fact that Germany grows her own corn, and is, moreover, literally bristling with tariffs—

"At Höchst, near Frankfort, as we pointed out in a previous report, people eat white wheaten bread as well as bread made of wheat and rye flour mixed. A loaf of white bread made at Höchst weighing four English pounds should cost 4d. The Gainsborough quartern loaf costs 4½d., so that the difference is hardly perceptible." †

THE WRITER'S PERSONAL TESTIMONY

The writer would add his own disinterested testimony to this somewhat long list of irrefutable evidence in proof of the utter fraud of this Party catchword.

At his request a well-known member of the London Corn Exchange, who is a German, kindly interested himself in this subject and collected information with regard to it. He took July 3, 1907, as the date basis of his operations, and through his Continental correspondents he ascertained the prices of wheaten bread in eight of the European capitals, including our own, on that date.

The following table is instructive, but it should be borne in mind that prices for wheat were many shillings per quarter higher on July 3, 1907, than when the Gainsborough Commission, for example, visited Germany:—

* *Monthly Notes on Tariff Reform*, August, 1908, pp. 132, 133.

† "Life and Labour in Germany," pp. 118, 119.

July 3, 1907.	Price of Wheat. 480 lbs.	Price of Flour. 280 lbs.	Price of Bread. 4-lb. loaf.	Duty on Wheat. 480 lbs.	Duty on Flour. 280 lbs.
Kingdom) United }	33/6 to 36/-	26/- to 26/6	5d. to 5½d.	—	—
Belgium .	33/- to 35/-	25/- to 27/-	5½d.	Free	2/-
Holland .	33/- to 35/-	25/- to 28/-	5½d.	Free	Free
Austria .	38/6 to 39/6	21/6 to 33/-	4d.* to 5½d.	11/5	15/10
France .	46/- to 47/-	35/- to 35/6	6d. to 6½d.†	12/2	11½ to 16/3d.‡
Germany .	45/6 to 48/-	32/- to 40/-	5d.‡ to 6½d.	12/-	12/11
Hungary .	39/- to 40/-	21/6 to 33/-	4d.§ to 5½d.	11/5	15/10
Italy . .	43/- to 47/-	32/- to 32/6	5¼d.	11/5	15/10

Here is a strange anomaly. We find that, other things being equal—i.e. the difference of grading as regards flour, and the difference of quality as regards bread—the prices for the 4-lb. wheaten loaf are practically the same in all countries, in spite of the startling fact that in five out of the seven foreign countries quoted there is a duty of 11s. 5d. to 12s. 2d. per quarter on wheat, and 2s. to 16s. 3d. on flour.

ANOTHER REVELATION

It is a startling fact that in no country do we find the 4-lb. loaf—allowing always for difference of quality—dearer than it is with us. Another surprising fact is that, in spite of a heavy duty of 11s. to 12s. per quarter on wheat, the people manage to buy their 4-lb. wheaten loaf as cheaply in the countries where these tariffs prevail as they do in *Free-trade* England.

Now, if it be true that we reap considerable benefits by getting other countries to grow our wheat for us and then let it come into our ports duty free, it follows, among other things, that we should at least reap the single advantage of *cheap bread*; indeed, if our rulers assume the enormous responsibility of sacrificing the country's chief industry for the sake of *other* advantages, they should at least be sure, beforehand, that the people's bread should cost them *a good deal less than is paid for it in other countries*, otherwise the *raison d'être* of their great scheme disappears.

But this is precisely what they have *not* done. They have thrown overboard the most important national industry, and

* The low price is for brown bread (wheaten).

† These prices are for the high-class French bread. Prices of bread eaten by the people not available on this date.

‡ The low price for brown bread; the high price is for bread not eaten by the people.

§ The low price for brown bread.

|| According to extraction.

in the process deprived literally millions of our unfortunate countrymen of useful occupation, without securing to the people even the single advantage of a cheap loaf, and the people have, therefore, every justification and every right in demanding from those who are responsible for this *impasse* the restoration of the *status quo ante*.

SIMPLE TRUTHS APPEAL TO THE PEOPLE

A demand of this nature, based as it is on the broad principles of common sense, and fortified with irresistible logic, must appeal to the vast masses of our fellow-countrymen, and that it does so is proved by the rapid progress of Tariff-reform.

Having placed our 4-lb. loaf side by side with similar loaves from other countries, we find, in spite of all we have been told to the contrary, by those who raised the *cheap loaf* cry, that it is neither *heavier*, *bigger*, nor *cheaper* than those made and sold in countries which protect their trade by a multitude of restrictive tariffs, and in which there is not a vestige of what is fatuously called in our country "free-trade."

Not a man in a hundred thousand was aware that the Protected States of the world produced and sold their bread as cheaply as we do; not a man in ten thousand ever thought of it at all. The general belief was that our loaf was really cheap, a good deal cheaper than in other countries, and we accepted this as a fact because we were told so by those who professed to know.

Europe was asked the price of bread on a certain day in eight of her great capitals, and she replies—NO DEARER THAN IN YOUR OWN.

The writer, for example, believed in much that Free-traders said, and, among other things, he believed in cheap bread as a *result* of Free-trade. He never put his beliefs to any tests, nor did he regard unemployment, poverty, and rampant pauperism as aught else than the natural results of human life. He considered the social and economic conditions under which the people lived as perfectly normal, and requiring no great changes in our economic system; and if a number of his fellow-countrymen suffered from time to time, owing to bad trade or other causes, well—it was regrettable but certainly unavoidable.

THE DANGER OF IMPLICIT BELIEFS

Hundreds of thousands, nay, millions of our countrymen believe in this, that, or the other, not because they have any real, solid foundations for their belief; not because they have

been able to test its value by any well-defined measure of success, but simply and solely because *other people* believe in it. "What's good enough for most people is good enough for me," is a saying as common as blackberries in autumn, and with this comforting platitude they dismiss many a knotty problem which would otherwise cause them a lot of trouble to unravel.

But we have at length realised that this attitude, although conducive at the outset to a certain amount of personal ease and comfort and freedom from care, is about the most wasteful one that we could possibly assume; wasteful, individually and collectively.

We find that we are being overtaken with a heavy and ever-increasing burden of taxation; that the people cannot find work and are obliged to emigrate in ever-growing numbers; that poverty increases and pauperism grows; that despite our unique position as manufacturers we are not holding our own in the markets of the world: and we therefore conclude that we had better look at this matter through our own spectacles rather than through those which have been fitted to our noses by others, and which have done nothing but obscure our vision.

That many of our beliefs in respect to the question we are here considering are wrong there is little room for doubt. That these beliefs have been planted in our minds by those who professed to know, is also true; while it is, moreover, evident that, in spite of the fact that the present agricultural and fiscal systems are utterly unsuited to present-day requirements, there is a large, powerful section of men in Parliament and out of it who, either for party considerations or to serve private interests, will be found arrayed in solid phalanx against any reforms that would be of real use to the people.

Many earnest men are now drawing the people's attention to the regrettable fact that those whom they elect and send up to the national legislative assemblies at Westminster neither legislate in the interests of the people nor serve any purpose save that of the political ends of the party to which they happen to belong.

THE KNAVERY OF ELECTIONEERING DODGES

This electioneering dodge of inventing some political catch-word that will attract the attention of the unwary voter, and trick him into a temporary belief in its verity, would be intensely amusing were it not that deep tragedy underlies the process. Dickens, in "*Pickwick*," humorously describes an election in his day, but the knavery resorted to on that memorable occasion by the rival candidates—the Honourable Samuel

Slumkey and Horatio Fizkin, Esq.—resulted in nothing worse than a free fight between the editors of the rival newspapers. If modern electioneering campaigns resulted in nothing more serious than this, the public would view the proceedings with unruffled equanimity; but, unfortunately, the harm done nowadays by mean electioneering subterfuges and political trickery, is as widespread as the ocean, and ramifies through the lives of the people, causing endless disappointment, want, and misery. The people believed in the "Big" and "Cheap" loaf, and many of them believe in it to-day, and yet it was but a political *ignis fatuus*, luring the unwary away from life's realities to their own utter undoing.

WHAT THE LAND CAN DO FOR US

Looked at from the veritable standpoint of common-sense, we can do anything we choose with our great inheritance—the LAND.

We can repopulate our country districts and give back to England that backbone of rural strength and vigour of which the enervating, exhausting policy of the last half-century has robbed her. We can sprinkle over our fair island from Cornwall to the Pentlands, from the Wash to St. David's Head, such a multitude of happy, thriving homesteads that our land will fairly hum with the joyous, invigorating sound of busy industries. We can send the people to honest work instead of to the workhouses, and we can give them plenty in the place of poverty.

We can employ literally millions of our people in making our own butter and cheese, in growing our own fruit and vegetables, in producing our own milk, poultry and bacon, in growing our own corn and making our own flour.

We can, in short, grow practically all our own food, and usefully and honourably employ all our own people. We can so well employ our own people in our own country that the wasteful drain of emigration will cease for a considerable time, and we shall keep the sturdy and the strong, those pushing, vigorous, brave sons of the nation with us, instead of forcing them to seek their bread in a strange land.

But we must have done with political knavery and a confiding, fond belief in the sincerity of political parties, because it is now clear to even the weakest intelligence that the chicanery of politicians is as palpable as it is misleading, while the experience of the past proves that whichever *party* may be in office, the *people's* interests continue to remain—neglected.

CHAPTER XVI

TARIFFS DO NOT AFFECT THE PRICE OF BREAD—THE GERMAN “BLACK” BREAD FALLACY EXPOSED

LET us now briefly consider the effect that the Protective Tariffs of foreign States have on the price of their bread, and determine the matter in a common-sense way.

Free-traders maintain that to secure cheap food we must not grow our own corn, but import it, letting it come into our ports duty free.

Leaving out of consideration the huge fundamental economical blunder, referred to elsewhere, that underlies this proposition, and which would never be detected by the unthinking, unreflecting portion of the community, their method would appear to be economically sound, but as this question, like all others, must be determined by the infallible standard of—RESULTS, let us put it to that supreme test.

First we have the Gainsborough Commission giving us its testimony, and as this Commission was composed of working men, and appointed by working men, to make independent inquiry into the state of German labour conditions, and as, moreover, the majority of the Commission consisted of *Free-trade* working men, their Report is of especial interest and considerable value.

WHAT THE “COMMISSION” FOUND IN GERMANY

“We found that Germany raised tariffs against every other country, and that France, America, Russia, South America, Spain, Italy, Austria, and other countries in Europe raised tariffs against her; but this did not stop the expansion of her trade with other countries.

“I went to Germany with an open mind with regard to Tariff-reform, but had not gone far before I found that something would have to be done to protect our industry at home

“It is reasonable to suppose that when the English people awake to the losses actually incurred by them in consequence of the high

tariffs imposed by Germany and other foreign countries, they will come to the only possible conclusions, that it is necessary, for the protection of the English workman, that the foreigners should pay for the use of the English market."

Referring more especially to the price of bread, the Commission says—

"A loaf of rye bread at Creffield, weighing four English pounds, should cost $3\frac{5}{9}d.$, or roughly $3\frac{1}{2}d.$

"The 4-lb. wheaten loaf, eaten at Gainsborough, costs $4\frac{1}{2}d.$

"All these details spell prosperity; and even though we do not go so far as to say they must be the direct result of the Imperial policy of protection, we are justified in drawing attention to the fact that this auspicious condition of things has been developing parallel to protective tariffs.

"It was pointed out by us in our last report that the prosperity of the last twenty years of German industry has been running parallel with protective duties. Wages have also risen; and the tendency of the day is that they will rise still higher. . . .

"Where then does the extreme pressure on the German consumer come in, in regard to the price of bread, as compared with the English consumer? We must note that Germany feeds nine-tenths of her population from her own grain."

WHAT TARIFF-REFORMERS SAY

Another effective way of answering this question is to see what the Tariff-reformers have to say on the subject, because it has been found of late, despite the efforts of their political opponents, that these Reformers have captured many a seat at bye elections on their Tariff-reform ticket alone; while it is a matter of common knowledge that they have put so many posers to their Free-trade antagonists in respect to the question we are here considering, that *their* view of the position should be ignored—

"The prevailing price of bread in Berlin at the present time, May, 1908, is $5\frac{1}{3}d.$ per 4-lb. loaf. This is for the ordinary rye loaf which is eaten by all classes, and which is composed of one-sixth rye and five-sixths wheat."*

"A loaf weighing 8 German pounds, good weight, was purchased in the Frankfurterstrasse a few days ago for one mark. As one German pound is equal to $1\frac{1}{10}$ th English pounds, and one mark is equal to 11·8 pence, this works out to almost exactly $5\frac{1}{4}d.$ for the 4-lb. loaf."†

* *Monthly Notes on Tariff Reform*, May, 1908, p. 343.

† Notes for Speakers. "Tariff Reform League," April 25, 1908, p. 2.

"On June 7th, during my recent visit, I bought in Wessenburger-strasse, Berlin, $4\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. of rye bread ('Schwarzbrod') for 35 pfennigs ($4\frac{1}{4}d$). I also purchased, in another shape, a long loaf of this bread weighing about 11 English pounds, for one mark ($1/-$). . . . My two purchases were made respectively in a cheap shop in a working-class district, and in an ordinary shop; and I failed to find anywhere rye bread being sold at the price quoted in the Yellow Book, namely, 4 lbs. $7\frac{1}{2}d$."*

Correcting the prevailing misconception that the Germans eat "black bread" from poverty, because it is cheaper, Mr. J. Ellis Barker, an eminent authority on the subject, wrote as follows:—

"Your correspondent is singularly unfortunate in quoting the *Economist* of May 2nd.

"The letter of their correspondent in Berlin gives the price of bread in one shop in Berlin. There is a high-class shop close to this club (The Constitutional Club) where bread costs $3d$. per lb. Does that prove that bread is 100 per cent. dearer in England than in Scotland? Your correspondent 'Fooder,' in your issue of the 14th inst., thinks that Germans eat rye bread from poverty, not from choice. Will he kindly explain to me why the Germans in London eat 50,000 rye loaves a week, and why they spend from $2d$. to $2\frac{1}{2}d$. on 'Granbrod' and 'Schwarzbrod,' and from $4d$. to $6d$. a pound on the darkest rye bread ('Pimpernickel'), when they can buy white wheaten bread at $1\frac{1}{4}d$. to $1\frac{1}{2}d$. a pound?"†

THE BOARD OF TRADE MISLEADS

Then in regard to the extraordinary statements published by the Board of Trade, on June 26, 1908, as to the price of German bread, and the cost of living and wages in Germany and England, many of the English papers at once rose up in arms to refute the inaccuracies.

Here is what one of the London dailies had to say on the subject—

PRICE OF GERMAN BREAD

"Mr. Churchill will be asked in the House of Commons on Monday by Lord Ronaldshay if the price of bread varied in Germany from $5\frac{1}{4}d$. to $7\frac{1}{2}d$. per pound, as stated in the recently published report of the Board of Trade (since withdrawn), and if this is so, will he state whether the price of the 4-lb. loaf in Germany varies from 1s. 9d. to 2s. 6d."‡

* *Monthly Notes on Tariff Reform*, August, 1908, p. 111.

† J. Ellis Barker. "Tariff Reform League Notes," May, 1908.

‡ *Daily Mail*, July 4, 1908.

GERMAN LIVING AND WAGES—GOVERNMENT REPORT
WITHDRAWN

"It is rarely that an official report, issued by the Statistical Department, has to be withdrawn from circulation because of the incorrectness of its facts and figures. But this fate has befallen the Blue-Book, published on Friday week, dealing with the cost of living and wages of the worker in Germany and England. Yesterday it was impossible to procure a copy from the publishers. The book has been recalled for corrections.

"It represented that the cost of living in Germany was as 118 to 100 in England; that the hours of labour in Germany were as 111 to 100 in this country; that net rents in Germany were as 123 to 100 in England; and that per hour the British worker received one-third more than the German.

"On a close scrutiny being applied, it was noticed that these figures omitted many articles of food, and items of expenditure. For example, rates, which are far heavier in England than in Germany, were omitted from the cost of rent, and tobacco and beer, which are far cheaper in Germany than in England, did not figure in the workman's weekly budget.

"There were, too, positive blunders. Thus the price of bread in six of the chief German towns was represented at four times the real figure. A correction to that effect was issued early in the present week. Another extraordinary error is that the price of meat in Germany is quoted without bone and fat, whereas in England the price includes bone and fat." *

One of two things becomes clear from this remarkable document of the Board of Trade, namely—either that that important economic department were profoundly ignorant of their subject—which is hardly likely, as the price of German bread and the cost of living in Germany are now as well known to thousands of our countrymen as they are in Germany itself—or that they deliberately put forward a false statement, with the object of wilfully misleading the people, in order to serve some mean political purpose.

BANEFUL EFFECT OF GOVERNMENT MIS-STATEMENTS

Whatever may have been the mainspring of their action, it would appear that the Government played a mean trick on the country, and in spite of the efforts of their political opponents to minimise the harm that is sure to result from misleading statements of this nature, it is certain that millions of people still believe that bread in Germany is dearer than it is with us, and that our workers have considerable advantage over their German *confrères* in respect to wages and cost of living.

* *Daily Mail*, July 4, 1908.

At least it is certain that all who favour the maintenance of existing fiscal conditions are sure to believe what the Board of Trade tells them in respect hereto ; which is most regrettable.

WHAT THE GERMAN PRESS SAYS

The accompanying extract from a German newspaper is interesting, as it shows that even in protected Germany the Radical organs in that country recognise that the necessities of life rise considerably in Free-trade England, in spite of her liberal *free list*, and that the increased cost of similar necessities in Germany is not due to the German tariff:—

“THE COST OF LIVING IN ENGLAND AND GERMANY”

“The *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, an influential Berlin newspaper, in its issue of April 13, 1908, publishes the following statement, under the heading ‘A Confession’—

“‘Hitherto the German Radical Press has always declared that the increase in the prices of some of the necessities of life in Germany is due to the protectionist tariff, and that countries in which Free-trade exists do not suffer from increased prices. We now read in the Radical Königsberg *Hartungsche Zeitung*, that in England, in spite of Free-trade, the cost of the necessities of life has greatly increased in recent years, viz. on an average 3 per cent. during 1906, and 5·3 per cent. during 1907 ; that is more than 8 per cent. within two years. We ascertain from this confession, for which we are truly grateful to our Radical contemporary, that the increased cost of some necessities of life in Germany is not due to our tariff, while Free-trade does not preserve England from increased cost of living. We have always maintained the same thing, and we presume Radicals, in view of the valuable testimony of the *Hartungsche Zeitung*, will no longer contradict us.’”*

WHAT THE WORKING MAN SAYS

The following copy of a Tariff-reform leaflet, published a short while since, bears with singular interest on the subject, and as the conclusions arrived at are irrefutable, the people of this country would do well not to ignore what “A Working Man” has to tell them:—

“THE WORKING MAN’S EXPENSES

A WEEKLY BUDGET

“You women folk know how difficult it is to provide for your families. Think what it means now all these things cost you more.

* *Monthly Notes on Tariff Reform*, May, 1908, p. 349.

“Here is a letter recently written to the *Daily Express*—

“SIR,—Two years ago we heard a lot about the big loaf that the working men were going to get. I was recently looking through some old weekly bills, and compared them with those of the present time—

	1905.		1908.	
	s.	d.	s.	d.
Coal	2	6	3	4
1½ lbs. butter	1	7½	2	3
4 lbs. sugar		8		11
8 loaves bread	1	10	2	2
½ gallon flour		5½		6½
2 gallons potatoes		8		10
½ gallon paraffin		3½		4½
	<hr/>		<hr/>	
	8	0½	10	5

“I think you will agree with me that all these articles are necessities, and yet the *price is increased 30 per cent.*

‘A WORKING MAN.’”

“There you have it shown that it costs 2s. 4½d. a week more now than it did three years ago for coals, butter, sugar, bread, flour, oil, and potatoes. Other things are dearer also.

“Out with that Fraud of Frauds, a Radical Government.”

WHAT OTHER PEOPLE SAY

Other evidence of the harm our present free list tariffs have done to the people is abundant and convincing. Indeed, the grave danger that this country is incurring by an obstinate adherence to a worn-out system of economics, which is as unsuited to the requirements of the times as a worn-out glove is to the rough work of grasping thistles, has called forth such a host of speakers and writers that “the man in the street” who wishes to learn something of the subject will find no difficulty in determining the matter for himself.

WHAT THE WRITER KNOWS

The writer himself, who is neither a Protectionist nor a Free-trader nor a member of any political party in the State, can add his testimony to this mass of evidence. He has spent four months in Germany during the last two years, and can vouch from his own experience that bread is *not* dearer in Germany, despite her ring of tariffs, than it is in this country, and that the “Black” bread argument is sheer nonsense; Germans are no more compelled to eat “Black” bread, because they are too poverty-stricken to buy white, than English

workers are compelled to eat white bread because they are too poor to buy brown.

The fact is, pure rye-bread, which is nearly black, or wheaten bread in which there is a liberal mixture of rye flour, is far more nutritious than pure wheaten white bread. This the German people know full well, and they simply eat it in preference to white bread for that reason—*irrespective of price.*

INNUTRITIOUSNESS OF WHITE BREAD

English people have been told again and again by dietetic experts—Sir James Crichton-Browne and many others—that the white wheaten bread generally eaten in this country and *more generally by the working classes than by the rich*, is not nutritious.

Here is one of the most recent references to the subject, published towards the end of 1908—

“BRITAIN’S BREAD

“A circular entitled ‘Daily Bread’ was issued yesterday by the Bread and Food Reform League.

“It is signed by the Duchess of Portland, the Earl of Meath, Sir James Crichton-Browne, Sir William Ramsay, and many other influential persons. It points out, incidentally, that, out of 355 lbs. of corn, wheat, meal, and flour consumed by each person every year, 279 lbs. come from abroad, only 76 lbs. being produced at home; and that two-fifths of the total weight of food consumed by working-class families consists of bread and flour.

“The circular advocates that persons charged with the care or feeding of children, especially heads of schools, should at least ask their millers and bakers to supply them with the ‘old-fashioned household bread, which is not brown, but cream-coloured, and retains about 80 per cent. of the grain, and especially the embryo or germ, now entirely discarded from fine white flour.’”

In spite of this unassailable testimony of the folly—nay obstinacy—of the British people in clinging so fatuously to their innutritious white bread, and of the superior wisdom of the Germans in selecting a more enriching loaf for their consumption, many of our people still believe that the “Black” bread of Germany *is* eaten by the German people because they are too poor to buy any other. But they believe this only because the leaders of the party to which they belong have told them so in order to serve the narrow selfish purpose of party interests, or the leaders themselves are ignorant of the true

state of affairs; in which case they are obviously not fit to be teachers and leaders.

That German trade has enormously expanded since she adopted her system of Tariff, and that prosperity has attended her, none can doubt. That she has become very wealthy, and that her wealth is collective rather than individual—as with us—is proved by the fact of the colossal sums to the credit of her working-classes in the State Savings Banks, while the lack of pauperism and the general prosperity of the masses offer additional proof that her ring of tariffs that are hostile to this country, as to all the world besides, have not killed industries, impoverished the people, nor—*raised the price of bread.*

“Bismarck was indeed a great man. He made Germany,” said Mr. Lloyd-George just after his visit to Germany; and this spontaneous note of admiration was not merely a tribute of honest praise for the German Old Age Pensions system, which he regarded as—

“The most wonderful piece of organisation that I have ever witnessed,”

but to many other things which he found working well in Germany as a result of Bismarck’s far-seeing statesman-like policy of years ago.

The following extract from the Gainsborough Commission Report may be read with interest at this point:—

“We have been just three weeks in Germany, and have seen the German workmen at work and at play. In the busy districts of Rhineland and Westphalia we came into contact with thousands of our German comrades engaged in the heavy industry, and looked in vain for the signs of poverty which certain persons in Gainsborough and elsewhere told us would confront us on all sides. Despite the prevailing dearth of meat, which is seriously affecting all classes in the German Fatherland, and consequently all those whose incomes are limited, including the incomes of the working people, whose budget for household expenses is necessarily quite specially affected at this time of year, nothing indicative in the remotest degree of widespread distress has come within the limit of our vision; on the contrary, there is every sign of increasing prosperity. Occupation is to be had everywhere for the asking of it, in all factories and at all works in the towns we have passed through; the building trade is everywhere in a fair condition, and even in the ranks of the unskilled, who must always be subject to fluctuations as regards employment, there is no general cause for complaint. Instead of there being a superabundance of workers and consequently a crowd of ‘unemployed,’ employers are clamouring on all sides for skilled labour.”

PRICE OF BREAD NOT AFFECTED BY TARIFFS

When we turn to other nations for further evidence of the effect of tariffs on the price of bread, we are met with the startling revelation that, in spite of the heavy duty on wheat—which varies from 11s. 5*d.* per quarter of 480 lbs. in Austria, Hungary, and Italy, to 12s. and 12s. 2*d.* in Germany and France; and of duty on flour from 12s. 11*d.* in Germany to 15s. 10*d.* to 16s. 3*d.* in France, Austria, Hungary, and Italy, per 280 *lbs.*—bread is no dearer in those countries than it is in duty-free England.

The statement given in the preceding chapter shows that in Holland and Belgium *and* Great Britain, which put no duty on wheat or flour—except a nominal duty of 2s. on flour in Belgium—the price of bread was practically the same on a given day as it was in five other duty-levying countries where the imposts varied from 12s. to 16s. 3*d.* per quarter.

If after this, and many other exposures of the unsuitableness of the Free-trade system to the requirements of the country, the people prefer blindness, then they must reap the consequences of their own folly.

CHAPTER XVII

OLD AGE PENSIONS IN ENGLAND AND IN GERMANY—A COMPARISON—A CONTRIBUTORY SCHEME SOUND— NON-CONTRIBUTORY SCHEME A STATE CHARITY

THE question of Old Age Pensions, although not one of the prominent points in dispute between Free-traders and Tariff-reformers, is, nevertheless, so intimately connected with the subject under notice, that some space may be usefully devoted to its consideration.

The Gainsborough Commission, before referred to, devoted some of their time to its study, while in Germany; and as the opinion of independent working men, on a subject which chiefly affects working men, is necessarily of more value than that of any political party which is biassed by party considerations, reference will be made to their views first.

Here is what some of the members of the Commission think on the subject.

THE GERMAN SCHEME

Mr. H. Beilby wrote—

“With respect to provision for old age a German working-man is better provided for. I should greatly like to see the old age and infirmity pension scheme introduced into England.” *

Mr. H. Calvert says—

“The old age and infirmity pension scheme impressed me as being perfect in organisation and administration; and it must be very gratifying to know that when the time comes to cease work, declining years will not be spent within the workhouse gate. Provision against accidents and sickness, which is also compulsory, is very beneficial, as it enables all workers to become independent of charity, which is always an uncertain quantity.” †

* “Life and Labour in Germany,” p. xx. (Introduction).

† *Ibid.*, p. xxi. (Introduction).

The Report itself has many references to the subject. Here are a few of them—

“The working-classes are well clothed and well educated, and their interests are attended to by the State in a measure unknown in other countries. In sickness they can claim relief at the hands of the State; in old age, and when incapacitated for work, they have not got the workhouse or the poorhouse to look forward to, but a certain fixed allowance, in return for which they are certain to have a refuge for their declining years with their relatives and friends.”*

“There is a pension fund inaugurated by the firm for the men over and above the State pension fund, and also a fund for giving support to the employees during sickness, or when in special want of aid. These are free gifts from the firm. A committee of the men go into every application for aid, and decide whether the case merits support. This is done in order to eliminate those who simulate sickness or distress, and do away with any risks of reckless benevolence.”†

“Throughout the whole Empire the provisions of the Imperial social legislation are effective, and throughout that part of the Empire through which we have been passing the action of the employers is also effective. The German workmen are insured against accidents, against sickness, and against infirmity and old age. They have no premium whatever to pay for the insurance against accidents, this being settled by the employers alone; the employers pay one-third, and the employed two-thirds of the premium against sickness; and the premium against old age and premature infirmity is distributed equally between employers and employed.

“The State further pays a contribution by undertaking all the expense of administration, free of charge, and by adding a money consideration to the old age and premature infirmity pensions.”

PENSIONS—A RIGHT, NOT A CHARITY

“By being thus insured the workpeople acquire a right, as citizens, to allowance in case of disability to work through accidents, sickness, and premature infirmity or old age. These allowances are not of the nature of donations to paupers; but of allowances to which they have acquired a right as citizens. In order to acquire these rights as citizens, the workpeople also contribute to the premiums, as well as the employer; and the State, as a body, pays the expenses of administration. These contributions of the employers, on the one hand, are necessarily a large financial burden on production, which must not be overlooked; and on the other hand, the contributions of the State are made up by the whole mass of the tax-payers, not only by the working people themselves.”‡

* “Life and Labour in Germany,” pp. 44, 45.

† *Ibid.*, p. 63.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

"Owing to the social legislation that has been enacted within recent years, a workman receives compensation, paid by his employer, for accidents sustained in the course of work ; he and his employer insure him against sickness, premature infirmity, and old age ; so that his future is provided for with the assistance of his employer and the State. Further, many employers, as we have already shown, confer benefits of various kinds, material and intellectual, on their employees." *

Mr. J. L. Bashford, the leader of the Gainsborough Commission, in his Appendix to the Report, entitled, "Infirmity and Old Age Pensions in Germany," in referring to the nature of the Act said—

"The Government resorted to COMPULSORY insurance, because it was impossible to devise any other method for securing the broad masses of the working-classes—those belonging to the lower grades—to contribute." †

Here is the crux of the position. The German Government knew, when they framed their Bill years ago, that the only way to secure the contribution of a certain section of the working-classes was to make the Act *compulsory*. That they were justified in taking this step the following extract from Mr. Bashford's Appendix will show :—

"Since the introduction of the system of compulsory insurance for the German workmen, the German Empire has advanced on the road to progress and wealth by leaps and bounds. The material and hygienic conditions of the whole nation have improved ; and everything goes to show that the working-classes must, in a great measure, attribute their increased health and vigour to the beneficent effects of the legislation initiated twenty-six years ago." ‡

INSURANCE SCHEME FOR WORKERS NOT—WASTERS

"This insurance scheme affects WORKPEOPLE, not VAGRANTS, tramps, or those who will not work. Nor are the WORKMEN'S INSURANCE LAWS a charitable scheme, in that they confer on every insured person a LEGAL RIGHT to a fixed modicum of assistance in case of sickness, accident, infirmity, or old age, in return for which they have themselves contributed an obolus to the fund from which they receive such assistance." §

These brief excerpts from a most valuable Report, teach us among other things, that the German "Infirmity Insurance Act" is of a type that, while compelling thrift, builds up, at

* Life and Labour in Germany," p. 117.

† *Ibid.*, p. 268.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

the same time, out of self-help, a feeling of independence, reliance and freedom, which is so dear to every honest, right-minded man and woman.

Here we have, then, in brief outline, a far-reaching scheme of Old Age Pensions which, it will be seen later on, has enormously improved the condition of German workers, and the question that has deep concern for the people of this country is—what are we going to do with it? Shall we set to work in earnest, and shape and fashion the German scheme so as to render it suitable to the requirements of our workers, or shall we treat it with that disregard and indifference which characterise the administration of so many of our national problems?

WHAT GERMANY FORESAW

Twenty years ago Germany saw the necessity of helping her workers, and she gave them the "Infirmary and Old Age Insurance Act" of 1889. This splendid pension scheme was not the result of petty political tinkering, but the work of wise, far-seeing, and patriotic German Statesmen, who, recognising what was necessary in the interests of their fellow-countrymen, loyally gave them a measure of real usefulness which would enable every worker to make provision for sickness, infirmity, and old age.

That the scheme has been an unqualified success is proved by the vast sums paid yearly to German workers, which will be referred to later.

THE ENGLISH SCHEME A LEGALISED STATE CHARITY

The Government has recognised the necessity of action by passing the "Old Age Pensions Act," but that measure is tentative rather than permanent, and palliative instead of being truly remedial.

No non-contributory scheme can possibly meet all the requirements of the case, and it is most regrettable that so imperfect a measure was ever launched upon the country.

The utmost that can be said in favour of this scheme is, that as many of our aged poor, who will benefit under the Act, have been reduced to their present pitiable condition rather through the neglect and maladministration of past governments than by their own fault, it is right and proper that they should now receive some compensation.

A scheme of this nature, which is nothing but another *legalised State Charity* on a vast scale, should end with the lives of the present recipients and then become merged in a

wider, far-reaching co-operative scheme whereunder every worker in the kingdom both men and women, including shop assistants, typists, clerks, and that great army of toilers whose occupations lie outside that broad sphere which embraces the many millions known as the "working-classes," *would be by law compelled to contribute.*

This tentative scheme of the present Government is, at the best, but a tardy recognition of what might be regarded as the just claims of our workers to State consideration and State aid, for it is beyond question that the people themselves are not capable, nor indeed have they the power to create and put into operation a comprehensive scheme of pensions and compensations wherein the employers, the State, and the whole of the workers, would be concerned.

PRESENT SCHEME—THE RESULT OF SOCIALIST PRESSURE

Obviously, a scheme of this kind must necessarily be inaugurated and carried through by the State. The question, however, which naturally arises out of such an admission is—What have the Governments of the last quarter of a century been doing that at the eleventh hour, when forced thereto by the Labour party and Socialists, they are compelled to launch upon the country a hasty, ill-devised scheme which, while costing the unfortunate tax-payers another six millions or more annually, satisfies neither of these parties nor meets, in any sense, the many requirements of the great army of our workers?

This ill-devised, non-contributory "Old Age Pensions Act" of 1908 can only be regarded as a sop to the recalcitrant Labour section of their own party, and a bid for the Socialist vote.

That the political party at present in office has succeeded in appeasing neither of these sections of the political community, is but a just retribution for the neglect of the workers' interests during all those years wasted in petty political rivalry which, had they been devoted to the public good, would have done much to obviate the bitterness born of that political unrest which is a marked characteristic of the times.

The absence of a carefully planned and far-reaching "Old Age and Infirmary Pension and Insurance Act" affords another instance of the ineptness of our party governments to inaugurate and carry through to completion measures of real reform—of a nature that would benefit the people and prove of service to the commonwealth.

It is, moreover, evident that, even when forced to some

overt action by the defection of a section of their own followers and the hostility of the Socialists, the party principle so dominates the situation that for the life of them the party in office dare not put forward a broad, comprehensive scheme of real usefulness, because of the fear that the party out of office might make so much political capital out of it as would ensure the defeat of their own government and turn them out of power.

THE INSANE "PARTY" SYSTEM

And this insane and suicidal system of ruling the country and administering its affairs is not a thing of yesterday, nor does it begin and end with the present Government. It dates back to the "good old days," to those times "when knights were bold and barons held their sway"; to that halcyon period of which poets sang and which were immortalised by various writers, when the people *enjoyed* universal serfdom and had less voice in the doings of Parliament than a child has in the domestic government of the household.

To-day the people have considerable political power *de jure*, but *de facto* it is really vested in those they send to Parliament to represent them. It is a matter of common notoriety how recklessly the people's welfare is sacrificed to party interests when their representatives get there.

This dominating tyrannical spirit of party influence equally affects every political party in the State, and it is inimical to the people's interests and antagonistic to real reform. The Statute Book for the last twenty-five years, for example, instead of recording a number of useful measures which would benefit the people, is full of Acts which were conceived in a craven, half-hearted spirit, born and bred in an unhealthy atmosphere of party jealousy and animosity, and which bear on their features the marks of destructive party warfare.

Whichever party may happen to be in office it will always be pursued by this baneful party spirit, dominated by its malign influence, and rendered feeble, inert, and nugatory by its unremitting enmity.

A DAWNING HOPE OF BETTER TIMES

There is, however, just the dawning of a hope visible on the far political horizon, and it is to be wished that this distant point of light may grow into a brilliant sun which will illumine the darkness of the people's lives and warm and cheer them with its fervid beams.

The cold selfishness of parties is bound to thaw sooner or

later under the ardent spirit of reform which is becoming more manifest day by day. The "Old Age Pensions Act" and the "*Confiscation*" Bill are but the outside sign of an inward change, while the visit of the Chancellor of the Exchequer—Mr. Lloyd-George—to Germany, undertaken with the professed object of studying the German "Infirmity and Old Age Insurance" schemes, offers but another example of this tardy awakening to the pressing necessity for reform of a more drastic nature than modern Governments usually care to undertake.

The people should mark well these significant signs and take precautions to ensure that there is no going back from this first forward step in the right direction. The chances are that Government are really aroused to the necessities of the case, and are determined to do their level best to give the country a scheme worthy of the name.

Mr. Lloyd-George was interviewed immediately after his return from Germany, and below will be found extracts from a Liberal organ, as also from a Conservative journal, of what he is reported to have said.

The Conservative journal * has the following:—

“MR. LLOYD-GEORGE’S RETURN

WHAT HE LEARNED IN GERMANY

£34,000,000 EVERY YEAR FOR PENSIONS

THE STATE’S SMALL SHARE

VIRTUES OF CONTRIBUTORY SCHEME

MR. LLOYD-GEORGE AND THE GERMAN PENSION SCHEME

“Mr. Lloyd-George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, returned to London yesterday with as many impressions as one strenuous month in Germany can leave on an active and receptive mind.

“The subject that engaged most of his time and thoughts was, of course, the German system of pensions for the aged and incapacitated. But, incidentally, other things came under his notice, and among them was the German workman’s home.

“‘What a gigantic scheme is theirs compared with ours ! Have you any idea how much is distributed in pensions every year ? Thirty-four million pounds sterling ! Think what that means—£14,000,000 in sick pay—of which the working-classes contribute two-thirds and the employers one-third ; £11,000,000 in pensions to the aged, and incapacitated irrespective of age—of which masters and men contribute an equal share ; and £9,000,000 as compensation for accidents—which employers alone have to pay.

* *Daily Mail*, August 18, 1908.

“‘And to this annual sum of £34,000,000, the State contributes only the cost of administration—a sum of £2,800,000.

“‘But this scheme—vast though it appears—is not to remain undeveloped. Very soon it will be increased to £53,000,000 by the addition of £5,000,000 for clerks, who do not benefit under the existing arrangement, and £12,000,000 in pensions to widows and orphans—one half from the contributions of the working-classes and one half from employers. This development will increase the State contribution to £5,000,000 a year—a sum that doubtless will exceed the cost of administration.

GERMAN SCHEME CONTRIBUTORY AND COMPULSORY

“‘Remember, the German scheme is not only contributory, but compulsory—even bachelors cannot escape responsibility for the widows and orphans.

“‘Are the people content with this system of compulsory provision for the years and accidents of life? Certainly they are. Even the Socialists are satisfied.

“‘A very useful purpose is served by the meeting of employers and men to manage these funds; though the men desire to have their say on the principles as well as the details. This joint action is most beneficial.

“‘Could such a system be adopted in Great Britain? Well, we must first have agreement among all parties—including the Socialists, who, in our country, look to the State more than the German Socialists.

“‘We have made a beginning—and that is something. Germany started in 1891, and has made great advance. Bismarck was indeed a great man. He made Germany.’”

The Liberal organ* said:—

“LESSONS FROM GERMANY

SPECIAL INTERVIEW WITH MR. LLOYD-GEORGE

PENSION SCHEMES

“FINEST SYSTEM IN THE WORLD”

WHAT THE RADICAL ORGAN REPORTS, £53,000,000 IN PENSIONS

“‘It is,’ he said, ‘a far more gigantic enterprise than I had ever expected to find. It is the most wonderful piece of organisation that I have ever witnessed. I have seen the whole machine in detail during my journey. I have interviewed employers and workmen, and I have seen the workings of the system in the central offices of the Provinces, and, finally, in the great central Imperial office at Berlin. You will know the details—how it covers the cases

* *Daily Chronicle*, August 27, 1908.

of sickness, old age, accident, and invalidity. The scope of it is shown by the fact that in the present year £34,000,000 will be raised for all these purposes in Germany. The Government are now adding clerks and widows; that, in all, will bring it up to £53,000,000 contributed by the nation itself for its own insurance. The sum contributed by the State amounts to a little more than the working expenses.'

"Do you think we can copy it in this country?'

NON-CONTRIBUTORY SCHEME BEST

"I should like to think that out. I have brought a great deal of literature which I must read. I must also study the systems at work in Belgium and Austria, either myself or through my officials. But I will say this much—as far as old men and old women over seventy are concerned—I am of opinion that their cases are best dealt with by a non-contributory system. Accidents are already dealt with in this country under the Compensation Act; the only question is whether sickness and invalidity can be dealt with on the German lines. On that point, I would like the trade union leaders in this country to employ their visit to Germany to study this question carefully and to help me in working it out.'

SOCIALISTS AND LABOURITES SATISFIED WITH GERMAN SCHEME

"Are the working classes in Germany satisfied with it?'

"Both Socialists and trade union leaders seem to me to be perfectly satisfied with its working. I pressed them for suggestions for improvement, and the chief suggestion they had to make was that the pension was too small. It certainly is too small, and in the case of sick insurance—to which the State contributes nothing, but which is a compulsory scheme forced upon all employers and workmen—there is a large growth of collateral organisations for supplementing the pension. Trade union leaders, I found, were not in any case opposed on principle to the contributory system. They were perfectly ready to increase the workmen's contribution in order to raise the level of the pension. They were all full of enthusiasm as to the influence of the whole system in raising the general standard of life and comfort in Germany. Some of the trade unions thought that it had taught the lessons of co-operation among themselves.'

"What did they think of our system?'

"They know very little about it; but when we told them about it, they said, 'England must be a very rich country.'

EMPLOYERS SATISFIED

"What do the employers think of the German system?'

"The employers seem to have been at first very dissatisfied; but, now, they are highly pleased with it. They did not at first

like the expense and inconvenience. The fact is, that the best of them have always recognised their moral responsibilities in the matter, and they now find that the system levels up the other workshops, and therefore that they are not now handicapped by competing with other workshops which make no provision for their sick people.”

Assuming that Mr. Lloyd-George has been correctly reported, it seems as though the Government may take certain steps in respect to this “Old Age Pension” question, but whether these steps will ever lead to a satisfactory settlement is another matter. We are too familiar with the manner in which all political parties juggle with our national questions to have much faith in the ultimate result, and although Mr. Lloyd-George himself may be in earnest, it is problematical if his party will give him a free hand in the matter.

Something of the kind was very likely in his mind when replying to the question:—

“Could such a system be adopted in Great Britain?”

“Well, we must first have agreement among all parties—including the Socialists, who, in our country, look to the State more than the German Socialists.”

His reply to a similar question from another interviewer is equally significant:—

“I should like to think that out. I have brought a great deal of literature which I must read. I must also study the systems at work in Belgium and Austria, either myself or through my officials.”

Whatever Mr. Lloyd-George’s individual desires may be, he has certainly safeguarded his official position by the above politic rejoinder, which may mean anything or nothing!

SIGNS OF WAVERING—ELEMENTS OF UNCERTAINTY

To bring all political parties in this country into agreement on any measure before Parliament is, as is well known, alas, practically impossible; while to ask the people to wait till the Government can study the social, economic, or political systems of one or more foreign countries is tantamount to saying that the matter is postponed *sine die*.

Nobody doubts the ability of the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, and even his political opponents recognise his keenness for reform and his boldness and vigour in carrying out his measures. Most people, moreover, believe in his honesty and integrity, and discern his desire to introduce many needed

improvements into our social and economic conditions, but whether his earnest endeavours to help the people to their own will ever result in real good, is exceedingly doubtful.

The tyrannous party demon, which always dominates the position, has strangled effort and killed individuality on countless previous occasions, and if Mr. Lloyd-George escapes the clutches of this malign spirit, then DEMOS will prevail—not otherwise.

WHAT THE PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO EXPECT

Whatever may be the outcome of Mr. Lloyd-George's German visit, our workpeople, as citizens of the Empire, want a reasonable practical recognition of their claims to consideration, and not *charity*. The Government have an excellent opportunity of showing them such consideration by the introduction of some scheme of old age and infirmity pensions, which, while ensuring the *obligatory* insurance of all persons working for wages or salary whose income does not exceed, say £100 per annum, will improve the position of the people by encouraging co-operation, thrift, and economy; some sensible scheme, in short, that will help the people and not humiliate them, that will uplift and not cast down, that will provide for, and not pauperise, them.

It will be borne in mind in connection with the German scheme that, although it is a co-operative arrangement between State, employer, and employed, the employers and employed contribute more than two-thirds in equal parts, while the *State subvention* amounts to less than *one-third* of the whole. In fact, the State contribution means little more than the working expenses.

If, after satisfying himself of the *contributory* co-operative fundamental basis of the German scheme, Mr. Lloyd-George persists in thrusting a *non-contributory* Old Age Pensions and Infirmity scheme upon this country, the British people will be as justified in denouncing that gentleman as Socialist as though he wrote "Comrade" before his name. A non-contributory scheme is nothing more nor less than spoliation of the British tax-payer and confiscation of his means, and it is this that Mr. Blatchford, Mr. Hyndman, and the more violent among the Socialist leaders advocate—that, and nothing more!

"I will say this much—as far as old men and old women over seventy are concerned—I am of opinion that their cases are best dealt with by a non-contributory system."

said the Chancellor of the Exchequer to his Radical interviewer.

DEEP INJUSTICE TO THE GREAT MIDDLE-CLASSES

It is doubtful whether the present Government is aware of the deep-seated, bitter feeling of resentment which has been created among the great Middle-Classes section of the British public, by the marked *insouciance* with which every Government, whether Tory or Radical, treats it, and which in time will have to be reckoned with as a factor in the political situation, just as much as Socialism or Irish Nationalism. This section is tired of political trickery and of being constantly mulcted to pay for public ineptitude arising out of party warfare, and it is beginning to ask for a change. The demand may perchance grow louder and stronger before long.

If the Old Age Pensions Act is intended merely to make provision for the remainder of the lives of the poor stranded ones among our great army of workers for whom the present Government rightly feels responsible, nobody will object, but if it means more than this, it is nothing less than the ruthless robbery of British taxpayers to pay for the general ineptness and studied indifference of past Governments to public requirements. Had Governments—past and present—devoted but one fiftieth part of the time wasted in petty wranglings and senseless party strife to the needs of the commonweal, the Old Age Pensions Act of 1908 would not have been on the Statute book to-day.

WHAT THE WORKERS WANT

The British working-man was, of course, not fool enough to reject the scheme of "Old Age Pensions," which came entirely out of the pockets of the British tax-payers, but he hardly expected this ridiculously quixotic method of dealing with the matter. Put before him a sound, sensible, practical scheme, whereunder he would be expected to co-operate with his employer and the State, in building up for himself a certainty in the future in respect to a suitable provision for old age or premature infirmity, for sickness and suchlike misadventures of life, and you will give him just what he expects, what he is hoping for, and what he is perfectly willing to subscribe to. But the scheme must be sound and efficient all along the line, or he will have nothing to do with it.

It has been shown in these pages how disastrously the great State Pauper charity has affected the people. Is there then a statesman, politician, tradesman, or working-man in the country who honestly believes that this last addition to the great Pauper institution will ultimately result in real benefit to the people,

or that a pusillanimous measure of this nature can do aught but harm to those it professes to serve?

EMASCULATING BRITISH MANHOOD

Do they really believe that our pauper laws, which, after all, are of a kindred nature to this "Old Age Pensions Act," will do anything more than deprive a man of those characteristics which are the pride and glory of his sex—the right and privilege of providing for and protecting his wife and little ones with his own strong right arm and—in *his own way*?

The British working-man is individually and collectively a power in the State, and a power to be reckoned with. He is an honest man and a stalwart champion for his own rights and privileges, and that he can well look after his own interests is proved by his trade unions, and other evidences of combination. If he wants anything, he is quite capable of asking for it in an organised manner, which often carries conviction with it. If, for example, he wanted an "Old Age Pension" scheme of a non-contributory nature, he would ask for it in a plain, practical manner; it doesn't follow that he would get it, nevertheless he would try.

In this particular instance the British working-men have not asked for any scheme of "Old Age Pensions" which would fall entirely upon the British tax-payers.

A few malcontents who voice the preposterous demands of Unreason have asked for such a scheme, but they no more represent the real wants or wishes of the great array of British workers than the writer voices the needs of the wild men of the Andaman Islands.

OLD AGE PENSIONS, BUT NOT CHARITY

The British workman does not want *charity*, and those who say he does simply pervert the truth. Give him a scheme whereby he will himself be expected to co-operate in making provision for old age, and whereunder generous, co-operative aid will be given both by employer and State, and you will find he will respond readily enough.

An "Old Age Pension" scheme of this nature is the working-man's right, and the tax-payers would support it; but the other scheme would be a rank injustice and a cruel wrong, and they would bitterly resent it.*

* Since this was written Mr. Lloyd-George talked volubly in his Budget statement about some Pension scheme of a widespread nature, but as he has not entered into explanatory details, the whole question is still in the air.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SACRIFICE OF AGRICULTURE—THE BURDEN FALLS UPON ALL CLASSES—HOW GREAT BRITAIN CAN GROW ALL HER OWN FOOD SUPPLIES

HAVING devoted considerable space to the controversial side of this momentous question, it now becomes necessary to remove it from that region and place it in the category of ascertained facts.

The first step in this direction is to take the area of the United Kingdom and ascertain whether it is, in respect to extent and productiveness, capable of yielding a supply of food-stuffs equal to the total requirements of the country. If it be so, then let us build up some perfectly simple, workable system that will enable our fellow-countrymen to turn the enormous potentialities they have in their land into a moving, living power, and so put a stop to that terrible waste from which the country has suffered since it was fatuously considered necessary to sacrifice agriculture so that manufactures might have the better chance of rapid development.

That the country has sustained enormous loss through this fatal, retrogressive step is beyond dispute; while the poverty of the masses is so widespread and phenomenal as to stand apart from that of all other countries in the Western world, with perhaps the single exception of Russia. It is also beyond doubt that, although this curse of poverty falls with especial severity on the poorest classes, the burden falls with irregular incidence on *all* classes of the community. Every class of the community is interested in the question, as the heavy and unnecessary taxes fall alike on Free-traders and Tariff-reformers, and all would therefore benefit from their diminution.

The total area of the United Kingdom is given as 77,684,000 acres, of which 13,504,000 acres are returned as "uncultivable or uncultivated, including mountain, waters, roads, etc." We have, then, an area represented by 64,180,000 acres which may be regarded as a *cultivable* area. Of this the area returned as

being "under cultivation" is 47,673,000, which leaves 16,507,000 acres of "uncultivated" land.

The following table explains the position :—

United Kingdom—Total area		Acres.
"	" Cultivable area	77,684,000
"	" Total area under "cultivation" . .	47,673,000

WASTEFUL AGRICULTURE

At first sight it would appear that there are, at all events, upwards of 47,000,000 odd acres under *cultivation*, but when this statement is examined, it is found that it is wide of the truth. This is the real position—

Area under Crops		Acres.
"	" Permanent Pasture, Clover, and Mature Grasses	12,992,428
		34,393,063
Total		47,385,491

But even this position, eminently unsatisfactory though it is, does not plumb the depth of our agricultural hopelessness, for we find that of the area of 12,992,428 acres given as "under crops," only 8,366,881 are under "corn crops," while the remainder is under "green crops" for sheep-feed. Further, that of this latter area—8,366,881 acres—but 1,892,740 acres are under wheat and fruit, and the rest under oats, barley, beans, and peas, including 1,182,028 acres under potatoes.

Briefly dealt with, it may be said that of our so-called "cultivated" area of 47,385,491 acres, 44,310,723 acres are under grass and crops for *sheep and cattle-feed*, while there are only 1,892,740 under wheat and fruit, and 1,182,028 under potatoes, or an aggregate of 3,074,768 acres, out of the enormous total area of nearly 48,000,000 acres under—*Man-feed*.*

LESS THAN 7 PER CENT. CULTIVATED FOR MAN-FOOD

Now, if the greatest enemy of the race devised means whereby the British people would lay up for themselves a never-failing store of trouble and suffering, he could not hit upon a better plan than this. Imagine the folly of the entire position; nay, more, the tragic pathos of it—48,000,000 acres of the finest and most productive soil in the whole world, and

* These figures are compiled from the "Statesman's Year Book, 1907," pp. 71, 72. For later figures from Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom, 1893-1907, see Chapter XXIV.

but 3·93 per cent. of it used for producing the natural food of the people—BREAD, and only 6·40 per cent. of this magnificently fertile area used for producing—FOOD FOR MAN.

Unfortunately, under the seeming folly there is bitter suffering and ceaseless pain and misery to millions of inoffensive people, who certainly deserve a better fate than that involved in the destruction of this great labour-employing and food-producing industry—AGRICULTURE. This is a most deplorable condition of British Agriculture, which, although well known to students, will come as a startling revelation to most of our fellow-countrymen, but it is hoped that there is yet time to retrieve the errors of the past by endowing agriculture with all those essentials to success which it must possess before it can do for the British people what it has done, and is doing, for the peoples of other countries.

Let us now see what we have to build upon: what the basis of our land scheme is, and if it is broad and strong enough upon which to build a powerful, stable agricultural industry which will give full employment to our people and lasting prosperity to our country.

SPLENDID OPPORTUNITIES FOR AGRICULTURE

Dealing with even numbers, we have 48,000,000 acres of what, by courtesy, is called by Government “cultivated” land, which, although not *tilled* in greater part, is nevertheless known to be among the finest corn-producing land in the world. Every acre of this vast area is capable of high cultivation and immense production.

Then we have 16,000,000 acres of what is termed “heath, grazing, and uncultivated land,” practically the whole of which is capable of producing, under a sensible, up-to-date agricultural system, excellent crops.

After this come upwards of 13,000,000 acres of “uncultivable or uncultivated” land, including mountains, waters, roads, etc., which are more or less of an unknown quantity.

A good deal of this “mountain, uncultivable or uncultivated” land might be converted into productive forests and good sheep pasturage, and even into arable land; indeed, had it belonged to Continental States this “mountain” land and the rest of it, which, in reality, partly consists of low hills varying from a few hundred to two or three thousand feet high, would have been converted to national uses a couple of generations ago.

Dealing with even figures, we have, then, a broad area consisting of—

	Acres.
First-class agricultural land	48,000,000
Second-class agricultural land "uncultivated" . . .	16,000,000
Mountains, waters, roads, etc.	13,000,000
Total	77,000,000

The highly productive nature of the "cultivated" area, 48,000,000 acres, is too well known to need further reference at this stage, so we will deal first with the 16 million acres of what Government terms "heath, grazing, and uncultivated land," which is just the soil that one may see from any carriage window as the train passes through the country.

Taking London as a centre and radiating therefrom to any point of the compass, this "uncultivated" land may be met with by thousands and tens of thousands of acres in every direction. "Heath, grazing, and uncultivated land" is, alas, in many counties, the prominent feature in the landscape. This is the land, which, added together, totals the enormous area of 16 million of acres.

This vast uncultivated area equals the total cultivated area of three of the smaller States of Europe, namely, Belgium, Holland, and Denmark, *all of which supply this country with considerable quantities of dairy produce and other forms of food.*

FAMILIAR "WASTE" LAND

This "heath, grazing, and uncultivated" land may be found in every direction and under varying conditions, in vast tracts in isolated places, or cheek by jowl with first-class arable land, separated only from extreme productiveness by the thin dividing hedge or stone wall. It creeps up to the fertile kitchen gardens of well-to-do people in newly developed townships; it is sometimes "caught" by enterprising nurserymen in the vicinity of provincial towns and converted into richly cultivated nurseries, and it enters so frequently into the domestic economy of many lives as to clearly demonstrate the really enormous potentialities which lie in and about this vast area.

In other words, these millions of acres have hitherto remained a negligible quantity because it has been the fashion to believe that they were of no value as factors in the general scheme of national economy. "God bless my soul!" exclaims your unthinking citizen, "you must be mad to think of bringing this enormous area of waste land under the plough, when three-fourths of our best land are already under grass, and a great deal more remains uncultivated because it does not pay to till it."

"WASTE" LAND A PROMINENT LANDSCAPE FEATURE

The people have indeed become so accustomed to heath and moor as a part, and in many counties a considerable part, of our landscape, that they now regard it as one of Nature's prominent features, in much the same way as they look upon mountain, lake, or torrent. The professors of economics who teach the creed that it is more profitable to allow our best lands to lie idle, and purchase our food-stuffs in foreign countries, are hardly likely to recommend the tillage of our *waste* lands; nor is it to be supposed that that vast array of "Agricultural Discouragers"—referred to in Chapter XXII. of this book—would advocate the reclaiming of those uncultivated tracts when they give a cold douche to all who are sanguine enough to believe that our *ordinary* arable land might be worked at a profit, even under the irrational conditions which now exist in this irrational, party-ridden country.

For various causes these 16 million acres of waste lands are lying idle and unprofitable, producing nothing for the people, nor affording them any means of employment.

In any one of the European States where agriculture is regarded as of primal importance in the national economy, the tremendous potentialities contained in this vast "waste" would, in a few years, be converted into a strong compelling force, which would launch into existence a numerous thriving and prosperous agricultural population, whose great purchasing power would stimulate manufactures and largely increase trade. Nor does it require demonstration here that the "waste" land of to-day can become the fertile soil of to-morrow, it being well known that high culture converts inferior into the most productive land.

MUCH "WASTE" LAND AS GOOD AS THE BEST

The fact of this matter is that much of this "waste" land is just as good as much of that now under cultivation, while the remainder could be made highly productive by good tillage.

The 13,000,000 acres of "uncultivable or uncultivated" land, which include "mountains, water, roads, etc.," come under a different category, because we cannot do without roads, nor can we empty our lakes and rivers or level our mountains.

If, however, our mountains were in Swiss, German, or French hands, much mountain land that is now "waste" would soon be covered with productive forests, while considerable numbers of sheep, which are now fed on the very

primest of our arable land, would be relegated to their proper demesnes—the low hill-sides and mountain slopes.

In agriculture as in every other industry, there must be experience, thrift and common-sense, and if we fail to apply these essentials to success, what can we expect other than failure? A woollen manufacturer does not use his finest angora fleeces in making coarse homespuns, nor does the cotton weaver use his finest counts of yarn in the manufacture of coarse calico; but the suicidal system under which agriculture is run in this country *forces the farmer to use up his finest land in sheep-feeds*, and for this reason—among other things—the agricultural industry fails, as it is bound to fail.

AGRICULTURE TESTED BY ITS CAPABILITIES

Now let us test the capability of our land to produce all our own food supplies.

We will first take the most important item—wheat.

It is computed that we require annually about 285,000,000 bushels of wheat for our own consumption. Can we produce this quantity? The Government returns* show that, on an average, our wheat lands produce thirty-two bushels per acre. We then require roughly 8,590,000 acres to produce the 285,000,000 bushels.

We have over 64,000,000 acres of land in the United Kingdom, most of which is capable of, tillage, 48,000,000 acres of this large area are already under “cultivation” (chiefly grass and sheep-feed crops), but bring every acre of this vast tract that is capable of being tilled under the plough; create *millions* of agricultural holdings where there are now but thousands; give the country a sensible, practical fiscal system; a system that will *lend itself* to agricultural needs, among other things: and who shall say that, apart from all party bias and political bunkum, 8,500,000 acres cannot be devoted each year to the growing of wheat?

OCCUPYING OWNERSHIPS

Many well-known authorities on matters agricultural consider that nothing like this area would be required if the land were properly tilled under a system of “Occupying Ownerships,” that is to say, under a system best calculated to produce the maximum instead of the minimum results from the soil. Good husbandry, such as would inevitably result if the man owned the land he tilled, would produce a *minimum* yield of five

* Cd. 4445. Board of Agriculture and Fisheries.

quarters per acre; and instead of 8,500,000 of acres being necessary to produce all the wheat we require for our consumption, 7,000,000 would suffice.

WE CAN GROW ALL OUR FOOD SUPPLIES

Then we import over 6,000,000 cwts. of bacon. Can any man in his senses affirm that if we grow from 7,000,000 to 8,500,000 acres of wheat, with thousands of farmsteads scattered throughout the country, we should lack any one of the required facilities for producing every pound of bacon that we now import in such vast quantities?

Next we come to cheese, butter, poultry, and eggs. Who or what is to stop us producing all these when once the great land industry is permanently established in our midst?

Once we give back to the people their best heritage—agriculture—put the plough back into the furrow, convert our sheep-walks into cornfields, our deer forests and sporting estates into market gardens; pasture our sheep on the rough hill-sides (their natural demesnes) instead of on our best arable land, and our cows in our low-lying water meadows, and then supplement this by stall feeding as they do in other countries where they raise a larger head of cattle per acre than we do; rigorously stop the wasteful system of allowing these animals to fatten on the cream of the land which should rightly be regarded as the property and substance of the people: who shall say that these things shall not be?

They are impossible to-day because the blundering of Governments, the insincerity of politicians, and the ignorance of the people have made them impossible, but go and ask any other civilised country in the world if *they* have found it impossible to accomplish these things, and they will laugh in your face.

COMPARISON WITH BELGIUM

Take one concrete example: Belgium, for instance, sends us of the surplus of her farm produce. We get £1,229,000 worth of eggs alone from that country, annually, besides which Belgium sends us largely of her other agricultural products, while retaining, at the same time, a sufficiency for her own consumption. But the astonishing fact in Belgium's case is that she manages to achieve this remarkable feat in spite of the fact that her area is more densely populated than almost any country in Europe, carrying, as it does, about 630 head of the population to the square mile, or nearly double that of the United Kingdom, which is about 360 to the square mile.

Then Belgium has another surprise for us. She has but a tiny cultivable area, only 4,350,000 acres, and yet she manages to raise 1,148,083 pigs, while we, with our enormous area under "cultivation" of 48,000,000 acres, raise but 3,953,834 of these animals. This works out at 26 pigs for every 100 acres under cultivation in Belgium, and only 8 per every 100 acres in the United Kingdom.

We find also that Belgium has 1,779,678 head of horned beasts, while we have 11,588,560. This works out at 40 head for every 100 acres under cultivation in Belgium, and only 24 per 100 acres in the United Kingdom.

HOW OTHER COUNTRIES DO IT

Again, if we similarly compare the production and industry of every civilised country in the world with that of our own country we shall find much to deplore all along the line. Everywhere else the land is regarded as the chief source of wealth, the chief means of employing and supporting the people, the backbone of the nation, and its refuge in the time of trouble. Roughly speaking, they rely upon their land as a means of employing and supporting about *one-third* or more of the entire population; of producing practically the whole of their food-stuffs; of preventing an exhaustive outflow of emigration: and last, but not least, of stimulating the demand for locally manufactured goods by maintaining in a general state of prosperity a large agricultural population, the spending power of which must be enormous.

With us the reverse of all this is the case; our land industry is neglected, and it supports the *minimum* head of the population in the whole of Europe and produces the *minimum* head of live stock; it is a source of weakness to the nation, inasmuch as we are forced to rely on outside aid for the very bread we eat, and a large proportion of most other foods; it compels exhaustive emigration because there is no employment to be found on the land; it induces poverty, and creates, therefore, a mass of pestilential pauperism: and it kills that demand for manufactured goods which, under other conditions, would undoubtedly come from a prosperous agricultural population that might be numbered in millions.

THE MONEY VALUE OF WHAT WE DO NOT GROW

Turning to the money value of the foods we are obliged to import, because the fatal policy of Cobden has deprived the people of their undoubted right to grow them on their own

lands and by their own labour, we find they amount to a stupendous figure.

Some of the food imports into the United Kingdom for the year 1906 are given in "The Statesman's Year Book" for 1907:—

Imports.	Value.
Wheat, Grain, and Flour	£67,879,948
Butter and Margarine	26,200,007
Cheese	7,607,641
Eggs	7,098,137
Meat, Bacon, Poultry, etc.	41,169,522
Animals for food	9,889,127
Fruits and Hops	11,225,968

Here we have a group of figures, compiled from returns furnished by Government, of so formidable a nature as to be absolutely startling; and yet, save a few students of the subject, there is not one Englishman in ten thousand who is aware of the state of affairs herein disclosed, nor aware that in them is involved the existence of England as a great world power.

Practically the whole of this enormous mass of food-stuffs, which costs the colossal sum of £171,000,000 annually, and which we ask foreign nations to grow for us, can easily be produced in our own country.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SACRIFICE OF AGRICULTURE (*continued*)—GREAT BRITAIN CAN GROW ALL HER OWN FOOD SUPPLIES

It is here necessary to support what is set forth in the preceding chapter with the contentions of other earnest advocates of a more vigorous and up-to-date agricultural system that would meet the requirements of the times. There are numerous land-reformers to be found in every section of the community, but we will only select two from the number as representative of their respective parties.

Mr. Robert Blatchford may be regarded as a type of the revolutionary spirit of the day, while the Right Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P., may safely be said to represent that which is conservative among us. Although their political opinions are as far apart as the poles, they are at least united in respect to the necessity of universal agriculture.

MR. BLATCHFORD ON THE NECESSITY FOR BRITISH AGRICULTURE

Mr. Blatchford, in his book, "Merrie England," has many references to the subject. Here are a few of them. After quoting figures showing that the United Kingdom, under certain conditions which might be encompassed without much difficulty, could grow food-stuffs to feed about 123,000,000 of people if it were found necessary to do so, he says:—

"We make cotton goods for foreign countries. The Manchester School will tell you that we must do it to buy corn. . . . The Manchester School will tell you that we cannot grow our own corn. That is not true. . . . They will tell you that as foreigners can grow corn more cheaply than we can, and as we can make cotton goods more cheaply than they can, it is to the interest of both parties to exchange. I do not believe that any nation can sell corn more cheaply than we *could* produce it; and I am sure that even if it cost a little more to grow our own corn, than to

buy it, yet it would be to our interest to grow it. . . . Don't you see that if we destroy our agriculture we destroy our independence at a blow, and become a defenceless nation? . . . No nation can be secure unless it is independent, no nation can be independent unless it is based upon agriculture. . . . The Tory land-grabber and the Liberal money-grubber are killing the wheat fields of England."

Mr. Blatchford has a good deal to say about the extreme fertility of British land were agriculture once established upon a perfectly stable basis and regarded, as it is in every other civilised country, as the *chief* industry of the people. He rightly maintains that British agriculture, properly developed and reasonably cared for by the State, could well support and maintain a far greater population than we have at present, and he then brings to his aid the very man who has done more to bring about the destruction of agriculture, and its resultant evils, than any man living or dead—Cobden. Quoting from one of Cobden's speeches at Manchester, he gives the following:—

"I heard Mr. Ogilvey say—and he is willing to go before a Committee of the House to prove it—that Cheshire, if properly cultivated, is capable of producing three times as much as it now produces from its surface. . . . and there is not a higher authority in England."

What "Mr. Ogilvey" affirmed, Cobden believed. This is, indeed, the crux of the entire position, and the people of this country would do well to take it to heart. The fertility of Cheshire is the fertility of England and of the United Kingdom; it exists to-day as it did in Cobden's time, but it is a great shame that it still exists, after all these long wasted years, as a latent possibility rather than as a living, mighty propelling power.

MR. BLATCHFORD ON AGRICULTURE CROAKERS

Mr. Blatchford wrote his "Merrie England" a good many years ago, under a sense of wrong and injury done to an unoffending people by Cobden and the Manchester School, but the injury remains and the wrong is unredressed.

Said he—

"Agriculture has been neglected because all the mechanical and chemical skill, and all the capital and energy of man, have been thrown into the struggle for trade profits and manufacturing pre-eminence. We want a few Faradays, Watts, Stephensons and Cobdens to devote their genius and industry to the great food question. Once let the public interest and the public genius be

concentrated upon the agriculture of England, and we shall soon get silenced the croakers who talk about the possibility of the country feeding her people."*

Speaking of the fatal policy of the Manchester School cheapening the price of wheat to the sacrifice of British agriculture and all that is involved in the destruction of our great land industry, he says—

"I know it has been said, and is said, that an English farmer owning his land cannot compete with foreign dealers; but I think that is doubtful, and I am sure that if the land were owned by the State, and farmed systematically by the best methods, we might grow our own corn more cheaply than we could buy it."†

CHEAP WHEAT MEANS LOSS OF HEALTH AND LIFE

Referring to Cobden's hackneyed phrase about Free Trade "giving to mankind the means of enjoying the fullest abundance of earth's goods," he said—

"But it means much more than that. However, let us reduce these fine phrases to figures. Suppose America can sell us wheat at 30s. a quarter, and suppose ours costs 32s. a quarter. That is a gain of one-fifteenth in the cost of wheat. *We get a loaf of bread for 3d. instead of having to pay 3½d. That is all the fine phrases mean.*

"What do we lose? We lose the beauty and health of our factory towns; we lose annually some twenty thousand lives in Lancashire alone; we are in constant danger of great strikes, like that which recently so crushed our operatives; we are reduced to the meanest shifts and the most violent acts of piracy and slaughter to 'open up markets' for our goods; we lose the stamina of our people; and—*we lose our agriculture.* Did you ever consider what it involves, this ruin of British agriculture?"‡

MR. COLLINGS ON THE NEED FOR AGRICULTURE

Mr. Collings, in his able work, "Land Reform," deals with this question from many points of view. He argues in a most convincing manner that, even under the present system of land tenures which, in comparison with the agricultural system in operation in most countries in the Western world, is not the one best calculated to produce the *maximum* yield from the land, we could nevertheless grow practically the whole of the wheat required for home consumption.

"Taking the supplies of 1903 as a basis for the calculation, it would

* "Merrie England," p. 30. Robert Blatchford.

† *Ibid.*, p. 33.

‡ *Ibid.*

require the yield (at 30 bushels the acre) of about seven million acres, in addition to the imports from India and the Colonies, to provide bread for all the population of the United Kingdom for a whole year, and if from any cause all over-sea supplies were stopped, this home produce would be enough for more than nine months' supply.

"Seven million acres out of nearly 48 millions under crops of some kind in the United Kingdom is not an undue proportion, seeing that before 1860, without bounties or protection, we had more than 4 million acres so cultivated."*

As these calculations are based on an average of 30 bushels per acre, he adds—

"In short it is difficult to find any writer on husbandry who reckoned less than 5 qrs. per acre as the average yield of best-cultivated land before the decay of agriculture set in. It is therefore not unreasonable to expect that under a system of occupying ownerships, with a sufficient bounty on wheat-growing, and the consequent good cultivation, the average yield would be at least 40 bushels per acre."†

But in corroboration of this, and in order to bring the matter more up-to-date, we supplement his text with a personal reminiscence.

"The present writer was visiting a farmer in the south of England a few years ago at harvest time. He remarked on the poorness of the wheat crop, and pointed to a large field in the neighbourhood, the yield of which, in the opinion of competent judges, was at least fifty bushels an acre. The reply was, 'That field is the property of a butcher in the village, who spares neither labour nor manure; he cultivates in a manner that I cannot afford to do.' This farmer, about two years afterwards, having lost what capital he had, was obliged to leave the farm."‡

HOW AGRICULTURE RAMIFIES AMONG THE PEOPLE

Mr. Collings then points out how widespread are the effects of agriculture and how its influence ramifies through all sections of the community.

"Every man, woman, and child in the country is affected by the prosperity or depression of agriculture. In the proposed land reform the yeoman farmer is regarded as the nation's instrument to secure national gains, comforts, and safety; the fact that he

* "Land Reform," p. 295. The Right Hon. Jesse Collings.

† *Ibid.*, p. 301

‡ *Ibid.*

shares the general advantages of that reform is but an incident in its operation."*

"In these pages the subject has been treated, however imperfectly, as a national one, with the object of bringing home to the minds of all members of the community, whatever their position and whatever their occupation, the fact that they have a living interest in agriculture, and that their happiness and well-being depend upon it."†

"Agriculture (in its widest sense) is held up as the parent industry of the world, of which trade and commerce are but the offspring and handmaids.‡

"Taken as a whole, therefore, if the agrarian policy here advocated were vigorously carried out, and Mr. Chamberlain's proposals were adopted in connection with it, the whole condition of English rural life would soon be changed. Employment would be enormously increased, not only for those immediately connected with the soil, but also for those engaged in subsidiary trades, such as the blacksmith, carpenter, miller, instrument maker, saddler, wheelwright, etc. Our villages and market towns, now in decay, would again become peopled and prosperous."§

As this phase of the subject is intensely interesting, one more example may be given of how it is viewed by men of all shades of political thought, and although the writer we will quote is not a compatriot, and the vast majority of the British people would not, perhaps, care to follow the fervid creed of his politics, yet his economics may be unimpeachable.

WHAT PRINCE KROPOTKIN SAYS

Whatever Prince Kropotkin's politics may be, he is a warm friend of the people of this country, and as the good of the commonweal is what we are chiefly concerned with in this work, his view of the situation will be the more acceptable and valuable because it is untainted by that malign party influence which is so inimical to the people's interests.

"Land is going out of culture at a perilous rate, while the latest improvements in market-gardening, fruit-growing, and poultry-keeping are but a mere trifle if we compare them with what has been done in the same direction in France, Belgium, and America.

"The cause of this general downward movement is self-evident. It is the desertion, the abandonment of the land. Each crop requiring human labour has had its area reduced; and one-third of the agricultural labourers have been sent away since 1861 to reinforce the ranks of the unemployed in the cities, so that, far

* "Land Reform," p. 309. The Right Hon. Jesse Collings.

† *Ibid.*, p. 394.

‡ *Ibid.*

§ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

from being over-populated, the fields of Britain are *starved of human labour* as James Caird used to say. The British nation does not work on her soil; she is prevented from doing so, and the would-be economists complain that the soil will not nourish its inhabitants!"*

"The most striking fact is, however, that in some undoubtedly fertile parts of the country things are even in a worse condition. My heart simply ached when I saw the state in which the land is kept in South Devon, and when I learned to know what 'permanent pasture' means. Field after field is covered with nothing but grass, three inches high, and thistles in profusion."†

"The Frenchman cultivates much that is left here under permanent pasture—and this is what is described as his 'inferiority' in agriculture. . . .

"He imports, in an average year, but one-tenth only of what the nation consumes, and he exports to this country considerable quantities of food produce (£10,000,000 worth), not only from the South, but also and especially, from the shores of the Channel (Brittany butter and vegetables; fruit and vegetables from the suburbs of Paris, and so on)."‡

"As to the comparison with Belgium, it is even more striking—the more so as the two systems of culture are similar in both countries. . . . The area given to wheat is five times as big as Great Britain."§

"The soil of Belgium supplies with home-grown food no less than 490 *inhabitants per square mile*, and there remains something for export—no less than £1,000,000 worth of agricultural produce being exported every year to Great Britain."||

UNITED KINGDOM CAN FEED 80,000,000 OF PEOPLE

"If the soil of the United Kingdom were cultivated only as it *was* thirty-five years ago, 24,000,000 people, instead of 17,000,000, could live on home-grown food, and that culture, while giving occupation to an additional 750,000 men, would give nearly 3,000,000 wealthy home customers to the British manufactures. If the cultivable area of the United Kingdom were cultivated as the soil is cultivated *on the average* in Belgium, the United Kingdom would have food for at least 37,000,000 inhabitants; and it might export agricultural produce without ceasing to manufacture so as freely to supply all the needs of a wealthy population. And finally, if the population of this country came to be doubled, all that would be required for producing the food for 80,000,000 inhabitants would be to cultivate the soil as it is cultivated in the best farms of this country, in Lombardy, and in Flanders, and to utilise some meadows, which at present lie

* "Fields, Factories and Workshops," pp. 46, 47. Prince Kropotkin.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 48, 49.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

|| *Ibid.*, pp. 57, 58.

almost unproductive, in the same way as the neighbourhoods of the big cities in France are utilised for market-gardening.”*

SCATHING COMPARISONS

“It is obvious that if we are satisfied with merely stating that it is cheaper to bring wheat from Riga than to grow it in Lincolnshire, the whole question is settled in a moment. But is it so in reality? Is it really cheaper to have food from abroad? And, supposing it is, are we not yet bound to analyse that compound result which we call price, rather than to accept it as a supreme and blind ruler of our actions?

“We know, for instance, how French agriculture is burdened by taxation. And yet, if we compare the prices of articles of food in France, which herself grows most of them, with the prices in this country, which imports them, we find no difference in favour of the importing country. On the contrary, the balance is rather in favour of France, and it decidedly was so for wheat until the new protective tariff was introduced. As soon as one goes out of Paris (where the prices are swollen by a heavy *octroi*), one finds that every *home produce* is cheaper in France than it is in England, and that the prices decrease further when we go farther East on the Continent.”†

JUSTIFIABLE CONTEMPT

Summing up his conclusions the writer of “Fields, Factories and Workshops” speaks with justifiable contempt of that attitude of profound ignorance and apathy which modern society assumes towards the food supply of their own country, a question of such tremendous import, even to the highly cultured and well-placed ones of the earth, as to demand their earnest consideration rather than their supreme indifference.

“We civilised men and women know everything, we have settled opinions upon everything, we take an interest in everything. We only know nothing about whence the bread comes which we eat—even though we pretend to know something about that subject as well—we do not know how it is grown, what pains it costs to those who grow it, what is being done to reduce their pains, what sort of men those feeders of our grand selves are, . . . we are more ignorant than savages in this respect, and we prevent our children from obtaining this sort of knowledge—even those of our children who would prefer it to the heaps of useless stuff with which they are crammed at school.”‡

Both Robert Blatchford and Prince Kropotkin have discovered “the rift in the lute,” while Mr. Collings has thrust

* “Fields, Factories and Workshops,” pp. 59, 60. Prince Kropotkin.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 71, 72.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

his point between the weak plates of the armour that should guard British agriculture. The apathy of the masses, born of the grossest ignorance of the A B C of the momentous agricultural question; the bewilderment of the middle-classes in respect to even the simplest problem which rotates round this great subject; the supreme indifference of "cultured society," the vested interest of the landed-classes, the insincerity of political parties, and the timidity of governments, render the explanation of this matter—which is really of the simplest nature—and *the bringing of it home to the realisation of the people*, as difficult as the task of Sisyphus. Then the commercial organisations, the Free Traders, the Manchester School, and all who have something to lose, or fancy they have, by the establishment of a universal system of agriculture in Great Britain, increase the difficulties by the dissemination of their particularly interested views, while the general confusion is added to by "economists," "scientists," and a host of others who rush in to trot out *their* particular hobbies.

HARM DONE BY WELL-MEANING ENTHUSIASTS

These well-meaning enthusiasts call to their aid all the theorems of economics and masses of figures in proof of the contention that it is cheaper for Great Britain to import her corn from foreign countries than to grow it herself by the labour of her own people, but this is dealing in deductive logic rather than with hard practical facts. They entirely overlook the cardinal fact that, in *not* cultivating our fields we are, in the first place, disobeying one of Nature's fundamental laws, and that those who disobey Nature cannot escape with impunity, and in the second, that in leaving our fields waste we are acting contrary to the recognised custom of every country in the world. It is *natural* for man to cultivate his land to its utmost productiveness, and *unnatural* to allow this greatest of all wealth-producers to remain idle and unproductive, or, to devote his genius and enterprise solely to the development of manufacturing industries. If this were not so those economists who favour the present wasteful system would be able to point to many nations, right down the long vista of the ages, which had become great and abidingly prosperous by sacrificing their agriculture to other pursuits. Is there a single instance of this on record? History supplies the answer.

Nor can they cite the British Empire as a case in point, because there is too much evidence on every side in proof of our prosperity *not* being abiding; that other nations have wrested and *are* wresting much of our trade from us in the

world's markets, and notably so *in our own country*; and that, although we are likely to continue for an indefinite period—which no living man may presume to predetermine—to be a great factor in the world's trade, our *supremacy* as the dictator of commerce and the supreme ruler of manufactures is already a thing of the past. A brief half century of industrial glory and then—the *Dies iræ* and the *Nunc dimittis*.

FUNDAMENTAL SIMPLICITY OF AGRICULTURE

There has, indeed, one way and another, been cast around agriculture—which is, *per se*, fundamental in its simplicity—such a net-work of professional platitudes, scientific quips, and party polemics, that it is now enmeshed in an absolutely unnatural environment. The resultant bewilderment and general confusion is such that there is no wonder “the man in the street” fails to understand the question.

Instead of regarding agriculture as a *rara avis* requiring an especial environment and exceptional treatment, it should be regarded as a perfectly natural condition requiring but natural manipulation. If we admit the errors of past treatment, give agriculture natural scope for development, and help it onwards with our sympathy and support, all difficulties will disappear, the intricate knot will be unravelled, and matters will naturally adjust themselves. To the people will come the time of the *Dies festi*, and the *Nunc dimittis* will give place to the *Magnificat*.

The point that here claims our earnest consideration is this—have we a sufficiently broad and solid basis upon which to build up our great national agricultural industry? The answer is unequivocally and unreservedly—YES. In this splendid inheritance of 48 million acres of the most productive land in the world—to which 16 million acres more could easily be added—together with several million acres which might be gradually reclaimed from mountain slopes and remote wastes, we have an unrivalled possession pregnant with tremendous possibilities. Therefore, let us now have done with possibilities and deal with everyday practicalities.

Any country that squanders its agricultural wealth by allowing the greater part of its best soil to be converted into sheep-runs, and “sporting” estates, cultivates the other part for sheep-feed, and then allows all the rest of the land to run to waste, fails to turn potential energy into an active living force.

In other words, no country in the world can afford to allow 48 million acres of the finest land on earth to be used with so complete a disregard of all the laws of domestic economy, and

allow another 16 million acres to run waste, without suffering terribly for its folly. Let us see how it has affected us.

HOW NEGLECTED AGRICULTURE AFFECTS THE PEOPLE

If we look at the question first from the point of view of the people, *i.e.* how it affects our workers in the matter of employment, we find that the land industry of the United Kingdom employs and supports to-day only about 5,000,000 persons, or less than *one-eighth* of the population.

RATIONAL METHOD

France employs and supports about three-fifths of its population, Germany about one-third, and Hungary about three-fourths in the land industry; and if we choose to follow their example by introducing a common-sense, rational system of agriculture, a universal system of small and large holdings by occupying owners and reasonable land tenures all round, we should be able to employ and support at least *one-third* of our population, or, say, about 14 millions of our people on the land, or even more by a higher system of cultivation.

But there is really no necessity to push the matter to extremes, and this is only intended to show what our land is really capable of.

There is, however, every necessity for the people of this country to be awakened from that deadly, lethargic sleep into which they were plunged by the preaching of a false prophet. Cobden and his disciples were fervid reformers, strenuous in their efforts, sincere in their convictions, and completely successful in their campaign. They fought long and well for what they considered to be a good cause, and they carried a large section of their countrymen with them.

They won the battle, but in winning it they destroyed agriculture, and in killing the land industry they murdered the people's best friend and greatest ally.

The deadly effects of the campaign were not felt at once; the great land industry was hard to kill, and it survived for a time.

Here is what Mr. Ernest E. Williams, author of "The Imperial Heritage," "Made in Germany," "The Foreigner in the Farm-Yard," etc., has to say on the subject in "Our National Peril"—

AGRICULTURE DIES SLOWLY

"It was not all at once that agriculture began to die. Just as a man may, by some foolish course of living, sow in his system the

seeds of death, and yet continue for some years afterwards in fair and apparent health, so it was with English agriculture. The 'natural protection' of distance, which Cobden promised to the English farmer, did shield agriculture for a time. The prairies of North and South America were as yet sparsely employed in arable cultivation, and apart from the comparative smallness of the foreign wheat supply available, a lack of facilities for transportation, and the high charges for freight, did give the farmer protection against foreign competitors, even after the duties were removed. But all through the intervening years the foreign wheat lands have been developing, railways have made a mesh over them, and the seas are now so crowded with ships that they are carrying grain across the Atlantic for a penny a bushel, and in some cases actually as ballast."

EMIGRATION TO AVOID STARVATION

It was *then* that the country commenced to feel the loss of its great staple industry. Labour difficulties became acute and employment hard to obtain, and it soon became apparent that despite the lavish optimism of the Cobdenites, our much-vaunted manufactures and world commerce were *not* capable of giving employment to the whole of the workers of the kingdom, and that vast numbers would either have to starve or emigrate. They chose the latter course, and a tide of emigration set in which has deprived the kingdom of millions of its best and strongest, for we must always bear in mind it is the hardy, strong, and vigorous who emigrate, and not the timorous, weak, and shrinking.

The figures given in Chapter XII., terrible as they are in their significance, only tell one story, and it is this: The people's greatest industry, having been killed by a cruel but mistaken policy, millions of England's sons and daughters have found the necessity of leaving the country which gave them birth, to—AVOID STARVATION!

And we are further alarmed by the startling fact that in spite of the enormous expansion of national trade which has been experienced during the last few years, this appalling drain on the manhood of the country is still found to be a *pressing necessity*, the aggregate for the five years ending 1907 having amounted to 1,514,279, while in the latter year the enormous total of 395,680 was reached; in other words—

"THE HEAVIEST EMIGRATION DRAIN SYNCHRONISES WITH PHENOMENAL TRADE EXPANSION."

Now, if great expansion of national trade means anything at all, it certainly should include, among other things, full work and prosperous times for the people; and without being

over-sanguine we should certainly safely calculate on *that*. But as a matter of fact it means nothing of the kind; it only means, in this connection, that fuller work may be found for a time for those who are already engaged; but for that vast throng of those unfortunates who are not engaged—and these are in their hundreds of thousands and their millions, as the emigration returns prove—there is NO WORK and NO HOPE.

In plain, terse English, those who are responsible for the present state of affairs, have, between them, killed the NATIONAL INDUSTRY, the chief source of the people's support and employment, and have given them nothing in return save a lot of vapid promises and an international trade policy of so Utopian a nature as to result in nothing but poverty to millions of our countrymen.

And it is just here that we should do well to bear in mind that most of these millions who have been driven from their country by inept fiscal laws were of the body electorate, and had an inalienable right to participate in, and benefit by, the wise and well-considered legislation of those whom they sent to Parliament to govern in the interests of the body politic. Every one of these unfortunates, and every one of those who are being exiled to-day, has a well-defined grievance, nay, a just cause for deep-rooted, bitter animosity against any Government and its followers who, solely for political motives, bolster up a system which long experience has proved to be as faulty as it is fatal.

And what of those who stay at home to share with their wives and families in the evils which a misguided fiscal policy must necessarily produce?

Have they no grievance against their rulers? Can they look around and say, "We are content"? Is work so plentiful with them, so stable, so remunerative as to cause them to say, "We have nothing to complain of"? Can they say that our professions, trades, and industries are so exigent in their demand for labour that a man is snapped up by one or the other of them the moment he is out of employment? Do we, as a people, find, in short, that the labour supply is so scanty, the demand so great, and employment of all kinds so certain and so well paid as to have justified the destruction of our great land industry years ago?

We have seen that because we alone, of all countries in the whole world, have attempted to make agriculture subservient to trade and manufactures, we have failed as we deserved to fail. The land is the source of being, the source of wealth; from it we are taken, to it we must return; without it we cannot live. Man, in making the most of the land, in working

it for all it will produce, is but following a natural LAW, and he who contends against the operation of natural LAWS, pits his puny strength against a FORCE that is simply irresistible.

We must cultivate highly every acre that is capable of being cultivated in the kingdom, or we shall fail as signally in the future as in the past.

There is no escape from this fact! No possibility of evading this LAW with impunity.

WILL NOTHING ever arouse the people of this country to a true sense of their position?

Is there anything under heaven that will awaken them from that fatal sleep which the destruction of their land industry plunged them into fifty odd years ago?

Is there any power on earth that will make them understand the simple fact that if they have an industry capable of giving employment and support to twelve or fourteen millions of people, and they muddle it so that it can only employ and support 5,000,000, they have made a shocking mess of their own affairs?

Will they *never* understand that unless they work their great NATIONAL industry on sound, economic, and commercial principles; work it for all it is worth; work it in a manner to produce the maximum of NATIONAL wealth and afford employment to the maximum head of the population: immense loss of NATIONAL strength, power, vigour, energy, vitality, and wealth *must* result? Will they *never* realise that want of work, poverty, and a complete derangement of social and economic conditions are but the natural sequel of NATIONAL WASTE?

Cannot they see for themselves that because of their blindness, infatuation, madness; because they have allowed false teachers to lead them astray, to lead them away from the real source of their strength and vitality, and from those springs of NATIONAL productiveness which are as essential to the well-being of the people as the sun's warmth is to the ripening corn: poverty has fallen upon them as a scourge, and that poverty and its attendant horrors will continue to haunt them so long as they cling to false creeds and worn-out beliefs?

The prevailing poverty of the people and the eminently unsatisfactory condition of the entire question affecting labour, have brought us face to face with a grim fact; and now we realise that our troubles proceed from the land, we should not cease in our efforts till agriculture has been built up in a manner that will render that industry strong and abiding; till it has, in short, been rendered capable of providing food for, and employment to, our people just as it does in all other civilised countries in the world.

In the consideration of this subject, *which is vastly more important to the nation than any other question of the times*, the sound advice and the earnest pleas of the authorities referred to should not be lightly put aside as of no value in the economy of individual lives, because it will surely dawn on the national intelligence—sooner or later—that, in spite of past apathy and present ignorance and indifference, this much despised, or at least misunderstood, agricultural question will after all furnish the key to practically all that is wrong in the national life.

It will be found that although Protection, Tariff Reform, Labour struggles, and Socialists' efforts, and the rest of the political and economic influences that are disturbing the people so much to-day, may do something to lessen congestion and alleviate distress, it is the land—agriculture and all that it holds in its wide embrace—that *must eventually strike the dominant note* in social, economic, and political questions.

The people are heirs to a vast inheritance, and it is through the land that they will enter into their great possessions.

“The stars come nightly to the sky ;
The tidal wave unto the sea ;
Nor time, nor space, nor deep, nor high,
Can keep my own away from me.”

CHAPTER XX

HOW WAR WOULD INTENSIFY POVERTY—GRAVE PERIL TO THE NATION—OUR FOOD SUPPLIES AT THE MERCY OF ENEMIES' AGENTS, "CORNERERS," AND SPECULATORS

LET us now try to realise what might, and assuredly would, happen to us if war broke out between this country and one or more of the great European States, particularly with a country possessing a powerful navy. Do not let us shirk this question as we shirk so many others, because there are visible signs that war is not at all improbable unless we change much that is objectionable in our foreign policy, or rather the "pin-pricking" policy assumed by a certain section of the Press, as also in the internal social and economic conditions of the country. That we should be armed at all points is unquestionable, but that we should arm resolutely and quietly, and in a dignified manner, instead of *talking* so much about it, is equally certain.

The strongest proof that could be brought against the fatuous policy which destroyed national agriculture would lie in the immediate effect that war with a European State would have on the price of corn, and, for that matter, of all other food-stuffs.

No country can be in a state of war without suffering seriously from dislocation of trade; increase in price of commodities; unemployment, and consequent poverty: but the country that grows its own food staples is likely to suffer less than the country which imports them.

France, for example, during the Franco-Prussian War, suffered comparatively little—save in beleaguered cities—from this cause, because of the immense food reserves which lay behind the universal agriculture of the country; and it was this fact, coupled with the tremendous wealth and recuperative power of the great land industry, that ultimately saved France from financial destruction.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN WERE WE AT WAR

Now, it requires neither a statesman nor a statistician to determine what would surely happen to us if we were at war with any European country, because every citizen of this country can, if he chooses, sum up the position for himself.

It is variously estimated that there is from three to six weeks' wheat supply in the country, represented by floating stocks, while, of other food supplies, it is estimated that such as there are would be consumed within about fourteen weeks of war breaking out, if once we lost command of the sea.

There are a number of people who still believe in the invincibility of the British Navy and the inviolability of the British Isles; and up to quite recent times such a belief was justified. Under the vastly altered conditions, however, in the relative strength of naval armaments brought about by the enormously rapid development of Germany's war vessels, the justification for such a belief at once disappears.

It is within the memory of even very young men that Germany's naval power during the South African War was represented by a few armoured vessels which are now obsolete; our naval power, on the other hand, dominated the seas at that period, and the belief in its invincibility and the consequent security of our insular position was justified.

GERMANY'S POWERFUL SQUADRONS

To-day, everybody knows that the German North Sea fleet represents one of the strongest squadrons of warships afloat, and that the Germans are building others of the *Dreadnought* class with the greatest rapidity, their means of production being quite equal to our own. This being the case, it does not require an Admiralty Lord to tell us that the status of European sea power is so changed by this one fact alone as to necessitate a complete change of front on our part.

No man denies that our navy is now more powerful than Germany's; but, on the other hand, no man is foolish enough to believe that if war broke out with that country the whole of our fleet would, or could, be kept intact for home defence.

We are, unfortunately, so dependent upon a number of foreign countries for four-fifths of our corn, and for a vast quantity of our other food supplies, that an enormous fleet of vessels is constantly engaged in bringing these supplies to our shores. To convoy this great flotilla in war time, and protect, at the same time, our vast over-seas trade with all parts of the

world, a large number of warships would necessarily have to be detached from the Home fleet and detailed for this duty.

The annual value of these huge food imports reaches the astounding total of £172,000,000,* and it follows, that if we are foolish enough to depend upon foreign countries for nearly the whole of our wheat, and for the bulk of our other food supplies, we must necessarily suffer in spending enormous sums to maintain a powerful fleet of war vessels to keep the seas clear, while we must also be prepared to detail a powerful squadron of these vessels during war time to convoy our food ships.

That this paramount duty would draw away a number of vessels and considerably weaken the Home fleet, there is no question; but whether this weakened fleet would still be powerful enough to guard our Islands and crush the formidable squadrons of Germany, even naval experts are not able to decide.

WHAT ADMIRAL SIR CYPRIAN BRIDGE SAYS

One of our admirals, writing on the subject as recently as August, 1908, said—

“Germany, as a matter of fact, is far from having a number of fighting ships equal to ours, and the strength of her naval personnel is less than half the strength of ours. It is, therefore, probable to the verge of certainty that Germany would not now, and cannot for some time to come, prove superior to us at sea.”

“It seems desirable to remind people that war is a two-sided affair; and as war between us and Germany must be waged largely at sea, it is now, and if we do not relax our preparations it long will be, in our power to do her much more harm than she could do us.”

“In order to injure us in war to the point of forcing us to yield to any terms that it may impose, a great Continental State must try . . . to starve its inhabitants into submission by stopping our supplies of food and raw material; . . . to capture or ruin our mercantile marine.

“These two operations must be purely naval. If Germany proves superior to us at sea, she may reasonably look forward to being able to carry these out.” †

It is interesting, and alarming, to note that although Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge's somewhat sanguine predications

* “Agricultural Statistics” (Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, 1907, Cd. 4264).

† Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge. Extracts from a letter to the *Clarion*, August 14, 1908.

in regard to Germany's naval strength were uttered in August of 1908, the debates in Parliament of March, 1909, prove how fallacious even the views of naval experts may be on naval matters—a short six months, and the country is rudely awakened to the fact that the sea power of Germany, measured in *Dreadnoughts*, which one of our most famous admirals assured us—

“As a matter of fact, is far from having a number of fighting ships equal to our own,”

is already within measurable distance of our own naval strength, and may even exceed it in 1912. The fact is, the rapidly increasing wealth of Germany, her enormous commercial and industrial expansion, and the almost boundless ambition of her people, render her a new and somewhat unintelligible factor in the economy of the nations, and a good many people fail to understand her. There is no wonder, then, that Sir Cyprian Bridge failed to read the riddle aright.

WHAT ADMIRAL HARDING CLOSE SAYS

Here is what Admiral Harding Close said on the subject in 1903—

“We spend thirty-one millions a year on the Navy. You might as well chuck that money into the sea for all the good it will do, for what is the use of our going to sea and winning battles of Trafalgar if we leave a starving population behind? . . . It is no use your boasting that we have a powerful Navy, and that, therefore, having command of the sea, our food supply is safe. You cannot get a naval officer to say so. We never had command of the sea, so far as the protection of our merchant ships is concerned. If there was a period in the history of this country when we might say we had command of the sea, surely it was after the battle of Trafalgar, when there was not an enemy left on the sea. Yet after that battle, hundreds of our merchant ships were captured; and it will be so again. We cannot protect our merchant ships; the thing is impossible. The true blockade will be the impossibility of our ten thousand slow merchant ships obtaining any insurance, and being laid up as the United States merchant ships were laid up when the *Alabama* was about. This will prevent the weekly arrival of the four hundred merchant ships which bring us our food, and cause panic on the corn-market, the enemy having made food contraband of war.”*

No comment need be made on these statements of two of our great admirals, save this—that when naval experts disagree—*anything may happen!*

* “The Murder of Agriculture,” pp. 56, 57.

ENGLAND DEPENDENT UPON FOREIGN COUNTRIES FOR FOOD

The people of this country to-day *are dependent upon the goodwill of foreign countries for their daily bread*, and out of this fact they may well conjure up many evils that may overtake them. There is a race going on between England and Germany in the building of *Dreadnoughts*, and no living man can predict how this insane struggle may end. One thing is certain, that Great Britain is enormously adding to her expenditure by this wild career of warship building, which must add to the burdens of the tax-payers, and yet it must be admitted that under existing conditions there is no other course open to this country.

It is said that as long as we hold the seas all fear of our food supplies being cut off may be dismissed. This may be true; and the absence of a really formidable European naval power during the last half-century has been the justification for such a belief. But the past is past; the present exhibits new and alarming aspects of this phase of the question; and the future no man may read.

Germany has declared that she is determined to have a sea power that will *at least rival our own*: and what Germany says, that will she do. She is wealthy, powerful, and ambitious, and certainly capable of performing what she promises.

The remarkable and rapid growth of her vast mercantile marine has startled the world, and what she has done with her trading vessels she can and will do with her warships. Germany is the power to be reckoned with here, and to pooh-pooh the idea of that country being the chief factor in the situation would be weak and foolish.

Germany has already got together a powerful fleet of warships which stands as a menace to our own shores; and as she has done this in the remarkably short space of seven years, we may well be anxious about the immediate future.

If, under the vastly altered conditions in the status of European sea powers brought about by Germany's attitude, we still persist in pooh-poohing the matter, we shall deserve the disaster which will surely overtake us as a people.

In this connection the following criticisms by German newspapers of Mr. Asquith's speech in the Naval debate in the House of Commons in July last, will be of interest—

“The *Reichsbote* criticises it in a hostile manner, saying that ‘the matter, and, of course, the manner, in which the sons of Albion arrogate to themselves the dominion over the sea is arrogance which other Powers cannot tolerate. England may be the greatest naval

Power, but to establish a principle and a programme to the effect that England has a right to govern not only the seas surrounding her, but to limit the movements of other States according to her own views in East Asian, American, African, and Australian waters.'

"This right of sovereignty cannot be acknowledged by any nation. The ocean is free, and all nations have the right to move on the sea freely."

"The *Kreuzzeitung* says 'the question of the maintenance of England's two-Power standard for the Navy will be answered differently in a decade's time, and less favourably than it was answered yesterday in the British House of Commons.'"^{*}

A GRAVER DANGER EVEN THAN WAR

There is, however, another factor which is destined to play a more important part in the situation, and, it is feared, have a far more terrible effect on the people of this country than even the defeat of our Navy and the invasion of our shores by a foreign army, and that is the holding up of corn supplies both by the country with which we may be at war, as also by a large number of independent speculators who would at once seize upon such an opportunity as the means of making money.

Let us separate these two extra factors and deal with the former first.

Here are a couple of quotations from recent writers on the subject—

"Now think what that (a barely fourteen weeks' supply of wheat in the country just after harvest) would mean in time of war. I mean a war waged against us by one or more great naval Powers. 'Oh, but the Navy!' perhaps you say. But does it not strike you that perhaps our Fleet would have something better to do than convoy grain ships across the Atlantic during war time? That its operations might be seriously hampered by having to perform this big service? Easily, then, the country might run short of food; for it is not only wheat, but all sorts of food-stuffs, for which we are largely dependent upon imports. That is to say, famine prices would at once result. Corn merchants estimate that the commencement of a naval war against this country would mean the immediate rise of wheat to anything between one hundred shillings and two hundred shillings a quarter. What would be the effect of that to-day upon the working classes? With trade disorganised, and wages therefore lower or non-existent, it would mean grievous suffering, bread riots, revolution—unless the country sought peace at once upon any terms the enemy would give it. But would there be any grain to convoy? By a few smart and secret operations, agents of the enemy could corner the world's wheat supply; and as

^{*} *Daily Express*, July 23, 1909.

this would be the most effectual method of bringing England quickly to her knees, it is more than probable that such a course would be followed." *

"Think what it means for the whole population of England and Wales to be entirely dependent upon grain-carrying ships bringing wheat over the sea for the daily bread of this great population.

"Not much imagination is needed to see that such a condition is full of national danger, not only in time of a quite possible war, but also in times of peace. . . . And he would be a bold man to deny to the vast power of financial trusts, constantly developing, the possibility of gaining a similar control over the price of wheat sold in England. And in time of war, the simplest tactics of an enemy would be to harry our food supplies, and so starve us out in a few weeks. And these tactics would be relatively easy because our Navy would have to be guarding our great and exposed coast-line against military invasion." †

THE MISCHIEF OF CRASS IGNORANCE

The mischief is that hardly a man in ten thousand ever takes the trouble to *think such questions out for himself*; indeed, he prefers *not* to think about such matters at all; they are unpleasant, and as *he* can do no good—at least so he thinks—by bothering himself over them, he dismisses them and proceeds to the consideration of pleasanter, and, as he believes, more profitable questions.

This ostrich-like attitude is, however, destined to be rudely disturbed; moreover, it is not only a cowardly attitude but the most *unprofitable* one that could possibly be assumed.

Every schoolboy, even, knows that war time offers the rarest opportunity for the cupidity of every man engaged in trade of whatsoever description, and he never fails to take the fullest opportunity of it. He knows full well that war is cataclysmic in its effects, and that practically every economic condition is upset and dislocated. It is, indeed, a golden opportunity, and every tradesman and merchant in the kingdom takes the fullest advantage of the occasion and, in the slang of the period—"runs the show for all it's worth."

The recent experiences of the South African war teach us that when war breaks out, even in remote parts of the Empire, markets at once become disturbed, "corners" are formed, supplies are "held up," and prices advance all along the line.

The writer remembers going into a shop to buy some silk

* "Our National Peril," Ernest E. Williams; *Windsor Magazine*, April, 1902.

† "British Agriculture and Tariff Reform," John Holt Schooling; *Windsor Magazine*, August, 1908.

socks; prices had considerably advanced, and he asked the reason why. "The war has affected the price," was the answer. "But," he remarked, "we don't get our silk from South Africa." "Oh," said the shopman, "I don't know about that, socks are dearer, anyway."

Do not pass this little incident over with a smile, for it is no laughing matter, but one of serious import and full of tragedy.

WHAT WAR WITH GERMANY WOULD MEAN

War with a great European Power means far more to the people of Great Britain than the South African affair did, and it is our business to understand what it does mean to us.

If there be one among us who is foolish enough to suppose that once war breaks out there will be set up among our shopkeepers and traders a bond of brotherhood, of love and goodwill whence will spring a generous philanthropic spirit and a keen desire to keep prices down: that man had better divest his mind of so fatuous a belief and accept the hard matter-of-fact reality, or betake himself to some other world where wars vex not.

War is a catastrophe, and although in certain directions it may develop loyalty and patriotism, nobility of character, self-sacrifice and heroism, it is sure, on the other hand, to bring to the surface much that is ignoble, base, selfish, cruel, and avaricious in human nature.

At any rate, the sad experience of the past plainly tells us that, whatever else may happen, prices are sure to rise, and once this takes place it matters not whether the cause be the cupidity of shopkeepers, the holding up of supplies by "cornerers" or by the secret agents of the country we may be at war with, the result is always the same—disaster to the nation, and misery and semi-starvation to the people.

Whatever else may happen then—*the people must suffer and suffer terribly.*

Said the writer in the *Windsor Magazine*—*

"with trade disorganised, and wages therefore lower, or non-existent, it would mean grievous suffering, bread riots, revolution—unless the country sought peace on any terms the enemy would give it."

He then adds—

"But would there be grain to convoy? By a few smart and secret operations, agents of the enemy could corner the world's

* "Our National Peril," Ernest E. Williams; *Windsor Magazine*, April, 1902.

wheat supply ; and as this would be the most effectual method of bringing England quickly to her knees, it is more than probable that such a course would be followed."

WHAT THE PEOPLE SHOULD REALISE

The deadly peril which besets the people of Great Britain in respect hereto is that they cannot be brought to a realisation of what that terrible passage—" *But would there be grain to convoy?*" —means to them and theirs.

It is always difficult to get a man who has dined well and sumptuously to enter into and realise the full extent and meaning of the term—*suffering from the pangs of hunger*—while it is just as difficult to make people who, although not necessarily rich, have, nevertheless, in a general way a sufficiency of food, understand the meaning of—*famine*.

But it is this word, and no other, which exactly expresses the condition in which the people of this country would be once war broke out between England and a powerful European State—Germany for example.

The weakest link in our chain armour of defence is our dependence on outside countries for the very food we consume ; and it is this utter helplessness which constitutes our greatest danger. It is this weak spot the enemy would strike at first ; and, quite irrespective of the fact that we may continue to hold command of the seas, the world's wheat supplies could be "cornered" and held back from a starving people—*by a few smart and secret operations of the enemy's agents*. Our own vessels may be there ready to keep the seas open and to convoy food supplies—" *But would there be grain to convoy?*"

One great cardinal fact stands out prominently, and it is this—that once we were at war there would be a sharp rise of prices in corn and all other food-stuffs, and all the fleets in the world could not prevent it, because the operating factors would lie beyond the influence of the nation, and consequently entirely beyond the control of any Government.

That this would be the case is testified to by the fact that during the Peninsular War corn was terribly high, in spite of another fact that at that period we were not in the habit of importing very much wheat, while our command of the seas was complete.

To again quote Admiral Harding Close :—

"If there was a period in the history of this country when we might say we had command of the sea, surely it was after the battle of Trafalgar when there was not one enemy left on the sea. Yet

after that battle, hundreds of our merchant ships were captured ; and it will be so again."

Although we were not at that time in the habit of importing much corn or other food-stuffs, the price of wheat, nevertheless, averaged *eighty-four shillings per quarter*, during the war.

"Wheat, which in 1792 was so low as forty-seven shillings per quarter, rose in 1801 to one hundred and eighty shillings. During some weeks of that year the quatern loaf sold at one shilling and tenpence. Throughout the war wheat averaged eighty-four shillings per quarter. . . . The grain-ships of neutral Powers were stopped on the high seas, and a forcible sale of their cargoes exacted." *

WHEAT £9 PER QUARTER DURING PENINSULAR WAR

This brief excerpt from the history of that time is full of significance. It tells, in the first place, that although we drew very little of our food-stuffs from foreign countries, this fact alone was not sufficient to prevent an enormous rise in the price of corn.

It further teaches us that, if under the stress of war the price of wheat rose to famine prices when we were practically independent of outside supplies, they would be sure to rise much higher when we have to import *four-fifths* of our wheat besides a vast quantity of all other food-stuffs, every pound of which would be entirely at the mercy of Britain's enemies.

Another great difficulty is to get the people to understand the enormous difference between our position to-day and the period covered by the Napoleonic wars, and unless we take the trouble to get this important factor fixed firmly in our minds we shall surely court disaster.

One hundred years ago we were practically independent of foreign countries for our food supplies.

To-day we are absolutely dependent upon a number of foreign States for our daily bread.

If that bread be withheld for the brief space of a few weeks, vast numbers of our unfortunate people would literally starve and die.

This is the crux which the masses fail to realise. The people must suffer, and yet they appear to be indifferent.

The latest agricultural statistics on the subject to which we have just referred show that £172,000,000 annually are sent abroad to pay for imported food.

* "The Nineteenth Century, a History," p. 73: Robert Mackenzie.

WHAT THE GOVERNMENT REPORT DISCLOSES

This Report furnishes much information which is not only interesting but intensely thrilling. It not only discloses the fact that more than *four-fifths* of the wheat consumed in the United Kingdom comes from foreign countries, but that the *individual expenditure on food imported from abroad has practically trebled during the last fifty years*. For the seven years 1859-65 the expenditure per head of the population was £1 2s. 2d. For the last seven years it was £3 4s. 11d.

These foods included meat, cheese, butter, eggs, vegetables, fruit and—*wheat!*

Now it is clear enough to the average mind that, given a state of war, the price of corn would not so much depend upon our supremacy at sea as upon other factors, which, conceivably, may be less under our control than the command of the great ocean water-ways.

There is, as we have just pointed out, considerable difference of opinion even among our admirals, as to whether we could or could not effectually protect our merchant ships if we were at war with a powerful foe—there is, however, but one opinion in regard to our country being entirely at the mercy of that foe in respect to buying and holding up food supplies.

THE PEOPLE SHOULD FEAR "CORNERERS" AND SPECULATORS

There is no doubt about our being at the mercy of every speculator or group of speculators in this country and in America, who would remorselessly use their millions in "cornering" wheat and every other article of food consumption besides, provided they could make money out of their transactions. The Chicago "Corner" of Z. A. Patten, in April of this year, affords the latest example of these villainous transactions.

And this also is true, that they would carry on their "cornering" transactions to the bitter end, quite irrespective of the fact that their operations were reducing the people of this country to literal starvation, and causing widespread misery and death to thousands of unoffending men, women, and children—innocent people who had never done harm or injury to this plutocratic group of merciless financiers.

It is furthermore beyond dispute that if these millionaire commercial operators—whether they be English or Americans—had met together in secret conclave to devise the best and

safest means of selling this country to its foes, they could not possibly adopt surer measures than by buying up, even for a brief period, large quantities of the world's food supplies.

The consideration of this one question alone opens up a wide field of controversy, but we can only deal here with one of its many aspects.

American citizens are, of course, beyond the jurisdiction of Great Britain, but the bill introduced in the House of Representatives by Charles F. Scott on April 15, 1909, to prohibit gambling in wheat, shows that the United States Legislature is fully alive to the necessity of stamping out a form of gambling which necessarily involves the misery of an un-offending people.

To make huge fortunes out of the sufferings of fellow-countrymen, or to reduce the people of a friendly State to starvation and death, is to do that which is cruel and wicked—to commit, in short, the worst possible human crime, and all the commercial customs in the world do not, and cannot, alter the fact. The United States House of Representatives have earned the gratitude of all peoples by the introduction of their Wheat Gambling Bill.

British citizens, however, come under a different category, and if there are no laws in the British code dealing with such cases, then the sooner they are passed and codified the less chance will there be of our own flesh and blood tampering with the people's food supplies, and of betraying this country to the enemy.

Britain, of all countries, should have taken the lead in this matter, seeing she is more at the mercy of "Cornerers" than other nations are. She, however, failed to lead, but she can follow, and the people of this country have a perfect right to demand urgency for a measure that will once and for all prohibit gambling in wheat or other food supplies; the punishment for the offence should be—*rigorous imprisonment and restitution of all profits on the prohibited transactions.*

That we are a nation of traders is beyond dispute. The development of our commerce and manufacturing industries is, within certain limitations, which need not be referred to here, good for the country; and unless there were inexhaustible vigour and increasing enterprise, our trade and manufactures would languish and we should fall behind in the race for wealth.

This desire to be in the forefront of the fight for the world's trade, while highly commendable in itself, has engendered a spirit of commercial recklessness which aims high and is not stopped by trifles. *To make money* is the chief aim of life, and

so long as that be accomplished, the means are often subordinated to the end.

The great "Combines," "Trusts," "Syndicates," and the rest of the modern trading associations, have not been formed for philanthropic purposes, but solely with the object of keeping prices up and extracting the last possible penny from the pockets of the people.

The "Standard Oil Company" is a case in point, and the prodigious wealth of Mr. Rockefeller alone, among the many vastly rich men connected with the Company, affords ample proof of the enormous profits that have been made out of the business for many years.

QUESTIONABLE QUALITY OF COMMERCIAL MORALITY

Commercial morality in many countries is questionable, and our own is not an exception to the rule. Given occasion, and men would "corner" wheat in war time as readily as they do in times of peace, and who and what shall stop them?

The writer was recently discussing this very question with one of our London merchants who did not seem to regard this last Chicago wheat "Corner," for example, as anything out of the common. "You should always bear in mind," said he, "that your 'Cornerer' has to take his chance, as we all have to do. If the markets favour him—good; if not, well—he is simply ruined, poor devil, that's all."

What a profundity of commercial immorality is revealed by this simple incident, and what cruel indifference to the sufferings of others; and yet this human attitude, full as it is of hardness of heart and malignity to the human race, is, after all, born more of commercial custom and ignorance of results than of anything else.

Here we have a typical example of how the commercial world regards such matters. Everything in life is reduced to a *money* standard. If there is money in the particular transaction upon which a man enters it is simply regarded as a legitimate line of business and there it ends, always provided he has managed to keep within the very wide limits of commercial law. The incalculable harm that may be done to fellow-creatures never enters into such a man's calculations; commercial transactions of the kind referred to are sanctioned by custom and within the meaning of the law, and that is enough for him.

The object of the writer is, as is plainly manifest, to arouse the people to a sense of their danger in respect hereto, and

to point out how necessary it is, in their interests, to bring about certain reforms in the agricultural system of the country which would render them less liable to, if not immune from, those dire results which would indubitably follow the operations of unscrupulous speculators in food stuffs, once we were at war with a foreign State.

The nature of these reforms will be explained in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FALLACIES OF ECONOMIC SCIENCE—ITS INAPPLICABILITY TO AGRICULTURE

THE man who can convince the British people of the monstrous error that it is more economical to allow their land to run to waste because they can import their wheat a little cheaper from foreign countries—which is as much a fallacy as was the old belief that the earth was the pivot of the universe around which moved the sun, and moon, and stars—will be a greater benefactor to this country than those who gave to the world steam and electricity.

Man can do without these latter, but without agriculture he cannot live.

The LAND is the source of all things that man enjoys on earth: it furnishes him with light, heat, dwelling houses, carriages, raiment, wine, oil, and FOOD. It is the fountain of all wealth and the source of life itself.

It is inexpedient that fallacies should exist in respect to any of our life's affairs, but that a prodigious fallacy should cling to the very industry from which springs the fountain of human existence, is simply destructive.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ERROR

That this monstrous fallacy *does* cling to our agriculture is beyond question, and strangely enough the only part of this great misconception which bears the semblance of truth is just that part of it which furnishes economists with their base of operations, namely, *that if wheat can be produced cheaper abroad it should not be grown locally*. But, admitting that it might and can be imported slightly cheaper than we can grow it ourselves, this surely cannot possibly sum up all the *pros* and *cons* of the case, nor dispose of those numerous factors which must necessarily radiate from so important a question of political economy as the one we are considering.

The fact is, the considerations involved in the question are well-nigh inexhaustible, and the more it is studied the more this fact becomes apparent.

The following brief examples show how this question of whether we should grow our own wheat or import it ramifies through society and affects the body politic, and how impossible, nay, indeed, how suicidal it would be to determine so complicated a problem by the arbitrary and narrow "laws" of economics.

Political economy is unquestionably an interesting study, and to its students and professors it no doubt offers many fascinating problems; but you can no more apply all its principles to the domestic economy of our individual lives than you can make water run uphill.

The simple fact is that no science has embraced, nor ever can, all those thousand and one commonplace individual requirements of human life which are continually cropping up to prove how utterly impossible it is to apply scientific principles to the domestic uses of the people. In this respect much science must remain inoperative, and, therefore, theoretical, fallacious, and *useless*.

Let us put the matter to an individual test. We have, we will suppose, an agricultural family of three—father, mother, and grown-up son. Work is not to be had, and it is with them a question of the workhouse or emigration.

The latter is out of the question for certain reasons, and there is nothing but the workhouse.

We will now reduce the case, just for convenience, to a mere matter of money, in order to see how this single example affects the public exchequer.

Our present Poor Law system is inelastic and uncompromising; if paupers go to the workhouse it costs the State taxpayers so much per head to keep them there, and there the matter ends.

Let us, however, presuppose a less arbitrary system of State aid, whereunder an honest man could be helped on in life, instead of being crushed out of existence by the foolishly mild yet degrading system which obtains to-day.

With an agricultural system somewhat on similar lines to those obtaining in some of the Continental States, our Government would be in a position to let the man acquire, say, four acres of land on easy terms, at three per cent. interest on capital value of land, as also on an advance for tillage and working expenses.

This would be the relative position so far as the State is concerned.

Under Present System

	£	s.	d.
Cost of three adult paupers at £12 13s. 0d.* per annum .	37	19	0
Annual loss to State	37	19	0

N.B.—This is a mere statement of cost for food, clothing, light, etc., and does not include capital outlay and interest thereon of immensely costly pauper establishments, but it will serve the present purpose.

Advance of State Funds

	£	s.	d.
Capital value of four acres of land at £25 per acre . .	100	0	0
Advance for tillage, implements, seeds, etc., £25 per acre	100	0	0
Total advance . . .	£200	0	0

Expenditure—Cost to the State

	£	s.	d.
Interest at $2\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. on capital value of land, £100 .	2	15	0
“ “ “ advance for tillage, etc., £100	2	15	0
Total cost to the State .	£5	10	0

Revenue

	£	s.	d.
Interest at 3 per cent. on capital value of land, £100 . .	3	0	0
“ “ “ advance for tillage, etc., £100 .	3	0	0
	£6	0	0
Annual profit to the State	0	10	0

The loan might gradually be paid off by a sinking fund of two per cent. on the total amount advanced, which would necessitate an annual payment of £4 by the occupying owner.

Here we have a condition of things whereby the State becomes a gainer of 10s. per annum instead of a loser of £37 19s. in its transactions with this single indigent family; but assuming that Government has to pay three per cent. for its loans instead of two and three-quarters per cent., such a transaction could still be carried out *without the necessity of the country losing a penny over it.*

PAUPERS BECOME PROSPEROUS CITIZENS

Viewed from another standpoint this case assumes an altogether different and more important aspect. The indigent family of three has been saved from pauperism, and instead of being a permanent burden on the State exchequer it has become a prosperous unit of the community, producing something as well as consuming much.

* Poor Law Report, February 17, 1909. Figures for 1903-1904.

With its four acres, one acre is put down in wheat each year to ensure a proper rotation of crops. The average produce per acre on well-tilled land is thirty-two bushels. The average consumption of wheat per head of the population is six bushels per annum, or eighteen bushels for this family of three. This leaves fourteen bushels per annum for the market.

As a producer of wheat and other food-stuffs this family at once becomes an important factor in the commonwealth.

Multiply this system of State aid to our deserving poor; let every man who is willing to work have the chance and the *right* of acquiring on easy terms—and yet at the cost of the State—a parcel of land which will not only support himself and his family, but produce, at the same time, something over for the use of the community, and it is easy to see that you would launch into existence a veritable army of prosperous agriculturists who would at once become a highly important part of the Commonwealth and a tremendous factor in the national economy.

WHAT THE FOUR-ACRE PRINCIPLE MEANS

Carried through to a logical conclusion, we find the application of this four-acre principle of small holdings to the whole of the land of this country means the production of such a prodigious quantity of wheat that we become fairly astonished. Here is the position.

We have 48,000,000 acres of “cultivated” land, or 64,000,000 acres of “cultivated” and “cultivable” land, and it follows that if one-fourth of a four-acre holding produces thirty-two bushels of wheat, we shall find that in one case we shall produce 384,000,000 bushels of wheat, and in the other 512,000,000 bushels—both quantities being largely in excess of the national requirements of 280,000,000 bushels—while reserving the remaining *three-fourths* of the land for ordinary crop rotation. It will also be found that, in such a case, the entire population of the country would have to be employed in agriculture.

Such a condition would be neither necessary nor desirable, and this single illustration of what *might* be done with our land is simply introduced, parenthetically, to show the enormous potentialities of agriculture.

Reduced, however, to a rational system of land tenures, as described in Chapters 24, 25, and 26, our land would be capable, as has been pointed out, of producing every quarter of wheat we require for home consumption, *and all other staple foods besides.*

THE FACT *v.* THE FALLACY

The truth is—

1. That we can, under an agricultural system, favourable to the entire country, grow all our own wheat.
2. That while there is no necessity to perpetuate the system of pauperising the poor, there is, on the other hand, every reason why we should at length adopt a sensible, practical system of converting, at least, the deserving and capable ones among them, into useful members of the community, and give them that stake in the country which is their inalienable right, but which has, most disastrously, hitherto been denied to them.

Then one more thing becomes equally obvious, and that is the practical impossibility of applying the laws of economic science to individual agriculturists.

Ask the man, for example, who produces his 32 bushels of wheat, and consumes 18 of them for his daily bread, what *he* thinks of the political economist who tells him that it is wrong to grow wheat when he can import it a shilling or two per quarter cheaper, and his reply will be forcible if not polite. What on earth has he to do with the subtleties of political economy or the unfathomable mysteries which enshroud the entire question of economic science? His business is to live; he knows he *can* live by and out of his land, but bitter experience taught him that he could not live without it. He knows full well that if the State had not given him the opportunity of acquiring his four acres on terms that gave him the only chance he had of pulling himself together, he and his would have been paupers in a State workhouse, or dead of disappointment and want.

It is just here, however, that your political economist waxes triumphant over the poor agriculturist who, knowing full well that he is right in *his* simple system of practical economics as applied to the everyday requirements of his domestic life, cannot, nevertheless, rebut the seemingly irresistible logic of the *theoretical* economist.

FAMILIAR FALLACIES

“But, my dear man,” argues the economist, “how can you say that it pays you to put your surplus fourteen bushels on the market when it is proved by all the laws of economics that wheat can be imported from many foreign countries at least one or two shillings per quarter cheaper than it can be grown in

England?" Then follow the stock arguments with which the world is so familiar.

Meanwhile our unfortunate agriculturist has been so badgered by his antagonists and pounded by the numerous batteries which "scientists" have erected against agriculture, that he has become quite confused. "I can't answer all your arguments in a single Yes or No," says he, "because it seems to me that such an answer would not meet the case. I know, however, that I *do* grow an acre of wheat each year out of my four acres holding, and that I consume part of it for my own bread and put the other part on the market. Taking one thing with another, I find my little agricultural venture pays me, and this is what chiefly concerns me. If I lose a shilling or so on my wheat, I certainly make up for it on the other things I grow and sell; if this were not so I could not carry on my farm from year to year."

Such a reply as this has been given by many agriculturists during the last fifty years or so; and when we come to think of it, it is, after all, the only practical reply that can or should be given to a really practical question. If a man's business pays him, well—it pays him, and that is *his* chief concern.

To your "scientific" economist, however, this eminently practical reply is so utterly opposed to all the canons of economics as to evoke profound pity and contempt for the foggy perversity of the bucolic mind, and there the matter ends as between the practical agriculturist and the theoretical scientist.

ECONOMIC SCIENCE TESTED BY ITS OWN FALLACIES

Let us, however, draw a parallel between agriculture and the manufacturing industries, as a further illustration.

It is not for a moment supposed, except by the uninformed, that every line of goods that a manufacturer makes is exceedingly profitable, or—equally profitable.

Questioned on the point, he will frankly tell you that this particular line is more profitable than that; that some goods hardly pay to make, and that, in one or two instances, he is, owing to excessive local competition, cheap imitations, or other causes, really working at no profit, or even at a slight loss. Asked why he does not give up producing goods that do not pay and he will tell you that the nature of his business would not admit of his doing so, many of his customers being buyers of at least half a dozen of the lines of goods he is in the habit of making, and that, taking one thing with another, it pays him to go on manufacturing the more or less unprofitable lines.

He would then add: "I have to look at the general result of the business rather than to uniform profits on individual lines. I would, of course, prefer that everything I manufacture should produce equally good profit, but, as this is impossible in business, I can only look to the result in the aggregate; if *that* is satisfactory, I have good reason to conclude that my business pays me on the whole."

THE PLAIN FACTS ABOUT ECONOMIC SCIENCE

When we get down to the substratum of fact which underlies this, as all other things in life, the simple truth is that much "science" remains inoperative, and therefore—useless, because of its inapplicability to the domestic requirements of the everyday life of the people. No sane man, knowing the enormous benefits that Science has bestowed upon the human race, would be foolish enough to carp and sneer at her marvellous achievements, particularly so as much scientific discovery has been practically applied to the needs of mankind. On the other hand, it will be as freely admitted that the quality of "science" which is unpractical is but a waste product of the human brain, and therefore—useless.

No rational man is inclined to cavil at the science of Economics, much benefit having been derived from its application to human affairs, but few men would admit of its applicability to every item in the domestic economy of the people.

Cobden, following the teaching of Adam Smith, said that we ought "to buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest;" and so we ought, in every case where so excellent a commercial principle can be practically applied, but like so many other fascinating objects which we constantly come across in this world, we find that this attractive morsel in the menu of our domestic lives, although bearing the semblance of an "economic" law, is in reality not possible of universal application, because—as has been shown in other chapters—the first cost of an article does not necessarily include other costs which, when added to the original amount paid, renders first cost much greater than was ever intended. Shortly, although the principle is theoretically sound, it is practically impossible, and Adam Smith's famous dictum thus becomes a mere adage and not a—*law*.

"Science," "Laws," and "Doctrines" are useful and beneficial up to a certain point, but if we attempt to apply them with arbitrary rigidity to every one of our life's affairs, we shall come to grief.

The Laws of Motion, for example, although essential and applicable to the vast, complicated economy of the physical universe, could not be applied effectually to a drunken man who prefers to lie prone in the gutter rather than maintain his natural equilibrium. In this case they would, therefore, remain—*inoperative*.

Nor would your most learned professor be bold enough to assert that a bird must not, should not, or does not know how to fly, because some "scientists" assert that he flies against all the laws of mechanics.

The minds of many great thinkers are so impregnated with figures and symbols, with algebraic signs and scientific formulæ, that they become utterly subordinate to their influence.

THE "EXACT" SCIENCES EVEN FRAUDULENT

In illustration of this well-known fact, a very amusing, yet highly instructive article appeared in the *Daily Express* of April, 1908, entitled "The Fraud of Mathematics." The writer * said:—

"When you meet a mathematician, and find that his mind is utterly subordinate to figures and symbols, that he explains Nature by numerical values, reduces a sunset to a , b , and x , takes no account of human or other susceptibilities, but works out everything by a rigid order of thought—though you know that Nature is never rigid, that no two waves are ever the same—yet, because you are baffled, you may even think you ought to admire the mathematician.

"But when somebody who does understand the higher mathematics comes over to your side, and roundly declares that they are a fraud and a delusion, and that algebra ought to be abolished as a mighty hindrance to thought—then you may whoop in joy and fearlessly shake a fist in a Senior Wrangler's face."

He then goes on to tell his readers that one of our Scientists, Mr. Frederick Hovenden, has a profound contempt for what he calls "Educated Ignorance." This is what he says—

"'Eighty per cent. of human suffering and misery,' he said to me gravely, 'arises from ignorance, especially from that most terrible form of ignorance—educated ignorance due to false education.'"

"Here are some of the things that can be done by algebra: Something can be subtracted from nothing; something can be subtracted from something half a time to produce two somethings; something can be added to something half a time to produce half a

* "The Fraud of Mathematics," Mr. Marcus Woodford; *Daily Express* April 9, 1908.

something ; nothing can be subtracted no times from nothing to produce any number of somethings ; while under certain mathematical conditions algebra says that addition is the same as subtraction, and that something can be multiplied by or into itself."

"Fancy multiplying a line into a line to produce an area, or multiplying an area into a line to produce a cube. It is impossible physically ; but it is possible in higher mathematics."

Such men as are here referred to, although possessing minds of transcendent power and ability, are, so far as many of life's affairs are concerned, of an exceedingly impracticable nature. In respect to the highly important item of dietetics, for example, your learned professor is, as a rule, proverbially careless, despite the fact that suitable food and the proper nutrition of the body are, after all, the most important factors in our physical being.

He does not know, for example, that a pound of Dutch cheese contains two and a half times the amount of nutriment that beef does, and that all kinds of nuts contain nearly three and a half times as much, and that both form better fuel for the human machine than does the time-honoured beef.

"The people owe a deep debt of gratitude to their scientists, philosophists, and thinkers ; to that splendid array of cultured men and women who have given to the world all that is useful, noble, and uplifting : and we stand in admiration and almost in awe at the mighty deeds they have done, and we wonder at the greatness of their intellectual power. But behind all this transcendent learning, these great ones of the earth are, in many cases, mere tyros in the matter of feeding ; mere babes in knowledge and of no wisdom whatsoever." *

"What, then, is the use of that marvellous inventive genius of the age which has strewn the world with such wondrous shapes and devices for man's comfort and enjoyment, if the inventor himself remain ignorant of the first principles of life, ignorant of that fundamental truth upon which his own body is built up, and which it is absolutely essential he should know." †

"SCIENCE" OF LITTLE USE IN DOMESTIC ECONOMY

At any rate it will be patent enough, at least to the majority of people, that men who are capable of multiplying a line into a line to produce an area, or, in other words, of performing—on paper—a *physical impossibility*, might conceivably not be quite the sort of people to apply to in order

* "Errors in Eating," Sir W. E. Cooper, pp. 37, 38.

† *Ibid.*, p. 37.

to decide the question as to whether it would be better all round, and generally more economical, to cultivate one's garden patch or leave it lying waste. Surely such men would be able to prove by all the laws of science, and notably by the science of economics, which is by no means an "exact" science, that to grow your own spring onions and your new potatoes, or to produce early cabbages and new peas, when you can buy foreign importations cheaper from the costermongers' barrows, would be to fly in the face of all the laws of political economy.

Your cottager may be utterly confounded by the man of science who reduces everything in life to a , b , and x , and expounds every question by algebraic jargon, or by what is called the *laws* of economics, which are as mutable as sand, but he goes on cultivating his garden plot all the same, despite the pessimism of the learned scientist.

Leave Nature alone to work out her own problems and we shall find that, if we are capable of understanding her ways, she never errs, and the application of *her* laws, therefore, to man's needs are invariably the best and most economic, because in obeying the laws of Nature we are but conforming to the laws of natural science, which know neither change nor brook interference.

It is as natural for a man to cultivate the soil as it is for the duck to take to water; and if we interfere with the operation of natural laws we shall as surely suffer in the long run as does the man who derides and sets at naught the laws which protect society from depredation and outrage.

The problem which the British people have to solve is of the simplest possible nature, and, provided they set about it in a direct, matter-of-fact manner, they will experience no difficulty in its solution. The question is simply—*whether or no they shall cultivate their garden patch?*

The best way to answer the question is—by cultivating it. This is the direct common-sense way, and the only practical way.

ECONOMIC SCIENCE A DAM—HOW TO REMOVE IT

When a mountain slide takes place and dams up the river at the bottom of the valley we do not invoke the aid of your learned professors of this 'ology or the other, nor do we ask your political economist to determine by the "laws," so called, of economic science whether it would be better to leave the dam as it is; on the contrary, we know that the landslip has interfered with the natural flow of the river, and we take our picks and shovels and set the river free.

This is the only practical way to take with the great land industry; a political slip took place over half a century ago which impeded the natural flow of the tide of agriculture, and the only way to effectually deal with the matter is to—*remove the dam*.

It is regrettable that in all these years we have never tried to remove the dam, but rather to explain and justify its existence. We deliberately built up a great barrier against the natural flow and development of agriculture, and thus interfered with the operations of a natural law; and, instead of frankly recognising our error and remedying the evil by removing the obstacle, we have foolishly, ever since, been invoking the aid of economic science to justify our position. For all the good it has done we might as well have trusted to the old cabalistic Abracadabra of the ancients.

The simple task before the British people is, then, to cultivate the land in the same simple manner that the peoples of all other countries in the world cultivate *their* lands.

In agriculture, as in all other industries, where a number of things are either manufactured or grown, you cannot always pick and choose your way. In business you must take the good with the bad, the profitable with the unprofitable; if it were otherwise it follows that every person engaged in business would become exceedingly well-off, if not vastly rich, and, in many cases, disproportionately so in comparison with the capital invested.

HOW MANUFACTURERS REMOVE THE DAM OF ECONOMIC SCIENCE

Your coal manufacturer, your woollen and cotton goods manufacturer, your furniture makers and the rest of them, who turn out many lines of goods, will all tell you they make more profit on some lines and less on others, while some hardly pay at all; and your railway managers will tell you that third-class passenger traffic pays better than first, yet they are obliged to maintain the latter. In every industry in the world it is the same, some things pay better than others, but all must be carried on together—*because they are inseparable*.

Because the land plays a more important part in the economy of human life than anything else, it necessarily offers a wider scope for the vagaries of political economists than manufactures or other industries; and we should therefore be exceedingly circumspect in regard to many of the conclusions arrived at by economists, because political economy,

not being one of the "exact" sciences, is necessarily not exact in its conclusions.

At any rate, practical agriculture demonstrates by the simple process of putting down in Great Britain an average, in round numbers, of 1,600,000 acres under wheat each year, out of a total area under corn crops of 6,900,000 acres, that it *does* pay to grow wheat, or that wheat pays, grown in conjunction with other things.

This being so, it is equally clear that he or they—scientists or non-scientists—who declare that it is flying against all the laws of "scientific" economy to grow wheat under such "unscientific" conditions, are but advancing an untenable proposition instead of demonstrating an ascertained fact. It may be taken for granted that agriculturists know more of such matters than the political economist who has never turned a furrow or sown a seed, and it would be better for the latter to leave farmers to look after their own affairs than to teach them a science which, while not being exact, is necessarily—*fallacious*.

CHAPTER XXII

DISCOURAGERS AND PESSIMISTS—THE PART THEY PLAY IN THE AGRICULTURAL QUESTION—UNDER SIMILAR CONDITIONS, AGRICULTURE CAN BE AS SUCCESSFUL AS MANUFACTURES

MANY misconceptions still exist in the minds of most people in respect to British agriculture being a possible industry.

These misconceptions exist because there are all sorts of bizarre notions in respect to this great primal industry, the inevitable outcome of environing it with unhealthy and, therefore, unnatural conditions.

Many people have become veritable pessimists and discouragers in all matters pertaining to agriculture, and the harm they do is not lessened because of their real belief in the hopelessness of the industry they condemn.

WHAT MANY PEOPLE THINK OF AGRICULTURE

Some think that the industry is hopeless because of the general desire on the part of the rural population to get what is called "a good time."

The people want more amusement, it is said; they like the cheap restaurants, the cocoa-rooms, the public-house and the music halls, the busy thoroughfares, the glitter of shops and the well-lighted streets. They want more excitement than they get in the country, and rural folk are, therefore, well content to change the dull village life for the superior attractions of a bustling town.

Others contend that the spread of education has made the village lads and maidens discontented with the ordinary surroundings of country life and its dull setting of colourless background, and that they pine to break away from it all and find an outlet for their new-born ambitions in other directions

where these natural aspirations for advancement will find full scope.

"Why should our young people be kept back in the race of life?" it is asked. Education has opened their eyes to life's possibilities, they contend, and it is but right and proper that they should gravitate to the towns, and there find those freer facilities for improving their conditions of life, which are more likely to be met with in the great centres of population.

Then there is the school which contends that the land is hopeless as an industry because it does not pay, and that you cannot expect people to grind out their lives amid dull surroundings, in hard dreary toil, without being able to make a decent living. "Why should they?" they ask; "and how can you expect any man to devote his life to any calling out of which he is not likely to make a fairly good living?"

Then come those who ridicule the "Back to the Land" cry, and contend that the vast majority of the people would rather *not* go back to the land, and that, if they did, they would be sure to make a mess of it.

"How can you expect a city clerk and a girl typist, for example, to take on a small farm and conduct it to a successful issue?" they say; and to unthinking, uncritical minds this does seem to be somewhat of a problem. First appearances are, however, proverbially deceptive, and, like many things, this question will assume other aspects on clear examination.

Nor should we overlook that well-known section of the community which belongs to the school of "experts," who love to demonstrate by all the laws of this, that, and the other, that British agriculture is impossible, and that the land is practically a negligible quantity.

THE BATTERIES OF SCIENCE AND AGRICULTURE

Among this group may be found professors of political economy and other cults, who will prove by all the laws of science, and by every other conceivable *ism* that can be called to their aid, that it is cheaper to import your wheat from the far off plains of Western Australia, or from the remote Northern Provinces of Canada, than to grow it at your own doors. This school is well armed with all the up-to-date weapons of polemical warfare, and when it charges its guns with deductive and inductive logic, and those terrible figures which prove anything or nothing, and trains them on the public mind, the people succumb at once.

The ordinary "man-in-the-street" can no more stand against a well-directed fire from the statistical batteries of political

economists, or the jargon of the "professors" of this or that "ism," than flesh and blood can withstand the deadly fusilade of the modern machine gun.

After this comes that great school of "controversialists" which perhaps exercises a wider influence over the minds of the people than any other school extant, because of the omnifariousness of its studies. No subject is too lofty for its ambitions, and none are beneath its consideration. It will tackle the most abstruse problems in astronomical science as readily as it will devote its attention to the best way of boiling broad beans! Tell a member of this school that it is better and truer economy to cultivate your garden patch than to leave it lying unfruitful, and he will prove by all the laws of science, and entirely to his own satisfaction, that you are as wrong in your position as the man who happens for the moment to be standing on his head.

Nor should we overlook the political economist, pure and simple, who may be likened unto the spider that spins on and on until his web is broad enough to enmesh all those who are unwary enough to come in contact with it. This man is a great thinker, a professed student of all matters pertaining to the movement of trade, the import of food products, and the export of merchandise, and he will prove to you that the man in this country who attempts to grow bacon and make butter, when he can import both of these commodities cheaper from Chicago and Denmark, is nothing more or less than an imbecile.

INTERESTED MERCHANTS, BANKERS, AND MANUFACTURERS

Then there is that great army of those who, for excellent reasons, are deeply interested in the maintenance of existing conditions, and whose widespread influence militates seriously against the chances of carrying British agriculture to a successful issue.

In the ranks of this army are to be found bankers, merchants, shipowners, stockbrokers, produce-brokers, commercial companies of many sorts, the "Trusts," those engaged, directly or indirectly, in the import and export trade, and a host of others too numerous to mention. Question these last—the "hoi-polloi" of this crowd—as to the advantages or otherwise of preserving the *status quo* in respect to this matter, and they will probably know little or nothing of the subject; but ask the bank director, the merchant, the shipowner, or the "Trust" magnate whether we should grow our own corn or import it, and his answer will be short, emphatic, and to the point. Merchants and exchange bankers, dock owners, and ship owners are,

naturally enough, all hugely interested in the importation of food-stuffs, and this much may be accepted in strict verity, that neither in the future nor at the present time can help be expected to come from this large and influential group, which would assist in the smallest degree in solving the agricultural problem. All who are connected with this powerful coterie are financially interested, or think they are, in maintaining present conditions, and to a man they would fight for their continuance. It is a fallacy, yet it exists all the same.

THE GREATEST PESSIMISTS

The man who exercises the most malign influence is perhaps he who is a pessimist by nature, a born grumbler, and one of life's failures. This man is to be met with everywhere, and wherever he may be encountered, or under whatever conditions, he always deals in cold douches and doles out wet blankets to his friends. Take him into your confidence, tell him of your little plans in regard to turning the land to account for the betterment of your life's conditions, unfold your schemes and talk of your hopes and your chances of success, and, as sure as fate, he will so cool your ardour with his chilly douche, and quench your hopes with his wet blanket of everlasting disparagement, that you will be filled with discouragement and despair. This is the type of man who will say to you, "Don't for goodness' sake, my dear fellow, do anything of the kind. I tried that game some years ago, and found it was an utter fraud; in fact I dropped more money over it than I could afford." "Or," he may say, "don't you believe it, old chap; you'll only drop your money if you try anything of the kind. Look at old Smith, for example, he thought he could make something out of it, but after a year or two he dropped it like a hot coal. Stop where you are, is my advice."

This type of man is as plentiful as bees in summer, and as ubiquitous as the sparrow. He is to be met with in every grade of society, as also in the columns of the daily Press; but whether his utterances be oral or written there is always the same pessimistic note running through them which proclaims him to be what in reality he is—one of life's failures, or at least a pessimist of the worst type. Nevertheless, this man, failure that he may be, and born grumbler that he is, exercises considerable influence over certain members of the community, and he is, therefore, a factor in the question we are considering.

If you venture to point out the significant fact that all other countries in the world but ours make much of their agriculture, and regard it as their most valuable industry, he

will reply, "Ah, it's all very well for them, they have been at it for years, and know what they are up to; but how, in the name of fortune, can you expect agriculture to pay when you can import wheat, bacon, butter, cheese, and everything else cheaper from a dozen countries than you can grow or produce them for yourself? If agriculturists cannot make it pay how can you expect townsfolk to make good farmers; what do they know about it? Take it from me you'll drop your money if you try that game."

BRITISH INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OPPOSED TO AGRICULTURAL REFORM

Last, but by no means least, comes that great array of British workers who toil in towns.

The report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Workshops for 1907, issued on July 17, 1908, shows that last year there were 107,321 factories, 146,917 workshops, and 7,210 laundries under inspection in the United Kingdom.

The total number of workers was more than 5,500,000, and of these 1,643,824 were women and children.

Deducting the women and children from that total, we are left with 3,856,176 men who, however much their views in favour of Tariff Reform may have changed, would practically vote solid for no change in the fiscal and economical conditions which environ agriculture to-day, because of the belief that *their* interests are best served by maintaining them. This is altogether a fallacious view, and, indeed, disastrous to their cause; but as this matter is dealt with in other chapters there is no need to discuss it here.

This powerful section of the community naturally exercises enormous influence over the question by assuming an attitude hostile to the establishment of national agriculture; but as many of them have at length been brought to realise that Tariff Reform may serve their purpose more effectually than Free Trade, so will they soon recognise that the existence of an immense universal system of agriculture in this country is no more incompatible with the existence, or with the expansion, of manufacturing industries than it is in every other civilised country on earth.

IGNORANCE RULES THE SITUATION

Ignorance that is crass and widespread rules the situation to-day, and all is darkness where there should be light, but there are, fortunately, signs of dawn on the horizon and the

promise of glad sunshine. The sooner a brighter day dawns the better will it be for England.

Looking at this much discussed and sorely misunderstood question in this way there certainly seems, at first sight, but little hope of making anything of it. We are met all along the line with such a veritable host of discouragers, and others who are influenced by self-interests, that what we regarded as a perfectly simple matter, indeed as the common experience and the common knowledge of the human race of an industry that is as old as the hills, and as well understood as the simple law that water will run down a hill but not up it, now seems to be invested with all sorts of difficulties which reduce us well-nigh to despair. Our friends and acquaintances cannot help us because the greater part of them are hopelessly ignorant of a question which should be as widely understood as the fact that it is more economical to turn raw cotton into calico than to leave it standing in the fields; while the majority of the people are entirely influenced by what the discouragers say, or by those who have private interests to serve.

If we turn to that popular educator—the Press—for help, we find that, with a few notable exceptions, the newspapers offer little encouragement to, nor advocate, a universal system of agriculture. Between this host of pessimists, dissuaders, and others, those who hunger after the land find themselves between the “devil and the deep sea,” and so they leave the land to look after itself, just as it has been left for the last half century and more, uncared for, profitless, and a standing reproach to the country.

Now, whatever may be said to the contrary by this formidable host of discouragers, there is not only money in the land, but good money, too. But, like money that is found in every other industry, it has to be sought after, properly located, and then dug out by hard, honest work, and the application of the self-same essentials to success—brains, skill, enterprise, assiduity, and the rest of it, as are necessary to success in other occupations.

THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

We are never likely to succeed in anything in this world unless we first of all form clear conceptions of what it is we wish to essay; satisfy ourselves that the thing is reasonably practical, that it, indeed, forms one of the well-known occupations of human life, and that it offers to the essayer every reasonable chance of success.

This is the attitude assumed by all sorts and conditions of men when dealing with economical questions of every

description, and, obviously, it is the only rational attitude that can be assumed in regard to agriculture.

"Is this a practical industry? Can it be made to pay?" are the only two questions that shrewd business men in every conceivable economic condition at the present time ever find it necessary to ask. The question—"Can it be made to pay?"—is the only one that concerns us here, because agriculture, as a widespread industry, is too well known to render any other question necessary.

Agriculture can be made to pay as every other industry can, but no industry, however common it may be, is likely to succeed unless those engaged in it possess the necessary essentials to success. Two men may start in the boot and shoe manufacturing business, for example, each of them being equipped with the necessary capital and knowledge of the trade. One succeeds and the other fails—why? The answer is simple enough—because the one who succeeds knows what he has to do and how to do it, and the other does not.

Two men may start farming under precisely similar conditions, the one succeeds and the other man makes a mess of his venture—why? Because one has all the essentials to success, namely assiduity, the faculty of absorbing knowledge and assimilating experience, coupled with industry and thrift, and the other lacks some or all of these necessary qualifications. What other result but failure for the one and success for the other can there be under such conditions?

And so it is all through life. You may do your best to equalise opportunities so as to give every man the same chance, but you are bound to fail, because those who start in the race vary so widely in temperament, ability, and those qualities which make for success, that even a handicap becomes impossible.

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT AGRICULTURE

Agriculture itself is a case in point. The common belief is that the land industry in this country is so hopeless as to be practically a negligible quantity in the economy of the nation; yet, in spite of this widespread idea, agriculture is still by far the largest and most important industry of the country, inasmuch as, in spite of the fatuous agricultural policy of the past, it still engages a greater head of the population than any two of our largest industries put together, namely, *the whole of the textile manufactures and the mining industry.*

That there are successful farmers and unsuccessful ones is as certain as that there are successes and failures in other

industries; but this only exemplifies the fact that agriculture has its ups and downs, and that those engaged in it must take their chances like other men.

No man in his senses can, in face of the overwhelming evidence in favour of agriculture being still our greatest industry, legitimately assert that there is no money in the land, that it does not pay, that it is altogether a *quantité négligéable*, because such a contention would argue that all who have been engaged in the industry during the last fifty years and are engaged in it still, are fools, and have only been throwing good money after bad all that time. Few there are who would be bold enough to assume so indefensible a position.

THE TRUTH ABOUT AGRICULTURE

If we delve down to the stable foundation of solid truth we shall find that, in spite of the fact that everything has been done by the Governments of the past to ruin the land industry and to discourage agriculturists in every possible manner, the land may still be regarded by capable, hard-working, thrifty persons as a calling by which men may make a decent living. To assert, however, that the industry is in a flourishing condition because some of those engaged in it do fairly well, would be as foolish as to contend that there is no money in it because *all* do not make a fortune, or because some engaged in it fail.

It is the fashion to believe that there is no money in agriculture, and that it could not be worked profitably, even if it were conducted with the same skill and energy and backed up by ample capital as other industries are. Let us, however, briefly examine this view of the case and see if there is a real truth underlying the belief!

In the first place we must not overlook the important fact that up to this period agriculture has *not* been worked on the same lines as other industries. For years past the land has been farmed chiefly by poor, unenterprising men who, if they had the will, certainly had not the power of spending large sums of money in fortifying their lands with those manures which are necessary in maintaining their maximum productivity, or in equipping themselves with all those costly, up-to-date agricultural labour-saving machines and implements that are essential in economical production. This fact is exemplified by the reduced yield per acre in wheat, for example, and in the primitive agricultural methods that are still followed in many parts of Great Britain.

This is an age of progress, of push and enterprise, and if farmers stand still where other men press onwards with energy

and ever-increasing vigour, can it be wondered at if they fall behind in the race?

Is it reasonable, then, to expect other results from agriculture than those which the country is familiar with? If the industry is starved for want of capital, and the soil remains poor and thin, what right has the farmer to expect good profits and rich abundant crops? If he fails to put money into the land, what hope has he of getting money out of it? As he sows, so must he reap!

On the other hand, the farmer has a deep-rooted grievance against past and present Governments for that sore neglect of his industry which has been so often referred to in these pages; a state of affairs which, while being prejudicial to complete success, does not necessarily render partial success impossible.

MORE GROTESQUE BELIEFS

There are, indeed, all sorts of strange misconceptions abroad in regard to the land, and not one of the least of them is that almost anybody is good enough for an agriculturist. This idea is so prevalent that it extends probably to four-fifths of the people, but there is no more justification for such a belief than there would be if it were applied to any other industry.

Every occupier of a suburban villa with his narrow strip of back garden, and every labouring man with his eighth of an acre in "The Workman's Plots," fancies himself an agriculturist, but neither of them has more right to the title than has the man, who occasionally scans the midnight heavens with a pair of binoculars, to call himself an astronomer.

Dabbling in a back garden with spade or pruning-knife, or growing a few potatoes or cabbages in a town plot, certainly affords one glimpse of agriculture, but it requires deeper insight and wider experience than this to make a successful agriculturist.

A hundred years ago it was said by one of our great novelists that all the fools of the family were pitchforked into the Navy; to-day the fool of the family considers himself good enough for agriculture.

With such prevalent misconceptions as these, there is no wonder that, although most of us have been more or less familiar with the land, in some form or other, all our lives, either through the medium of our back garden or through some other feeble connecting link, there is, nevertheless, widespread ignorance among the people as to the agricultural industry and its up-to-date requirements. It is, moreover, clear enough that

unless every misconception in respect hereto be removed and a more rational view of the entire question set up in their place, agriculture will continue to pine and languish.

SUCCESS ONLY POSSIBLE TO THOSE WHO COMMAND IT

What right has any man to expect that, unless he applies the same brains, knowledge, experience, skill, capital, assiduity, and energy to agriculture as must necessarily be applied to all other industries before success can be hoped for, he will succeed?

Why should ignorance, want of knowledge, lack of experience, shortage of capital, combined very frequently with feeble effort, absence of assiduity, and a flabby conception of thrift, hope to succeed in agriculture when it is well known that such an undesirable stock-in-trade would be bound to ensure failure in every other industry?

Once these misconceptions are understood by those engaged, or wish to become engaged, in agriculture, there is no reason why a man should not make a decent living, even under the present foolish and malign conditions with which past wrong-headedness has invested the industry.

But, let it be organised under proper tenures, assisted by the State, and helped onward by co-operation, support, and sympathy, and the people given the same chances of working agriculture to the best possible results as are given in every country of the world—except our own—and the city clerk and his typist wife, the grocer's assistant, the Manchester warehouseman and lawyer's clerk, the briefless barrister, the struggling doctor, the penniless *litterati*, and a host of other earnest, willing, and capable men who now suffer from a congested labour market in all trades and professions, will have an excellent opportunity of turning their talents to account.

Failures there are bound to be in agriculture as there are in every industry, but the *capable* man who essays agriculture is bound to rise if the chance be given him.

DEMAND CREATES SUPPLY IN ALL INDUSTRIES

It is just here that your discourager waxes eloquent. "How do you propose to find several millions of capable agriculturists out of the overplus of your town populations which must necessarily include the dregs of the unemployed and the *unemployable*? Nice farmers *they* would make," says he. The answer is simple enough. There is no proposal to permit so valuable an asset in the national economy as the LAND to be seized upon by the dregs of the unemployed, or by wastrels of any degree.

The land will be reserved for the sober, thrifty, diligent, and intelligent citizen, to whom every encouragement and State aid will be accorded, but to *no others*; and if, out of the vast numbers of English people who would gladly settle on the land if reasonable opportunities were offered, there cannot be got together a great, capable agricultural population, *the world, for the first time in history, will witness an unique economical phenomenon.*

NEW MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES FIND NO LACK OF LABOUR

Compared with the honourable eld of agriculture, most of our scientific discoveries, the invention of mechanical contrivances and their application to manufacturing processes, are but things of yesterday—of a brief sixty years or so—and yet there is no lack of skilled labourers in our great urban industries. If millions of capable workers can spring up with so rapid a growth as to fulfil the exigent and difficult demands of new manufacturing industries, it is obvious there cannot possibly be any difficulty in getting men to fulfil the requirements of a simple industry like agriculture—*with which man has been familiar even before the dawn of history.*

There is, one way and another, so much premeditated or unconscious hostility to agriculture in this country from so many directions that the wonder is, not that it is in a languishing condition, but that it is alive at all.

That it *does* exist is due neither to Governments nor to the people, but to agriculturists themselves who, despite the cruel blows dealt to their industry by the administrations of the last sixty years, have held to it tenaciously. This fact alone offers the best proof of the stability of agriculture, of its indestructibility and, therefore, of the necessity of regarding it as the *primal* industry; and it must be clear to all who will not permit their vision to be obscured by political prejudice or party bias, that if agriculture has not entirely succumbed to the destructive processes which have been directed against it for more than half a century, and it *is still by far the greatest industry of the day*, the greatest employer of labour, the greatest life-giver and the cleanest, wholesomest, and most manly industry of them all: it *must* necessarily be the industrial fulcrum upon which all other industries move and rotate.

Much is being done to make the people acquainted with these things, and the sooner their eyes are opened to them, the sooner will the dawn of better times appear.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE INSENSATE "PARTY" SYSTEM IN PARLIAMENT— COGENT REASONS FOR DRASTIC REFORM—A BAR TO REFORM AND A MENACE TO NATIONAL INTERESTS

IN discussing the grave results of the present party system, the writer was recently asked by a friend, "What would you substitute for the Party system?" "Boil it down," he said, "transmute it, reduce it to an irreducible quantity, and you would still have—a Party."

This is true; there would still be—a Party. You cannot have a one-man State nor a one-man Government; the thing is impossible.

No Government of the past in any great country in the world ever consisted of one man, and no Government of the present time, nor in the future—so far as we may determine the future by to-day's standards—will be a one-man Government. No man wants a one-man Government, nor is it likely that such a Government would be a good one if it were possible to have it.

There is, however, a vast difference between a "one-man show" in the form of a Government, or even a Government attenuated to an irreducible minimum, and the party-ridden form of government we have been accustomed to in this party-distracted country.

THE ABUSE OF THE PARTY SYSTEM

There have always been political parties in every civilised State, and it is more than probable there always will be. The political party, *qua* party, is not in itself objectionable, but it is the terrible abuse of political power that has grown up and around the party principle and which has wrought such incalculable harm to the nation, that the people are beginning to object to.

The party *in* power, for the time being, instead of being left

free to devote their brains and energies to the true interests of the commonweal, are more concerned with watching the movements of the Opposition than with framing measures of national usefulness.

Then the party *out* of power are practically concerned only with the one absorbing question as to how and when they can turn their opponents out of office.

Is it possible that national interests can be furthered when the party in office is afraid to embark on any course of real and much-needed reform because of the dread that their opponents out of office may make political capital out of it?

Does it not become abundantly manifest that under such a suicidal system there can be no hope to-day, nor at any future time, of any real lasting good resulting from so pernicious a state of affairs, because of the paralysing effect that such a system must necessarily have upon human effort?

What Government, harassed by the present system, and working always under the lash of the Opposition, fearing even the censure and perhaps the defection of some of its own followers, can possibly work in the real interests of the Empire?

Is it likely that, under so impossible a condition, any Government, of whatsoever denomination, can carry through any measure that would really benefit the people?

Is it not highly probable, nay, indeed certain, that every Bill brought up for consideration, instead of being framed in that broad, liberal setting which is essential in all questions of real national reform, must necessarily be drawn up in a manner simply to disarm criticism and give the Opposition the least possible chance of making capital out of it?

Is it possible that national legislation, conducted in so craven a spirit, and aiming only at half-hearted, palliatory measures, can ever result in real good?

Instead, however, of dealing with abstract principles, let us reduce this question to one simple concrete example.

EVIL EFFECT OF PARTY SYSTEM: A CONCRETE EXAMPLE

Let us take, as an illustration of the grave question we are considering, the case of a mechanical engineer who has been employed by a large public company to put together the seemingly complicated yet perfectly simple parts of a mighty engine which lie scattered abroad on the floor of a great factory.

The engineer is an expert and knows exactly what to do and how to do it, and if left to himself the work would soon be accomplished satisfactorily.

Unfortunately, however, there is a large Board of Directors, whose interests are not altogether identical. Some pull one way and some another, and what with conflicting interests, clique serving, jealousy, selfishness, obstructiveness, and general interference, the expert finds it impossible to get on, and he is compelled to give up his work.

Another expert takes his place, but the attitude of the Directors remains unchanged; each man has his own particular axe to grind; the Board is split up into two separate parties; work is retarded; the business of the company suffers, and, between one thing and another, the unfortunate shareholders are well-nigh ruined.

This is but an example of what takes place not infrequently in the commercial world. Many a good business has been ruined by bad management, and many a public company has been brought to grief either by an incompetent Board of Directors or by men who had some narrow, selfish purpose of their own to serve.

As with men, so it is with Governments. You can no more carry on the business of a nation with one party of the national directors pulling one way and another party pulling in the opposite direction, than you can satisfactorily conduct the business of a firm under similar conditions.

THE PARTY SYSTEM AN IMPOSSIBILITY

Yet this is precisely what we are trying to do every day in our National Board of Direction.

The members comprising that Board are disunited. They are split up into two distinct parties, each forming a faction professedly hostile to the other. Their interests are diametrically opposed to each other, and their antagonism is such as to preclude the possibility of the party *out* of office helping on the national business by supporting or encouraging the efforts of the party *in* office.

It is, indeed, a point of honour and of duty with the party out of power that every measure, whether it be good, bad, or indifferent, brought up for consideration by the office-bearers for the time being, shall be as vehemently attacked and as violently opposed as though it were some effort to defeat the ends of justice and ruin the nation.

The British Constitution provides for a system of government whereunder there shall be two political parties, one of which shall carefully watch the proceedings of the other, so that a salutary check may be exercised over the proceedings of the party in office for the time being. It is a most excellent

system and a necessary one, and nobody objects to it in principle. Theoretically, it is sound enough, but in practice it has proved to be impossible, and fatal in its effects.

One has but to examine the Statute Book for the last twenty years to understand how bare it is of really useful Acts; how devoid it is of that series of splendid legislative enactments which should stand forth as national achievements bearing the impress of great minds, which, moved thereto by loyalty and patriotism and an earnest desire to right that which was wrong, had given the country something that would help the people onwards towards peace and general prosperity.

THE NATIONAL STATUTE BOOK : WHAT IT *SHOULD* SHOW

Our Statute Book should be full of the records of *Statesmen* ; that is to say, there should be a number of Acts of public utility conceived in the true interests of the country and carried out on those broad, generous lines which, while conserving in full all national interests, should be equally fair to *all* classes of the community. It should be full of useful, helpful, rational, up-to-date enactments which would carry with them the unmistakable imprint of those six hundred and odd legislators who, having been sent to Parliament to do the work of the nation, had done it well, and in the true interests of the commonweal.

Such Acts should clearly bear the impress of loyal, patriotic minds, of minds unbiassed by party and untainted by selfishness. They should show that they had been framed in recognition of the national necessities, and with the sole object of serving national interests. They should plainly demonstrate that, while not hostile to our relations with foreign countries, nor in any way inimical to Imperial interests, they were of such a wise, far-seeing nature as would help the people to make the most of the internal resources of their country without the slightest fear of harm or injury accruing to their trade and industries from external influences.

Every Act should clearly show that one trade or industry would not benefit at the expense of another, or that one section of the community, or one particular class, had not been helped to the detriment of another section or class.

WHAT THE NATIONAL STATUTE BOOK *DOES* SHOW

What the Statute Book *does* show is the very antithesis of this.

With a few very rare exceptions it is evident, from the effect of their operation, that many Acts have been badly

conceived, loosely framed, and are of a nature undoubtedly injurious to the commonweal.

What, for instance, can be more inimical to the people and disastrous to the nation than our land laws? Ages ago, when land was supposed to be rich enough to bear it, heavy burdens were laid upon it to meet State and Church demands.

Sixty odd years ago agriculture was sorely smitten by the repeal of the Corn Laws and the introduction of Free-trade, which was professedly set up by Cobden and his party to serve manufacturing interests, and it may naturally be asked why the national industry of the people was not given an equal chance with manufactures, by removing from it altogether the grievous burden of those tithes and taxes which were imposed in the dim ages of the past, when the land industry was considered rich enough to support both Church and State. Or, if the administration of Cobden's time did not care to venture so far, why were not both land tithes and land taxes taken in hand, duly considered, readjusted, and then equitably distributed over both agriculture *and* manufactures? It was Cobden's avowed intention to serve manufacturing industries at the expense of agriculture, and this being the case, it becomes clear that, as agriculture would suffer in the process, while manufactures would benefit, it was the height of folly and a gross injustice to force an impoverished agricultural industry to continue bearing a burden which sorely tried it even in its time of comparative prosperity.

WHY COBDEN SACRIFICED AGRICULTURE

The agricultural industry was sacrificed by the manufacturer-reformers of Cobden's time in a deliberate, cold-blooded manner on the altars of Commerical-Industrialism, so that they might become rich. There was not the least necessity for the sacrifice, as has been shown in other chapters of this book, nevertheless, it *was* made, and the reformers became rich, as they would have done under any circumstances. The agriculturists became poor!

"I am afraid that most of us entered upon the struggle with the belief that we had some distinct class-interest in the question,"

said Cobden in 1843, in speaking of the anti-Corn Law agitation. This exactly describes the position, and after sixty years of injustice the tardy question is being asked, fortunately by an increasing number of fair-minded men each succeeding year, "*Why was the outrage permitted?*" The answer is, "Because

then, as now, the commercial and industrial forces leagued against agriculture were powerful, combined, well organised, unscrupulous, and vigorously represented in Parliament, while the interests of agriculture, were, and are, scattered, uncombined, without organisation, and—practically unvoiced in the councils of State."

There is no wonder, then, that under such conditions Cobden and his party found no difficulty in subjugating the land industry and sacrificing its interests to serve their own.

EACH PARTY AFRAID TO TACKLE THE "TITHES" QUESTION

It has been said that "to tackle tithes and land taxes would be to stir up a hornet's nest," and considering the interests involved the position is easily understandable. Whether a hornet's nest or a scorpion's, a "cockatrice's" nest or a lair of any other fabulous monster be disturbed in the process of righting a wrong, the wrong should be righted nevertheless. In the years that are gone history tells us that in the days of its comparative prosperity, agriculture was sorely burdened because of its tithes and taxes; while to-day, because of this and because of other injustices to the great land industry, which are freely referred to in other chapters, agriculture, instead of being the greatest national wealth-producer, the universal employer, and the veritable industrial sheet-anchor of the people, it is entirely subdued by, and subordinate to, other industries that have failed to respond to such national requirements. There is prodigious wealth, but the people declare—and rightly so too—that it is too unevenly distributed, and is, therefore, *individual* instead of being as it should be and—must be—*collective*. They justly point to the widespread pauperism of the people in proof of this contention, while they contend with equal force that the ever-present and ever-growing UNEMPLOYED question proves the hopelessness of the idea that trades and manufactures can afford efficient means of employing the people.

In sacrificing agriculture to serve the narrow interests of party, a grave political blunder was committed and an unpardonable wrong inflicted on the people; and despite the sneers of certain politicians and the derision of certain interested individuals, the time is not far distant when these views will be fully vindicated.

DRINK TRAFFIC QUESTION USED FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES

Then again, what greater injury could be done to a nation than by the laws which govern the administration of the drink traffic?

The Government derives about thirty-six millions in revenues from the manufacture and sale of intoxicants!

The brewers and distillers are among the wealthiest interest in the land, while several of them are multi-millionaires!

"Another great factor in the situation is the enormous political power possessed by those whose interests are wrapped up in the liquor traffic: the brewers, distillers, and licensed victuallers; and this is a power to be reckoned with, in Parliament and out of it. They are well organised into businesslike and powerful associations, and many of their representatives occupy seats either in the Lords or Commons. The political party which shows them most sympathy naturally gets most support, and they are strong enough to make their influence felt in all the councils of State.

"Here we are dealing with one of the strongest forces in human nature—self-interest. This rules the situation, and we cannot get away from the fact that, however pressing and calling for reform the people's business may be, it requires a man of more than ordinary greatness to put public interest before private gain."*

Between the ineptness of past Administrations on the one hand, and the powerful influence of the brewing and distilling interests on the other, the people are between Scylla and Charybdis. They have suffered terribly in the past through the incapability of the one and the cupidity of the other of these two forces, and they are suffering to-day, and yet when an attempt is made to relieve the situation to some extent, the party out of office, hoping thereby to catch the vote of brewers, distillers, and licensed victuallers, and a host of others interested in the drink traffic, howl and rant and stump the country denouncing vehemently what they call the "Confiscation" policy of a Radical Government.

HOW THE OPPOSITION "ENGINEERED" THE "CONFISCATION" BILL

Apologists for the present iniquitous system profess to be the poor man's friend by raising the cry of "Why rob a poor man of his beer? The poor man has as much right to his drink as the hotel visitor or the club lounge."

Nobody wishes to deprive a man of his beer, or of any reasonable facility for getting what liquor he requires, but there is every necessity to curb the licence which has grown up and around this liquor question.

It is not an uncommon occurrence to find four or five public-houses in a small village of 25 to 30 houses; to find

* "Drink and the British People," p. 14, Sir W. E. Cooper.

a public-house at every street corner in most towns, with others at frequent intervals along the street.

It is a common occurrence to find in nearly every town in the kingdom a hundred facilities where ten would suffice, and since the drinking shops are so freely scattered throughout the length and breadth of the country, the wonder is not that drunkenness is common, but that there is not more of it. That it is not more prevalent is due to the good sense of the people themselves, and the masses would gladly welcome salutary reform in the laws which now regulate this traffic.

HOW VESTED INTERESTS KILLED THE "CONFISCATION" BILL

A better exemplification of how national requirements are still subordinated to private interests, and how easy it is for well-organised industries to make sport of the needs of a people, cannot be found than in the wreck of this "Confiscation" Bill in the House of Lords.

Allowing for the self-interests of those engaged in the trade, as also for the party bias of the Opposition, there will hardly be found a man in the kingdom who, having studied the question from a rational, common-sense, and independent point of view—realising that during the last ten years the people have spent an average of about £180,000,000 annually on intoxicating liquors, and recognising that the curse of drink has settled upon masses of the people as a deadly blight—will be found to uphold the action of those who killed the Licensing Bill. This is not the place to discuss the Bill, but this may be said—that it was an honest attempt on the part of Government to amend, to some extent, the many evils which spring from this unbridled drink traffic. The Licensing Bill is now a matter of history, but its stormy passage through the Commons, and its destruction in the Lords, serve to emphasise the tremendous difficulty there is in this party-ridden country of getting a single measure of real reform through Parliament once vested interests are threatened. It has been well termed "a victory of wrong over right, of the trade over the community," and brings, as the Lord Chancellor said, "no honour to the victors."

DRINK PRODUCES £35,000,000 TO REVENUE

Because of the easy facilities of raising enormous revenues, past Governments have connived at the growth of a monstrous evil which has taken hold of the people with a deadly and unrelenting grip. Millions have suffered in the past, incalculable harm is being done to-day to vast masses of unfortunates

who cannot resist the widespread temptation to drunkenness, and yet the "trade" is so well organised, disciplined, and equipped with all the newest weapons of political warfare—whatever these may be—that the Government are powerless to help the people. As with the land, so with the traffic in intoxicating drinks—*certain vested interests bar the way to reforms of a nature that would be of real help to the people, and the thing becomes impossible.*

Self-interest is, perhaps, the *strongest* force in human nature, and it rules this country with arbitrary sway, all men and all classes being subject to its universal influence.

106 PEERS GATHERED WHEN LORD ROBERTS SPOKE ON NATIONAL DEFENCE

When Lord Roberts made his great speech in the House of Lords in the autumn of last year on the pressing necessity of NATIONAL DEFENCE, 106 peers were in their seats in the Upper House, in spite of the fact that the Press had been commenting on the forthcoming speech and calling attention to the dangers of foreign invasion a couple of months beforehand. The debate, however, fell flat, little interest being evoked at the time, and—none since!

368 PEERS KILLED THE LICENSING BILL

In the final debate on the Licensing Bill, at which its obsequies were performed, 368 peers voted while others were in their places who did not vote.

Commenting on it, one of the London dailies had the following:—

"The beginning of the ending of the Confiscation Bill was carried out to-night in a brilliant setting and an atmosphere of tranquillity.

"The attendance was the largest the Gilded Chamber has witnessed this year. There have been no such gathering of Unionist peers, and no such crowded galleries of peeresses, since the last occasion on which the House of Lords killed a measure. This was in the spring, when they made short work of the Scotch Land Bill, which the Commons had flung back at them for the second time."*

If this episode means anything it is this: that while the Peers of the Realm are not prepared to exert themselves in the least where National Defences are concerned, or, at the best, take but a languid interest in the movement, the crowded

* *Daily Express*, November 26, 1908.

House on November 25, 1908, and the keen interest taken in the destruction of the Licensing Bill, prove how excessively energetic they can be once vested interests are threatened.

Another of the London dailies had the following:—

"PEERS AS BREWERY SHAREHOLDERS

MEN WHO KILLED THE BILL IN THE LORDS

REMARKABLE BLACK LIST

"In the majority against the Licensing Bill in the House of Lords yesterday were the following peers whose names appear as shareholders in brewery companies. Some of these peers hold the stock as trustees, either for their families or for others.*

"This list, moreover, is not exhaustive, for only forty or fifty companies out of 200 are examined, and the debenture holders, who are probably a larger class, are not known.

"In the lists of shareholders examined 140 peers own between them as much as £2,416,000 worth of stock.

"It is obvious that the position of a trustee places a peer in a different position from a private stockholder, and in quoting these names we do not for a moment suggest that these peers were influenced by considerations of private interest. But the list shows to what an extent the class from which the peers are drawn have been induced to invest in companies for the sale of liquor, and demonstrates the hold which the trade has acquired in high places.

"It is a statutory rule that no magistrate shall sit as a licensing justice who has an interest in the trade. If this salutary condition had been applied to the Lords, so that no peer should vote against the Licensing Bill who had interests in the trade, the majority for the Bill would have been much smaller."†

PARTY SYSTEM UP FOR TRIAL

These two notable examples of the failure of the present political system to meet national requirements will suffice, although numberless instances of its hopeless inadequacy might be cited.

The Party system was designed to serve nobler interests than these, but it has failed, and the PEOPLE are asking for reform in no uncertain voice.

"Where are those laws," they say, "that should prominently mark the efforts of our legislators in the cause of the people, and justify them as fitting representatives of the nation?"

"Where are those reforms which it is the right of British

* The list of peers who voted is omitted.

† *Daily Chronicle*, November 28, 1908.

citizens to obtain, and which we, the people, will and must have before this country can emerge from that gloomy region of poverty and general unprosperity which, alas! enshrouds too many of our unfortunate countrymen to-day?"

"What man can point to this law or that and honestly say, from his heart, that here is a measure conceived by wise and far-seeing statesmen: a measure born of a parliament of loyal patriotic legislators, and put into operation by that body for the good, and in the interests of the people?"

"Shall it not, on the contrary, be said that practically all the laws in the Statute Book for years past illustrate rather the hopelessness and impracticability of our legislative system than vindicate its usefulness?"

UGLY QUESTIONS REQUIRING ANSWERS

These are ugly questions, but they must be answered sooner or later.

That the national legislative body is, for the above reasons, among others, an incompetent body, and utterly incapable, under existing conditions, of giving to the country a code of simple laws whereunder the people would have an equal chance with the peoples of other States of making the most of *all* their trades and industries, is perfectly obvious to every man who, unbiassed by political influence and untainted by party corruption, takes the trouble to think this matter out for himself.

If it were not so, if these Acts had been framed on the broad principles of public equity and utility, is it possible that there would be with us to-day that foul and ever-growing mass of pauperism which is the *bête noir* of the Exchequer, and the despair of statesmen, forming the most grievous and yet unnecessary burden to the rate-payers of this country, the like of which finds no parallel in the world's history?

If these Acts had been of a national nature, meeting the needs of the people without sacrificing the interests of the tax-payers; had they been of a kind that, while conserving Home interests, would not necessarily militate against Imperial unity: would the unemployed now be tramping the country seeking work and finding it not, or would discontent and political unrest dog the footsteps of Government with the pertinacity of a sleuth-hound?

Had the people's representatives at Westminster taken warning by the signs of the times, and had they framed their legislative measures during the last twenty years so as to have met, wholly or in part, those proper claims of the people to certain well-understood and wholly necessary reforms, is it at

all likely that Socialism, which has arisen as a menace to the nation, would have developed its present aggressiveness?

Socialism, in some form or other, is perhaps nearly as old as the human race, but Socialism, as we know it to-day, breeds and thrives best in the foul miasma arising out of the despair and discontent of the people; and whatever may be the outcome of the intense political unrest of the present time, the country's legislators will be wholly to blame for having persistently squandered their time in silly, petty wranglings and senseless party strife, instead of wisely using it in the promotion of national interests.

GRAVE DEBATES DEGENERATE INTO PARTY WRANGLING

The people of this country have become so accustomed to the spectacle of party warfare in the House that a man now enters the Strangers' Gallery more with the idea of witnessing some "fun" than with the hope of hearing a debate on some weighty national question conducted with that sense of grave dignity and responsibility which should characterise all the deliberations of the national representatives at Westminster.

For the same reason a man scans his newspaper for the day's parliamentary news more with the idea that he will find something there to *amuse* him—a quip or sally from some smart member of the Opposition and the caustic rejoinder of a Government speaker—than with the belief that he will find there a grave, sensible, and helpful debate on some question of national importance.

It does not, however, follow that this attitude on the part of the public, regrettable though it is, is born either of apathy in regard to national affairs, or of indifference to public needs. It is an attitude born solely of the foolishness of party strife, the pettiness of party wranglings, and the hopelessness of the party system as practised to-day; and if men look for amusement out of such a jumble, who shall blame them?

A few years ago, those who advocated reform in this direction might have exclaimed with the prophet Elijah, "I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men."

MEN ARE SICK OF INSENSATE PARTY STRIFE

To-day there is a growing and widespread desire for reform in respect to this party warfare, and, although it moves with tardy steps, it will surely come in time.

The party principle, within certain limitations, is necessary in State interests, but the party principle as practised to-day is

malignant and baleful in its results; hence the widespread desire on the part of the more thoughtful men to curb its harmful propensities.

That this is so is proved by the free and scathing remarks that one now hears in every grade of society from men who, though they may nominally belong to one political party or another, owe no blind allegiance to it.

Such men are to be found in every drawing-room in the kingdom, in every club; in the railway carriage and on board the ocean liner; in every section of the community and in every village and town; and as their numbers are increasing every day, while the spirit of freedom from political thralldom is growing rapidly, there is every indication that this determination to cast off those shackles which have hitherto bound men as slaves to the party they followed, will furnish the surest means of disintegrating the party spirit and modifying its more objectionable features.

PEOPLE MUST FIGHT THIS PARTY DEMON

What the people of this country should do is to take steps to see that this spirit of opposition to the present impossible conditions of our party system, which has at length found expression in words, should now be conserved and crystallised and fashioned into a moving material force having for its conscious object the invasion of that domain wherein dwells this malignant party spirit. They should aim at its complete overthrow and its subsequent subjugation to a more rational up-to-date system, whereunder the national business would be helped on, and not retarded, by a scheme of obstructive tactics which serve no purpose but to thwart and paralyse the individual and collective effort of those who for the time being exercise, by the will of the people, the executive powers of State government.

It is not difficult to estimate the enormous loss the country must have suffered through the constant and inevitable waste of thought-power; of that unapplied mental energy which is continually being given out by great minds, which, if wisely conserved and carefully directed, would result in much-needed reforms conferring real lasting benefits on the people.

THE PEOPLE ARE AWAKENING

The people are at last beginning to realise that there is not the remotest chance of the country getting—at least, under the present policy of obstructiveness which marks the daily doings

of the various political parties in the House of Commons—those necessary measures of reform in many parts of our fiscal system which they really must have before they can be said to possess the same reasonable chance of making the most of their agricultural and manufacturing industries as is enjoyed by the peoples of all the other great civilised States.

They, moreover, realise at last that unless such fiscal and other reforms as may be necessary in their interests *are* introduced, and introduced at once, the chance of being able to compete with their foreign rivals with any probability of success becomes manifestly hopeless.

The question for the electorate, then, is how this suicidal party system of internecine strife is to be curbed and kept in check.

THE PRINCIPLE ADMITTED, BUT ITS ABUSES DEPLORED

The essential principle of party politics is admitted, and it is questionable if a saner system could be devised.

The abuses which surround the system are as apparent as the stars on a clear night.

These abuses can best be overcome by precisely the same process which removes most foul things in this world, namely, by the simple yet perfectly remedial process of *recognition and realisation*. Recognise the evil in the first place and then bring yourself into a complete realisation of what it means to you and yours, and the evil, whatever it may be, will soon disappear. A foul, festering mass of rubbish in your back yard, so long as it remains unrecognised as an evil, is ignored; but if it be complained of as a nuisance by your neighbours and you find it is causing sickness to the members of your own family, you at once enter into a recognition and realisation of what it means to you and yours, and—the rest follows as a matter of course.

Let the body politic, and particularly the body electorate, enter into a complete recognition and realisation of what this insane party strife means to them and theirs, and something will soon result.

This pernicious system of party strife has dipped deep down into the pockets of the people and placed in deadly peril their best interests, and it is time they took overt action to protect that which remains to them and to restore that which has been lost.

OVERT ACTION NECESSARY

Overt action may take many forms and expressions—letters to the Press, articles to the magazines, leaflets to the people, discussions at working-men's clubs and institutes, a word now and again to street corner audiences, reference to the subject by Hyde Park "orators"; consideration of the matter at dinner-tables, in clubland, in debating societies, and by the hundred and one means usually taken in spreading abroad questions of public interest.

Public opinion has the curious property of quicksilver, which, once aroused, spreads itself in every direction like that eccentric mineral, until every section of the community is affected and moved to the necessity of action. It is the political thermometer of the people; it is the barometer which marks political change, and the compass by which politicians steer their course. Arouse public opinion, then, in the direction we are indicating, so that politicians may mark its unmistakable trend and—the rest will speedily follow.

Once public opinion be set in favour of certain necessary changes in our social, economic, or fiscal systems, no political party in existence would be foolish enough to attempt to stem the current; if they did they would be swept away as easily as the on-rushing tidal wave sweeps away a child's sand castle on the seashore.

The party principle in politics, in some form or other, is nearly as old as the hills, and perhaps as necessary as air; at any rate, it is part of the British Constitution. It has been, it is, and it will be, and this being so, it must be accepted as a factor in the situation.

LICENCE IN PARTY POLITICS HAS ENGENDERED ABUSE

We cannot divorce ourselves from it; it cannot be killed and cast out, nor can we get rid of it in any other way, but it can be caught and held in check, and moulded and fashioned to suit public requirements. The mischief is that it has been left by the apathy and indifference, but chiefly through the *ignorance* of the people, to run riot; no restraining hand has ever been laid upon the contending political parties; licence has grown out of this lack of restraint, and the simple fact remains—as the only outcome—that the party war is now waged by and between the contending parties in Parliament with that blind insanity which practically sacrifices, in nearly every instance, the broad interests of the nation to the narrow, selfish, and sordid interests of party.

Words instead of work is the characteristic of the Parliament of to-day, and the *copia verborum* of its six hundred and seventy members not only elogs the wheels of the State machine but not infrequently stops it altogether.

That which was intended, therefore, as a blessing has proved to be a curse, and so long as the people of this country fail to recognise the fact, so long will the evil remain as a standing menace to public interests.

CHAPTER XXIV

LAND TENURES—A PRESENT JUMBLE OF INCONSISTENCIES —WHAT THEY HAVE RESULTED IN—COMPARISON WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

THE most important question under consideration in these pages is that of LAND TENURES. It forms the hub of the industrial universe, and is the fulcrum upon which moves and depends not only the agricultural industry itself, but every other industry in the country.

This vital question should, first of all, be considered from the agricultural standpoint, and then from that of its connection with, and its influence upon, manufacturing industries, as also upon the general economy of the country.

The economical system upon which a man holds his land necessarily provides, at the same time, the determining factor of—SUCCESS or FAILURE. If a man holds a plot of ground on terms which are one-sided, inequitable, and of a nature that offer no inducement to “run it for all it’s worth”; or, in other words, *to work his own life into the very furrows of the soil he cultivates*, there is bound to be either—failure, or, at the best, partial success of so dubious a quality as to be of no value as an asset in the great life of the nation. If there be failure in the primary industry this failure radiates from the point of its initial motion and gradually spreads to, and subsequently envelopes, all other industries.

SUITABLE LAND TENURES OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE

The system, then, on which British cultivators are to hold their land becomes of paramount importance, and too much attention cannot be given to the question. There are many ways of accomplishing most things in life, and there is generally a minimum and a maximum quality in all human effort. The

lands of Great Britain may be cultivated so as to produce the minimum results—as at present—they may be farmed in a manner that will employ, support, and feed a few hundred thousand more people—men, women, and children—than are supported by agriculture to-day, or, our land may be so manipulated that *from ten to fifteen millions of our people may be settled upon, and employed, supported and fed by a great agricultural industry and the many subsidiary industries resulting therefrom.*

Obviously, then, an industry that is charged with such enormous potentialities and is either capable of affording profitable employment and full support to *one-third* of the British people, or, of employing and barely supporting—as at present—less than *one-eighth* of the population, is an industry that should be carefully handled and jealously guarded and conserved, otherwise leakage and loss are sure to result.

Agriculture, in fact, is elastic as indiarubber, and plasmatic as potter's clay. An acre of land badly cultivated will only yield eight bushels of wheat, for example; highly cultivated it will easily produce forty bushels. Manifestly, an industry of so pliable a nature should never be allowed to fall into the hands of those who are either indifferent to its interests, unconscious of its importance as a dominating factor in the national life, or politically or financially interested in preventing it from assuming its proper position in the national scheme of economy.

AGRICULTURE THE DOMINATING FACTOR

The land question and the agricultural industry play the most important part in the political economy of every civilised State in the world—save our own—and nothing is permitted to interfere with its interests or to obstruct its progressive prosperity. It is rightly regarded as the primal industry, the great permanent labour-employer, the industrial sheet-anchor, and the chief wealth-producer and wealth-distributor. It is common knowledge that the universal adoption of this wise yet necessary attitude by the nations towards the greatest of all the many economical questions which flow out of and surround human existence, has resulted in the establishment of such conditions as ensure success to agriculture and render the industry safe from the corroding influence of vested interests, the intrigues of political parties, or the predatoriness of Parliaments.

The best vindication of industry is the measure of its success. All the countries that have conserved and fostered their great land industries, while vigorously prosecuting their manufacturing industries and rendering them so formidable as

to rival and imperil our own, nevertheless contrive to send us largely of their surplus agricultural produce. The United States is our largest supplier of wheat and flour. France and Germany send us large quantities of agricultural produce, while Belgium, with her flourishing manufactures, sends us of the surplus of her farm produce. We get £1,229,000 worth of eggs and poultry annually from that country. Do we suppose that she sends us her own farm produce, and then buys foreign eggs for her own consumption? Belgium is far more densely populated than our own country, with 630 head of the population to the square mile against our 360, or, in other words, about twice as densely populated as the United Kingdom; and yet, in spite of this, she contrives to produce as much butter, poultry, etc., as she requires for herself and something over for export.

Belgium is cited as a single instance of what the land is capable of under a wise system of land tenures and the fostering care of the State, but the same measure of success may be claimed by every civilised State in Europe and the Western world.

COMPARATIVE AGRICULTURAL RESULTS: GREAT BRITAIN AND OTHER COUNTRIES

No good purpose will be served here by describing the system on which lands are farmed in this country, as that is too well known already. A very useful purpose will, however, be achieved by pointing to some of the *results* of that system, and drawing a comparison between them and those of certain other countries.

Here are some statistics showing, for example, the relative position of the United Kingdom and some competing countries in respect to live stock.

LIVE STOCK IN UNITED KINGDOM AND THREE OTHER COUNTRIES *

	United Kingdom.	Germany.	France.	Belgium.
Horses . .	2,079,470	4,267,403	3,165,025	244,893
Cattle . .	11,588,560	19,331,568	13,968,014	1,779,678
Sheep . .	29,932,064	7,907,173	17,461,397	235,722
Pigs . . .	3,953,834	18,920,666	7,049,012	1,148,083
Goats . .	Nil	3,329,881	1,461,616	241,045

* Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom, 1893-1907 (Parliamentary Blue Book).

PERCENTAGE OF LIVE STOCK TO EVERY HUNDRED HEAD OF THE
POPULATION

	Horses.	Cattle.	Sheep.	Pigs.
United Kingdom	4.95	20.75	70.0	9.40
Germany	7.09	32.20	13.11	31.50
France	8.11	35.81	44.77	18.07
Belgium	3.67	26.56	3.52	17.13

FEWER SHEEP MEANS HIGHER AGRICULTURE

These figures clearly show that there is nothing in the tenurial system of these countries that prevents agriculturists from becoming rich in the more valuable of the domestic animals—horses, cattle, and pigs, while in respect to sheep it should be borne in mind that a decrease in these animals necessarily means a corresponding increase in the *food-producing area* and consequent employment of more people, a condition of agriculture especially designed by every country in Europe except Great Britain. Referring to this, an eminent writer on German agriculture * has the following:—

“It is true that at the same time the number of sheep has declined by more than 15,000,000 (in twenty-seven years, 1873–1900), largely owing to the shrinkage of pasture land which was turned into fields; but this shrinkage is not so serious as it seems. In Germany two pigs represent about the same value as do five sheep.”

This means that the great superiority of Germany in pigs, nearly 15,000,000 in excess of the number in this country, or, according to the German computation, equal to 37,500,000 sheep—a number in itself largely exceeding the total herds of this country—her enormous excess in cattle and horses, and her 3,329,000 goats, of which Great Britain possesses hardly any worth enumerating, all point to the fact that, among the many advantages which arise out of the system of foreign land tenures, the maintenance of a proportion of live stock greatly in excess of that admissible under the British system stands out with remarkable clearness.

THE RESULTS OF BRITISH AND GERMAN AGRICULTURE

As Germany is our principal European trade rival, and is destined, moreover, to play the final game with Great Britain

* Mr. O. Eltzbacher.

for the world's trade supremacy, let us test the system of the respective tenures in another way.

Partly owing to her fiscal policy and partly to her system of tenures, Great Britain has been forced to devote practically the whole of her cultivated area either to pasturage or to green crops for her cattle and sheep, *because it is asserted by farmers that the rearing of sheep and cattle is the most profitable kind of farming they can adopt.* The last Statistical Abstract * gives the total cultivated area of the United Kingdom for 1907 at 49,611,589 acres, of which 41,294,176 acres were under "Permanent Pasturage," "Green Crops," etc. Only 8,317,413 acres were returned as under "Corn Crops," but of this area only 1,665,017 acres were under "Wheat," the remainder, namely, 6,652,396 acres, being under barley, oats, rye, beans, and peas. Among the "Green Crops" there were 1,151,632 acres returned as under "Potatoes," and this acreage, added to that under "Wheat," gives a total of 2,816,649 acres, out of the total cultivated area of 49,611,589 acres, as being under crops for MAN-FEED, all the rest, namely, 46,794,940 acres, being under CATTLE and SHEEP-FEED.

STOCK REARING: HOW GERMANY BEATS BRITAIN

If a country devotes practically the whole of its cultivated area to pasturage and green crops for the rearing of live stock chiefly for human consumption, it follows that that country should be able to show a larger head of live stock for a given number of acres than a country that does not make a speciality of live-stock rearing, but devotes its lands principally to arable cultivation. Simplifying the matter as much as possible, and reducing it to a calculation on the *pasturage* area alone, here is a comparison between the number of live stock produced in this country and in Germany—

United Kingdom	{ Permanent pasturage, acres, 27,411,720	Horses, 2,079,471 or	7 per 100 acres	
		Cattle, 11,588,560	42	" "
		Sheep, 29,932,064	104	" "
		Pigs, 3,953,834	14	" "
Germany	{ Permanent pasturage, acres, 14,747,688	Horses, 4,267,403 or	29 per 100 acres	
		Cattle, 19,331,568	131	" "
		Sheep, 7,907,173	54	" "
		Pigs, 18,920,666	127	" "

With the exception of sheep, the shortage of which in Germany is, as we have just seen, more than compensated for

* Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom, 1893-1907 (Parliamentary Blue Book).

by her tremendous preponderance in pigs, that country, although arable to the hilt, nevertheless succeeds in rearing a number of live stock, acre for acre, so enormously in excess of the number raised in this country, in spite of the fact that British agriculture is almost exclusively devoted to *the rearing of live stock*, as to make it abundantly clear that the British system is an unmitigated failure and fundamentally wrong.

NO APOLOGY MADE FOR "RUBBING IT IN"

As this question deeply affects the vitality of the nation, no apology will be made in these pages for "rubbing it in," or, in other words, of citing proof after proof of the unsuitableness of British tenures and the madness of maintaining them. Here is a statement showing the number of persons employed in agriculture in four European countries besides our own—

Country.	Acres under Cultivation, including Permanent Pasturage and Forests.	Number of Persons Employed.	Persons Employed per every 100 Acres.
United Kingdom .	49,611,589	2,262,452	4.58
Germany . . .	99,759,326	8,156,317	8.20
France . . .	107,992,900	8,430,059	7.80
Belgium . . .	4,362,766	449,902	10.30
Hungary . . .	56,850,276	6,055,390	10.65

This, in itself, forms a sufficiently strong indictment against the ineptness of the British system, but the fact that in the above "cultivated" areas are included 34,569,794 acres of woods and forests in Germany, 22,224,134 acres in France, and 22,262,483 acres in Hungary, while in the United Kingdom there are but 3,069,375 acres of woods and forests, renders the British position worse by comparison—a given area of forest land obviously employing less labour than a similar area of arable.

BRITISH AGRICULTURE SUPPORTS SMALLEST HEAD OF THE POPULATION IN EUROPE

Viewed from another point, this wretched question takes a still more unfavourable aspect. It is generally calculated that in agriculture where one person is *employed*, there are about two and a half persons *employed, supported, and fed*. This rule, applied to the above table, gives the following result:—

Country.	Persons Employed and Supported.	Total Population Last Census.	Percentage of Employed, etc., to Total Population.
United Kingdom .	5,656,130	41,550,773	13·61
Germany . . .	20,390,793	60,005,183	33·66
France . . .	21,075,147	38,961,945	54·00
Hungary . . .	15,138,475	19,254,559	78·60

Here is a terrible disclosure, and one that constitutes a sweeping condemnation of the British system. While the United Kingdom employs and supports less than *one-eighth* of her population in agriculture, Germany employs more than *one-third*, France employs more than *one-half*, and Hungary more than *three-fourths*, of their population on the LAND.

Here, then, the British people have presented to them a number of agricultural paradoxes and anomalies. On the one hand, we, who profess to make a speciality of live-stock rearing by turning our best arable land into grazing lands and rich meadows, find that all those countries which have converted *their* grazing lands and meadows into arable, beat us hands down in live-stock rearing. Germany, for example, produces—

(a) *Four times* as many horses.

(b) *Three and a quarter times* as many cattle.

(c) A LESS NUMBER OF SHEEP (more than compensated for by excess number of pigs).

(d) *Nine times* as many pigs.

DAMNING PROOF AGAINST THE BRITISH SYSTEM

Now, of all the damaging, damning evidence that can possibly be brought as to the utter worthlessness of our agricultural system, this is surely the most convincing. Here we have further clear, unmistakable proof, set before us year by year in unemotional statistical works of reference, that we are shamefully beaten by neighbouring States in the *one* branch of the great agricultural industry in which we lay ourselves out to excel, which fact in itself surely forms a sweeping, condemnatory indictment of our wasteful and futile methods.

Europe, recognising that she has not the limitless grazing areas at her command which are to be found, for example, in some of our great Colonies, in Argentina, and in the States of South America, wisely restricts her cattle-growing operations to certain limits. Her rich arable land pays better to cultivate than to graze, and, as a rule, only low-lying or waste land is devoted to pasturage. Yet, in spite of this fact, Europe succeeds in rearing

enormous numbers of cattle. Cows pay better than steers, and perhaps two-thirds or four-fifths of the cattle reared in many of the European states are milkers.

WHAT HOLLAND DOES

In Holland, where the land is nearly all water-logged, the people have built up a great industry by devoting the land to the only thing it is suited for—grazing; and they have done it wisely, and with due regard to the principles of strict utilitarianism. They leave the raising of large herds of steers to those countries which possess prairies and pampas and almost limitless areas of grazing land; and because they know that a given area of grass land will support only a certain number of cattle, they go in for cow-rearing almost exclusively, for out of this a vast number of people may be supported, while the growing of beef merely supports the grower and the butcher. The Dutch farmers regard the growing of cattle for food purposes as the most wasteful, unfruitful system of farming that could possibly be devised, and they leave it alone.

WHAT BRITAIN SHOULD NOT DO

The United Kingdom is the only country in the world which has followed the topsy-turvy plan of turning her rich arable land into pasturage, and then, singularly enough, adopting a system of cattle and sheep-rearing which is the most wasteful and unproductive and the least suited to the needs of a small country where every acre should be tilled and utilised to its utmost capacity in support of the people. The English farmer resorts to this thriftless, senseless method because it is said to be *the one* thing that pays best; and this fact alone affords overwhelming evidence of the degeneracy of the present system, and the hopeless condition of the entire industry.

Then, in spite of the fact that labour troubles press us sorely, and UNEMPLOYMENT has become a veritable curse to the country, turning the social and economic conditions upside down and rendering it well-nigh impossible to live in our fair land in comfort and peace, the land, the agricultural industry, instead of being regarded as the great labour-employer and the national industrial sheet-anchor, is becoming more attenuated and useless each year as the result of allowing more land to go out of cultivation. The number of persons employed on the land is not only the smallest of the four countries cited, but it is by far the *smallest in Europe*. There is a vast area of the finest land in the world waiting to be tilled, and nobody to till

it. There are millions of people on the verge of destitution, and there is plenty of land, yet none is available. There is land everywhere, and yet not an acre for a starving population. There are land-less men and man-less land waiting to be brought together, and nobody to do it.

AGRICULTURAL PARADOXES

The entire agricultural question is a veritable jumble of inconsistencies, anomalies, and paradoxes; it is, moreover, a disgrace to every parliamentary administration of the last sixty-two years, a rank injustice to the people, and a standing menace to the prosperity and peace of the country.

This odd mixture of incongruities is the result, partly of a system of tenures which is as unsuited to the requirements of this or of any country as the gauzy draperies of an Indian dancer would be to an Esquimaux belle; and partly of a selfish system of economics, which was forced upon the country by a powerful band of manufacturer-reformers sixty years ago, and maintained by clever political prestidigitation, operating detrimentally to national interests.

Some of the evil results of this pernicious system have been revealed in these pages; others there are that ramify among the people and are lost to public view, while others that will assume even more malign aspects will surely arise to perplex honest citizens and cause further confusion, unrest, and discontent among the people; but whatever else may happen, this is certain, that until the land tenures of the country be fundamentally altered, and the present fiscal system be forced to give place to a better and more equitable one, no measure of relief—worthy the name—may be looked for by the British people.

CHAPTER XXV

LAND TENURES (*continued*)—WHY NO DEFINITE CONSTRUCTIVE SCHEME IS PUT FORWARD—BETTER PURPOSE SERVED BY SHOWING HOW TEXTILE INDUSTRIES WOULD HAVE FAILED IF RUN ON AGRICULTURAL SYSTEM OF TENURES

HAVING referred in the previous chapter to certain advantages accruing to foreign States owing, among other things, to their superior system of land tenures, it is necessary to suggest certain remedial measures which might be adopted with considerable advantage by Great Britain. It will be well, however, first to review the position, because it is absolutely certain, in this dissonant age, when political interests can be served by a cheap system of economics, and certain powerful sections of voters would be prepared to maintain the *status quo ante* at any sacrifice of national interests, that whatever system may be suggested, it is sure to meet with as much organised opposition as though it were a measure proposed to defeat the ends of justice and overturn the stability of the Empire.

THE OPPOSERS OF LAND REFORM: WHY THEY OBJECT

The political trimmer would obviously oppose any kind of land reform that appeared to be in want of harmony with the programme of his party *pro tem*. The manufacturing interests—with the exception of those who have come over to Tariff-reform, erroneously believing that a prosperous universal agricultural industry for Great Britain would seriously militate against their overseas trade—would oppose land reform of a nature that would give British people the same chance in agriculture as is enjoyed by the people of all other European States. The landlord and farming interests, although *their* political power is practically a negligible quantity, owing to lack of organisation, would, strangely enough, not favour land reform unless many of the objectionable features of the present

tenures, which are more or less responsible for the present agricultural *impasse*, were preserved. The landlord, for example, would oppose the abolition, or the extreme modification, of the *rental* system, in spite of the fact that such a system is, and must be, an insuperable obstacle to successful agriculture, whether under the present *régime* of Free-trade or even of Tariff-reform; and also of the added fact that this fatuous clinging to an impossible method of using the land has contributed more to the enormous loss of agricultural wealth during the last thirty years than any other single item in the long table, save that of the more fatuous policy of past Governments. The landlord is too conservative to favour the removal of the rental system, and the farmer would oppose it because he has some absurd, undefined ideas that the substitution of a universal system of permanent occupying ownership, for the present ever-changing and therefore *impossible* system of tenures, would, in some measure, militate against his interests. The working-classes, erroneously believing with most of their employers—the manufacturers—that a vast internal agricultural industry would in some way militate against *their* interests, would be found arrayed against land reform of a nature that would place their country side by side with foreign States in respect to its agriculture. Then there is a large number of pessimists who, although they have nothing to lose, but a great deal to gain by the creation of a prosperous land industry in our midst, would nevertheless croak and declaim against any change because “it is their nature to do so.”

This section of the community grumbles at everything and helps to pull down, but it never lends a helping hand in building up. Still, it must be reckoned with as having a voice in State management—save the mark!

FUTILITY OF PROPOSING DEFINITE LAND REFORM SCHEME

It therefore becomes apparent that whatever scheme may be brought forward for the regeneration of agriculture, it will surely be roundly abused and condemned by a large and politically powerful section of parliamentary voters. For these excellent reasons, as also because not the slightest good to the country has resulted from the efforts of the land-reformers whose names have been referred to, no attempt will be made in these pages to put forward any elaborate scheme of land-reform. Obviously, such a task would be altogether supererogatory owing to the ease with which all schemes of the nature can be pulled to pieces, the skill which political parties have attained in political jugglery, the meretriciousness of economic

"science," and the consummate ease with which the people can be beguiled by such Will-o'-the-wisp political catchwords as the "Big Loaf" cry, and many others of a similar nature.

A BETTER SCHEME TO COMPARE ENGLAND WITH OTHER COUNTRIES

A more useful purpose will, however, be served by confining the matter more to a question of *comparisons*, for the reason that once you establish a *precedent* you have half won your suit. If Great Britain were the only country in the world, the establishment of a precedent for agriculture, or for any other industry, would be impossible, and the question would probably remain a controversial one till the crack of doom; the fact of there being a score of precedents within a few miles of our shores brings the whole question well into the open, and renders political and economic legerdemain more difficult to perform.

France, which is acknowledged to be the *richest agricultural country in the world*, directly employs, as was shown in the last chapter, nearly 8,500,000 persons on her lands, and M. Gourot, President de la Société Nationale d'Encouragement à l'Agriculture, speaking on the subject in July, 1905, spoke of 24,000,000 *agriculturists of France*. As we must assume that the President of this Society knew what he was talking about, we conclude that France's great land industry employs and supports the enormous total of 24,000,000 of her population, or nearly *two-thirds* of the whole.

Hungary, with a population of a little over 19,000,000, employs and supports over 15,000,000 in agriculture, or, in other words, her land industry employs and supports upwards of *three-fourths* of the entire population of the country.

Germany employs and supports about *one-third* of her population.

Great Britain stands alone in that she employs and supports 5,656,000 persons in agriculture, or about *one-eighth* of her entire population.

These are hard, unemotional facts which can neither be minimised by political trickery nor whittled down by the "economic" paring-knife. These countries, and indeed every country in the world, manage to maintain a highly prosperous agricultural industry and employ a far larger head of the population than Great Britain ever dreamed of doing, and the time has come for the British people to ask the reason *WHY?*

RENTAL SYSTEM IMPOSSIBLE IN AGRICULTURE

The reply is that it is partly due to an impossible system of land tenures, and partly to the maintenance of those tenures by a powerful political body who deem their interests are best served by supporting a policy which is inimical to every national interest, *including those which are erroneously held to be benefited by maintaining it.*

Let us first consider the system of tenancies, or, in other words, the practice of attempting to run the agricultural industry of Great Britain on a system of RENTS.

We are such creatures of habit that we become accustomed in time to most abnormal conditions of life.

The practice of farming out parcels of land for a certain sum of money which we call *rent*, is a time-honoured custom in our country, and, like many other "time-honoured customs," it has become unsuitable to the times in which we live, and to-day it is a fact that we can no more afford to maintain the custom than we could of building and maintaining a fleet of wooden battleships for the defence of our shores and overseas trade.

HOW TEXTILE INDUSTRIES WOULD FARE UNDER A
RENTAL SYSTEM

To attempt to run a great agricultural industry on a system of "tenancies" is to essay the impossible. Let us take the great textile industries of the North as an illustrative example, and run them on precisely similar lines to those on which the Manchester School compels the agricultural industry to run. Let us say there are a number of landlords who own the whole of the textile factories and mills, and who insist on forcing the occupiers, or tenants thereof, to hold their mills under a system of leases short or long, which reserve to the landlord full powers in respect to renewal, rents, etc. Here we have a "tenant-at-will" system with all the power practically on the side of the landlord. A wave of trade prosperity would certainly mean higher rents on renewal of leases; while a period of depression might, although it is not certain, mean a slight reduction. Broadly speaking, however, it is certain that any reduction of rent after bad years would surely be followed by an increase after good ones—an unstable system that would as surely fail in the textile as it has in the agricultural industry.

Let us now try to imagine the chaos which would result if our manufacturers generally were forced to run *their* industries

under precisely similar conditions to those which they have, by their supreme selfishness, forced upon agriculture. Sixty years ago they had the power to free agriculture from its bonds, but it pleased them to draw them tighter, and they have at length eaten into the very vitals of the industry and produced such abnormal conditions that would be extremely laughable were it not for the under-current of tragedy which flows beneath the seeming farce.

BRITISH FARMER REDUCED TO SHIFTS AND STRATAGEMS

The rental system, the indifference of Governments, and the selfishness of the Manchester School, have forced the British farmer to resort to many shifts and stratagems to make both ends meet. He has to travesty true agriculture by converting rich arable into pasturage, and to have wasteful pastoral farming where his best tillages should be, instead of feeding his sheep on hillsides and moor and heath. The absurd "tenant-at-will" system forces him to defend himself by taking farms on short leases, cropping heavily, manuring lightly, working the very heart out of the land for a few years, and then throwing up his lease. It is not an uncommon practice now for a man to take farm after farm, work them in this manner for a few years, and then move on elsewhere. Is it likely that agriculture can thrive under such impossible conditions?

Let us now place the cotton lords, for example, in a similar position, and suppose that the whole of the mills are owned by a number of men whose ancestors acquired the sole right of ownership over this great industry. We will suppose that centuries ago these mills were run under the old feudal system; to-day the system is leasehold, and although it is known to be as unsuited to the times as the old knightly armour of the Crusaders would be in modern warfare, yet it is the only one that these overlords will permit.

TENANT SYSTEM CONDUCTIVE TO WORST POSSIBLE RESULTS

Long experience has, we will suppose, proved that running mills and factories on the tenant system is productive of the worst possible results. In the first place, no man is likely to do his best for a business which depends upon either the goodwill or upon the caprice of the landlord for its continuance, and, moreover, with the certainty of a considerable increase in rents if the last year or so, prior to the expiry of the lease, happen to have proved prosperous. Is it likely that the tenant will put those essentials to success into his business—vigour, intellect,

undiminished energy, technical and scientific knowledge, combined with high enterprise and abundant capital, when he is uncertain whether his landlord will renew his lease on equitable terms? Or is it likely, on the other hand, that a landlord, under an uncertain system of tenancies, would be prepared to keep his mills in a thoroughly up-to-date condition to enable him to successfully compete in the world's markets? Is it likely that under such impossible conditions, which we will suppose to exist between him and his tenants, he would be prepared to spend money with no stinted hand the moment he saw his machinery getting out of date and falling behind in that productive capacity which is practically the only test standard of efficiency in modern mills? Is it likely that he would condemn that machinery, and then spend fifty thousand pounds in this mill, or one hundred thousand in that, so that his mills may be kept up to the requirements of the times? This heavy outlay has to be faced not infrequently by those who are engaged in the industry, so that their mills may be equipped with new and improved machinery, and kept thoroughly up to the requirements of modern markets. Enterprising men recognise the necessity of doing this and never hesitate to act whenever occasion demands, and they hardly ever fail to reap the reward of their enterprise. Is it not likely that our landlord, recognising the uncertainties of the position here postulated, would rather "go slow," to see how matters "panned out," as the Americans say? In the circumstances he could hardly act otherwise, and the result would surely be *disaster* sooner or later, and ultimate—Chaos.

ALL INDUSTRIES MUST BE FED WITH BRAINS AND CAPITAL

Whatever your business may be it must be fed with the best you have to give—assiduity, economy, enterprise, thrift, brains, and capital. That business succeeds best into which you work—*yourself, your own life*. Is it likely that a tenant-at-will would put these precious qualities into a business, the continuance of which he could never be certain about? Surely no man would be such a fool.

Then is it not conceivable that, under so inharmonious a system, neither landlord nor tenant would be in a position to do the best for himself or for the industry? The former would surely starve the industry by withholding from it the essential to success—the outlay of necessary capital, while the latter would play his part in that listless, half-hearted manner, born of the hopelessness of the position, which would be bound to encompass failure, or, at the best, but partial success, instead of

with that whole-hearted thoroughness which has characterised the methods of British manufacturers and enabled them to assume the foremost position in the commercial-industrialism of the age.

TREATED AS AGRICULTURE HAS BEEN, TEXTILE INDUSTRIES WOULD HAVE FAILED

Is it likely that our great cotton industry would have become the power it is to-day, had it been hampered by a galling restrictive system similar to that existing to-day between the owners of the soil and those who work the agricultural industry? Is it probable that had cotton, wool, iron, coal, and a score of other British industries been made the sport of political parties, sacrificed to the selfish ambitions of interested reformers, treated with supreme indifference by successive Governments, and been subject to the crass ignorance of an unreflecting and an undiscerning public, they would have reached the position they are in to-day?

If these industries had belonged to a number of overlords, and had been leased out in parcels to tenant occupiers as they lease out their lands, is it possible that they could have grown into such great labour-employing and wealth-producing industries? Is it not a fact that every industry in this world must be free of hindrances before it can yield the best results? and does it not follow that if British manufacturers had been subject to the same difficulties and impediments that have frustrated the operations of British farmers during the last sixty years, they could not possibly have given to British manufacturing industries the pre-eminent position many of them enjoy in the world's market to-day?

CRASS IGNORANCE REGARDING AGRICULTURAL FAILURE

To all such questions an unqualified and an emphatic NO! can be given in answer.

No trade, profession, or industry can possibly be at its best, can develop or flourish, that is hindered by foolish restrictions, or limited by absurd, impractical, and therefore impossible conditions. How can it? If you want a man to do his best in this world in football, cricket, or in any trade or industry, you must start him on his way free of every impediment and incumbrance that might clog his steps and embarrass his forward movements; and you must be sure that the tasks you set him are in every sense reasonable and within the scope of everyday practicability. These conditions

complied with, a man would succeed in agriculture just as well as he would in any other industry, but it is because these necessary conditions have *not* been complied with that agriculture has failed, and will continue to fail.

The reader should pause here to reflect upon this "new view of an old question"; and it is because the British people have *not* taken it into consideration that British agriculture has failed as the agriculture of no other country has failed.

Every conceivable means have been taken by men of various conditions and under varying circumstances, consciously or unconsciously, to either kill outright or seriously cripple the agricultural industry of the country; and now that they have accomplished their purpose, they either treat it as being the poor feeble thing it is—an incapable, effete industry, or wonder why people are foolish enough to cling to, or hanker after, agriculture when—"there's really no money in the land, you know."

As "The Free-trade Movement" has been of considerable service in illustrating previous chapters, further reference to it may be usefully made to prove the utter impracticability of the *rental* system in agriculture, and how utterly unsuited it was to the requirements of the industry, or of the country, even in the so-called palmy days of agriculture.

COBDEN'S PLEA FOR AGRICULTURE

Quoting from one of Cobden's parliamentary speeches, the writer of "The Free-Trade Movement" says—

"The agricultural distress continued through the winter, and on March 13, 1845, Mr. Cobden moved in the House to appoint a select committee 'to inquire into the causes and extent of the alleged existing agricultural distress, and into the effect of legislative protection upon the interests of landowners, tenant-farmers, and farm-labourers' . . . 'How is it,' he asks, 'that in a country overflowing with capital, when there is a plethora in every other business—when money is going to France for railroads and to Pennsylvania for bonds, when it is connecting the Atlantic with the Pacific by canals and diving to the bottom of Mexican mines for investment—it yet finds no employment in the most attractive of all spots, the soil of this country itself?' He answers, 'Capital shrinks instinctively from insecurity of tenure, and we have not in England that security which will warrant men of capital investing their money in the soil.' He goes on to maintain that 'the want of leases and security deters tenants from laying out their money in the soil.' 'Tenants therefore are prevented by their landlords from carrying on cultivation properly. They are made servile and dependent, disinclined to improvement, afraid to let the landlord see

that they could improve their farms, lest he should pounce on them for an increase of rent.' And he showed from specimens that when leases were granted, the 'covenants were of such a preposterous character that I will defy any man to carry on the business of farming properly under them.'"*

It is clear from this trenchant attack of Cobden's on the system of land tenures of sixty odd years ago, that it was *then* regarded as unsuited to the requirements of the industry, and as subversive to the true national economy as it is to-day, and yet since 1845, when these words were uttered, no administration—irrespective of its political cognomen—that has assumed the reins of government in all these years, has ever done aught to remove the reproach that, in its agricultural policy, the British Government is dominated by *vested interests*, and is therefore constrained to resort to *class legislation*.

Most people nowadays realise that Cobden, in condemning the system, was not so much pleading for agriculture as denouncing Protection, nevertheless, he truly depicted the fundamental falseness of the agricultural basis. This view of the position is borne out by the following:—

"But the most powerful section of this speech is that in which he demonstrates from agriculture the fundamental fallacy of Protection."†

Further on it is stated—

"In a powerful peroration he appealed to the gentlemen, the high aristocracy of England, 'to play in a mercantile age that noble part which in feudal times had made their ancestors the leaders of the people'; but he adds, 'if you are found obstructing that progressive spirit which is calculated to knit nations more closely together by commercial intercourse; if you give nothing but opposition to schemes which almost give life and breath to inanimate nature, and which it has been decreed shall go on, then you are no longer a national body.'"

LAND TENURES CONDEMNED BY COBDEN

That Cobden and his followers were, at all events, fully cognisant of the utter worthlessness of British land tenures, is beyond doubt, and this simple truth is of more concern to us here than the political uses he made of the fact. The *rental* system was condemned as an impossible one in 1845; it was condemned ages before that date, and it is condemned to-day, and the British people have the right to ask pertinent questions.

* "The Free-Trade Movement," p. 86.

† *Ibid.*, p. 87.

‡ *Ibid.*

Here are a few more references to the subject from the same work—

“Rent of land had risen nearly threefold during the war, and the prices of all consumable goods were high.” *

“The same parliament, composed largely of landowners, had already passed a bill (1815) which had for its object to maintain the price of corn and keep up rents, while it aimed also at keeping the land under cultivation and providing a sufficient supply of home-grown corn.” †

“Rents, which had been lowered after the fall in prices in 1814, again rose, and prices fluctuated; in good years the crops realised less than half that which they produced in bad years. . . . From 1820 to 1822 there were no less than 475 petitions to the House of Commons complaining of the distress and of the exhaustion of agricultural capital, of high rents and rates, and of the poverty of the farmers, whose rents had been based on the assumption of the higher prices to be secured under the Corn laws.” ‡

“A good harvest in 1835 reduced wheat to 35s. per quarter. Farmers were despondent, and complained that they would be ruined by the plentiful crop, since they could not pay their rents.” §

The pages of the work we are quoting from so fully were intended rather to denounce the old Corn Laws and reveal the ugliness of Protection and the blessings of Free-trade, than to afford examples of the ineptness and the iniquity of the land tenures of Cobden's time, with the object of drastically amending them for the people's good to-day. As they, however, enunciate a living truth in regard to agriculture, this fact must constitute our apology to the author for putting an interpretation to his utterances which he probably never intended they should bear.

FURTHER PROOF OF TENANCY SYSTEM FAILURES

In further proof of the impossibility of working the greatest industry of the country on the tenancy system, the Right Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P., in his able work “Land Reform,” gives some pertinent facts.

In the first place he says—

“The laws relating to land are so complicated that only lawyers can understand them.” ||

“Land throughout England is the subject of ‘tenure’ and not of ownership; that absolute ownership of land is unknown to

* “The Free-Trade Movement,” p. 43.

† *Ibid.*, p. 44.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

§ *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 62.

|| “Land Reform,” the Right Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P., p. 42.

English law; that in practice in early times, and in theory at the present day, the only absolute owner is the king, and that every one else holds such land as he may possess (whatever may be his rights with regard to it and its free alienation) simply as a tenant of the king."*

"But it is hopeless to expect that, under our present system of land tenure, there can be any considerable increase in the number of peasant proprietors except by the means of State aid. In cases where men hold a few acres of land as tenants—and there are large numbers who do—their rents are very heavy as compared with those paid by large farmers."†

"Some time ago the author of 'Land Reform' visited two small holdings in a midland county. One of them, about six acres, was rented by two men at five pounds per acre."‡

"The 'land hunger' must indeed be great to induce men to pay such large rents and to think themselves fortunate in being able to get land at all. No doubt the six acres the two men rented at five pounds per acre were worth five times as much per acre as the adjoining field. But it was the industry and skill of the men that made it so, and the question naturally arises, Why should their industry and skill be taxed to the extent of £24 per annum? The position is best illustrated by thus stating individual cases, provided that the cases are not solitary ones, but are representative of a large class which exists."§

FREE-TRADE VOWED TO DESTROY AGRICULTURE

Here, then, we have the opinions of two eminent living authorities, albeit their views on political economy are as wide apart as the poles. The writer of "The Free-Trade Movement" is, as his works prove him to be, one of England's staunchest and most doughty Free-trade champions, a man who would not save agriculture and give it back to the people as their greatest labour employer, their chief source of wealth-production, by putting a duty of even *one* shilling a quarter on wheat.

"For good or for evil, Great Britain has become dependent upon imported wheat to the extent of more than 70 per cent. of her consumption. Cheap food is essential to her industrial supremacy, and only by free importation can an adequate supply be maintained,"||

says the writer of this most up-to-date Free-trade work, and so it will be found all along the Free-trade line. The national

* "Land Reform," the Right Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P., p. 43.

† *Ibid.*, p. 229.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

|| "The Free-Trade Movement," p. 169.

industry, AGRICULTURE, and every industry and interest allied to, or arising out of it, must be sacrificed, so that nothing may be permitted to interfere with the INDUSTRIAL SUPREMACY *of our manufacturers*. In other words, every other interest in the country, all other sections of workers, and that vast body of British citizens who far outnumber those who are engaged in manufactures, must be sacrificed so that the only remaining section—the comparatively small band of manufacturers and their *industrial workers*—may have cheap food.

LAND REFORM WILL SAVE AGRICULTURE

The writer of "Land Reform," on the other hand, takes a broad, liberal view of the position. He recognises that CHEAP FOOD is not the only thing in this world, nor does it in itself constitute the *summum bonum* of human life. Everybody admits that cheap food should be one of the chief concerns of every Government, and that every reasonable care should be exercised in securing it; but if in securing a 5½*d.* loaf instead of a 5¾*d.* one, enormous national sacrifices have to be made in other directions, such a policy obviously becomes both foolish and cruel.

"One might say that the two arch-evils of English economy are 'cheapness' and so-called 'charity.' The keen rivalry in trade caused by the competitive system makes cheapness the chief aim of the trader. Hence the adulteration of food, the lowering of the quality of products, and other hurtful results. It is worth considering whether or not these mischiefs arise from putting the supposed interests of the consumer before the interests of the producer and of the nation as a whole. It is true that after the abolition of the duty on imported silks a woman could buy silk dresses at a much lower price than before, but by the cheapening process many thousands of silk-workers were thrown out of employment. To take a more humble example, by free import of matches six boxes of these articles can be bought for a penny. The so-called 'free-trader' may regard this as a triumph of his policy, and the house-wife as a gain in domestic economy, but this cheapness is secured at a cost of human suffering and want, such as the following case, by no means a rare one, reveals: 'One of the women, Sarah Ann Young, aged seventy, of Shoreditch, died, and at the inquest yesterday her daughter, who was a widow with three little children, said she and her mother had worked together at home at match-box making. They earned 1*s.* 3¾*d.* for seven gross of match-boxes. For some work they were paid 2¼*d.* a gross and for other 2*d.* a gross, and had to find their own paste. The *post-mortem* examination showed there was not a particle of fat about the body. Death was due to

exhaustion, consequent upon disease and want of food' (*Daily Express*, February 4th, 1904)." *

So writes the author of "Land Reform," and as the views of both of these authorities are thus placed in convenient juxtaposition, our readers can determine for themselves which policy commends itself to their judgment—the coldly, selfish one of the intolerant, austere Free-trader, or the warm-hearted, humane, yet politically and economically sound one of the Tariff-reformer and Land-reformer.

* "Land Reform," the Right Hon. Jesse Collings, M.P., pp. 407, 408.

CHAPTER XXVI

LAND TENURES (*continued*)—WHAT THE PEOPLE SHOULD DO—SCHEME OF TENURES OUTLINED—A GREAT AGRICULTURAL LOAN NEEDED

FROM the two preceding chapters several vitally important questions stand out with remarkable lucidity, which for the sake of convenience may be referred to categorically.

1. Agriculture being the primal industry of the human family, it necessarily enters into and ramifies along every vein and current of human life, and is inseparable therefrom.
2. Agriculture being the greatest labour-employer and wealth-distributor of this, or any other country, and the industrial sheet-anchor of the people of every nation, the system on which the land is worked becomes of paramount importance in the national economy.
3. Agriculture being charged with enormous and exceptional potentialities in respect to employment, food and live stock production, and other sources of fruitfulness and wealth, this great industry should be regarded as the rightful inheritance of the nation and should not be made the subject of class-interest, class-legislation, or the sport of political parties.
4. Agriculture in the United Kingdom, while being capable of employing as large a head of the population as any country in Europe, employs on an average less than half of that employed in other countries per every 100 acres under cultivation; while the number of persons employed, supported and fed by agriculture in this country is but 24 per cent. of the number similarly provided for in Germany, France, and Hungary.
5. Agriculture having been sacrificed to maintain the SUPREMACY OF BRITISH MANUFACTURERS, national

interests have necessarily been subordinated to class benefits.

6. Agriculture being handicapped by impossible land tenures—which, while originally intended to serve the landlord interest, are now maintained to serve the selfish policy of the Manchester School—has never had a chance of assuming its rightful position as the chief industry of the people, the chief labour-employer, and therefore the chief solvent of the UNEMPLOYED problem, and the dominant factor in the social and economic conditions of the country.
7. The time has now come to realise the true position of agriculture; the predominant part it ought to play and *must* play in the national life, and to consider the creation of a system of tenures which, for the first time in the history of the country, will enable agriculture to assume and maintain its position as the primal industry, the main source of employment, and the chief wealth-producer and wealth-distributor.

WHAT THE PEOPLE SHOULD DEMAND

Bearing these cardinal points in mind, the British people will be able to voice their demands in no uncertain tone. British agriculture is to be placed in the very forefront of British industries, and no consideration must be permitted for a moment to interfere with this object. Class-interests, political intrigue, political economists, the timidity of some Governments and the trickery of others, have all played their part in keeping the people out of their NATIONAL INHERITANCE—the great land industry—but the time has come for them to claim their own. They must, however, beware of further trickery; they must stoutly refuse to allow this question to be made the subject of further discussion; it must be removed once and for all from the field of polemics and dumped right down in the arena of established facts. Successful and universal agriculture is just as simple of accomplishment in the United Kingdom as it is in any of the countries of Europe where it constitutes the main source of the people's wealth and provides the chief national pabulum; but the question whether it shall or shall not be established in this country must neither be submitted to the Manchester School for opinion, to Free-traders for advice, nor must it be thrown, like a bone to a dog, for "Scientific" economists to worry over. Vested interests must not be allowed to bar its progress further; nor must Governments be permitted to use it for crooked political purposes.

HOW THEY SHOULD DEMAND IT

If any of these things happen; if a "Royal Commission," for example, be appointed to "Inquire into the practicability of establishing a universal system of agriculture in this country, etc.," it is certain that this would be but "a sop to Cerberus," or in other words, a shelving of the question for an indefinite period. Let the people beware of this; let them make it clear to the world that they are determined to have LAND-REFORM of a real abiding nature, of a nature that will convert those millions of acres of our magnificently fertile lands—which, owing to the trickery of politicians and others, are now lying waste—into a vast source of employment and wealth: and that in the accomplishment of this purpose they will stand no nonsense. This is the attitude, and the only attitude, that the people should assume towards this vital question, and if they fail to adopt it they will surely be worsted in the fight.

The people must no longer ignore the important fact that the only reason for the failure of British agriculture in all these weary years is solely because they have been beguiled into the belief that the question of whether we should cultivate our fields or leave them lying waste is a subject for controversy. Cobden and his manufacturer-reformers of the "forties" had most excellent reasons for misleading the people.

AGRICULTURE SACRIFICED TO CLASS INTERESTS

"I am afraid that most of us entered upon the struggle with the belief that we had some distinct class interest in the question,"*

said Cobden in a speech to his Manchester followers on October 19, 1843, and so they had. Their interests in making agriculture subservient to manufactures were precisely the same as they are to-day.

"For good or for evil, Great Britain has become dependent upon imported wheat to the extent of more than 70 per cent. of her consumption. Cheap food is essential to her industrial supremacy,"†

said a Free-trade economist in 1907, and in comparing the two quotations it is clear they both spring from the same source—CLASS INTEREST. Cobden fought for the manufacturing interest in 1843, and in 1907 the author of "The Free-Trade Movement," in declaring that *cheap food is essential to industrial supremacy*, fights for exactly the same interest.

Agriculture is too old, too world-wide, too well understood

* "The Free-Trade Movement," p. 69.

† *Ibid.*, p. 169.

by the people of all countries on earth, too well known, as the chief source of universal employment and universal wealth, to be made the sport of Governments, the puppet of a coterie of manufacturers, the plaything of political parties, a theme for silly polemics, and a subject for "scientific" economists to probe and cut up as a vivisector dissects, with cold-blooded interest, the quivering body of his hapless victim. But, in spite of this, the British people, in all the years that have elapsed since Cobden won his fateful victory, *have* permitted their chief industry to become entirely subordinate to these and other malign influences, with the inevitable result—widespread and growing unemployment, social degeneration, intense political unrest, and a mass of aggressive pauperism which the State cannot check, nor public and private charities satisfy.

PEOPLE SHOULD DEMAND OCCUPYING OWNERSHIPS

With this necessary warning, the question of land tenures can now be considered. It is a very simple one, namely, that of OCCUPYING OWNERSHIPS.

Great Britain must now make the most of her splendid lands as other nations have done, and the only way to do it is to give every man who tills his field the right to become its owner. Little will be gained by going minutely into the question of present holdings, for the reason that there is not a reliable statement on record as to how many there are in the country.

In a return presented to the House of Commons in 1876 the number given was 972,836, but of these 703,289 were owners of less than one acre each.*

The "Statesmen's Year Book" for 1906 gives the agricultural holdings in Great Britain at 520,106, and Ireland at 545,102, but whether these be accurate or the reverse is of small consequence to the larger issue involved in the question. It is known that more than half the area of the whole country is owned by 2500 people;† and that the landlords (of more than 10 acres) number only 176,520, owning ten-elevenths of the total area:‡ and these facts alone constitute the gravest charge against the British system of land tenures.

The "cultivated" area of the country is given at 49,000,000 acres in round numbers, while there are about 16,000,000 acres of *cultivable* land which could be soon added to this vast area, once universal agriculture were established.

* "Land Reform," p. 85.

† Chiozza Money, "Riches and Poverty," p. 75.

‡ Mulhall, "Dictionary of Statistics," p. 34.

Now, what is required here, so that every acre could be utilised to the fullest possible extent, is that these mighty tracts of some of the most fertile land in the world should be owned literally by *millions* of occupying proprietors who would work their very lives into the furrows of their fields, rather than they should remain in the keeping of a handful of men who, as history teaches us, are incapable of converting the tremendous potentialities of agriculture into a mighty, living, moving force.

LANDOWNERS WEIGHED AND FOUND WANTING

British landowners might retort, "Abolish Free-trade, give British agriculture the same chance it has on the Continent, and it will soon flourish again," but history refutes such a statement. The fact is, British agriculture never *has* flourished. Under the old Corn Laws it had its ups and downs, which is the utmost that can be said for it. With corn at 60s. a quarter and over, it paid farmers to grow wheat, but with low prices they were ruined. A few prosperous "farmers' years" and landlords put up rents, and so the farmer was compelled to make his profit out of a sorely stricken, half-starving people on the one hand, or be ruined by reasonably low prices for his produce on the other.

The landlord was the dominant factor in those days, and the history of the period covering the Napoleonic Wars, up to the repeal of the Corn Laws, shows how he exercised his great powers. Abolish Free-trade, put British agriculture in precisely the same position it enjoys in every State in Europe—*save only with the single exception of LAND TENURES*—and it will fail in the future as it has in the past, for the simple reason that insecurity of tenure would bar its success. If the law permits a man to make two pounds where he has been making one, the landlord would as surely put up his rents and make his extra pound to-day as he did in the years that are past, and this single fact would prove fatal to British agriculture.

EVEN FIXED RENTS UNSUITABLE

Perpetual fixed rents might help the situation to some extent, but to this system there are considerable objections. The landlord, in the first place, could hardly look for a scale of rents which must obviously be based upon *present rental values* (and they are low enough in all conscience) that would yield a fair return on his patrimony, and this very naturally would not satisfy him. The tenant would still be—a *tenant*, and in this fact lies the root of the evil. No man who has a perpetual tenancy

of a house, we will say, is likely to do so much for it as he who is an owner; there is an indefinable *something* in the term which prevents him, and there the matter ends. The agriculturist can no more put his life, his very self, and that of his wife and family, into a farm of which he is a *tenant*, than the householder can; it goes against human nature somehow, and there the matter ends so far as he is concerned.

Whichever way the "rental" system be looked at, it stands condemned; in fact, it condemns itself: and the people of this country should make up their mind on this point for good and aye, and allow no consideration to alter it.

ROUGH OUTLINE OF NEW LAND-TENURE SCHEME

It now becomes necessary to briefly outline some scheme that will approximate to the one which this country must ultimately adopt before British agriculture can assume its rightful position in the economy of the nation.

Every acre of agricultural land in Great Britain should be acquired and held by the State for the benefit of the nation. It should be taken from the present owners at a fair valuation, and then made over to capable agriculturists on equitable terms that would admit of a fair immediate return, and the acquisition of the freehold on reasonable conditions. This must be done by an Act of Parliament.

This Act might follow to some extent the Irish Land Act of 1904, but with many important and far-reaching provisions added thereto; for example, the State should, in this case, *compulsorily* take over every acre of cultivable land in the country and hold it *in trust* for the benefit of the nation. In other words, the land should be regarded as a NATIONAL INHERITANCE, and be held as such for the commonweal. Any other measures of a paltering, half-hearted nature would but deal with this broad NATIONAL question in a pusillanimous spirit and prostitute a great cause to sordid ends.

THE STATE MUST LEAD

There should be a universal system of agriculture from one end of Great Britain to the other, and the State should *take the lead everywhere*. This would be an entire reversal of its present policy in dealing with the industries of the people, but agriculture is the exception which proves the rule. Indeed, it is so in every country in Europe, the State has always taken the lead in those countries, and the result is—*uniformly successful agriculture of the highest order*. Every civilised country but our

own has never ceased to regard agriculture as the main source of national wealth, and the great fulcrum upon which moves all human enterprise. Many wise edicts and laws have been put into operation during the last century for the benefit of the industry ; while the numerous agricultural colleges ; the schools of tillage ; the State-aided agricultural works ; the special grants for land reclamation ; the itinerant staff of teachers and lecturers who move to and fro imparting valuable information to those engaged in the industry ; the many facilities offered for agricultural co-operation, and other instances too numerous to enumerate : all testify to the keen interest of the State, and its direct aid to, and co-operation with, agriculturists for the benefit of the industry.

In this party-ridden country it is enough to propose a scheme of the kind to show that it will invoke bitter opposition. One political party will avoid it, another will make political capital by opposing it ; while VESTED INTERESTS will open all their vials of wrath upon any party rash enough to countenance so drastic a measure. Nevertheless, it will have to be dealt with before British agriculture can assume its proper position as the primal industry and the chief mainstay of the British people.

FINANCIAL STATE AID NECESSARY

Then, the State should be ready with financial aid, and while there is no necessity to throw money at a man, there is every necessity that no capable, deserving man should be lost to the country for lack of a little capital. In this connection it should be borne in mind that Great Britain has lagged behind other nations so long that she has no agriculture worthy the name, and that she will have to *create* both agriculture and agriculturists. In this process of creation all sorts and conditions of men will no doubt be attracted to agriculture ; some will be worthless, others worthy of help ; these latter should be encouraged by direct State aid, retained, and built into the great agricultural structure.

Recognising that ample capital is essential to the success of the agricultural, as it is to that of other industries, the State must come forward here as in other directions ; and, by becoming the agricultural bankers of the country, maintain the industry in a prosperous condition, undertaking only those financial responsibilities which the country would, for such a purpose, willingly subscribe to.

State Agricultural Banking Agencies should be established in convenient centres throughout the kingdom, which for this

purpose should be divided into circles. Each circle should be in charge of a manager who should make himself familiar with all the farms in his circle, their value, capabilities, etc.: so that he may be able to deal promptly and efficiently with all applications for financial aid, and report intelligently on their administration.

ALL FARMS MAY BE STATE AIDED

All farms may be State aided, but proprietors must not be allowed to borrow money on the security of their farms from any other source than the State banks, and steps should be taken to render such a course illegal.

In the event of failure or bankruptcy, the State would have the same rights as any other creditor or mortgagee. Provision should, however, be made by previous enactment to avoid all the tedious, irksome, and costly legal proceedings that usually attend such cases, which are a curse to debtor and creditor alike.

All farms should be under State inspection, as a guarantee to the people that they are being carried on efficiently. Reports on the working of every farm in the kingdom should be sent in periodically to the proper offices.

MORE AGRICULTURAL TRAINING SCHOOLS NECESSARY

One important feature in the case is the want of facilities for agricultural tuition, and one of the first steps to be made in this direction should be the establishment of training schools, or agricultural colleges, where a thoroughly sound and practical training may be obtained by all who are prepared to enter the industry and study it as it has to be studied in order to place it on the same footing as other industries.

The training institutions at present in existence would not meet the requirements of such altered conditions as have been sketched. What is wanted is a number of agricultural colleges pure and simple, situated in the country at convenient points, where every branch of agriculture could be practically and continuously taught. The curriculum should be kept as simple as possible, and entirely up-to-date; the college should, in fact, assume the form of a large farm on which the students would live and work, making practical application to-day of what they learnt yesterday: a system certain to produce far better and more rapid results than any amount of lectures, however scientific and learned, delivered from a University professor's chair.

The freest facilities should be offered to all desirous of entering on a course of training. The fees should be extremely moderate, almost nominal, in fact; and scholarships and exhibitions should be obtainable with such ease as to place the course of training within the reach of all who show the necessary aptitude and industry.

ALL SPORTING ESTATES TO BE BROUGHT UNDER CULTIVATION

All culturable lands that are reserved for sporting purposes by proprietors at the time of passing the Act, should, within reasonable time, be brought again under cultivation and given back to the country for the production of food supplies, and for providing employment for the people; but it should be optional with the proprietors to reserve a percentage only, in proportion to the acreage of each estate, for sporting purposes, the percentage to be fixed by enactment.

Grass land and pasturage throughout the country should be reduced to a minimum commensurate to maintain the maximum head of cattle, cows chiefly, which it is found the country is capable of supporting without trenching on arable preserves. This will require delicate discrimination, and nice adjustment, but if the Scandinavian system of stall feeding be adopted, instead of allowing the cattle to roam aimlessly and wastefully over unnecessarily large tracts of grazing country, it will be found that an infinitely larger number of cows can be kept than are dreamt of under the present chaotic and wasteful system.

ESTABLISHMENT OF DAIRIES AND POULTRY FARMS COMPULSORY

The establishment and maintenance of dairies should in all cases be compulsory where the farms are large enough to support the cows; the dairies to vary in proportion to the size of the farms.

The establishment and maintenance of poultry farms should be compulsory in all cases irrespective of the size of the farms.

Under certain conditions the country is capable of supplying practically all the dairy produce, poultry, and eggs that are consumed annually, and the farmers should be required to supply them.

HOW TO RAISE THE MONEY

The money required for the purpose should be raised by loan and added to the—National Debt. This may, and no doubt will be objected to by many who are sufficiently interested

in maintaining the present state of affairs; but if the people are prepared to lend the State £770,000,000 to pay for its wars—for killing people, in other words—they would be strangely inconsistent if they refused to subscribe several extra millions for the more peaceful purpose of saving the lives of their fellow-countrymen and building up a great, profitable national industry.

WAR LOAN UNPRODUCTIVE

There would, however, be a wide distinction between a huge war loan and an agricultural debt. The former is unproductive, unremunerative, and an eminently undesirable item on the wrong side of the national balance sheet. It produces nothing for the people, nor affords them employment; it is an immense drag on the national finances, and costs the people about £20,000,000 in interest with *no return on the outlay*. It is, in short—*sheer waste of public money*.

AGRICULTURAL LOAN PRODUCTIVE AND PROFITABLE

AN AGRICULTURAL DEBT, on the other hand, would be the antithesis of all this. It would be productive, it would afford employment, and support and provide food to literally millions of people; it would rehabilitate lost conditions, repopulate our country districts and give back to England that backbone of rural strength and vigour of which the enervating, exhausting policy of the last half-century has robbed her. It would create throughout our land such a number of happy prosperous homesteads that our country-sides would literally teem with a cheery contented population of old men and women, young men and maidens, who had regained their physical vigour, and had found that bright *gaieté de cœur* in agriculture which they had sought for in vain among the industries of manufacturing towns.

WHAT THE AGRICULTURAL LOAN WOULD DO

A great agricultural loan would again launch into existence all those subsidiary industries which arise out of, and depend upon, agriculture, and would, at the same time, create in our midst a numerous, prosperous agricultural population, the purchasing power of which would be enormous. It would be a source of immense wealth to the people and therefore a direct gain to the nation. Last, but not least, an agricultural loan, whether it be for £10,000,000 or £500,000,000, *would not cost the country a penny*, for the simple reason that the extra half

per cent. over the borrowing rate, which would no doubt be charged to agriculturists for the accommodation—*would cover all costs of administration.*

Whichever way this question is looked at it presents the same set features. It is a plain, common-sense proposition, demonstrable by plain, common-sense methods.

Agriculture is a plant that will flourish well enough in this country if set in natural surroundings and treated to a congenial atmosphere. It has languished and become the poor weakling it is to-day because sixty odd years ago it was plucked up by the roots and subjected to such conditions as induced atrophy and decay.

WILL PARLIAMENT ACT OR SHIRK RESPONSIBILITY?

It now remains to be seen what the two great political parties, which to-day control the destinies of this country, will do. Neither of them is bold enough to admit that in THE LAND lies the redemption of the people from all this present-day turmoil and political and social unrest; perhaps they do not realise it, but the fact remains that in the land, by the land, and through the land, will and must come eventually, that which all England is seeking—Prosperity and Peace.

It may be that the Radicals won't bring in a sweeping land-reform measure because they are afraid it might be the means of turning them out of office. It may be that the Liberal-Unionists won't tackle the matter because of their fear of landlords and other vested interests. It may be that both parties will fool away their chances and so play into the hands of the Socialists, and then, the—*Débâcle.*

The trumpet has, however, sounded the warning note of danger; the clarion voice of Truth has pealed in the streets and in all the haunts of men, and if the representatives of the people in Parliament, and the people themselves, wilfully close their ears and understanding to these significant portents, they must, of necessity, accept the consequence of their reckless folly and mad infatuation.

CHAPTER XXVII

LAND TENURES (*concluded*) — OCCUPYING OWNERSHIPS AND COMPULSORY SALE OF LAND NECESSARY—LAND- OWNERS SHOULD TAKE THE INITIATIVE BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE

ONE of the most important links in this long chain of evidence in support of far-reaching Land-reform, is the part played by the landlord. Hitherto, his *rôle* has been that of landowner and a mere receiver of rents, but the time has come when so equivocal a position can neither be maintained nor justified.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF WEALTH

The responsibilities of wealth are not only great, but they vary in proportion to the nature of the wealth. The wealthy financier, for example, whose possessions are in stocks and shares, is, perhaps, under fewer obligations to the people than the man whose wealth is partly represented by many thousands of acres of rich land that is capable of producing enormous quantities of food supplies, and affording employment to thousands of people. But, be this as it may, there can be no question as to the responsibilities of the latter. Every landed proprietor is, by the nature of his possessions, under grave and serious obligations to his country. The land of all countries is primarily for the purpose of supplying food for the people, and the owners thereof, in taking up the lands, assume, at the same time, all the duties, responsibilities, and obligations involved in such ownership.

These responsibilities may vary considerably for many reasons. In a sparsely populated country, for instance, where land is plentiful and labour scarce, a man's responsibilities would be less onerous than where the population is dense, employment difficult to obtain, and land scarce and exceedingly valuable. In the latter case it is the plain duty of every man who owns land to put it to the best possible use, so that the country may derive from it the most economic results; and in our own country, where these conditions largely prevail, and

where we have so many great landed proprietors whose estates run into tens of thousands of acres, individual responsibilities often assume gigantic proportions. Take the case of any man with an inheritance of this kind, and gauge his stake in the country, and his potentialities for good or evil. He is often prodigiously rich, apart from his landed wealth, and it is a matter of no great moment to him whether his land lets for five shillings an acre or fifty, whether it produces the maximum yield of food-stuffs for the people, or whether it goes out of cultivation altogether. He would of course like to see it *well* farmed, highly productive, and bringing in good rents; but if farmers cannot make it pay, it had better be turned into grass, or taken over for sporting purposes, and this is its fate in many instances.

LANDOWNERS' OBLIGATIONS TO THEIR COUNTRY

In this sense it may justly be said that these men have failed in their obligations to their country and the people.

We have shown in other chapters how the farmer has collapsed, partly through want of capital and lack of energy, and we have now to grasp the fact that the landlord has helped to bring about the present *impasse* by a *laissez faire* attitude, when he should have been vigilant and resourceful. He should have realised that the great changes which were made in the agricultural industry more than sixty years ago necessitated, in turn, considerable changes in the system that had subsequently been followed, and that, above all things, ample capital, the application of up-to-date methods, rigid economy, and thrift, were more than ever necessary to save the industry from destruction. He should, moreover, have realised, that if his tenant-farmers lacked these essentials, he, at all events, possessed, or at least had access to, them; and that it was his duty to turn this current of life-giving forces, coupled with high enterprise and untiring energy, on to the land to save a great industry from being lost to the country, and a great number of people from incurring poverty and semi-starvation.

Failing the tenant-farmer, the landed proprietor should have farmed his own lands, and his justification for this would not only have been found in the fulfilment of his obligations to the people, but in the fact that it would have actually paid him to have done so.

From such a standpoint it would certainly appear that our landed proprietors have failed to realise their responsibilities, failed to understand that, in becoming lords of the soil, many obligations to the country were involved in that lordship, many duties of a grave and onerous nature that are not involved in

the ownership of such possessions as pictures, for example, or other *objets d'art*, or even of stocks and shares.

This attitude of the landlord, which may have been induced by a lack of appreciation of the position, by indifference, or by other causes, has had disastrous effects on the nation from many points of view, but it will perhaps suffice to say that it has been especially inimical from an economic standpoint.

BRITISH LANDOWNER FAILED IN HIS DUTY

Arraigned before the bar of Public Opinion the British landowner does not bear his examination well. Parliament, during Cobden's time, did what it could to ruin agriculture, and the landowners fatuously clung to the policy of squeezing what rents they could out of their sorely-burdened tenants. To-day, the landlord's position is as bad as the farmer's; and, while asking what has he done with his goodly heritage—that vast patrimony his ancestors bequeathed to him, which he should have regarded as a sacred trust to be solemnly held for, and worked in, the best interests of, the commonweal—other questions might be put at the same time; namely, has his land paid him, has it yielded that return which good property should yield, or has it not? The landlord himself can best answer these questions!

The public have been led to believe that land is the worst possible property to hold, and that in many instances it is not worth the holding; while it is, moreover, affirmed that many a big landowner, after paying the necessary upkeep expenses on his farms, hardly gets anything out of his estates.

If this be the case, then one obstacle, at least, in the way of establishing a different system of land tenures for this rent-ridden country, disappears automatically, *as no man can reasonably be expected to hold on to a condition of things which is distinctly inimical to his own interests.*

A PLAIN DUTY FOR LANDOWNERS

Now, out of this *laissez faire* attitude of the landlords, coupled with the fatuous attitude adopted by Parliament sixty-three years ago, has sprung an evil that has caused irreparable harm to the people; and although they have hitherto managed to "rub along somehow or other," the signs of the times, which are printed plainly enough at every street corner and in every news sheet, proclaim that somnolence must yield to wakefulness and inactivity to indefatigable exertion. The Government must now play their part in this great national drama in a whole-hearted, statesmanlike manner, and the landlords must play theirs on the same broad principles of thoroughness;

while both must enter upon this new departure with due appreciation of the cogent necessities of the case, otherwise a worse evil will surely overtake the country—and *the landowners*.

This momentous question offered a splendid opportunity to Lord Rosebery to take the initiative when delivering his great speech to the business men of Glasgow on the 10th September, 1909, but he failed to take advantage of it. As an ex-Prime Minister and a great landowner he had a rare chance of leading the way to agricultural reform of a nature that would serve national interests, but like so many of his compeers he preferred silent inactivity to overt action. The future will reveal if his attitude on that occasion was wise and prudent.

In regard to the compulsory sale of land, it will no doubt be contended by those who have some interest to serve, or fancy they have, by maintaining existing conditions, that it would be unjust to force a man to sell that which he would rather keep; and, although the public can readily understand and appreciate such a feeling, they could not altogether condemn a measure of this nature, because they could point to an equal measure of "injustice" in many other matters relating to the administration of the affairs of the commonwealth, which are actually acquiesced in and agreed to by that very class which would condemn this occupying-ownership scheme. The income-tax, poor-rates, death-duties, and other items of a kindred nature in the domestic life of the nation, are all compulsory, but that fact alone is insufficient to condemn them on the score of injustice.

The various Acts which empower the authorities to acquire land by compulsory sale for "Public Purposes" offer ample precedents for a much more comprehensive measure of that nature, but can there be a greater "Public Purpose" than to acquire the land of the country for the people's good?

None of us may exactly like these compulsory attentions on the part of Government, but as loyal subjects we recognise the necessity for their existence and—we submit to them.

If the same attitude be adopted in respect to the compulsory sale of the land, the principle involved is the same, but with this wide difference, that, whereas in one case a man parts with something that belongs to him without receiving a *quid pro quo*, in the other he would receive in return *full market value for that which he is asked to give up*.

There is only one course for British landowners to take, and if they are wise they will not fail to adopt it while the daylight serves.

- (a) They should no longer hesitate in coming forward to help in the solution of these difficulties that have

taken hold of the country and gripped the people in their widespread embrace.

- (b) They should recognise that the old plan of running the agricultural industry on the "rental" system is as dead as a salted herring, and that a new and better one must spring out of its carcase, as the fabled Phoenix is said to arise from its own ashes.
- (c) They should come forward as an influential body and ask Government to take immediate steps to take over their lands on equitable terms, with the avowed object of creating and maintaining a well-considered scheme of OCCUPYING-OWNERSHIPS.
- (d) They should frankly admit the ineptness of the old system and the necessity for a new one, and then help in a whole-hearted manner to secure its *immediate* accomplishment.

THE AWAKENING OF LANDOWNERS

Fortunately there are not wanting signs of a desire to improve the situation: the contemplated sale of the Thorney Island estate of 20,000 acres, by the Duke of Bedford,* being the most recent indication of the awakening of the great landowners to the pressing necessities of the case. It should, however, be borne in mind that while this instance affords evidence of a *willingness* on the part of landowners to sell, the situation will not be improved in the least by sales of this description. It is more than probable this land will be purchased by some rich speculator who will continue to run it on the *rental* system, or, it may be, the owner will offer it to Government at a price that would render negotiations for the purpose of Occupying-Ownerships impossible, and obviously this would be but a transference from the frying-pan into the fire. This vast estate should be acquired at reasonable cost, either by its present tenants or by capable agriculturists who would run it for all it is worth, and work their own lives into every spit of the spade and every furrow of the plough as their *confrères* do in France and other countries, and as they must do in this country before they can command uniform success in every branch of the industry.

THE AWAKENING OF THE PUBLIC MIND TO COMPULSORY AFFORESTATION

Then, this awakening of the public mind to the *necessity* for compulsory sale of the land is further indicated by the "Second Report on Afforestation," † published in the early part of this year.

* *Daily Mail*, February 25, 1909.

† Royal Commission on Coast Erosion and Afforestation, 1909.

The Royal Commissioners, seeing the hopelessness of bringing about the afforestation of the millions of acres which our present "landlord system" has made waste, have, after a most exhaustive inquiry into the entire question, very sensibly and quite fearlessly recommended the acquisition, by compulsory sale, of 9,000,000 acres of suitable lands in various parts of the country.

The Report, which, by-the-by, is a common-sense, level-headed document from cover to cover, goes so fully into the questions as practically to leave nothing more to be said. It points out, among other things, the improbability of sylviculture ever becoming a popular form of investment for private individuals, because it takes a long time to reap the full reward of investment—eighty years—and also because of the practical impossibility of ensuring "continuity in the system of management."

That these two causes have perhaps almost entirely resulted in the eminently unsatisfactory condition in which we find British sylviculture to-day—although this part of the land industry is the *worst in Europe*—seems beyond doubt, and as British landlords have, for these and other reasons of an equally detrimental nature, allowed a great industry to fall away into nothingness, during the last one hundred years or so, they are hardly the men one would call upon to set up in Great Britain a scheme of afforestation which would result in a universal system of sylviculture of a nature that would stand the country in good stead in the days to come. As with food supplies, so with timber; we are practically dependent to-day upon the foreigner for most of our wood; and as it appears certain from the works of the best authorities on the subject that timber is becoming scarce in most of the great producing countries, this country will, in the future, have to become practically self-sustaining in many kinds of this widely used commodity.

SYLVICULTURE: COMPULSORY SALE RECOMMENDED

As part of the great land industry, sylviculture then becomes as essential as arable cultivation in the common interests of the country, and the Commission, rightly regarding the present system of land tenures, the landlord system, or whatever term we prefer to employ in the connection, as being impossible, they unhesitatingly recommend the only system likely to meet the requirements of the case, namely, *Compulsory sale and purchase*.

"Sylviculture in the United Kingdom is an enterprise which rarely appeals to the private landowner or capitalist. The prolonged

time for which capital must be locked up before any return can be expected, the loss of rent and burden of rates over the whole period, and the absence of security for continuous care and management, act as deterrents. None of these objections applies to the State, whose corporate life and resources lend themselves in an especial degree to an undertaking of this character. If the State plants, it will certainly reap, which the individual owner can rarely hope to do." *

"The success of forestry depends to a large extent on a well thought out scheme of operations, with continuity of management throughout the whole period of the rotation. On private property such persistence is difficult to secure. One owner succeeds another at more or less short intervals, and the personal views or private needs of the individual may over-ride the forest policy of his predecessor. The State, on the other hand, never dies, so that a scheme of operations can be inaugurated with every prospect of being carried to a successful conclusion. In other respects, too, the State can accomplish much that is beyond the power of the individual." †

"Your Commissioners have no hesitation in recommending that it is in the highest degree in the public interests that a beginning should forthwith be made with a comprehensive scheme of national afforestation. To accomplish this it will be necessary, at an early stage, for the State to acquire suitable land, and at once the alternatives arise of acquisition by negotiation or by compulsion. No doubt some progress would be possible along the lines of acquisition by negotiation, and considerable areas might be obtained in this way. But as the essence of success lies in suitable land being obtained in suitable places, and, furthermore, as scientific silviculture demands that operations shall be carried out on large compact areas, it does not appear to Your Commissioners probable that all owners of suitable land would be ready voluntarily to sell on reasonable terms. We, therefore, recommend that compulsory powers be obtained by legislative enactment, and that a general survey should be made with a view of ascertaining what lands are available for the purposes of State afforestation. These lands would be purchased from time to time as required, the owner receiving in compensation their full value in all the circumstances of each particular case, following the precedent of the Small Holdings Act, 1907, so far as it is applicable. Compensation should be paid also to sitting tenants.

"The compulsory purchase of private property in the interests of the State is no new idea, and is exemplified in the Small Holdings and Allotments Act, and in the Army Act. Even such a comparatively small purchase as that of Salisbury Plain could not be accomplished without the application of compulsory powers. In the view of Your Commissioners the object is of no less importance in the case of the acquisition of land for State afforestation, and they

* Royal Commission on Coast Erosion and Afforestation, 1909, p. 42.

† *Ibid.*, p. 33.

have, therefore, no hesitation in recommending that this course be adopted." *

"Your Commissioners are of opinion, basing their belief on the most trustworthy information at their disposal, that there are roughly 9,000,000 acres of land in the United Kingdom which may, with advantage to the State, be afforested." †

With these most excellent reasons there is no question that the State, and the State alone, is the proper and, indeed, the only agency capable of producing successful results in the important industry of silviculture, and all parties in the House should unite in asking the Government to deal with the matter; but will they?

If one may judge of the future action by past events, there will be no more chance of the Government carrying out the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Afforestation than there will be of real reform in other directions. The chances are that national silviculture will be made the sport of the various political parties in Parliament as scores of other popular measures have been. *Expertus metuit!*

DIFFICULTIES OF BACK TO THE LAND OVERESTIMATED

There are two other points in the consideration of the subject that should not be overlooked: (a) that of investing the question of finding a capable band of agriculturists to work occupying-ownerships with greater difficulties than the history of the past justifies; (b) in attaching more importance to what is called the British "Territorial Aristocracy" than is justified by results.

The first point has been made the subject of polemics for years past, and a great deal of nonsense has been uttered by men of all classes and cults, but the most matter-of-fact, common-sense way to deal with this question—as with every similar question in this world—is not to talk about it, but to act. If "Geordie" Stephenson had talked about his locomotive one-fiftieth part as much as "experts" have talked about—the *possibility of finding capable peasant proprietors for our Small Holdings*, the railway locomotive would never have been *un fait accompli*, so far as Stephenson was concerned; but that shrewd north countryman knew better than to talk—he *acted*.

Take the cycle and motor manufacturing industry as another concrete example. In 1881 there were but 1086 workers engaged in the trade; twenty years later there were 33,356 persons employed—an increase of over 3000 per cent. in twenty

* Royal Commission on Coast Erosion and Afforestation, 1909, p. 34.

† *Ibid.*, p. 37.

years. To-day there are thousands more, all skilled, experienced, and *capable* men. Then take any one of the great manufacturing industries that have sprung into existence during the last fifty years and made Britain famous all the world over. Had the promoters made the subject of finding a sufficiency of skilled workers for their various undertakings a matter for *controversy*, many of them would have been still "in the air," even to this day. They, one and all, took the better part; they knew that raw human material is as capable of being worked, moulded and fashioned into the requisite form as is the clay in the hands of the potter, and they simply—*fashioned it*.

Every man who is free of prejudice, uninfected with that evil spirit of controversy and scepticism which unfortunately characterises many of the British people to-day, and who happens to remain in possession of his sober senses, knows perfectly well that if a completely new industry like that of cycles and motor cars, and many others that are absolutely new to the human race, can be launched into being, furnished with capable "hands," easily mastered, and conducted with skill to successful issues, it follows that an old-world industry like agriculture, about which almost every living man knows something, can be similarly dealt with. Indeed, the case is so obvious, and the proposition capable of so simple a demonstration, that to deny it further would be to display regrettable obstinacy.

THE CLAY CAN BE EASILY FASHIONED

Agriculture can be supplied with hundreds of thousands and even *millions* of capable men who would work their holdings, small or large, to successful results, but they will have to be moulded, fashioned, and trained in precisely the same manner as men are trained for every other industry. If, in the process, some of the raw material proves faulty and unsuitable, as not infrequently happens to the clay, and some of the pots are broken in the moulding, it cannot be helped. Agriculturists who happen to be in training for the land industry must take their chance as men in other industries do; but whatever happens in the process, one thing is certain, namely—that *any number of first-class agriculturists will surely be forthcoming for any extension of the land industry, in precisely the same way that a sufficiency of capable men has always been found for the extension of other industries—or even for the equipment of new ones. Experto crede!*

THE TERRITORIAL ARISTOCRACY JUDGED BY RESULTS

The second point—the value of the "Territorial Aristocracy," is one that has formed a favourite theme for economic "experts"

and others for years, and to add to the mass of polemics on the question would be futile. The most sensible way of dealing with the matter is to reduce it to its least common denominator—RESULTS.

In reviewing the Right Hon. Jesse Collings' book, "Land Reform," in June, 1908, one of the London newspapers * said—

"To judge from what he says at page 236, Mr. Collings would get rid of our present territorial aristocracy, and substitute for them a network of small proprietors spread over the whole country. . . . Mr. Collings is mistaken if he thinks he has Lord Beaconsfield on his side. Lord Beaconsfield undoubtedly would have hailed with pleasure the enlargement of the yeoman class—which, by-the-by, has never disappeared—and a great number of peasant farmers on the land; but not at the cost contemplated by Mr. Collings. There was nothing Lord Beaconsfield laid so much stress upon as 'our territorial constitution,' and to this he attributed the strength and durability of our Empire. Mr. Gladstone's well-known tribute to the value of a resident gentry is a sufficient answer by itself to Mr. Collings' indictment."

While the writer would disclaim all intention of deriding the judgment of these two eminent statesmen whose memory is justly revered by all classes of the British people, or of carping at the able reviewer of one of our best and most patriotic journals, he would, nevertheless, do what he can to divest this vital question of every quality that might gravitate towards bias, or engender sentiment.

Whether it is generally recognised or not, this country is "at the parting of the ways," and there is, therefore, all the more reason why every inch of the ground should be closely examined. The "territorial aristocracy" question, like all others that come to the bar of public opinion, must be treated on its merits. It must be regarded as a purely economical question and as one having far-reaching effects on the people. If it be found economically sound—good; if it be found unsound, full of sentiment, and detrimental to the commonweal, it should, with other detrimentals, be cast into the melting-pot and refined. No sane man wants to sweep away the "territorial aristocracy," crush the "landed gentry," or wrongfully deprive them of their possessions; but if they have wrongfully used those possessions, or have not used them to the best public advantage, then the question of relieving them of their duties, responsibilities, and obligations becomes quite an equitable, common-sense proceeding.

If there is anything in our "territorial constitution," or

* *The Standard*, June 2, 1908.

“resident gentry” system of running our great land industry, it will be manifested in results. If it be claimed that upon such a system depends “the strength and durability of our Empire,” then it becomes indubitable that the British system is better, or as good as, those systems on the Continent, which are the antithesis of our own. If it be found, on the other hand, that, in comparison with other countries, the British system has not yielded equally good results, then the reason for maintaining that system cannot be longer upheld.

TERRITORIAL ARISTOCRACY SYSTEM—A FAILURE

Parliamentary Returns, statistical works, and common observation all prove, alas, that British agriculture, in spite of the exceptional fertility of the soil, is the worst and most backward in Europe—IN THE WORLD!

This single fact appears in itself so damning an indictment against the *British* system as to need no further corroborating evidence. British agriculture, while being the laughing-stock of the nations and held up by them to ridicule, serves them, at the same time, with the means of growing millions of pounds of agricultural produce which our inept system prevents us growing ourselves.

It will be contended that this failure is not due to the “territorial aristocracy” system, but to the Free-trade policy of the country, and although it is true to a certain extent it does not exonerate that system from the charge of being generally inimical to agricultural interests. During the Peninsular War the history of our country proclaims the fact that land rents rose nearly threefold, that trade and agriculture were in a sad condition, food was dear, employment scarce, and the people endured considerable suffering. But let an independent witness add his testimony to the case.

SOME OF THE TESTS

Referring to the agricultural distress at that period, the work so often mentioned in these pages has the following references to the subject:—

“The same parliament, composed largely of landowners, had already passed a bill (1815) which had for its object to maintain the price of corn and keep up rents, while it aimed also at keeping the land under cultivation and providing a sufficient supply of home-grown corn.”*

“From 1820 to 1822 there were no less than 475 petitions to

* “The Free-Trade Movement,” p. 44.

the House of Commons complaining of the distress and of the exhaustion of agricultural capital, of high rents and rates and of the poverty of the farmers, whose rents had been based on the assumption of the higher prices to be secured under the Corn-laws." *

"A good harvest in 1835 reduced wheat to 35s. per quarter. Farmers were despondent, and complained that they would be ruined by the plentiful crop, since they could not pay their rents." †

So much did the agricultural distress of the times and the wretched state of the industry appeal to the reformers of those days, that it afforded them, indeed, a justifiable basis for that political propaganda which culminated in the repeal of the Corn Laws and the establishment of Free-trade. Had the British plan of running its agricultural industry on the "territorial aristocracy" system been all that is claimed for it; had "the strength and durability of our Empire" depended upon "our territorial constitution," surely the reformers of the "forties" could have found no excuse for overthrowing it: yet, strange to say, it supplied Cobden and his followers with the very fulcrum upon which they worked their great Reform lever.

"The present system robs the earth of its fertility and the labourer of his hire, deprives the people of subsistence and the farmer of feelings of honest independence." ‡

Speaking of the excessive poverty of the agricultural labourers under the old "territorial aristocracy" system, he said—

"What sort of consumers of manufactures do you think agricultural labourers would be with the wages they get? There are 960,000 agricultural labourers in England and Wales, and each of them does not spend 30s. a year in manufactures on his whole family, if the article of shoes be excepted. I would ask what can they pay on 8s. a week to the revenue?" §

PROOF OF FAILURE

Here, then, is a brief sketch of the "territorial aristocracy" system in action under "Protection." Neither the old Corn Laws nor the enormous influence of the landowners in the Parliament of the times was of the slightest avail in saving the country from terrible distress, resulting from an agricultural system as unsuited to the requirements of the people as Arctic snows would be to tropical vegetation; and this fact stands out with startling abruptness.

* Cobden's speeches, "The Free-Trade Movement," p. 57.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

If any reasonable man can find aught to defend in the manipulation of the agricultural industry by the "territorial aristocracy," under a fiscal system which finds its antithesis in the present Free-trade one, and which many landowners declare to be the source of their troubles and the origin of agricultural decline, it will only afford but one more example of that widespread spirit of fatuous contention which is in reality the bottom of half the troubles that have befallen the British people. More work and less talk is what is wanted in this country.

THE BIG FARM SYSTEM A FAILURE

The "landed gentry," coupled with the "yeoman" system, should now be briefly examined and compared with that of other countries. If there is anything in this "big farm" system which proclaims it to be a better and more economical one than the smaller farm system run by Occupying-Owners, then there should be evidence of it forthcoming. Those who support the big farm system must produce their corroborating testimony, for the reason that the writer cannot find any. *Per contra*, there is overwhelming proof that the intensive systems of France, Belgium, Germany, and other countries, where small farmers are the rule and large ones the exception, are far and away ahead of the other, which is regarded as wasteful, and suitable only to new and sparsely populated countries like Canada and Argentina, where land is plentiful, and cheap labour scarce, but utterly unsuited to the exigent requirements of the people of the densely populated countries of Europe, where land is dear and employment difficult to obtain.

Here is one reference to the subject from Germany, although scores might be produced from France and every country in Europe—

"The small agriculturists of Germany produce, on the whole, larger harvests per acre than do the large landowners who cultivate their fields with hired labour. Largely owing to this difference, the middle and the West of Germany are chiefly devoted to high culture. In the East of Germany, where the large landowners sit, we find poor fields, less thorough cultivation and smaller crops. East Germany thus resembles Great Britain not only in this, that the land is in the hands of a few large owners, who like to enjoy themselves in town and who leave the supervision of their estates to their paid underlings, but in the fact that in those districts the raising of live stock is more developed than is the cultivation of the soil. Nevertheless we discover the surprising fact that the small landowners in the middle and the West of Germany are not only more efficient in

agriculture, but also in stock-raising, for the small agriculturists raise on their holdings far more horses, cattle and pigs per acre than do the large proprietors in the East." *

It would appear from the foregoing examination of the two points under consideration that there is not the slightest foundation for the absurd notion that a lack of capable agriculturists would prove a bar to the extension of the "Small holdings" system, or that the British "territorial aristocracy" system either serves the best interests of the country or contributes even in the smallest degree to maintain—"The strength and durability of our Empire."

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF GOVERNMENT

The Government, too, has many responsibilities, and owes a deep debt to the nation. Successive Administrations have neglected their plain duty to the people, and the latter are at length tired of the humbug and subterfuge that have characterised every Government since Cobden's time, whether Tory, Liberal, or Radical. In more recent times they have played the same old game and told the same old story until sensible people who want good government, irrespective of party, are disgusted by their cheap rhetoric, and nauseated by their never-ending empty platitudes and political chicanery. The Conservatives, for example, were in power for about eighteen years, namely, 1886-1892 and 1895-1905, and any person who cares to search the Statute Book for that period will find it practically bare of any measure of reform that would confer real, lasting benefits on the people of this country. The Irish Land Act of 1904 was but a sop to the recalcitrant Irish party to stave off the bigger question of Home Rule, but that was an Irish measure, and it in no sense affects the English and Scotch people, who have their own cause for bitter resentment against that and other Governments of modern times.

That both Tory and Radical Administrations are fully alive to the necessity of land reform is beyond doubt. The Allotments and Small Holdings Bill of 1886; The Small Holdings Act, 1892; The Purchase of Land (England and Wales) Bill, 1904; The Local Government Act, 1904; The Agricultural Holdings Act, 1906; The Land Values (Scotland) Bill, 1906; The Small Landholders (Scotland) Bill, 1906; The Small Holdings and Allotments Bill, 1906; The Scottish Land Bill, 1908: all point to this fact. Owing, however, to the insincerity of political parties and the hopelessness of getting any measure of

* *The Contemporary Review*, April, 1908, O. Eltzbacher.

national reform through Parliament under the present condition of the party system, many good Bills never develop into an Act, and if they do they are so shorn of their best features, and so battered and mangled in the fierce strife which rages round them in their passage through the House, that they become feeble and inert and powerless in public interests.

GOVERNMENT KNOWS, BUT IS AFRAID

The present Government are just as much alive to the *necessity* of drastic land reform as were their predecessors, but The Agricultural Holdings Act; The Land Values (Scotland) Bill; The Small Landholders (Scotland) Bill; The Small Holdings and Allotments Bill; and The Scottish Land Bill show how fearful they are of giving the Opposition cause for offence. The result of this pusillanimous proceeding was a couple of weak Bills which served no purpose but to provide the Opposition with a subject for cheap sarcasm and meretricious rhetoric. The Opposition, on the other hand, while heaping ridicule on the Government measure, and laughing to scorn the utter inadequacy of its provisions would, nevertheless, introduce no Bill of their own providing for far-reaching land reform—of a nature sketched in these pages—if they were returned to power, because they would be afraid of *their* opponents making too much political capital of it. And so this game of humbug and deceit goes on year after year, and between the two great political parties, who play their own game and not that of the country, the people's interests continue to be fooled away.

Presumably every Government, whether Liberal-Unionist or Radical, knows perfectly well what is required to give the people employment and the country prosperity and—peace, but the half-hearted, inadequate, equivocal relief measures they have brought in proclaim that they do not possess sufficient courage to drive home their convictions, the extreme lengths to which the party system is carried in Parliament precluding the possibility of placing any real measure of national reform on the Statute Book.

UNIVERSAL AGRICULTURE MUST COME SOONER OR LATER

Whichever way this question may be looked at there is but one conclusion, one prominent commanding feature always before our eyes—THE LAND, which is and must remain the dominating factor in the great life of the nation. It has pleased Governments and landowners to ignore this imminent

power, or play with it to suit their own purposes: but, whether they realise it or not, it will assert itself sooner or later and shatter to pieces the flimsy barriers that both one and the other have set up against its natural development and dominating influence, as surely as the stars come nightly to the skies to remind us of their existence.

Landowners have it in their power to save the situation by taking the initiative with Governments, and the latter have it in their power to force the landowner to do that which is right if he proves recalcitrant. If neither of them will do the right thing, then it is certain that in the fulness of time Socialism will step in and give to the people, by revolutionary methods, that measure of universal prosperity which present-day arbiters of the position might have brought about by more peaceful means. The Liberal-Unionists affirm that the old Liberal party is dead, and that the political arena of the country is now occupied by themselves and the Socialists; but whether this estimate of the position is right or wrong, it must be admitted that Socialism has made vast progress during the last few years and that it is a progressive movement. Socialism being, then, a considerable factor in the political situation, it has to be reckoned with as a possible *dominating* factor in national affairs. A Socialist Administration thus becomes a possible quantity. Landowners, although not quite between "the Devil and the deep sea," have, therefore, to choose between one of the Governments of the present time and a possible Socialist Administration in the near future. Let them make the choice.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF FREE-TRADE PRINCIPLES— ADAM SMITH'S FAMOUS APHORISM—WRONG INTER- PRETATION BY FREE-TRADERS

ONE of the chief bases of Free-trade, and perhaps the chiefest, is Adam Smith's famous maxim which is quoted by every Free-trader, for out of it spring many of the Free-trade doctrines.

"It is the maxim of every prudent master of a family *never to attempt to make at home what it will cost him more to make than to buy*. The tailor does not attempt to make his own shoes, but buys them of the shoemaker. The shoemaker does not attempt to make his own clothes, but employs a tailor. The farmer attempts to make neither the one nor the other, but employs these different artificers. All of them find it for their interest to employ their whole industry in a way in which they have some advantage over their neighbours, and to purchase with a part of its produce, or what is the same thing, with the price of a part of it, whatever else they have occasion for. *What is prudence in the conduct of every private family can scarce be folly in that of a great kingdom.*" *

It is the easiest thing in the world to fling abroad principles and lay down "laws," but a more difficult thing to get people to follow them.

"*Glendower*. I can call spirits from the vasty deep.

"*Hotspur*. Why, so can I, or so can any man.

But will they come, when you do call them?" †

HUMAN FALLIBILITY

No man questions the genius of Landseer, or denies the engineering skill of Robert Stephenson, yet the former committed a fundamental error in technique in his famous picture, "The Shoeing Forge," while the latter lost England the Suez

* "Wealth of Nations," Book IV. chap. ii.

† First part of *King Henry IV.*

Canal by reporting against the practicability of its construction. Two notable examples of human fallibility! Two concrete cases of how even great minds may err!

No man is disposed to belittle the genius of Adam Smith, but few men would be prepared to admit that all his arguments are sound, his doctrines infallible, and his teaching absolutely indefective; and yet he is quoted by many writers as though his "The Wealth of Nations," and his "Theory of Moral Sentiments," were written by Divine authority and taught to the children of men by the angelic throng.

Adam Smith, John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Ricardo, and others before and after them have done men a service by breaking the bonds of that old system of mercantilism which encouraged exports at the expense of imports, and threw around commerce those monopolistic fetters which held men as with bands of steel; but to accept their sayings as oracular, and their doctrines as the *ultima thule* of economics, would be to erect a monument to human folly.

That Adam Smith did more to break up this old spirit of mercantilism which obstructed the free flow of international commerce than any man before or after his time, is admitted, but that he said the last word on the economics of foreign or internal trade, the economics of agriculture, and the economical needs of the British people, is denied by every man who is prepared to consider the question from a purely economical standpoint.

Many men nowadays are inclined to look at such matters from a non-party point of view, and every man who does so prefers to see his fellow-countrymen profit by the recognition and adoption of a rational, up-to-date system of economy, which would enter into the domestic everyday requirements of the people, rather than see them foolishly and blindly following a creed which, although theoretically correct, is as unsuited to the modern needs of the British people as this cold, foggy climate of ours is to the life and growth of tropical orchids. Both may, in a sense, be said to be exotic, and nothing of an exotic nature will exist for long in uncongenial surroundings.

WHAT ADAM SMITH WOULD HAVE TOLD US

Adam Smith wrote his monumental work, "The Wealth of Nations," at a time when profound ignorance of the science of economics was a characteristic feature of the people, and when the monopolies and anomalies of the mercantile system demanded illumination and exposure, but if that great philosopher—keen observer and reasoner that he was—were living

to-day, it is certain that he would not force his principles on the people to their detriment so zealously as do his followers.

He might, moreover, say to us—"My life's work was intended rather to enunciate a principle than to establish a law, and as it is certain that nothing of human creation is immutable, so must everything born of human effort be liable to change. The science of economics should, therefore, be regarded as the pursuit of knowledge rather than the laying down of an unchangeable law; and if it be found that its teachings are inapplicable to the requirements of modern life, then this fact affords but another example of how finite are man's efforts and how fallible is his nature."

"MUTATIS MUTANDIS"

He might then say: "I laboured hard to give to my country, and to the world generally, a system of economics which I know to be better than the prevailing mercantilism which I sought to overthrow, but if in the fulness of time it be found that, owing to the jealousy of nations, the conflicting interests of individuals, and the innumerable obstacles which bar the way to *international* Free-trade, my system becomes impracticable of application, then it would be the quintessence of human folly to persist in applying it." He might further add: "Nor did I attempt to prove that my system was infallible, and that it should be rigidly followed to the detriment of individual or national interests. My *magnum opus* was only intended to point the way; and as everything human is liable to constant change, so must every man who gives to the world a new scheme write after it—*mutatis mutandis*!"

There was nothing narrow, mean or sordid about Adam Smith; his life was perhaps as exemplary as his work was great and noble, and he gave to the world the best that he or any man can give—himself; and whatever may be the ultimate result of the present reactionary movement, no man will be foolish enough to cast a stone at the memory of the great economist and philosopher.

This view of the case, however, appeals not at all to Free-traders, because to admit speculativeness in Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations" would be to acknowledge the immaturity of his deductions, and this would have been altogether fatal to the formation of Free-trade principles. At any rate the Free-trade movement sprang out of this famous maxim, among others, of Adam Smith, and to-day it is represented by a powerful Free-trade party. On the other hand, there is a powerful party, bitterly antagonistic to this party, and a battle is impending.

THE FREE-TRADE "FIDDLE"

The great question of the best economical position for Great Britain to assume, rests then, between two contending parties, namely, the Free-traders and the anti-Free-traders. The latter is a comprehensive term and generally intelligible to the voter. The former is fairly comprehensive, but not so intelligible, because it seems to be capable of so many interpretations as to puzzle those desirous of understanding its principles. Irreverent satirists have likened Free-trade to a fiddle upon which many tunes may be played to suit the varied tastes of a "Constituency," and it certainly appears that a smart politician or an expert political economist would experience no difficulty in putting the Free-trade horse through many and varied paces.

Cobden's ideas of Free-trade, for example, were less elastic and capable of fewer *interpretations* than those of Mr. Lloyd-George, whose Tariff Convention with the United States signed on 20th November, 1907, and his arrangement with the Australian Government a month or so later, in which our slate trade benefited by a preferential reduction of 5 per cent., while the bicycle trade reaped even greater advantages, partook rather of the nature of *Reciprocity and Protection* than of Free-trade. Nor can it be said that the new Patents Act, which forces foreign manufacturers to set up industries in this country, is an *essential principle* of "Free"-trade.

Then again, although the avowed views of a Conservative Government may differ considerably from those of a Liberal one in respect to the meaning and import of Free-trade; and although they declare them to be—for purely political purposes—as wide apart as the poles, we do not find, that when a Liberal Administration succeeds a Conservative one, it evinces a feverish desire to smash up and vehemently cast out the anti-Free-trade measures of its predecessors.

TAXES ON FOOD—FREE-TRADE INCONSISTENCIES

Sugar affords an example that the *real* difference between the Free-trade party and the anti-Free-trade party is, after all, more a matter of *political technique* than a solid disagreement which stands rigid as a wall between the contending parties.

You can no more do without sugar than you can do without bread, and yet the present Free-trade Government have no scruples about deriving over £6,000,000 annually in duties from this widely used and necessary article of consumption.

There is also that long list of food-stuffs such as cocoa, coffee, tea, milk, and milk productions, confectionery of all kinds, fruits dried, jams and marmalade; all of which pay duty before reaching the people. A Free-trade Government may call these articles—*luxuries*, but the people know that they are necessary foods and no more luxuries than bread is a luxury; nevertheless, Free-trade Administrations appear to have no more qualms of conscience about drawing revenues from such sources than an anti-Free-trade Government would have.

FREE-TRADE "RECIPROCITY"

The present Government, which calls itself Liberal—but which its political opponents dub Radical—has in the New Tariff Convention with America entered into an arrangement which is as diametrically opposed to the principles of *Free-trade* as light is to darkness. The United States, wishing to secure still greater advantages for her goods, and freer facilities for her commercial travellers, says to us: "You give us free entry for our samples of dutiable imports, and we will give you something in return. You profess to be a free-trading nation, nevertheless, you are just as much open to a bargain, or in other words, to those principles of reciprocity under which the protected countries of the world formulate their systems of tariffs, as other nations are. You already draw £35,000,000 annually from your import duties on goods of various kinds, many of them, such as sugar, for example, being necessities of life and in daily use by the people; while we know from past experience you would just as readily tax other articles of common consumption if you wanted money for war purposes, or for other urgent State needs."

Free-trade apologists will, no doubt, by many a specious argument, attempt to explain away this extraordinary movement of the Government in favour of Reciprocity, this leaning towards the very principles which their political opponents, the Unionist Tariff-reformers, so strenuously advocate, but, however much they may protest, this Free-trade principle has been clearly, unmistakably, and formally surrendered by their own Government in this Tariff Convention with the United States, and the matter is now *un fait accompli*.

It is, however, contended by Free-traders that although they have all the desire to abolish import duties on food-stuffs, they are not in a position to do so, because it is necessary to maintain them for revenue purposes, but this, surely, is not a defensible position. If it be really right and proper in the

interests of the commonweal that not a penny of the public revenues should come from taxes on the people's food, it would be quite an intelligible platform—among others—for the Free-trade party to stand upon.

GOVERNMENT FREE-TRADE PRINCIPLES NOT CLEARLY DEFINED

They do not, however, appear to make a strong point of this in their electioneering campaigns; indeed, it seems to be kept pretty much in the background. That there is no indication that the Free-trade party intend to make the abolition of all existing duties on imported food-stuffs the strongest plank in their political rostrum at the next general election, would seem to point to one of two things, namely, that they regard this source of revenue as a perfectly legitimate one in spite of their many avowals to the contrary, or they have good reason to believe that, once these easily garnered millions were surrendered for a sentimental reason, they might experience exceeding great difficulty in recouping themselves in other directions. They may have conceived the idea that, even in these days of truckling under to the working man and playing up to him on every possible occasion for his political influence, the abolition of these duties and the transference to the so-called "classes" of taxes to a similar amount, would not be altogether a popular measure, and they possibly shrink from a position which they hold to be charged with potential dangers.

If they are uninfluenced by either of these motives, but feel constrained, for other reasons, to continue drawing a considerable portion of their revenues from imposts on imported foods, then, whatever these reasons may be, it is clear that although—for purely *political* purposes—it suits the party to champion the cause, they have no mind to sacrifice party interests to the rigid principles of Free-trade.

FREE-TRADE GOVERNMENT SACRIFICES PRINCIPLES TO POCKETS

While the Free-trade party are, therefore, prepared to espouse the cause, they practically admit that the Free-trade principles, although excellent in theory, will not stand the rough and tumble of everyday life.

Silk breeches and kid gloves may be very pretty and becoming, but good honest homespun and a stout pair of leather gauntlets are better able to resist the hard wear and tear of life, and enable us to grapple with those thorns which crop up so often in our journey through this world.

To put it briefly, Governments, no more than individuals,

can afford to ignore the pressing exigencies of life; nor are they proof against those temptations which touch self-interests. The United States wanted a comparatively small commercial concession. "*Certainly*," says our Free-trade Government, "but give us something in return; reduce your duty on some of our goods which you buy from us, and we will take certain duties off some of the goods you send to our country, a small bargain to serve some personal interest, and lo! Reciprocity becomes the guiding principle even of a Government which professes to be the avowed champion of what is, by misnomer, called *Free-trade—Verb. Sap.*!"

With these instances before us, is it not true that in spite of their Free-trade *professions*, Liberal Governments are quite as ready to sacrifice their principles to their pockets, the moment they want money, as their political opponents are?

Is it not true that despite their much vaunted cry of Free-trade, and their declared belief in its principles, they can no more help taxing the food of the people than they can hinder the return of the equinoxes?

Without prejudice it may safely be asserted that Free-trade will not stand the wear and tear of everyday life, nor can Free-trade Governments resist sacrificing their principles to party interests; while it seems indisputable that, even if they *do* regard Free-trade and a "Free breakfast-table" for the working classes as the *non plus ultra* of the Free-trade principle, the fact that they have failed for the last fifty odd years to give the idea material form, proves that they have not, at all events, the courage of their convictions.

It would seem, then, that the term "Free-trade" is both elastic and illusory and, therefore, incapable of exact definition. It is not, in its application to matters of national economy, or in its general operations, so easily definable as a great science should be, and indeed, as the economical system of our country *must* be, before it can be readily understood and appreciated by the people.

Because it is not possible to determine the principles of Free-trade by the methods of their present-day application, and because Free-trade is built up on theoretical economical propositions which are neither determinable by, nor capable of, practical demonstration, it therefore becomes necessary to ask some Free-trade authority to furnish certain examples of the abstract principles of Free-trade which might then be reduced to the more intelligible—*Concrete form*.

With this object in view "The Free-trade Movement"* has been selected as one of the most up-to-date works on the subject.

* G. Armitage-Smith, M.A., 1907.

CHAPTER XXIX

A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF FREE-TRADE PRINCIPLES (continued)—CERTAIN CONCRETE EXAMPLES SHOWING FREE-TRADE FALLACIES — COBDEN'S FUNDAMENTAL BLUNDER

It is held by Free-trade economists that Great Britain should buy her corn from Argentina, we will say, where she could get it a trifle cheaper than if she grew it herself, because, as imports must necessarily be paid for by *exports*, and as about 75 per cent. of British exports are *manufactured goods*, these manufactures would necessarily have to be taken in exchange for the corn.

This is a very pretty theory, and it serves the interests of Free-traders admirably; but, like most of their theories, it is in —*the abstract form*. Will it bear reducing to a simple concrete example? Argentina has sent us £50,000 of corn, and wants £50,000 worth of steel rails and bridge material for the extension of her railway system. Belgium and Germany are competitors with us for the order, and can—as they have often done—undersell us, and one or the other of them eventually gets it. Where, then, do our manufactures come in?

Let us see what further investigation may reveal.

Said Adam Smith—

“It is the maxim of every prudent master of a family never to attempt to make at home what it will cost him more to make than to buy. . . . What is prudence in the conduct of every private family can scarce be folly in that of a great kingdom.”

This is what is termed by economists *specialising production*, and as an “abstract principle” it is well-nigh unassailable.

Whether this principle can be rigorously applied in its integrity to either the individual requirements of domestic life, or to the larger life of the nation is, however, quite another question.

Commenting on this famous dictum, "The Free-trade Movement" says—

"No language can state this principle of the efficiency of exchange more simply or forcibly than that of Adam Smith." *

He then follows with this—

"The increase of utility derived by specialising production is regarded by economists as the greatest advantage gained by trading, but protective tariffs prevent this gain by checking the importation of goods which a country can produce for itself though at a greater cost. Canada has a sparse population, and a soil well suited for the production of corn, fruit, and timber; Great Britain has a dense population, vast capital sunk in machinery, and with her minerals and industrial skill she is specially adapted for manufacturing. If Canada devotes herself by preference to Agriculture, and Great Britain to manufactures, by free interchange both countries will be wealthier than if each endeavoured to supply its entire wants in both departments of industry." †

THE FAMOUS FREE-TRADE DICTUM

These are mere generalisations, and they deal only with the abstract principles of a complicated science; nevertheless, they are useful in that they furnish a plain pronouncement of policy based upon Adam Smith's dictum, from an avowed Free-trader, on one of the most important points connected with economic science.

Great Britain, owing to her dense population and vast capital sunk in machinery, is to manufacture, while other nations are to grow our corn, fruit, and timber for us. We are to be lords of manufacturing industries, and they—lords of the soil. This is the interpretation of the famous passage in the "Wealth of Nations," and upon it has England been pledged to her present economical system.

Now, out of such a condition spring so many objections, so much loss of wealth, and so much danger, that it would take a far larger volume than this to state one-fiftieth part of the case against so anomalous and perilous a proposal, although, alas! it must be regretfully admitted that the evil has already fallen upon us, and we are now reaping the fruits of our wrong-doing.

A policy of this nature carries with it a fundamental economical error of the first magnitude, and it is, therefore, doomed to destruction.

* "The Free-trade Movement," p. 198.

† *Ibid.*, p. 198.

A CLEVER APPEAL TO HUMAN CUPIDITY

The reason that it has lasted for the last half-century is because it appealed to one of the commonest and worst sides of human nature—cupidity.

"You have a splendid thing in your inexhaustible coal supply," said the economists of years ago; "link it up with steam, and run it for all it is worth. Spend your money in getting together more and more machinery; push your manufacturing industries; build ships as quickly as you can, and capture the trade of the world. Manufactures will pay you far better than agriculture, because, with your superior trading facilities in comparison with other nations, with your mercantile marine and the rapid application of steam to sea-going vessels, you will be able to bring your corn from foreign countries where they can grow it cheaper than you can here. Don't waste your time and money over agriculture, but devote both one and the other to manufactures and trade, and you will find there is more money in it than there is in any land industry. And, above all, do not forget that in all this you have the start of all foreign nations, so—make the most of it while you have the chance."

Such were the stock arguments of the manufacturer-economists of the first half of the last century, and such are they to-day as we have just seen from Mr. Armitage Smith's book, the second edition of which was published as recently as 1907.

Perhaps the strongest physical impulse to which human nature is subject is—self-preservation. It enters so largely into the composition of human life in such a multitude of forms that it may be said to constitute the *summum bonum* of our existence.

The body is our chief regard, and to keep it well and strong, generously fed, comfortably clothed and well housed, and then to give it the *best possible time* all round, is the individual and collective aim of the human race.

We work early and late, we think, devise, plot, plan, and scheme—sin even—so that the body may be well cared for, and that our worldly state may be as good or better than that of our neighbours. We run and push and struggle one with another, and if, in that race for wealth and position, or for mere existence, as the case may be, for which every human being is bound to enter in this busy world, we push a brother here and there off the stage—well, it's a pity, poor devil, but it can't be helped.

Our own particular physical entity is what concerns us; we

must preserve that at all risks, and at any cost. *Self-preservation is the first law of nature*, and any sacrifice must be made that this law may be fulfilled.

Appeal to a man's pocket, and you are sure to get quick results of some sort. Tell a man he is a fool to waste his time over growing turnips when he can make twice the money in spinning cotton, and he will probably believe you.

LOVE OF GAIN THE CHIEF AIM OF LIFE

Gain of some sort, whether it be the gain of notoriety, praise, fame, or money—chiefly the latter—forms the pivot of life, and upon it most of life's affairs turn. It calls into existence much human effort, and converts latent potentialities into an active living force.

It bridges the ocean with ships, re-peoples waste continents, girdles the earth with electric bands, and is the parent of most industrial enterprise.

Taken all round, the lust, or passion, or whatever part of our nature this very common and yet perfectly natural sense of acquisition is allied to, indubitably exercises the most powerful influence over human life; and when the manufacturer-reformers of the early Victorian era appealed to this sense, with the fervid zeal born of the misfortunes of a people, and of their own interests, they were sure of ready listeners and eager followers.

In the bad times, covered by the period between the close of the Peninsular War and up to, and after, the repeal of the Corn Laws, reformers found splendid soil to work on. Times were bad, bread was dear, the country was full of poverty and discontent; and when Cobden, Bright, and their zealous colleagues and followers put before the country their scheme which promised cheaper bread, higher wages, and better times all round, the people naturally enough went over to them.

GAIN was the bait here as it is all through life, and who shall blame the people if they swallowed it?

Work was hard to get, destitution was the common lot of many, distress was widespread, and, if under such conditions you can show a hungry man how to better his worldly state, he is not likely to hesitate long.

STARVING MEN NOT FASTIDIOUS

The unemployment and destitution of a large portion of the masses to-day furnish an excellent parallel. Point out to these starving ones, who are neither employed by manufactures

nor agriculture, that their case would be materially improved by sacrificing manufactures to agriculture; that the land is the chief source of employment, of full wages and general prosperity; that all they have to do is to vote solid for the re-establishment of agriculture, and they would plump their votes for a great national agricultural policy, in supersession of the present industrial system, without any more discrimination than their forbears did in the days when Cobden and his Manchester School preached the opposite doctrine.

The reformers and economists of the "thirties and forties" showed the people how they might better their condition, how they might GAIN, and those starving masses to whom Cobden so strongly appealed gave their mandate to bring about the changes recommended by their advisers with as little knowledge or regard to consequence as their compeers would to-day if they were shown how a reversal of the fiscal policy, which had reduced *them* to a state of semi-destitution, would ensure better wages and a reasonable standard of comfort. How could it be expected that a penurious multitude, many of whom had not had a square meal for months, or, in some cases, for years, could reflect on the remote economic consequences of their mandate? Is it likely that the destitute unemployed of the present day, being Parliamentary voters, and finding no work either in trades or manufacturing industries, would pause to ponder over the far-off economic effect of *their* mandate if they were made to believe that the establishment of a universal agricultural industry, *in supersession of manufactures*, would serve their turn? Not they! It would be a race for agriculture and—"The Devil take the hindmost."

THE MISTAKE OF THE "HUNGRY FORTIES"

The mistake made in the "forties" was in sacrificing agriculture, just as we to-day should make a similar mistake if we sacrificed manufactures to agriculture. To sacrifice either the one or the other was, and is, not only quite unnecessary, but futile and fatal.

With this digression, which is necessary to show the source from which this fatal mandate of sixty years ago sprung, the reader's attention is now drawn to that radical error in economics which underlies the present agricultural and fiscal system of the country; and if the writer can but make it clear that his efforts in respect hereto are made in no party spirit, but solely with the object of helping the people to come to some realisation of the terrible loss they incur under

the existing system, the educational value of this work will be considerably enhanced.

WHAT FREE-TRADE REFORMERS POSTULATED

The reformers of the early part of the last century laid down the principle that the national interests of Great Britain would be best served by her becoming a great manufacturing nation; that the capital and energies of the people should be directed thereto: and that as outside countries could grow our corn for us cheaper than we could produce it, agriculture should be subordinated to manufacturing industries.

Let us, at the outset, regard this matter from a purely commercial point of view—a mere everyday matter of business—because it is this aspect of the case that will most likely appeal to the public.

The other aspect—which deals rather with the science of economics than with the utility of the matter—being of interest only to scientists and students of the cult, we propose to leave severely alone, as a discussion from a “scientific” point of view would serve no purpose but to confound and obfuscate those who prefer a plain statement of facts in a plain, understandable manner, to a learned and abstruse treatise on scientific economy.

Now, when a man is asked to give up something he possesses for something which he does not possess, he invariably asks the question—“What do I gain by it?”

This question was without doubt raised by every man who in the “hungry forties” was asked to give up the old order for the new. The answer he got satisfied him that, in giving up that which he had, he was getting something of greater value in exchange for it.

He gave up AGRICULTURE, then, and got in return, MANUFACTURES.

Let us now count the gain or, rather, reckon the cost.

“If Canada devoted herself by preference to agriculture, and Great Britain to manufactures, by free interchange both countries will be wealthier than if each endeavoured to supply its entire wants in both departments of industry.”

This single dictum of the economist, which, it must not be overlooked, is but an abstract theory, opens up, nevertheless, such a vast field for controversy, that only one phase of the question can be dealt with here.

SOME OF THE LOSSES

The United Kingdom became a manufacturing nation, and gave up her agriculture at the bidding of Cobden and his school of manufacturer-economists. Is she the wealthier for it?

It has been shown in earlier chapters that, owing to the sacrifice of agriculture, the United Kingdom has lost enormously in actual agricultural wealth, as also in further immense losses arising from the dying out of the many subsidiary industries depending upon a prosperous agricultural industry for their support. It will never be actually known what this direct and indirect loss amounts to, but it is variously estimated by our ablest statisticians to total anything from £1,000,000,000 to £1,600,000,000 (see Chapter VI.); but whether it be the smaller or the larger amount, no country that has lost so stupendous a sum in about thirty years can be said, even by the smartest conjurer among our many smart political economists, to be the *wealthier* for it.

Then it has been shown in Chapters XII. and XIX. that, besides colossal loss of agricultural wealth, the Mother-Country has lost in that period many millions of the best and hardiest of her children, who, forced thereto by the inexorable laws which a false and pernicious system of economics has imposed on the country, sought refuge in wholesale emigration to avoid—STARVATION.

LOSS OF VIRILE POWER

Since 1853, during which year the emigration returns were properly tabulated, showing the distinction between the British emigrants and foreign, it is found that the enormous total of 14,768,909 English, Scotch, and Irish emigrants were forced to leave their native land for foreign countries. This vast army of lost citizens exceeds the entire population of the Australian Colonies, New Zealand, and Canada—which at the census of 1901 was given at 9,926,977—by nearly 5,000,000 of souls. Assuming, as we safely may, that had this country set up a constructive instead of a *destructive* agricultural policy sixty-two years ago, side by side with a constructive commercial and industrial policy, the vast majority of this mighty host of toilers would have been still with us, working out a splendid universal system of agriculture which might easily have co-existed with an equal universal system of commercial-industrialism. These great sister industries should have been closely drawn together by the strongest bonds of affinity—closer,

indeed, than those ties which bind man and wife. They should have been allied, not separated; wedded, not divorced. But, alas! Cobden and his followers thrust them asunder so that neither could assist the other, and both have suffered. Commercial-industrialism prospered for a time and became rich, but it might have become richer, because its wealth is enjoyed by the few rather than shared by the many; while it is becoming poorer each year as foreign nations put their goods in competition with our own. Agriculture, on the other hand, never recovered from the shock of separation; it lost the support of its sister-industries, and it languished and faded away into the poor pallid thing we know it for to-day—a maimed industry, weak and helpless as a palsied limb.

Does it not, then, become clear to every man outside the narrow influence of party politics, or the equally narrow sphere of that influence which the arbitrary doctrines of economic science cast over its followers, that in losing our agriculture we have lost the enormous internal purchasing power which such a loss necessarily involves, and that although this loss can never be redeemed, never recovered from the profound depths of a calamitous past, it may yet be considerably mitigated by building up a sensible, provident agricultural system which, while conserving the best of our manhood and womanhood, would bestow a general mead of prosperity upon the people of this country which they have certainly not experienced for the last century or more?

FREE-TRADE OPPOSED TO SUCCESSFUL AGRICULTURE

Free-traders, political economists, and others of that ilk tell the people that these things cannot be; that a universal prosperous agricultural industry is incompatible with manufactures and commerce; that the two *cannot* exist side by side, and that the nation must actually “PUT BACK ITS PROGRESS”* the moment it commences to grow its own food supplies.

But what avails discussion on a fundamental error in *theoretical* economics of so obvious a nature, since Germany, the United States, Belgium, and every civilised country in Europe, or the Western world, which enter into competition with us in the world's markets, offer object-lessons in *practical* economy which cannot be denied, contradicted, or upset? All these countries have a universal system of agriculture working harmoniously with, and to the mutual benefit of, commerce and manufactures. All these industries work side by side to the benefit of the people and to the prosperity of the country, and

* “The Free-trade Movement,” p. 193.

as several of these countries, while conserving and developing their agricultural industry to an extent that enables them *to grow all their own food*, are, at the same time, building up and developing their manufacturing industries, even to a greater proportionate extent than we are, it follows that—*to sacrifice agriculture in order to give free facilities to manufactures and trade is nothing but a monstrous fallacy, born either of ignorance or wilful deception, but which, anyway, demands the fullest possible exposure and condemnation.*

The enormous loss of agricultural wealth which the country has sustained, together with the frightful drain on the country of its vigorous manhood and womanhood, and the actual loss of money by the decrease of the purchasing power of these banished millions of our best workers, offer in themselves irrefutable evidence of the elementary economical blunder committed by "Scientific" economists in laying down the "Law" that—

"If Great Britain devotes herself by preference to manufactures she will be wealthier than if she devoted herself to both manufactures and agriculture."

ADAM SMITH'S DICTA: ADAGES, NOT COMMERCIAL LAWS

Of this also we may be sure, that when Adam Smith laid down his system of economics he knew that no system of the kind is, or can ever be, perfect and infallible. "*Never attempt to make at home what it will cost him more to make than to buy*"* is, on the face of it, a saying, a maxim, the sort of proverb that any business man might give utterance to for his son's benefit, or for the general guidance of his business staff; but to interpret it into a LAW, as many Free-traders have done, and moreover a rigid, inexorable law for the guidance and regulation of our national trade, is to go further than Adam Smith himself would have gone or ever intended to go. The great economist was more astute than most of his followers, and saw further ahead than Cobden and *his* followers. Here is a striking illustration of this; speaking of Cobden's boast about the universal adoption of Free-trade by the nations, we find the following significant passage: "Adam Smith had been more awake to these difficulties when he wrote,"† and we may depend that his astuteness and foreknowledge led him to decide that what he taught in the broad field of economics was more with the idea of enunciating certain general principles which might be found of considerable use in national trade than of laying down rigid economic LAWS. Even to-day, with the

* "Wealth of Nations."

† "The Free-trade Movement."

added light of 133 years' experience, no man would be foolish enough to attempt to lay down *laws* in regard to so slippery a "science" as economies, because of the ever-varying conditions of national and international trade, and it may be taken for granted that so far-sighted a man as Adam Smith would never have attempted it. His famous maxim was intended to apply only to *first cost*, and was as applicable to his time as to ours, but the whole nature of the man's great work reveals the fact that he was not foolish enough to force his maxims down people's throats if he found that a slight saving in *first cost* meant considerable loss in the *second*, *third*, and *fourth cost*. But this is exactly what his followers have done. To secure some saving in the first instance they have sacrificed so many interests as not only to nullify the initial saving, but to cause a loss which is so widespread and which ramifies among so many sections of the people as to be hardly traceable.

The question here, as indeed it is in so many other instances in connection with this momentous question, is—"HOW LONG?"

COBDEN'S BOAST TESTED BY TIME

Let us further examine the doctrines upon which the country's commercial and economical system have been founded to see if they will bear other tests. Will they bear the test of Time's corroding touch? Can it be truly affirmed that Free-trade has fulfilled the ardent hopes of its founder and vindicated his sanguine expectations?

"I believe that if you abolish the Corn-laws honestly, and adopt Free-trade in its simplicity, there will not be a tariff in Europe that will not be changed in less than five years to follow your example," *

said Richard Cobden sixty odd years ago, and yet in all this time the nations have not come our way; a few of the minor States of Europe have partially adopted Free-trade principles, but all the great countries of the earth which have become our most formidable competitors for the world's markets, have forged for themselves strong weapons of Protection against which Britain's Free-trade principles may not prevail.

Free-traders admit this, and in attempting to explain the position they naturally do what they can to minimise the disastrous and far-reaching effects that this unfulfilled prophecy of the great Free-trader has had upon the country.

The failure of Cobden's famous prediction is freely acknowledged in the following paragraph:—

* Cobden's speech in the House of Commons, January 15, 1846.

"Much attention has been drawn to the sanguine but unfortunate prediction of Cobden that if England led the way other European nations, convinced by her example, would follow within five years. But fifty years have now passed, and not only have the European nations failed to follow the example of Great Britain, but some have increased their tariffs, while the United States have advanced still further on the lines of Protection, and even most of our Colonies have rejected the policy of the mother-country in its favour. This constitutes apparently a weighty expression of opinion against the Free-trade doctrine, and calls for some examination." *

Immediately after the above comes the following explanation:—

"In the first place, however, Cobden did not rest the argument for this policy upon its adoption by others. His prediction was no more than an expression of his own firm conviction that the merits of a doctrine, so clearly grasped by his own mind, would be brought home with equal force to others when its actual operation in Great Britain afforded visible evidence of its advantages. But he did not make sufficient allowance for difference of circumstances or for interested opposition. Adam Smith had been more awake to these difficulties when he wrote; John Bright also had no expectation of the sudden conversion of Europe; and Peel distinctly stated that his action rested on the conviction, slowly and surely attained, of the necessity of Free-trade for Great Britain, and not upon any anticipation of its becoming the policy of other countries."

CLEVER DEFENCE OF COBDEN'S FALSE POSITION

This is unquestionably a clever defence of the Great Reformer, but whatever may be said to the contrary it is clear to all who are disposed to take an absolutely dispassionate view of the matter that Cobden's Free-trade scheme *did* spring out of the grand idea that it would prove to be the best economic system upon which to conduct the *world's trade*, and that the nations would adopt it as soon as they saw its many advantages. Universal Free-trade was the basis upon which Cobden built his economic structure; it was the dream of his middle age, and the *primum mobile* of his ardent crusade; it moved him to indefatigable energy and animated his whole being, and when, fired by his strong beliefs that his great scheme would relieve the poverty of the masses, create universal employment, induce the inflow of enormous wealth, and lift Great Britain into the exalted position of the foremost trading country in the world, he naturally felt that the nations *must*

* "The Free-trade Movement," p. 145.

come our way and adopt Free-trade; there is no wonder then that he flung abroad his proud boast—

“There will not be a tariff in Europe that will not be changed in less than five years to follow your example.”

The nations have *not* altered their tariffs to follow ours. Why? Free-trade writers have offered volumes of clearly reasoned matter in explanation of the extraordinarily perverse and wrong-headed attitude assumed by all the great civilised States of the world who have now become our keenest competitors in the great commercial and industrial campaign which is being waged against us in all the world's markets; but the strong reaction which has now set in against Free-trade in our own country, even among Free-traders themselves, proves that Free-trade defenders have convinced nobody but the more conservative section of their own followers.

Dealing with another phase of the question, the following extract will very briefly indicate the attitude assumed in respect hereto by at least one Free-trade economist.

“Nor must we forget the nature of the trade of other countries. Great Britain is unable to provide herself with sufficient food; raw materials and food-stuffs together account for nearly 75 per cent. of her imports, while manufactured goods are about 75 per cent. of her total exports. This is the case with no other country. It is true that France and Germany both import some corn, but their chief imports, and almost the entire imports of most other protective countries, consist of manufactures, materials for manufactures, and luxuries, on which the pressure of duties is less severely felt than would be the case if they were levied upon the immediate necessities of life. While, then, different circumstances have fostered the protective principle in Europe, the United States, and the Colonies, in all of them the facility for collecting revenue by the customary method of duties on imports gave it an easy footing; and in all it has been maintained by the sentiment of supporting home industry, and the fallacy that more employment is found for labour in the country by excluding foreign competition.”*

A STATEMENT OF MANY INACCURACIES

This passage is remarkable for many things.

It contains the statement that Great Britain is unable to provide herself with sufficient food, which no man outside the narrow circle of Free-trade economists will for a moment admit. Great Britain *does not* grow her own food to-day for the excellent reason the country is now acquainted with, but that she *can* and *will* grow every quarter of wheat and every pound of bacon

* “The Free-trade Movement,” p. 146.

and cheese she requires for the consumption of her people there is not a shadow of doubt. It is but a question of time.

Then we are told the Protected countries which are our trade competitors import hardly any corn because—*they grow their own*. Their imports consist *almost entirely of manufactures, materials for manufactures and luxuries*, on which the pressure of duties is less severely felt than would be the case if they were levied upon the immediate necessities of life.

This seems to be giving the Free-trade case away with both hands. In the first place, if the imports of Protected countries consist largely of *materials for manufacture*, it argues that they have a considerable manufacturing industry—in spite of the fact that they grow their own corn and of their ring of tariffs—which require to be fed by large imports of raw material. It further follows that if they can launch into existence and maintain in a state of progressive prosperity large manufacturing industries which, in nearly every instance, exceed the proportionate rate of progression of our own trade, it becomes clear, even to the most casual observer, that these countries found no necessity to sacrifice *their* agriculture and import their food from foreign States.

The unpleasant fact, moreover, reveals itself that if these countries could continue to provide themselves with all their own food and, at the same time, *create* and carry on in progressive prosperity large manufacturing industries—for it must not be overlooked here that most foreign countries had but few manufacturing industries sixty-two years ago—there was not the slightest reason why Great Britain, which at that time was far ahead of any other nation in *existing* manufacturing industries, should have discontinued growing her corn and other food staples.

*“Free-trade was therefore a necessity prior to the full and profitable expansion of those industries which have enriched Great Britain during the last fifty years,”**

said the same Free-trade economist only a year or two ago, and this remarkable idea, which time, and the examples of other nations have shown, contains an elementary economical error of enormous importance, evidently took firm hold of the manufacturer-reformers of Cobden’s time.

FOREIGN DUTIES LESS BURDENSOME THAN OURS

Then it further becomes apparent that if the economical condition of these countries enables them to levy duties on a

* “The Free-trade Movement,” p. 132.

class of goods *on which the presence of duty is less severely felt than would be the case if they were levied upon the immediate necessities of life*, such a condition must necessarily be superior to our own, which, in spite of "Free"-trade, finds the necessity of levying considerable duties on many of our FOOD imports on which the duty is severely felt.

Then again, if the "Protective" principle offers free and easier facilities for collecting revenue from duties on goods which can bear them without being felt so severely by the people than if they were levied on foods, why in the name of common-sense do *we* not adopt a system of the kind so as to give *our* people a chance?

But the most remarkable portion of this remarkable excerpt is that the "Protective" principle has been maintained in *all* countries—whether our competitors or not—

"By the sentiment of supporting home industry, and the fallacy that more employment is found for labour in the country by excluding foreign competition."

Now, if the question of "supporting home industries" is nothing but a mere—SENTIMENT; in other words, if the vital question of whether we shall or shall not employ, support and feed our own people is nothing but a fancy, a gnomie utterance, a *sentiment*: then we have been deceived. The world at large, however, regards the food and employment of the people as of paramount importance, as, indeed, *the* most important item in that interminable list of economic questions which arise out of, and are involved in, that vast subject which men call Sociology. You cannot get food without employment, therefore it becomes a necessity to find employment. You cannot have employment without industries, therefore it becomes necessary to establish and *maintain* them. If you establish industries in a country and then by the laxity of your fiscal laws permit other countries to compete with you at all points, practically without restriction, you are bound to lose some of your trade, and if you do this you deprive your people of employment and—food. A people deprived of food and employment means STARVATION! This is precisely the condition of masses of the British people to-day; many are reduced to dire poverty and are standing on the very brink of that abyss which engulfs so many of our unfortunate countrymen and women.

There is nothing fanciful, hysterical or *sentimental* about STARVATION.

In regard to the last line of the paragraph, few people nowadays, even Free-trading manufacturers themselves, are foolish enough to believe—"that more employment is found for

labour in the country by excluding foreign competition" is a fallacy. The generally accepted opinion which has been thrust upon this country, by irresistible proofs of too material a nature to admit of scepticism is, that if you want to protect your own industries and find employment for your own people—you *must exclude* foreign competition, and this opinion, formed out of convincing evidence which is forthcoming from every direction, would appear to be absolutely irrefutable.

But do not let us accept either view of the case without first of all reducing the question from an abstract principle to concrete examples.

Supposing, in the first place, we manufacture 100,000 tons of steel rails per annum which requires the services of 10,000 men. If we employ British labour, 10,000 Britishers are simply—employed. Let in foreign labour in competition with our own countrymen, and every foreigner employed means the displacement of a British workman.

If by "excluding foreign competition" the writer of "The Free-trade Movement" means that we should not attempt to exclude the competition of foreign countries for our orders of 100,000 tons of rails, then the case simply resolves itself into this—that every ton of rails made by a foreign country, in part of that 100,000 tons, means less work for British manufacturers to that extent.

If the writer means neither of these things, then he had better explain his meaning.

These, then, are the conclusions which must inevitably arise out of the condition postulated by "The Free-trade Movement," and although it is, perhaps, not quite the interpretation the writer intended it should bear, it is, nevertheless, the only one that rationally minded men are likely to give to it in these times when real, far-reaching reform is necessary to save the country from a worse fate. In other words, this remarkable passage which deals in abstract principles rather than in concrete cases, is but another example of the danger of "generalising" and of the exceedingly mutable basis of all questions of economic "science."

CHAPTER XXX

A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF FREE-TRADE PRINCIPLES (*continued*)—MORE CONCRETE EXAMPLES SHOWING FREE-TRADE FALLACIES—THE RACE FOR THE WORLD'S TRADE—HOW BRITAIN IS BEING OUTDISTANCED

ONE or two further moves in this interesting game between Free-traders and those who are on the "other side" might now be considered.

In "The Free-trade Movement," pp. 205, 206, we find the following passages :—

"The advance in manufactures made by other countries in the last quarter of a century is indisputable: in Germany the progress in population, industry, and commerce since the consolidation of the empire has been very great."

"All these countries have now reached a much more advanced industrial position than that which they occupied thirty years ago. It was the good fortune of Great Britain to attain a high level in manufacturing industries at a much earlier date; the products of her mines and factories long held the markets of the world with ease, since she had practically no serious rival, and under the *régime* of Free-trade her commerce expanded rapidly. More recently other nations have been developing their resources of coal and other mineral wealth, and have been increasing their scientific knowledge and mechanical skill; and they are now well equipped as competitors in many of the fields of manufacture and of commerce. It is not remarkable that their relative progress should appear rapid in comparison with that of a country which attained industrial maturity at an earlier period, and that it should even give rise to erroneous views as to its real nature and magnitude, and the causes to which it should be ascribed. It is inevitable that, at an earlier stage, growth may proceed at a greater pace, but it does not necessarily follow that the *absolute* increase is really greater, or even that it is an amount of vital significance."

"Statistics prove that, for the present, Great Britain retains her pre-eminence as the leading manufacturing and commercial country."

These are candid admissions of Britain's altered position and of her weakness, and the writer, while admitting the seriousness of the competition between Great Britain and rival countries, seeks to reassure his Free-trade readers as to the erroneousness of the views in regard to "its real nature and magnitude."

FREE-TRADE IDIOSYNCRASIES

It has been truly said that "man's idiosyncrasies are innumerable and his follies unfathomable," and "The Free-trade Movement" adds its testimony to the verity of the saying. If you know a man has delirium tremens as a result of excessive drinking, why attempt to disguise the fact by calling it a "slight aberration of mind, due to worry or sunstroke?" England has a kind of delirium tremens owing to excessive indulgence in—Free-trade, and she is as surely going to the Devil as a man is who poisons himself with excessive doses of alcohol. Free-traders are perfectly right in affirming all those things of British trade contained in the pithy paragraph just quoted. The advance in manufactures made by other countries in the last quarter of a century is truly indisputable, and that they are now equipped with all the scientific knowledge and mechanical skill to enable them to become formidable competitors of Great Britain in all the markets of the world, and notably *in our own country*, there is not a vestige of doubt, and this fact is so manifest to the whole world that not even Free-traders—as this verifiable excerpt proves—dare dispute the fact. This being the case why seek to minimise the enormous importance of the question and its inevitable effects on British trade, by attempting to show that the great relative progress our foreign rivals have made in their industrial expansion, in comparison with ourselves, "give rise to erroneous views as to its real nature and magnitude" and that, in itself, it is not—"an amount of vital significance."

The reason given in "The Free-trade Movement" for this *lucus a non lucendo* method of dealing with a matter of such high economic importance is—"that Great Britain retains her pre-eminence as the leading manufacturing and commercial country," but it will be shown presently that this fact, which may to-day serve the Free-trade purpose of bolstering up a tottering cause, is, nevertheless, but a broken reed to depend upon.

BRITAIN'S TRADE PRE-EMINENCE A DELUSION

The pre-eminence of Great Britain's trade is a matter of common knowledge, but as most things in this world are estimated and measured by their relation to something else, so must Britain's trade be measured by the same relative standard. The man who possesses £100 may be considered wealthy by his poorer compeers, while a man with £100,000 may be regarded as a poor man by a multi-millionaire who possesses untold wealth. Britain, with her Import and Export trade of £1,000,000,000 annually, may truly be regarded to-day as pre-eminent in the magnitude of her commercial transactions, but even Britain has to submit her case to the same STANDARD OF RELATION. "*What is her relative position?*" is the question here, and the only question that can or should be asked, and when it is answered, it will be seen that, although pre-eminent in magnitude, she is by no means pre-eminent in the more vital question of RELATIVE PROGRESSION.

Here is an attempt on the part of "The Free-trade Movement" to show that because the incidence of British Imports and Exports per head of the population happens to be greater than in some other countries, it necessarily means individual and collective prosperity to the British people; an ingenious method of manipulating National statistics, but fortunately one not calculated to deceive anybody, save those ultra-conservatives of the Free-trade party who prefer to be deceived.

Here is the table—

VALUE OF EXPORTS OF DOMESTIC PRODUCTS PER HEAD OF THE POPULATION
OVER TWO QUINQUENNIAL PERIODS *

	United Kingdom.			Germany.			France.			United States.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
1870-1874	7	7	3	2	16	7	3	15	0	2	9	11
1890-1894	6	2	11	3	2	9	3	11	4	2	19	0

SIMILAR TABLE FOR DOMESTIC IMPORTS.

	United Kingdom.			Germany.			France.			United States.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
1870-1874	9	2	4	4	6	3	3	15	8	2	18	7
1890-1894	9	7	3	4	2	2	4	8	0	2	11	11

The writer then says—

"From these figures it appears: (a) That the imports and

* "The Free-trade Movement," p. 206.

exports of the United Kingdom per head of the population are nearly double those of any one of the three great progressive countries; (b) That British imports per head have increased in money values, while the exports have fallen slightly in value in the twenty-five years."

HIGH INCIDENCE OF TRADE PER HEAD OF THE POPULATION— A DELUSION

Dealing first with the conclusions arrived at in this extract it would appear that they should rather alarm than reassure us. Great Britain is admittedly ahead of other nations as a manufacturing-exporter, and while she continues in this position her exports must necessarily be larger per head of the population than those of rival countries. Such an economical condition may indicate weakness rather than strength, and individual wealth rather than collective prosperity. This position is, however, being rudely assailed, as will presently be seen; indeed, we have lost much of the distance by which we led other nations for so many years. But the crux of the whole matter is not—that our exports per head of the population—

"are nearly double those of any one of the three great progressive countries,"

but that *the composition of the population of Great Britain is totally different from that of these progressive countries.*

It has been shown elsewhere that France employs and supports 24,000,000 of her population, and Germany 20,000,000 by agriculture, while Great Britain employs and supports about 5,000,000, or, in other words, both these countries possess an enormous agricultural population in tremendous excess of our own. This fact established, it at once becomes obvious that the larger the *agricultural population* of a country the smaller becomes the incidence of manufacturing exports per head of the *general population* and—*vice versâ*. In other words, the less food-stuffs a country grows the more must it import, and the more it *imports* the more must it *export* in exchange for the food it is obliged to buy abroad. Briefly put, the British incidence of exports per head of the population is the highest, perhaps, in any civilised country in the world, *because her agricultural population is the lowest*. This appalling fact is not a subject for congratulation but for infinite and genuine regret.

IMPORTS CONSIST LARGELY OF FOOD SUPPLIES

Nor can consolation be drawn from the other fact—that our *imports* are nearly double those of other progressive countries,

because of our total imports of £607,888,500, food accounts for £172,000,000.* (See over page.)

Put in another way—the destruction of agriculture forces us to buy *three-fourths of our food supplies from foreign countries*, and, this being the case, the incidence of imports per head of population naturally ranges high, much higher, indeed, as is bound to be the case, than it can possibly be in those countries which grow their own food supplies, and therefore find no necessity for importing any.

In this simple fact lies deep humiliation to the British people, and the eagerness with which Free-traders seize hold of it, to buttress a falling structure, is but evidence of the weakness of the cause they are so tenaciously clinging to.

The following passage is also full of significance:—

“The most important conclusion, however, to be drawn from the table is, that while a change in the magnitude of the trade is clearly going on, Great Britain retains her leading position.”

From this passage it is clear that the writer of “The Free-trade Movement” takes an optimistic view of the position of British trade, and explains to his readers that so long as *Great Britain retains her leading position*, there is really nothing to fear.

BRITAIN LOSING HER LEADING POSITION

Now, when we talk of a “leading” position, the British people are sporting enough to know that it is a relative term which may mean much or little. Dorando held a “leading” position in the Marathon race, but this did not prevent it being wrested from him by a competitor from America. If a horse wins by a score of lengths, we say, “it’s no race”; nor is it, because there was no competition worthy the name; but if the race be won by a “short head,” or by a “nose,” our excitement becomes intense, and we call it a “close shave.”

Then, if in the course of the race, certain “outsiders” creep up length by length till they nearly overhaul the favourite, and come in a short length behind the winner, we call that a “good” race, and we mark those “outsiders” down in our betting books as horses destined to play an important part in future races. As with the turf, so with trade; real competitors always claim our attention; the rest are—nowhere.

Let us now send the competitors down the course just to look at their paces.

* Cd. 4258. Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom, 1903.

Here is a parade of some of them—

TOTAL IMPORTS

Country.	1901.	1902.	1903.	1904.	1905.	1906.	Percentage of Increase.
United Kingdom	521,990,198	528,391,274	542,600,289	551,038,628	565,019,917	607,888,500	16
United States	171,494,000	188,192,000	213,691,000	206,476,000	232,815,000	255,534,000	49
Austria-Hungary	68,860,000	71,681,000	78,213,000	85,329,000	89,422,000	97,550,000	42
Germany	266,542,000	276,858,000	295,133,000	312,902,000	350,499,000	394,410,000	48
France	174,768,000	175,760,000	192,048,000	180,092,000	191,156,000	225,092,000	29

TOTAL EXPORTS

Country.	1901.	1902.	1903.	1904.	1905.	1906.	Percentage of Increase.
United Kingdom	280,022,376	283,423,966	290,800,108	300,711,040	329,816,614	375,575,338	33
United States	304,263,000	282,392,000	290,048,000	298,996,000	310,780,000	357,907,000	18
Austria-Hungary	78,561,000	79,733,000	88,741,000	87,028,000	93,491,090	99,170,000	27
Germany	217,877,000	229,992,000	246,551,000	256,778,000	281,804,000	312,651,000	43
France	160,516,000	170,088,000	170,092,000	178,040,000	194,676,000	210,620,000	31

NOTE.—We find that, although we still *lead*, other nations are coming up to us rapidly, while Germany, with her heavy *proportionate* increase, becomes a really formidable competitor.

Cd. 4258 and 4265: 1908. Statistical Abstract, Parliamentary Blue Books.

This plain statement of facts exactly describes Great Britain's position in the great race for the world's trade supremacy, and although it tells its own tale plainly enough, a little embellishment will accentuate the position.

In the last chapter "The Free-trade Movement" told us that—

"raw material and food-stuffs together account for nearly 75 per cent. of her (Great Britain's) imports";

and once we take in the real meaning of this, its significance becomes alarming.

First, we have to import almost countless millions worth of food-stuffs, and then—since all imports are paid for in exports—import raw materials, work them up into manufactured goods, and re-export them to pay for the food that foreigners grow for us.

Under so topsy-turvy a system the incidence of imports per head of the population is necessarily bound to range high; but the fact, rightly understood, is a tremendous indictment of our economic policy. If we grow our own food-stuffs—as we ought to do in accordance with the economic usage of the other great civilised countries of the world—this high incidence would happily disappear, and, instead of paying foreign food growers for our imported food in our own manufactures, *we should simply pay our own agriculturists*. This plain economical fact is at length being borne in upon the minds of parliamentary voters, and, when it is generally understood, the old order will yield place to the new.

Commenting on the progress of other countries with Great Britain, we find the following passage on pages 134 and 135:—

"To compare their progress in some respects with that of Great Britain would be to compare the growth of the child with that of the man. Taking note of like circumstances, no country has made the same relative progress as Great Britain during the past fifty years."

This was true for a time; but the above statement conclusively proves that whatever we gained in the earlier part of the fifty years referred to, we are rapidly losing now.

The work from which this table has been compiled proclaims that the information is drawn from an unimpeachable source, while it is, moreover, of a nature that would render further indifference on the part of the British people not only foolish, but positively suicidal.

BRITAIN SORELY PRESSED BY COMPETITORS

For a considerable time we maintained such a lead in the race for the world's trade as enabled us to outdistance every competitor. "The products of her mines and factories long held the markets of the world with ease," says "The Free-trade Movement"; and it was so. But the conditions of the race have changed. Britain still leads, it is true; but she is being so pressed by competitors immediately at her heels that she is feeling the strain sorely. "Other countries are advancing, but as yet they have not overtaken British foreign trade," quotes the above book; and in this single sentence there is an undercurrent of deep pathos which is clearly manifest to all those who care to read between the lines. The race has ceased to be a one-sided affair or a foregone conclusion; Britain's competitors are creeping up, and the near future will witness an exciting finish. That this is the accepted view, even of Free-traders, is proved by the following passage:—

"The competition of progressive countries in many branches is very real, and will become more acute as each year adds to their skill and capital. Great Britain cannot retain permanently the advantage of her earlier start, inasmuch as there is a general levelling up of capacity and effectiveness, and a tendency towards assimilation of the circumstances governing both labour and capital in progressive countries. The contest has begun, and it will become increasingly keen in the future. Whilst it is necessary to recognise this fact as a comparatively new element affecting British commerce, there is no occasion for despondency, and still less rational would be recourse to measures of a retaliatory or hostile character, which only lead to further dislocation.*

We are, then, face to face with the irreducible fact that British trade has reached "the parting of the ways," yet attempts are still being made to make people understand that all this is of no consequence, and that there is no cause for alarm. Here is an illustration of this—

"The coal and iron industries of the United States and Germany have advanced enormously since 1870, and yet the output of Great Britain is greater than ever."†

The following table is then appended in proof of the fact that Britain is still LEADING:—

* "The Free-trade Movement," p. 214.

† *Ibid.*, p. 209.

COAL PRODUCTION (BOARD OF TRADE MEM.)

	Annual Average, 1870-1874. Million Tons.	Annual Average, 1890-1894. Million Tons.	Increase. Per cent.
United Kingdom . .	120	180	50
France	15	26	73·3
Germany	32	73	128·1
United States . . .	42	153	264·3

PIG-IRON PRODUCED (BOARD OF TRADE MEM.)

	Annual Average, 1870-1874. Million Tons.	Annual Average, 1890-1894. Million Tons.	Increase. Per cent.
United Kingdom . .	6·4	7·3	14·1
France	1·2	2·0	66·7
Germany	1·8	4·9	172·2
United States . . .	2·2	8·1	268·2

FREE-TRADERS MINIMISE EVIL EFFECTS OF FREE-TRADE

The writer then comments on the state of affairs disclosed by these tables—*which is distinctly inimical to British interests*—as follows:—

“It will be noticed that the output of the United States and Germany has increased much more than that of Great Britain. This is not wonderful; their industrial development began later, and their mineral wealth is at the base of their manufacturing progress. Whether these countries will ultimately take the lead in manufactures remains yet to be seen.”*

As the reader is quite capable of forming his own conclusions from so plain a pronouncement of the perilous position of two of our chief mineral industries, further comment here would be supererogatory.

Further on, however, “The Free-trade Movement,” while deprecating many things that have been said about the unsatisfactory condition of British trade, has the following:—

“Sensational alarms as to the decay of British industry and commerce have been seen to be baseless, but sufficient ground exists for

* “The Free-trade Movement,” p. 209.

anxiety that the nation should realise the nature of the competition to which it will in future be subjected, and that it should recognise its own defects.”*

Whether these “alarms” be “baseless” or not, is best proved by referring to the table above, as also to the more comprehensive tables a page or two back.

That there *are* dangers to British trade, the author of the book quoted from fully admits, but he holds that these should be looked for “nearer home.”

“There are other dangers to our trade and manufacturing supremacy which originate nearer home. These are the industrial conflicts that from time to time check production, paralyse industry, and dislocate the export trade, thus giving an opening to foreign competitors.”†

“The dangers from this quarter are only to be averted by the exercise of great forbearance, and by an appeal to the common-sense of those directly concerned. If British industry be made thoroughly efficient, it may hold its ground against the world, but both workmen and employers cannot be too fully impressed with the fact that their skill, ingenuity, and industry are now pitted against those of the most intelligent and progressive nations in the same classes of employment, and that there is no form of Protection which can avail them in the struggle for superiority.”‡

Enough has now been said to show the trend of Free-trade thought in connection with the subject under consideration. It is admitted all along the line that although Great Britain held the lead for many years in the world’s markets and outstripped her competitors with the greatest ease, other nations are rapidly coming up with her and may pass her in the race before long—“whether these countries will ultimately take the lead in manufactures remains yet to be seen,” observes “The Free-trade Movement”; and while this is a tacit admission of a grave danger, there is, on the other hand, no semblance, even, of the possibility that the gravity of the position may be due to *Free-trade itself*.

FREE-TRADERS BLAME EVERYBODY BUT THEMSELVES

After discussing, at some length, certain well-known causes which are said to militate against British trade, among them the “sweated labour” question and that conservatism in British merchants who adopt with their foreign customers “the take it or leave it” attitude, instead of meeting their wishes in respect to alteration of patterns, styles, etc., the writer says—

* “The Free-trade Movement,” pp. 220, 221.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 221, 222.

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 221, 222.

“The problem of the competition of British produce with that of other countries, whether in our own or neutral markets, is finally one of *skill and efficiency*, of adaptation to circumstances, and of wise economic arrangements; but is not a matter which Government interference or regulation by tariffs can determine in our favour.”*
 “The present point is whether our foreign trade has been injured by the progress of other nations, and if so, *whether Protection can help to maintain our supremacy or arrest the advance of rivals.*” †

The first thing that strikes one in regard to the first part of these excerpts is the *noli me tangere* attitude assumed by Free-traders. It is admitted that many things have happened to British trade but—“Don’t blame me,” cries the Free-trader—“look elsewhere for the causes.” They tell us our workmen lack skill and efficiency; we do not adapt ourselves to circumstances; in the departments of chemistry, electrical engineering and in other directions we are behind other nations, as also in scientific and technical training, and much more besides; and while all men of rational minds will admit there is truth in this, they deny that these defects in themselves are sufficient to account for the enormous loss to British trade by foreign competition.

LOSS OF TRADE NOT DUE TO BRITISH INEFFICIENCY

Agriculture, the leather industry, boots and shoes, the carpet trade, glass, cotton, woollen goods, minerals, the glove and hosiery trade, hops, fruit growing, and many other industries, have suffered severely because of unfair foreign competition; and as these plain facts have been, and are being, rubbed into the public mind by all sorts and conditions of anti-Free-traders, it is extremely unlikely that the British people will admit that these widespread losses, which practically affect every trade and industry in the United Kingdom, are due to their own universal inefficiency, lack of skill, want of technical and scientific training, and the rest of the shortcomings charged to them by the Free-trade school.

Nor are they prepared to admit that the many evils which British trade has suffered from could not be removed by Government interference and a carefully regulated system of wise, helpful tariffs. They very reasonably point to the trade of every other country, especially to that of our two great trade rivals, in proof of their contention, and hold that, if under a carefully devised system of tariffs, Germany, the United States, and other Protected countries can create, develop, and maintain *their* trade and manufacturing industries in a state of

* “The Free-trade Movement,” p. 223.

† *Ibid.*, p. 210.

progressive prosperity, and, by so doing, employ, support, and feed *their* populations without excessive pauperism and widespread unemployment, *we* can do the same if we choose.

In juxtaposition to this happier condition of things in the land of our rivals men point to the state of affairs in this country and contend that excessive pauperism, widespread destitution, extreme and ever-growing unemployment, general discontent, and intense political unrest may be taken as indicating the social and economic conditions of the people—as the readings of the national barometer—and as such conditions must necessarily have grown out of and undergone development under Free-trade, for the simple reason *that the country has no other economical system for the last sixty-two years*, it can hardly be maintained by Free-traders that such conditions point to the prosperity of *British* trade.

They further maintain that because the Governments have *abstained* from interference, for well known political reasons, this evil has overtaken them, and claim that the time has come for the direct intervention of the State, and the institution of a fiscal and economical system, which, in many respects, must be the antithesis of the Free-trade system which has proved, after long trial, a veritable failure.

A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

The second part of the particular passage we are considering has been partly answered in the preceding paragraphs, but with due deference to the writer of "The Free-trade Movement," the point the British people are gravely considering to-day is *not* whether our trade "has been injured by the progress of other nations, and if so, *whether Protection can help to maintain our supremacy*," but, "*to what extent can the enormous injury done to British trade by the present economical system be repaired by the abolition of Free-trade?*" Paraphrased in this manner, the question assumes more intelligible shape and comes better within the grasp of the "man-in-the-street."

The point at issue is, however, of such high economic importance and capable of so much "scientific" interpretation that it had better be removed altogether from the sphere of economic science and set up as a simple business proposition of a nature which business men are called upon to deal with every day of their lives.

HOW ECONOMIC "SCIENCE" CAN BE MANIPULATED

This is just one of those cases which economic "science" can so manipulate as to make it bear a multitude of aspects.

It can be so treated as to make it clear to Free-traders, at all events, that the loss to the British woollen trade, for example, is really a gain to the British people; that a decrease in exports is compensated by an increase in imports; that the aggregate increase in both imports and exports spells trade prosperity, and that the *balance* of trade is still in favour of Great Britain. Indeed, Free-trade economists can so turn and twist this particular case into so many shapes, and so befog the minds of those who happen to be innocent of the intricacies of economics, that they will hardly know whether they are standing on their heads or on their heels.

This economic "science," not being in the nature of an "exact" science, as before pointed out, is subject to extraordinary vagaries, and there is hardly anything it cannot do in national or domestic economy—on paper. The woman who makes her flannel petticoat at home, instead of buying it at the nearest store, is an imbecile; the man who paints his own front gate and fencing instead of employing a painter is an ass—economically; and the man who cultivates his field so that it may employ labour and produce food, instead of employing foreigners to grow it for him in their own country, is entirely beyond the economical pale and is hopelessly lost. Economic "science" not only teaches this and much more, but what is worse it has persuaded the people to *do* all these things, and—they have done them. Many things that they could do far better for themselves they employ foreigners, or others, to do for them, and an inevitable result of this is that the people have lost that *handiness* which formerly characterised them, and they have become helpless and dependent upon others to such an extent that both the United States and Canada now regard many of the English immigrants as *undesirables*!

WHAT HISTORY TELLS

History tells the tale that those countries which threw away their self-support and relied upon outside aid always came to grief in the long run, and history has an unpleasant habit of repeating itself. The United Kingdom is becoming daily more dependent upon the nations for many things she requires. We encourage foreigners to manufacture for us, and we ask them to grow three-fourths of our food, and as sure as the stars come nightly to the skies so will the fate of our own folly overtake us sooner or later.

That we may no longer be obfuscated with all this farrago about economic "science," let us reduce this case to a simple concrete example.

THE CARPET TRADE A CONCRETE CASE

Years ago we had an extensive foreign carpet trade; we grew our own wool, imported some from our Colonies, and made our carpets on British soil by British workmen. Our Axminster and Brussels were in considerable repute abroad, and we shipped our productions largely to foreign countries.

Twenty years ago we sent away an average of 7,400,000 yards of carpet of various sorts; to-day we export to those countries just *half that quantity*.

Twenty years ago we exported to foreign countries £15,000,000 worth of our woollen and worsted manufactures; to-day, despite the natural growth of the world's trade and the larger demand consequent therefrom, we send them some £1,500,000 worth short of that amount. Then, in the "eighties," we imported an average of £6,480,000 worth of woollen goods from foreign countries; to-day we import over £9,000,000 worth, or an increase of nearly £2,600,000. These two instances will furnish the example we are seeking for, for although many others might be cited, the question before us is this—"Is our trade injured by foreign competition?" The answer is—"Certainly it is."

This is how the proposition is demonstrated. If we grow our own wool, import some from outside sources, make our carpets and other articles of wool, and then export a considerable part of our manufactures to foreign countries, we have established industrial conditions which imply employment and prosperity to a certain number of people, and a certain increase in national wealth.

The conditions of trade change. We export less of our own woollen manufactures and import more. In the process our manufactures must decline while those of foreign countries must proportionately expand.

To put it another way. If our exports of manufactured woollen goods to foreign states fall off by £2,000,000 annually, and our imports increase by a similar amount, British manufactures are displaced to the extent of four millions annually, and British labour and British trade proportionately suffer.

This is a perfectly simple illustration of what is happening to our industries in many directions, and one that is readily understandable by most people, but it is just here that we should stop, otherwise we shall surely sink in the shoals and quicksands of economics. British trade, both home and foreign, is being seriously injured by foreign competition,

and Free-traders have a difficult task before them if they still persist in trying to make the people believe otherwise.

Free-trade economists point to so many universal benefits accruing from Free-trade that many volumes would be required for their consideration; we can only deal with one other point.

HIGHER STANDARD OF COMFORT SHARED BY ALL NATIONS

Much is made of the higher standard of living which the British people enjoy to-day in comparison with years "*lang syne*."

This is perfectly true in the main, but for the purposes of exalting the beneficence of Free-trade it suits these economists to ignore the fact that all other civilised nations, *not being Free-traders*, have equally shared in this higher standard of living which is obviously the natural outcome of the universal progressive prosperity of the world, rather than due to the particular fiscal system of any country. The development of the railway system of every country, the freer facilities offered to over-seas trade and international communication, the application of science to all departments of manufactures, the spread of hygienic knowledge, cheap literature, and the thousand and one civilising influences of the last fifty years, have all contributed to mental culture and a higher standard of thought and material comfort; and to state that the British people owe these benefits to Free-trade is to advance a proposition which is not only absurd but—untrue.

"Statistics of wealth, commerce, rates of wages, savings, consumption of food, etc., of shipping, revenue, and of the expansion of the great staple trades, give indubitable evidence of the vast advance in comfort of the nation since the abolition of the protective régime." *

It is at last realised that, in spite of that boasted commercial and industrial progression which this country has enjoyed during the last fifty years, other nations, which have protected themselves with all sorts of tariffs—which, by the way, are chiefly directed against Great Britain—have not only experienced similar trade expansion but have actually progressed in commercial and industrial development *to a greater extent* than we have.

REAL CAUSE OF HIGHER STANDARD OF LIVING

The freer facilities for communication with other countries have opened the people's eyes to many facts. Among others

* "The Free-trade Movement," p. 134.

they find, despite the pretty optimism of Free-trade writers in respect to the greater comfort enjoyed by the British people, the better food, housing, clothes, and the higher standard of living and the rest of it, that in some respects the advantages are the other way about. Who, for instance, knowing most of the Capitals of Europe and many of the foreign manufacturing towns, can say that the people are better housed in the foul, festering, two-storied dens which compose many of the streets of Lambeth, Whitechapel, and a score of other poverty-stricken purlieus of London, than those who occupy the spacious buildings erected for the accommodation of workers in Paris, Berlin, Rome, and other Capitals? Then, who would be bold enough to say, having been to both places, that the mean squalid homes of our workers at Oldham and Wigan are superior to those splendidly built, spacious, and wholesome workpeople's homes at Frankfort and Cologne?

This fabulous belief in the superior advantages of British workers, in this respect at least, is dead—killed by its own falseness.

In conservancy many foreign nations are ahead of us, while in respect to lighting there is hardly a town in this country that can compare with practically any town in Europe; the electric light is everywhere, while in some places even the town clocks are electric. Theatres, Opera-houses and Concert-halls, are a feature in most Continental towns, while excellent music is cheap and has the merit of being *run for the people*.

The prosperity of foreign countries has enormously increased, and that this prosperity is *general* is evidenced by the vast accumulations of the money of the people in the National Savings Banks of most foreign States.

SAVINGS OF FOREIGN WORKERS GREATER THAN OUR OWN

The Report of the Gainsborough Commission, copiously referred to in other chapters of this book, conclusively shows that, so far as Germany is concerned, her trade and manufactures have enormously increased, her people are well off, well clothed, housed and fed. There is neither general poverty nor a mass of pauperism as with us, demanding immense State aid and stupendous private charity; there is no constant and growing unemployment among her workers; while the £598,000,000 lying to the credit of German workers in German Savings Banks, against our £209,000,000, offers evidence of a nature that may not be assailed by Free-trade economists—that the phenomenal commercial and industrial prosperity of the German Empire since the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–1, when she

permanently established the Protective system, has at least been shared by the German *people*.

Then they are struck with the extraordinary fact that this progressive prosperity is universal. France, Belgium, Italy, Austria-Hungary, the great German Empire, the United States, our own Colonies, Brazil, Argentina, and the other States of South America, as indeed practically every State in the civilised world, while still adhering to the Protective principle as the basis of their fiscal policy, have one and all shared with Free-trade Great Britain that wonderful trade expansion, that progressive commercial and industrial prosperity, and that advance in material comfort which Free-trade economists would have the people believe is—so far as this country is concerned—really and truly the result of the Free-trade policy.

In face of this mass of opposing evidence it is sufficient to say that to advance a proposition of the kind is to declare its absurdity.

INSULT TO FOREIGN PEOPLES

If Free-traders will for once shake themselves free from the ridiculous notion that Great Britain is the *only* nation in the world capable of industrial effort and business enterprise, and of evolving out of their commercial acumen the only possible, and therefore the only practical fiscal scheme as a common basis for international usage, the better it will be for this country. In assuming this attitude they have not only insulted the intelligence of foreign peoples, but as the United Kingdom is now used as the common dumping ground for the surplus commodities of every nation which has become our industrial competitor, this country is held up as the laughing-stock of every manufacturing nation in the world, as also of those who compete with us in agricultural produce.

Foreign nations are quite capable of looking after their own fiscal arrangements, and the fact that in every case they have shared with this country in that marvellous trade expansion and progressive prosperity which was the common experience of the last half-century proves that, whatever else may be the case, this much-talked-of prosperity which is claimed for Great Britain does not, at least, owe its origin to Free-trade.

This simple fact, indeed, underlies the whole position. The start we obtained with our railways, the rapid conversion of our great mercantile marine into steam vessels, our wealth of coal and vast mineral resources, gave us for a time a decided advantage over other European States; and we wisely took it. This country then embarked on its great industrial and commercial career on a—Free-trade basis.

The other competing countries which came up to the starting line at a later period embarked on a similar career on a—Protective basis.

PROGRESSIVE TRADE DUE TO NATURAL EXPANSION

That both have been equally successful proves that this enormous trade expansion is nothing more or less than a natural development resulting from the phenomenal growth of oceanic communication and the extension of a universal railway system, which renders international intercourse and rapid exchange of commodities perfectly easy. Trade, in short, has but responded to the very natural law of demand and supply, and with the evidence before us of how rapidly *all* the civilised nations of the world have responded to the demand, it is clear that the operation of this law, while remaining practically unaffected by the nature of the fiscal policy adopted by the competing States, is, on the other hand, most powerfully influenced by their productive capabilities, as also by the cost of their commodities. Germany and Belgium, for example, can put certain commodities made of iron on the world's market cheaper than Great Britain can, and these countries naturally supply the demand, irrespective of whether they adopt the Free-trade or the Protective principle as the basis of their fiscal system. In other words, once you give the peoples of the earth ample facilities for free interchange of commodities, the world's trade is bound to expand, and go on expanding, irrespective of the fact of your calling yourself a Free-trader or a Protectionist. This being but the working of a perfectly natural Law, Great Britain would obviously have had her share in this progressive development, *including a higher standard of living*, had she maintained her Protective policy of sixty years ago and altered and adapted it to serve the needs of the people, not only in *one* branch of industry, but in *all* branches, as other countries have done.

The nations of the civilised world have long recognised this fact, and it has prevented and probably may prevent, for an indefinite period, most likely for all time, the fulfilment of Cobden's famous prophecy—

“I believe that if you abolish the Corn Laws honestly and adopt Free-trade in all its simplicity, there will not be a tariff in Europe that will not be changed in less than five years to follow your example.”

CHAPTER XXXI

A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF FREE-TRADE PRINCIPLES (*concluded*)—SOME CATEGORICAL REPLIES TO FREE-TRADE QUESTIONS

ONE of the chief features of most works on economics is its fondness for dealing in abstract principles rather than in concrete examples. To deal in the abstract is to generalise, and to deal in generalities is not to convince.

There is an old saying that—"an ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory," and it is true. The abstract partakes too much of—theory. The concrete is nearer to—practice.

The following passages are examples of the abstract :—

FREE-TRADE POSTULATIONS

"If Great Britain were to insist by means of prohibitive tariffs on making her people grow all their own corn, much labour would be diverted to agriculture, and vast portions of inferior land would need to be cultivated. Since all imports of corn would now cease, the exports of cloth, machinery, etc., by which they are at present purchased would cease also, and the industries which supply them would decline, the mercantile marine, which conducts the trade, would be unemployed, shipbuilding and other subsidiary industries, so far as they depend upon this branch of commerce, would collapse and a vast army of unemployed artisans, now receiving high wages, would be driven to agriculture to provide a bare subsistence from a niggardly soil, or what is more probable, they would leave the country in search of a better livelihood. The effect upon home industry would thus be disastrous." *

"In no circumstances known at present could this country feed her enormous population of 40,000,000 people at their existing standard of subsistence ; to be self-sufficing as regards food, a portion of the population would need to emigrate, and of the remainder, the majority must betake themselves to agricultural pursuits. Is the

* "The Free-trade Movement," pp. 112-113.

nation prepared to put back its progress and revert to that position in order that it may be self-sustaining, when by means of free exchange it is able easily to maintain its vast population in considerable comfort?"

"Our dependence upon other countries has a counterpart; if we take food from them, they take from us manufactured goods; they seek our products as eagerly as we desire their grain."*

"Other countries are for the most part self-supporting as regards food; in this respect the case of Great Britain is exceptional."†

"For good or for evil Great Britain has become dependent upon imported wheat to the extent of more than 70 per cent. of her consumption."‡

GRIM FATEFUL DICTA OF ECONOMICS

Whatever else these grim passages may mean, they tell the British people in plain unmistakable language that, irrespective of all other considerations, they must abandon and cast aside the greatest of all national industries—agriculture—so that Industrialism and Commercialism may have full sway. No other economical interest, and no other human consideration must, for one single moment, be permitted to stand in the way of the onward march of these Imperial forces; everything in the land must yield to them, and whatever sacrifices are necessary on the part of the people, even to the extent of yielding up their chief means of subsistence—*National Agriculture*, such sacrifices must be willingly and cheerfully made. There must be no opposition, and no regrets. INDUSTRIALISM and COMMERCIALISM are to be enthroned as the sovereign rulers of the British people, and the people would do well to submit humbly and peacefully.

THE FREE-TRADE MOLOCH

Since that far-away time when the old Phœnician god claimed his human sacrifices, and the cold-blooded priests of Moloch committed their victims to the flames, there has, perhaps, not been a crueller wrong done to a people than in committing this country to the destruction of its national agriculture and setting up in lieu thereof other industries. The Israelites lost home and country by destroying the temple of the veritable God, and in setting up altars to Baal and Ashtaroth, and the British people have lost much by sacrificing agriculture to the gods of Industrialism and Commercialism.

* "The Free-trade Movement," p. 195.

† *Ibid.*, p. 164.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

Nor is it likely there will be found in all the broad pages of the world's economical history a more humiliating, a more fateful, and, withal, a more *unnecessary* dictum than is contained in the statement at the head of this chapter.

GREAT BRITAIN PUNISHED BY WITLESS MAN

To say that Great Britain cannot grow her own food supplies—as practically all other civilised countries do—because of certain exceptional economic conditions which especially attach themselves to her, but which have no application to other States, is to declare the fact that the people of this country have been singled out for condign punishment, not by the Master of Destiny, but by the wit of man.

Here is an admission of national weakness and failure; of a people's utter helplessness and their complete dependence upon the foreigner for the very bread they eat: the foreigner who, although he may write himself friend to-day, may to-morrow declare himself a foe. This mighty nation of ours, this vast empire upon which the sun never sets, this great people who, by the help of Providence and their own strong right arms, have carved out for themselves and their children an inheritance the like of which the world has never yet beheld, are, nevertheless, reduced to the position of a paralysed cripple.

There is hardly a more pathetic sight in this world than to see a strong muscular man, endowed by his Maker with a splendid frame and ample virile energy, suddenly smitten from his high estate and reduced to the monotony of the sick-couch or the weary perambulations of the bath-chair. To such a nature the administrations of his female friends and nurses, although necessary to his enfeebled and helpless condition, are but the offering up of daily testimony to his crushed manhood—and full well he knows it.

THE FIRST LAW OF NATURE

To deprive a people of the means of feeding themselves is to take from them those means of self-preservation which is axiomatically called—"The first law of Nature." To reduce a people to a state of utter dependence upon outside aid for their daily bread, is to put them in the most unenviable and, indeed, the most perilous position which it is possible for the wit of man to devise.

To devise such a position, either for an individual, or a people, is obviously the *very thing that should not have been done*; and this should be added, that whatever may have been

the considerations which prompted such a fatal position; however great the interests served by so deplorable a disobedience of natural laws: the people should never have been deprived of the means of self-support. That was a fatal error from every point of view, and capable of neither extenuation nor condonation.

FOR GOOD OR FOR EVIL

For good or for evil Great Britain has become dependent upon imported wheat to the extent of more than 70 per cent. of her consumption,

says "scientific" economy; and "scientific Free-trade" economists now uphold the policy which dead and gone manufacturer-reformers thrust upon this country sixty odd years ago.

The first question that naturally arises out of this anomalous and most unnatural position is this—"Is it possible to conceive any circumstances, or any condition or set of conditions, under which one or more sections of the community would be justified in depriving the remaining sections of the means of self-preservation?" To such a question there can only be one emphatic answer—"No."

AN UNNATURAL COURSE

But unfortunately this is the exact position the British people are in to-day. A small band of distinctly interested manufacturer-reformers, sixty years ago, took the unnatural course of depriving the country of its agriculture, and the people of their chief means of support—of self-preservation—and, as a consequence, most untoward and unnatural results have supervened.

Now, out of this amorphous condition strange forms and customs have arisen, and many and various are the remedial measures which have been suggested and applied by all sorts and conditions of "scientific experts," and, strangely enough, instead of regarding the matter as an inevitable result of a simple disobedience of a natural law, numbers of people have come to regard the unique position we have foolishly assumed among the nations as a perfectly normal condition which can be met by the application of the ordinary usages of *political economy*.

This aberration of the national mind, after fatuously seeking aid in all sorts of unlikely places, has now focussed itself on "Employment," but in snatching at the shadow it has

again missed the substance. "Give the people EMPLOYMENT," says Socialism. "Give us EMPLOYMENT," cry the people. "We must find EMPLOYMENT for the people," says the Government of the day; and so all along the line the cry resounds for EMPLOYMENT.

Up to a certain point those who cry for employment are right, but does not the experience of the past clearly show that when the *chief* source of employment has been cut off, all other forms of employment must necessarily become more or less precarious? Tariff-reformers say, "Ah! but when we give home industries the chance they want, by a little judicious help here and there, there will be a regular boom in our manufacturing enterprises, and there will be no lack of labour then." True, again, up to a certain point; but this sanguine prediction, like Cobden's famous Free-trade prophecy, will surely fail unless we grasp the eternal truth, here and now, that until we take the great LAND industry into our consideration and give *it* the place of honour in our deliberations; unless we regard *it* now, and at all times, as the greatest factor in the economical considerations of this or any other country; unless we allow *it* to grow up side by side with our other industries—as all other civilised nations do—and encourage it with our sympathy and support, and help it onwards with our aid and with our material help, if necessary: our efforts to relieve the position will have been made in vain.

ROBBING PETER TO PAY PAUL

It should be understood here that while there is no attempt made to thwart the efforts of Tariff reformers, or in any way to belittle the advantages that would undoubtedly result from a judicious application of some kind of Protection for our industries, the writer would make it quite clear that to help our manufacturing industries and to leave alone the greatest industry of all—agriculture, would be but robbing Peter to pay Paul. This is the very thing we have been doing for the last half-century and more, but it must be obvious to every man who cares to look at the matter without party bias or foolish prejudice, that nothing in the shape of real relief of a permanent nature has ever resulted from any effort to relieve the situation by and through the means of our manufactures, while it remains certain that no lasting relief can come from manufactures *alone*—because the thing is impossible. Tariff-reform *and* Land-reform combined will do what is needed, but one without the other in either case would be but a lop-sided affair that would ensure only lop-sided results. Science

has taught us that bricks *can* be made without straw nowadays, but even science cannot show us how to make them without clay; nor can economical science teach us how to render a people self-supporting and prosperous by depriving them of the means of support and, therefore, of all chances of becoming prosperous. It is clearly against the canons of common-sense, and therefore—impossible.

BRITAIN THE LAUGHING-STOCK OF EUROPE

This is the problem before the British people to-day. They have been forced into a position which is the laughing-stock of all civilised peoples, and which is as full of incongruities as it is of fatal influences; and, instead of seeking directly for the simple truth which underlies this question, they prefer the devious course which leads them directly away from it.

SIX FAMOUS FALLACIES

Reduced to a concrete form, which alone is likely to appeal to the ordinary mind, the chief fallacies to be remembered in the passage quoted at the head of this chapter are—

FALLACY 1. "*In no circumstances known at present could this country feed her enormous population of 40,000,000 people at their existing standard of subsistence.*"

FALLACY 2. "*To be self-sufficing as regards food, a portion of the population would need to emigrate, and of the remainder, the majority must betake themselves to agricultural pursuits, . . . to provide a bare subsistence from a niggardly soil, and a vast army of unemployed artisans now receiving high wages would be driven to agriculture.*"

FALLACY 3. "*Since all imports of corn would now cease, the exports of cloth, machinery, etc., by which they are at present purchased, would cease also, and the industries which supply them would decline . . . shipbuilding and other subsidiary industries . . . would collapse.*"

FALLACY 4. "*Our dependence upon other countries has a counterpart; if we take food from them, they take from us manufactured goods; they seek our products as eagerly as we seek their grain.*"

FALLACY 5. "*Other countries are for the most part self-supporting as regards food; in this respect the case of Great Britain is exceptional.*"

FALLACY 6. "*For good or for evil Great Britain has become dependent upon imported wheat to the extent of more than*

70 per cent. of her consumption. . . . Is the nation prepared to put back its progress and revert to that position in order that it may be self-sustaining?"

These questions of enormous moment will be dealt with seriatim.

FALLACY 1. "*In no circumstances known at present could this country feed her enormous population of 40,000,000 people at their existing standard of subsistence.*"

BRITAIN CAN EASILY FEED HER POPULATION

To affirm that Great Britain cannot feed her population—in *no circumstances known at present*—is to imperfectly state a proposition, and a partly stated question can only be partly answered. The question which is before the country is this: "CAN GREAT BRITAIN FEED HER OWN POPULATION?" The answer is: "YES! WITH PERFECT EASE."

To put this momentous case before the public in any other form would be to beg the question, and the people are sick and tired of the fine-spun quiddities which have been cast around this matter for the last half-century. They want straight questions and straight answers; a square, stand-up fight, in fact, and neither the quibbling of political parties nor the clever prestidigitation of "scientific" economists will be of further avail.

To ask if Great Britain can grow all her own corn and other food-stuffs *to-day*, is to ask if a man, although a strong swimmer, who has been tied up hand and foot, and trussed up like a turkey ready for roasting, would be likely to swim if cast into the water? "Not likely" is the answer here, but remove his bonds; release him from his trussings, and he would swim fast enough.

In respect to growing all her own food supplies, Great Britain is like the tied and trussed swimmer—she can not only grow all the corn she requires for her own consumption, *but millions of quarters besides*, but she has been so tied up by the bonds which political parties have cast about her for the last sixty years and more; and so trussed and girded about by the fetters which economic "science" has forged for her out of the fecundity of its own immateriality: that although even now she might be able to grow what she requires, it would be difficult.

But loose her from her bonds and trussings, set her free—as every other civilised country in this world is free—from all those absurd restrictions which a ridiculous agricultural system

and a fatuous fiscal system have cast about her land industry, and she will be able to grow all her own corn, butter, cheese, poultry, eggs, bacon, vegetables, and practically every ounce of food she requires for her own population, and—a *great deal more besides if necessary*.

The bill for these importations amounts to £172,000,000 annually, every penny of which could be put into the pockets of our agriculturists with the greatest ease.

PRESENT BARS TO SUCCESSFUL AGRICULTURE

The restrictions to agriculture are well known and well marked, and consist chiefly of two formidable obstacles, (a) Impossible land tenures; (b) an impossible fiscal system.

Tariff-reforms will most likely remove the latter obstruction before long; while the former will soon be entirely changed and remodelled on up-to-date rational lines by the common-sense of the people. Agriculture, "*small holdings*," "*back to the land*," and such-like matters, have been much in the public mind of late, and public thought will soon find material expression in overt action.

Give to the country a sensible system of land tenures whereunder every cultivator of the soil, who could render a good account of himself, would have reasonable chances of acquiring proprietary rights over the land he tills, and this country would not only grow all her own corn, but a lot more for export, if other people wanted it—which they are not foolish enough to do.

As the ways and means to this end have been clearly set forth in Chapters XXIV. to XXVII., it is only necessary to add that, as this country possesses, according to Parliamentary returns, 49,000,000 acres of "cultivated" land *which comprises the finest wheat-growing lands in the world*, the 280,000,000 bushels of wheat which the United Kingdom requires annually for her own consumption could be grown with the greatest ease.

Here is the matter in a nutshell:

The average wheat consumption of the United Kingdom is 280,000,000 bushels. The average yield per acre is 32 bushels.* The average area under wheat annually to produce the 280,000,000 bushels would be 8,750,000 acres.

AMPLE AREA FOR CORN GROWING

This wheat area, which represents a little more than one-sixth of the "cultivated" area, is, as every farmer knows, well

* Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, 1908, Cd. 4445.

within that proportion demanded by a reasonable system of crop rotation, and from this point of view, at least, the question of growing all our own corn comes clearly within the scope of practicability. There is, however, as is shown in other chapters of this book, a vast "uncultivated" area of about 16,000,000 acres which could easily be brought under the plough—once this country were given a sensible agricultural system—and added to the "cultivated" area of 49,000,000 acres. Much of this added area would prove to be excellent corn land.

That the agricultural possibilities of this country are enormous, there is no question.

That this power is to-day expressed by potentialities rather than by a living, active force, is also true.

That our great land industry is still a potentiality, instead of a vast power exuberant with vital energy, is partly due to inept administration influenced by the vested interests of the Manchester School, and those who uphold present land tenures, and partly to political economists, who, by the laws of an inexact "science," teach the people it is better to let their land lie idle than to cultivate it.

Science is an excellent thing to have and to hold, and without it there would be but little progression in many human affairs. It is as necessary to the individual as to the nation, and no man would be foolish enough to deny its efficacy or deride its teachings. But there are certain limitations beyond which even Science may not venture, and if she has the temerity to do so she becomes as much liable to a rebuff as would an ordinary individual who had rashly exceeded the limitations set by Prudence.

SCIENTISTS CONFOUND "LAWS" WITH "THEOREMS"

If political economists call to their aid the doctrines of economic science, and persuade themselves that they are dealing with the *laws* of an exact science, and not with the *theorems* of economists, they lay themselves open to a rebuff the moment the invalidity of their reasoning becomes apparent.

Over sixty years ago the people were persuaded to abandon their land when there was not the slightest necessity for doing anything of the kind. Since that period political economists have done more to keep alive this fatal belief than any other section of the community, and have exercised a greater influence over the question than anything else in the kingdom.

The time has now come to treat the entire matter of growing our own corn from a rational, common-sense point of view, a

point of view which by no means commends itself to Free-traders or to "scientific" economists; nevertheless, this view must be taken in *national* interests, or Great Britain will lose her exalted position among the nations.

The next point under consideration is :—

FALLACY 2. "*To be self-sufficing as regards food, a portion of the population would need to emigrate, and of the remainder, the majority must betake themselves to agricultural pursuits . . . to provide a bare subsistence from a niggardly soil, and a vast army of unemployed artisans now receiving high wages would be driven to agriculture.*"

This statement postulates a position which has no material basis, while it, moreover, contains a radical economical error of the first importance, which seriously impairs the validity of its writer's reasoning. It shows, at the same time, an imperfect knowledge of the enormous power of Britain's great land industry, and a disbelief in the marvellous fertility and tremendous capabilities of British soil.

The mischief of all this is that so long as we have "economists" who disbelieve in the far-reaching advantages arising from cultivating our own soil instead of allowing it to remain untilled; and "scientists" who tell the people it is better for them to import their food-stuffs from abroad and pay for them with manufactured goods—as the *sole means of supporting our industries*—than to grow them themselves on their own splendid soil and with their own strong hands, so long will this mischievous fallacy be maintained to the national detriment and the people's ruin.

FIGHT THE FALLACY BY EXPLAINING IT

The best way to fight this evil is to explain it!

In the first place, to say that if we grow our own corn—a *vast army of unemployed artisans, now receiving high wages, would be driven to agriculture*—is to generalise, and to generalise in economics is one of the easiest things in the world; and it is because people have hitherto accepted these doctrinal generalisations of "expert" and "scientific" economists as the *laws* of an "exact" science—which economics is a long way from being—that they have been beguiled into all sorts of extraordinary beliefs in respect to that valuable labour-employing and wealth-producing possession of theirs—THE LAND.

Political economy, or economics, political science, and any other 'ology or 'ism that has to do with the politics of any country, is necessarily a complicated affair, and in the hands of

dexterous men it is as capable of being played upon to suit the particular taste of the operator for the time being, as is a musical instrument in the hands of a skilful performer; and the sooner the people of this country awake to the realisation of this important fact the better it will be for them.

Political economists, Free-traders, and all who are interested in keeping the great agricultural industry in its present debilitated and impotent condition—a condition for which they are entirely responsible—are in the position of the man with the battle-axe who, having lopped off his adversary's sword arm, taunts him because of his powerlessness to defend himself. The enemies of agriculture first deprive the land of its fertility by throwing it out of cultivation, and then taunt it with its inability to feed the people. "*In no circumstances known at present could this country feed her enormous population,*" cry Free-trade economists, and were it not for the deep tragedy underlying the irony, the situation would be like "Charley's Aunt"—utterly ridiculous and brimming over with fun.

Why will not those who have placed their country in this anomalous position condescend to enlighten their fellow-countrymen, who are seeking information, how the lands of England can produce food for her people when they are lying—WASTE?

DO MEN GATHER GRAPES OF THORNS?

"Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" said the Master; and to-day it might be asked—"Do waste lands produce corn? How can they feed the people when an arbitrary, unjust, and suicidal economical system, born of interested Free-traders, decrees that they shall lie STERILE?"

The facts are clear. To grow all our own corn is to premise a state of agricultural prosperity in this country the like of which has not been witnessed for generations; in fact, a state which has never been witnessed in the history of our country.

Internal agricultural prosperity, of that universal nature which this industry must necessarily assume, once we produce all our own food, would assuredly create a large extra demand for all kinds of manufactured goods which does not exist at the present time, because of the attenuated and poverty-stricken agricultural class which now clings to an enfeebled agricultural industry.

As the purchasing power of a vast community of thriving agriculturists planted in the midst of a great manufacturing country must necessarily be greater than that of the present insignificant body, many of whom are so badly paid as to be on the verge of destitution, it follows that a strong natural impulse

would be given to all our manufacturing industries which could but have the effect of raising wages and assuring employment to all artisans, instead of throwing them out of employment.

Industries do not decline nor does commerce collapse because you create in your midst a great agricultural industry where none existed before, nor does the creation of an extra industry, added to those which already exist, give birth to "*a vast army of unemployed artisans.*" The very reverse of this is bound to happen automatically, and yet certain political economists—as we have seen—tell us that it cannot be so, and that if you start a great agricultural industry you are sure to bring ruin upon many other industries.

A FUNDAMENTAL ERROR

The first part of this extraordinary statement contains the fundamental error that has just been pointed out, and the writer of the passage should now explain his proposition, as most people fail to see how it is possible for a large army of industrial artisans to be thrown out of employment by the creation of another industry—agriculture—which must necessarily take in exchange for *its* products a like value of *manufactured* commodities.

This part of the Free-trade dictum contains such an obvious, fundamental economical error that it would be a supererogation to consider it further.

The other question involved in the point we are considering is that the vast army of unemployed artisans, which growing our own corn would start into life, "*would be driven to agriculture to provide a bare subsistence from a niggardly soil.*"

To call the magnificent land of the United Kingdom a "*niggardly soil*"—is either to wilfully mislead the people or to show a most profound ignorance of the agricultural capabilities of the country.

If there is one country more than another which possesses the most highly productive land in this world, it is this country, and we, moreover, possess it in such abundance that there would not be the slightest need for any recourse to "*those vast portions of inferior land*" which so much alarms the writer of "The Free-trade Movement," and to which he refers in the excerpt which heads this chapter.

AMPLE LAND FOR FOOD PRODUCTION

The Board of Agriculture tells us there are in round numbers 49,000,000 acres of "cultivated," and 16,000,000 acres of "cultivable" land in the United Kingdom; but leaving the

latter item out of consideration for the moment—although most of it is just as good land as the “cultivated” area—there is, still, the larger area available for wheat.

It is true that only 1,663,000 acres were in wheat in 1907, but this deplorable fact offers no evidence of the unsuitableness of such land for arable purposes, but only of the ineptness of our present agricultural system which forces the farmer to convert the bulk of his best arable land into pastures and sheep-feeds, because it pays him better to grow sheep and cattle than to till it for the purpose for which it was primarily intended, and to which purpose it is put in every country in the world save our own, namely, to produce food for, and give employment to, the people.

Briefly, it may be stated that this so-called “cultivated” area of 49 millions of acres, taken as a whole, constitutes the best area of corn-producing land which can be found on this globe.

Here, for example, is a little statement of facts culled from the latest Parliamentary papers on the subject, and, in face of the plain truths therein set forth, it might well be asked—“What justification has the writer of ‘The Free-trade Movement’ for his condemnation of the very finest corn-growing land in the world?”

AVERAGE YIELD OF WHEAT PER ACRE IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES *

	Bushels.		Bushels.
United Kingdom	33·98	India	10·71
Argentina	10·58	New South Wales	11·69
Austria	17·49	Ontario	21·96
France	19·88	Queensland	8·41
Germany	29·59	United States	13·57
Hungary	15·19	Victoria	11·13

BRITISH SOIL THE MOST PRODUCTIVE

Here we find that Great Britain heads the list in point of productiveness of practically every corn-producing country in the world, and heads it by a long lead, and the question which has now to be put, and to which a direct answer will be required, is this: “For what purpose, and with what intent, were the people led to believe that theirs was a ‘*Niggardly* soil,’ and that if Great Britain were to grow her own corn—‘*vast portions of inferior land would need to be cultivated*’?”

Much has been made of Britain’s agricultural weakness by Free-traders, political parties, and political economists—each one having some interest to serve—and between them all they

* Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, 1907, Cd. 4445.

have reduced the people's greatest wealth-producing industry to the pitiable condition it is in to-day—the laughing-stock of the nations and an ever-present menace to a world-wide Empire; but to call our magnificently fertile land “a niggardly soil” is to open all at once the vials of vituperation on that much-abused and sorely degraded quantity; while to assert that vast quantities of *inferior* land would need to be cultivated before we could produce our own wheat is simply to—mislead. But “any stick to beat a dog” is good enough, and it is evident that those who take a delight in belittling Britain's agriculture avail themselves of this and all other means to that end.

There is nothing “niggardly” about British soil, but there is much that is niggardly and wrong about these British political parties, British political economists and others of that ilk, who, whatever may be the considerations which urge them to it, persuade the people that it is better to sacrifice their splendid agricultural resources on the altars of Commercialism and Industrialism than to run them side by side with those industries as, indeed, with every other industry which this great country is capable of launching into existence. A bar to successful agriculture exists; a mighty obstacle purposely put there by the *manufacturer-reformers* of the “hungry forties”; but remove the bar and there would be no more misleading statements about *niggardly soil*, *inferior lands*, and the rest of such claptrap phrases.

MORE SCIENTIFIC FALLACIES

FALLACY 3. “*Since all imports of corn would now cease, the exports of cloth, machinery, etc., by which they are at present purchased, would cease also, and the industries which supply them would decline . . . shipbuilding and other subsidiary industries . . . would collapse.*”

Here again the writer indulges in abstract theories and generalisations instead of giving concrete examples showing how, and when, and in what specific instances, our industries would suffer by this country ceasing to import its corn.

In pages 103–7 and in page 120 of “The Free-trade Movement” we are particularly reminded that the world's trade is carried on by commodities in exchange for commodities, and that these are practically the only means of exchange, money being but a token, or the measure and standard of trade.

“Trading is done in *terms* of money, that is, in price; gold is the measure and standard, but its transport is avoided as much as possible. And as in the internal trade of the country cheques and

bills are estimated to perform some 95 per cent. of the exchanges of the nation, so in foreign commerce exchanges are effected by means of bills. The operations are refined and technical ; the result is that debts for goods are balanced against one another through the agency of credit documents representing money, and by the aid of the machinery of banking. Thus the foreign trade of the world is carried on with comparatively little metallic currency ; goods are bought with goods, imports with exports, balances only being paid in gold.

“The object of international, as of individual exchanges, is to obtain the commodities we need, and the goods we part with are merely instruments for gaining as much as possible of those we desire.”

This is a commercial law which is well understood and to which no objection can be urged. It is, moreover, a law which knows no change and applies as inexorably to the internal trade of a country as to its external commercial transactions. Indeed, the writer of the work we are quoting admits this—“*As in the internal trade of the country cheques and bills are estimated to perform some 95 per cent. of the exchanges of the nation, so in foreign commerce, exchanges are effected by means of bills.*” In other words, goods, commodities, kind, or whatever term we may prefer to employ, play the chief part in the exchanges of the world, while the actual *money* transactions play a comparatively insignificant part.

GOODS MUST BE PAID FOR BY GOODS

It follows, then, as commodities must necessarily be paid for in commodities, it matters not at all whether the 170 odd millions' worth of agricultural produce which we need to purchase annually for our consumption, be produced in foreign countries or in our own. *Goods must be paid for by goods* ; that is the commercial law, and it follows that under any circumstances the agriculturists—whether they be foreign or British—who produce the £170,000,000 worth of agricultural produce, *must necessarily receive that amount of other commodities in exchange.*

It then remains quite clear that whether we grow our own corn or import it, manufactures, merchants, and traders would still be called upon to produce various commodities to exchange for an equal value of agricultural produce, and *their* position, together with the workers engaged in the production of the commodities, would not be affected one way or the other. But when we get down to the great masses of the people it will presently be seen that growing our own foods in our own

country, or growing them in foreign countries, has a far deeper significance for them than most people realise.

The first result of growing our own corn would be the cessation of imported corn, but commodities of equal value would still be required to pay for the corn locally produced, since the economic law holds good here, as everywhere else, that the world's trade is carried on by commodities in exchange for commodities, and not by gold in exchange for goods.

A CONCRETE EXAMPLE DEMONSTRATED

This proposition is easily demonstrable by taking a concrete example of a small farmer holding fifty acres, we will say, who produces agricultural commodities to the value of £500 annually. With the proceeds he buys all he requires to enable him to carry on his industry—seeds, manure, agricultural implements, horses, carts and harness, food, clothing, fuel, lighting, and all other necessities of life. Then he spends money on the erection of new buildings or the up-keep of old ones. The residue at the end of each year is profit, and whether this be £5 or £50 it represents the insignificant part that gold really plays in the world's trade—everything else having been paid for *by commodities in exchange for commodities*.

As our farmer of fifty acres, then, is forced by an inexorable commercial economic law to exchange his agricultural produce for other commodities, every other agriculturist in this country, or elsewhere, must do likewise, for it is a law that none may evade. It further follows that as British agriculturists are likely to require in exchange for their agricultural produce much the same kind of goods as their *confrères* in foreign countries, who have hitherto grown our corn for us, it matters not one jot to our manufacturers whether the demand for such goods comes from this country or from abroad, so long as there *is* a demand. To *supply* the demand is what mainly concerns them, and so long as they are called upon to do this, the *source* of the demand is necessarily of comparatively little moment.

HOW ECONOMISTS IGNORE FACTS

But there is yet another aspect of this many-sided question which it pleases Free-trade economists to ignore. It is this. The United States sends us £1000 worth of wheat; we send them £1000 worth of manufactured goods (not that we do so, but we admit the principle) in exchange, and there the matter ends. Nobody benefits from the transaction in this country

save the merchants and manufacturers and those engaged in producing the £1000 worth of commodities.

If we grow our own £1000 worth of wheat, the merchants, manufacturers, and those engaged in the production would still be called upon to make their £1000 worth of commodities, to exchange for the wheat, while a number of other persons would also benefit owing to the many subsidiary industries which necessarily grow out of agriculture.

It is beyond question, then, that a given amount of agricultural produce, whether grown in Great Britain, Argentina, or the United States, would necessarily have to be paid for in other commodities—including cloth, machinery, etc.—of like value. It then becomes clear that the contention of Free-trade economists that “*the industries which supply them would decline*,” is built upon a fundamental economical error, and is, therefore, void of foundation.

The remaining contention on this point that “*shipbuilding and subsidiary industries would decline if we ceased to import our food supplies*,” while offering certain *prima facie* evidence of the validity of the argument, is capable of bearing an altogether different aspect when looked at more closely.

DANGER OF DEALING IN ABSTRACT PRINCIPLES

The practice of dealing in abstract principles is dangerous, because you cannot, in many instances, apply them to the daily needs of our domestic life. You may *theorise* to your heart's content in the complicated and widely ramifying properties of economic science, and honestly believe that you have, by induction and deduction, not only fixed certain principles but laid down actual economic *laws*, only to find that the moment you attempt to apply your “laws” to the individual or collective requirements of your fellow-mortals, your laws are not laws but only a set of economic theories of so fragile a nature as to be shattered to pieces the moment they come in contact with the rude touch of human life.

This is apparently the line of reasoning largely followed by most political economists, and so long as they indulge in such easy generalisations in this *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* method of dealing with so grave and complicated a subject, the validity of their judgment in all economical questions must remain open to serious objection.

In the particular matter under consideration, the writer of “The Free-trade Movement” has left out of his calculations several factors destined to play an important part in the game

we are watching. That he recognises the importance of *subsidiary* industries, is shown by his reference to such industries in connection with his predicted decline in our "shipbuilding" trade. This is the passage—

"Shipbuilding, and other subsidiary industries, so far as they depend upon this branch of Commerce, would collapse."

WHAT FREE-TRADERS IGNORE

He, however, conveniently ignores the importance of the many industries that are subsidiary to *agriculture*, and which would spring into vigorous existence the moment agriculture became a strong national industry, full of life and energy, instead of the poor, crushed, enfeebled thing we have in our land industry of to-day. This is blowing hot and cold in the same breath!

It has just been shown that the first result of growing our own corn would be the cessation of imported corn, but it should be made quite clear by repeating the important fact that *this could not possibly mean any decrease in the volume of imported raw or semi-manufactured material of equal value to the agricultural produce less imported, since commodities of even value would have to be made by us in exchange for all agricultural produce, whether imported from foreign countries or grown in Great Britain.*

The only effect that growing our own corn could possibly have on the British shipping trade, would be in ceasing to bring us a certain amount of wheat and flour; but as it is a statistical fact that Great Britain owns but one-half of the world's carrying trade, it follows that her shipping trade would only be partially affected in respect hereto.

But even this slight falling off in tonnage would be more than compensated for by the creation and establishment, on a firm basis, of a universal system of agriculture in the midst of a great industrial country, which would be sure to offer a strong stimulus to trades and manufactures; and as more and more raw material from foreign countries would be required to meet the ever-growing demand of this immense prosperous agricultural community, there is every probability that the *aggregate* result would be an increase in our imports and a corresponding increase in our exports, rather than a decrease.

SUBSIDIARY INDUSTRIES: THEIR BENEFICENT EFFECT

Then, it by no means follows that this is the last move in the game; on the contrary, it is but the beginning of a new

order of things which is destined to have a far-reaching beneficial effect on the British people: and certainly not that grievous consequence to British shipping which the writer of "The Free-trade Movement" would have us suppose.

The immediate effect of producing in our own country £170,000,000 worth of agricultural produce would be the creation of a widespread agricultural population, which would be numbered in millions, and whose purchasing power would obviously be enormous. This prosperous community, interspersed throughout the length and breadth of the land, demanding from our manufacturers, and others, at least £170,000,000 worth of goods annually in exchange for their agricultural produce, would manifestly launch into being a veritable host of subsidiary industries which certainly do not exist to-day. Seedsmen, chemical manure makers, agricultural implement makers, cartwrights, harness makers, horse breeders, builders, carpenters, blacksmiths, painters, grocers, bakers, clothiers, bootmakers, drapers, haberdashers, stationers, booksellers, agricultural labourers, and many other wage-earners too numerous to mention, would grow out of a widespread, prosperous, agricultural industry as naturally as good wheat grows on a fruitful soil. The collective purchasing powers of these subsidiary industries would form no inconsiderable factor in the industrial question of the day, as they would be sure to invigorate our manufactures and trades, and to leave them out of calculation is to commit an elementary error in economics.

AGRICULTURAL PROFITS LOST TO THE COUNTRY

Another highly important factor in the situation which it pleases Free-trade economists to ignore is the question of—*profits and their destination.*

To carry on an annual trade in food-stuffs of £170,000,000 annually, there must be profits, and considerable profits too. What becomes of them? The Indian ryot hoards them; that is to say, any surplus cash he may have at the end of his year's work, he either literally buries in the ground, or he melts his rupees down into bangles for his women. The Russian peasant is not particularly enterprising in the investment of such profits as he may make; while it is certain that the wheat growers of the United States, Canada, Argentina, or the farmers of other foreign States from which we draw our food supplies, do not invest *their* profits in this country.

It may be contended by these economists that they *do* invest their profits in this country inasmuch as the sale price

of a commodity includes cost, charges *and* profits; but however profound may be the knowledge of the gentlemen who dabble in national statistics and parade before a wondering world whole battalions of statistical statements, they can never prove that the Indian ryot who buries his savings in Mother Earth, or the astute American farmer who sells his hundred dollars' worth of wheat to his English cousin across the water, take from this country an *exact equivalent value in British goods*. The thing is impossible of proof, and however proud we may be of our economic science, our statistical knowledge, and of our many 'isms and 'ologies, no "scientist" will ever be able to prove to anybody's satisfaction that the foreigner, who sells us a quarter of wheat, or a hundred fowls' eggs, invests his profits in this country or takes in exchange for them an *exact equivalent value of British goods*.

FOREIGNERS BUY FROM US LESS THAN THEY SELL

Nor would such a contention find any support from the national statistics themselves; indeed, these would appear to prove the contrary, inasmuch as our *imports largely exceed our exports*. Here are the figures for 1907: Imports, £645,807,942; Exports, £426,035,083;* and when it is officially declared that we import £127,000,000 worth of goods annually more than we export, it can be well understood that those who supply us with the enormous total of our imported foods have ample scope of buying from us less than they send us. Briefly—the foreign countries *do not* buy from us as much as they sell us, nor are their profits on the £170,000,000 worth of agricultural produce, which we buy from them annually, *invested in this country*.

If, on the other hand, we produce this stupendous amount of food-stuffs in our own country, it follows that the profits accruing from so great an industry would be invested and re-invested in and among our own commercial enterprises. In addition to this the numerous *subsidiary* industries which must necessarily spring out of so universal a system of agriculture, would, in combination with this intelligible factor, play so important a part in stimulating our own trades and manufactures that extra supplies of raw and semi-manufactured material from foreign countries would have to be imported to meet the increased and growing local demand. The extent of this new, and yet perfectly intelligible, demand is impossible to

* Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom. Cd. 4258: 1908.

determine because of the multitudinous ramifications of all economic questions; but that it would go far to compensate for any falling off in imports of wheat that might be experienced through the local production of our own corn supplies, is clear enough. It might fully compensate for such decrease; indeed, this would appear to be the case for the following reasons:—

GROWING OUR OWN CORN UNAFFECTS CARRYING TRADE

It is held by economists that the world's carrying trade is not affected by the increase or decrease in the imports or exports of any particular country, but only by an increase or decrease in the *aggregate* trade of the world. This is an economical dictum that practically amounts to a *law*. The fact of growing our own wheat instead of importing it does not diminish the *world's* trade by a single ton, it simply shifts the venue from one country to another, in so far as this particular item of merchandise is concerned; and as our country—which would assume the new *rôle* of wheat growing—is infinitely richer than many of those that have hitherto maintained it, it is evident that its purchasing power would be greater.

The greater the purchasing power of a people, the greater is the demand for commodities; and the greater the demand for manufactured goods, the more must raw material be imported. This also is an economical dictum practically amounting to a law.

Although, then, there seems to be a certain amount of *primâ facie* evidence that growing our own corn would result in a falling off of imports to *that extent only*, it does not seem to be capable of substantiation when the *pros* and *cons* of the case are circumstantially examined.

Summing up the case, it seems as though there is at first sight a certain amount of evidence that might support the abstract theory that growing our own corn would result in a falling off of imports to the extent and value of the corn less imported; but, like many "abstract" propositions, it is utterly incapable of demonstration the moment it is tested by the practical common-sense experience demanded in "concrete" examples. Indeed, few, if any, of these pretty economical theories are capable of substantiation, when the *pros* and *cons* of the case are circumstantially examined; and those who care to put practically the whole of the Free-trade contentions, as expounded in "The Free-trade Movement," to similar tests, will soon learn upon what an unsubstantial basis the entire Free-trade structure has been founded.

We might now briefly consider the next point, namely—

FALLACY 4. "*Our dependence upon other countries has a counterpart; if we take food from them, they take from us manufactured goods; they seek our products as eagerly as we seek their grain.*"

This remarkable contention has been answered in the immediately preceding pages; but as it stands in the original text of "*The Free-trade Movement*," as a separate proposition, and as it, moreover, forms one of the main contentions of Free-trade economists, it may well be entitled to separate attention.

Now, unless there be some indefinable economic subtlety deeply underlying this significant affirmation, of so fine-spun a nature as to remain undiscernible by the ordinary intellect, it is singularly remarkable for its *naïveté*.

That such foreign nations as supply us with food must take our goods in exchange, is perfectly true, and that in this they are simply obeying a universal economic law, or commercial custom, from which it appears that no nation or individual in this world may escape, is equally true; but to affirm, or to lead unreflecting people to suppose there can possibly be any other way, or method, or form of payment, or that our products would not be as eagerly sought after by our own people—if we ceased to depend upon other countries for food, and grew it ourselves—is either to display a most elementary knowledge of economics, or to wilfully mislead the people. Abandoning sophistry, the plain statement of the case is as follows:—

BRITISH PRODUCTS IN DEMAND IRRESPECTIVE OF SOURCE OF FOOD SUPPLY

Suppose Germany, for example, provided us with the whole of our food-stuffs, Germany could only take from us in exchange an equal value—or as much as it suited her to take—of other goods. Substitute the United States for Germany and precisely the same thing would happen. Change the source of supply to our own colonies and call upon Australia and Canada to provide our food for us, and still no change in the mode of payment would be experienced. Shift yet once more the venue from Canada to Ireland—supposing for the moment that the Emerald Isle *could* supply us—and it would still be found that Ireland would take in exchange for her wheat and other foods a *corresponding amount of other commodities*.

Now make your final change and grow all your wheat and

other foods in the United Kingdom, and still there would be no departure from the universal law that *goods must be paid for in goods*. The United Kingdom would have to pay for her home-grown agricultural produce in precisely the same manner as she now pays Argentina, Russia, and the United States for the corn and other foods they supply us with—namely—in *other commodities*.

Whatever may be the amount of agricultural produce grown on British soil, it *must* be paid for chiefly in British manufactures, goods, or other commodities demanding the employment of British labour. In spite, then, of all the fine-spun subtleties of economic “science” and the mendaciousness of the Manchester School, who fancy they would lose by destroying existing conditions, British merchants must continue to import from foreign countries that vast amount of raw material which must come to us annually, to enable British manufacturers to supply goods in exchange for British grown wheat and other agricultural produce. It is, moreover, plain that there would be no diminution in value or in volume of these annual imports, because, since produce must be paid for by produce, goods, commodities, or whatever term we prefer to use, it matters not to British merchants and manufacturers whether Britain grows her own corn or whether she imports it.

BRITISH-GROWN WHEAT PAID FOR IN BRITISH MANUFACTURES

Since, then, the fact stands out with remarkable clearness, that under every conceivable economic condition that can be applied to this question, British manufactures and British merchants and traders must necessarily produce goods of British make and give them in exchange for agricultural produce of like value, *whether grown in this country or imported from abroad*, the question which naturally suggests itself to the mind of every British subject, who remains untainted by the views of party politics and unfettered by the restrictions of a narrow economical creed is—“Why was so shallow a pretext, containing, as it does, an elementary economical error, ever put forward?” Those responsible for the proposition can best demonstrate it.

The point now under consideration is this—

FALLACY 5. “*Other countries are, for the most part, self-supporting as regards food; in this respect the case of Great Britain is exceptional.*”

To dispossess a country of its natural means of self-support and then to charge it with being in an *exceptional* position in

respect to its food supplies, is to deprive a man of his eye-sight and then to reproach him for not being able to see.

CYNICAL INDIFFERENCE TO FACTS

This line of reasoning is so deliberately cold, selfish, cruel, and professedly cynical, as to positively offend and disgust that enormous section of the British community which has hitherto posed as spectators of what they regarded as an interesting comedy between Free-traders and their opponents, but which they now perceive is a vast National Drama full of pathos and deep tragedy. They are, moreover, tired to death of the Jesuitical juggleries and the eternal Machiavelianisms of "scientific economists," political economists, and others of the same cult, and would prefer to see the entire question of whether we can, or cannot, grow our own corn, and whether we should, or should *not*, grow it, reduced to its last and proper denomination—GROW IT, and then let the common-sense of the British people determine the results. "Too much talk and too little work" is, perhaps, the greatest enemy of the British people to-day, and it is certain that so long as they permit their better judgment to be beguiled by those who tell them that Great Britain is, as regards her food supplies, in an EXCEPTIONAL position, so long will the fallacy be maintained to their own undoing and the destruction of National interests.

Whether we grow our own food supplies or get foreigners to grow them for us, is a vital question that affects the interests of the British people as no other question can affect them; and yet Free-trade economists treat it as a matter of course, and either with light-hearted levity, or a supreme disregard of every interest outside the narrow circle of their own selfish considerations.

Great Britain is not in a position to provide her people with ample supplies of home-grown agricultural produce, and Free-trade economists not only put her in that position, but keep her in a condition of helpless dependence upon foreign countries for her daily bread.

PRODUCING OUR OWN FOOD A BURNING QUESTION

This is a question which has not found favour with the British public till quite recently, but now that the pauper yoke is becoming intolerable and the unemployed question pressing; now that militant Socialism is battering at the doors of the commonwealth, and demanding from Society drastic changes in

many directions; now that reactionary measures are talked of in the Clubs, in railway carriages, and the saloons of ocean liners; in drawing-room and kitchen, by the rich man in his sumptuous home and by the poor man in his cottage—the fact of whether we are or are not to grow our own wheat and produce our own butter, cheese, poultry, eggs, and the hundred and one other items of food required daily for the sustenance of our own people, is becoming one of the burning questions of the day.

The British people are truly in the “*exceptional*” position claimed for them by Free-trade economists, and they are in a false position, a position which invites external attack and breeds internal pauperism, unemployment, well-grounded discontent, disloyalty and degradation, all of which, and much more combined, will surely result in the disintegration of the empire. The people are deprived of the means of producing their own food and the means of universal employment in the wholesome, life-giving, and wealth-producing industry of agriculture because, forsooth, in their mania for securing cheap food for what they euphoniously call the *masses*, those who have some purpose to serve have insanely sacrificed every other interest. They have, moreover, wilfully ignored all those varied complicated considerations which ramify through the lives and domestic economy of a great people as the tendons, fibres, and nerves ramify through the human body.

WHO FORM “THE MASSES”?

If, for example, those uncompromising economists, Free-traders, political prestidigitators, the Manchester School, and the rest of that coterie of possibly well-meaning but misguided enthusiasts, who have thrust what is, by misnomer, called a “Free” trade policy upon the British people, had for a moment considered that what it has pleased them to call the *masses*, the *working-classes*, the *proletariat*, and the rest of the catch-penny phrases they are so fond of trotting out at election times, must, or should, in this, as in every country in the world, *necessarily consist chiefly of the agricultural classes*—they might possibly have been induced to pause before finishing their work.

AGRICULTURAL POPULATION LARGEST IN ALL COUNTRIES

It has been shown in other chapters that the agricultural population of practically all civilised States is necessarily larger than any other section, while even in this country, with a sorely

attenuated and enfeebled land industry, agriculture still employs a greater head of the population *than the whole of our great textile and mining industries put together*. Given, however, a sensible, sound, practical system of land tenures, as suggested in other parts of this work, which Great Britain must have before she can emerge from the sea of troubles which now surround her, *she would then have an agricultural population of anything from ten to fifteen millions of people employed in the land industry and subsisting upon the fruits of the earth*.

These are the *masses*, the *working classes*, the *proletariat* which have suffered terribly at the hands of those who forced their Free-trade scheme upon this unfortunate country. Ten millions of the people have been left out in the cold so that other ten millions, we will say, might have cheap food. Ten millions of our fellow-countrymen have practically been deprived of the means of providing themselves with food, at any price, so that the favoured ten millions might buy *their* food a trifle cheaper. The vast agricultural population which is the greatest wealth-producer of every country in the world, civilised or uncivilised, and which is rightly regarded as the backbone and mainstay of every nation, must be deprived of *their* rightful and legitimate occupation and driven into the great towns to swell an already overflowing population, because certain commodities must be cheapened to a more favoured section of the population. This great agricultural population which, added to what is called the *submerged tenth*, although far exceeding in numbers those industrial workers which somebody has called the "aristocracy of labour," must, nevertheless, submit, partly because the sacrifice of all agricultural interests forms part of the Free-trade policy, and partly because these industrial workers, owing to their trades unions and general powers of organisation, have become a powerful political influence in a country wherein the interests of the commonweal are invariably subordinated to the interests of the party. The agricultural population, on the other hand, owing to its sore distresses of the last half a century, remains unorganised and therefore—unrepresented in the affairs of the nation and as voiceless as a mute.

CLASS INTEREST THE BOTTOM OF FREE-TRADE

Class interest was the *vera causa* of the Free-trade movement sixty odd years ago, and class interests are now fighting hard to maintain the Free-trade policy. The following admission is significant:—

"It has been charged against the movement that the manufacturers were fighting and providing funds for the League in their

own interests. This was true in a certain sense, for their trade was languishing ; but they also pleaded the cause of their workmen, who were starving owing to want of employment, because foreign markets were practically closed by the tax on the commodity with which foreigners were willing to buy their goods. Further, it was a cause in which all purchasers of food were interested, for the benefits accruing from activity in trade and an abundant supply of food cannot be restricted to any one class or industry ; they concern the nation as a whole. In a speech afterwards made in Manchester, Cobden admitted fully this class-interest in the movement. He said, 'I am afraid that most of us entered upon the struggle with the belief that we had some distinct class-interest in the question.' As Mr. Morley remarks, however, 'The class-interest widened into a consciousness of a commanding national interest. The class-interest of the manufacturers and merchants happened to fall in with the good of the rest of the community.'"^{*}

The contention here that "*food cannot be restricted to any one class or industry ; they concern the nation as a whole,*" is precisely what we are contending for. To serve "Class interests," and therefore to benefit "*one class or industry*" at the expense of another class, is exactly what was done by Cobden and his followers, and as this is vouched for by Cobden himself in the passage quoted above, there can be no doubt that to promote the manufacturing interests of the nation at the cost of agricultural interests was, and is, the guiding principle of Free-trade policy.

Morley's "Life of Cobden" does what it can to minimise the unfavourable effect that so damaging an admission is bound to have on the public mind ; but, however much his biographer or apologists may attempt to gloss the matter over, the fact that *class interest* was not the least powerful of the influences which prompted Cobden to undertake his great Free-trade campaign is clear beyond doubt. "The class interest of the manufacturers and merchants happened to fall in with the good of the rest of the community," says Cobden's biographer ; but whether this be true of the times in which Cobden fought and gained his Free-trade battle, or not, it is certain that nobody to-day will be found to agree with so specious a line of reasoning save the Manchester school, in which Cobden himself was so able a teacher, and those who, for various motives, are personally interested in maintaining a policy which, born of class interests, can only be maintained to serve sordid ends instead of the broad generous interests of national needs.

^{*} "The Free-trade Movement," pp. 68, 69.

FATAL RESULTS OF CLASS INTERESTS

If Cobden's policy for the last fifty years and more had fallen in "*with the good of the rest of the community*," should we be required to collect annually from over-burdened ratepayers the stupendous sum of £35,000,000 in Poor Rates, and spend half of it in providing relief for the more aggressive forms of pauperism in our over-crowded pauper establishments?

Had Cobden's policy not dispossessed nearly one-half of the entire population of the country from their legitimate and natural means of subsistence, would there be to-day an enormous and ever-growing host of unemployed marching up and down the country in search of work and standing as a reproach to his own scheme and a menace to the commonwealth?

Had the "good of the rest of the community" been truly served by the destruction of the people's greatest industry, would there be that deep-seated resentment on the part of the people to practically all existing things and institutions, which has found expression in the form of Socialism, and which threatens to uproot society itself and give to the world a new order of things because of the many grievances of a long-suffering people? Universal land culture, among other things, is one of the prominent features in the revolutionary programme of the Socialists, and is it likely that these red-hot reformers would have marked this vast question down for *immediate reform* had they not been alive to the supreme importance which agriculture plays in the lives of the people?

Had the interests of the *masses* been served as Cobden's biographer would have us believe, would there be cause for all the sullen discontent, the political and social unrest, and that seething sedition, which sears and corrodes the people's minds as the lightning blasts and destroys the sturdy oak?

These, and a score of other questions of a kindred nature, might well be asked in connection with this single part of a many-sided question, but it would serve no purpose to prolong the investigation. It is enough to say that, although by grave mischance, the people of Great Britain are in the unique and unenviable condition of not being in a position to grow their own food supplies, they are only in that "*exceptional*" position because of the folly and selfishness of Cobden and his followers, who sixty years ago thrust upon the British people a trade policy which time has proved to be as unsuited to the best interests of this country as the winter snow would be to the golden time of harvest.

FALLACY 6. "*For good or for evil Great Britain has become dependent upon imported wheat to the extent of more than 70 per cent. of her consumption. . . . Is the nation prepared to put back its progress and revert to that position in order that it may be self-sustaining?*"

is the question that is gravely asked in the sixth and last item in the group of fallacies we are considering in this chapter.

A MONSTROUS FALLACY

The statement, in other words, amounts to this. *To produce our own food would be to put back the nation's progress.*

This is tantamount to saying that to cherish the body is to retard its development—to water the plant is to stop its growth, a proposition that is neither demonstrable by any known "scientific" formula, nor determinable by any common-sense method of reasoning known to the human race to-day. Then it may be truly said that to advance a proposition is not to demonstrate it, and to ask a riddle is not to expound it.

The utterer of this remarkable dictum was no doubt honest in his convictions, and sincere in his beliefs, or he would not have given them to a cold, calculating, and unbelieving world, but to be sincere in our beliefs is not always the best proof of their verity.

It is said that Torquemada was most devout, most sincere in his beliefs, and convinced of the righteousness of his cause when he provided his royal master and "Most Catholic King" with those constant *autos da fé* which were as sweet-smelling incense to the nostrils of that most *Christian* monarch; but the hapless victims who fed those terrible fires knew better. Later judgments not only confirmed this, but pronounced these convictions and devout beliefs to be mere prettexts to enable Torquemada to remove from his path all those who were bold enough to disagree with the bloody tyranny of the Inquisition.

HOW THE POWER OF STEAM WAS DERIDED YEARS AGO

A later and more practical illustration of how dangerous it is to trust in one's beliefs is found in the pessimism of those who, in the years that are gone, derided the possibility of applying steam to sea-going vessels.

In those days, when the steam-engine was in the experimental stage, an Englishman, well known in the scientific circles of the day, wrote a pamphlet proving entirely to his own

satisfaction that it would be impossible for steam *ever* to be used in ocean navigation because of *the impossibility of any vessel to carry sufficient coal for its furnaces*. Steam is a mighty power to-day on and off the ocean, and while there may be none now living who question its efficacy or deny the enormous benefits it has conferred upon the human race, there are, unfortunately, many who question the potentialities of the land as a mighty factor in human affairs, in spite of the fact that this tremendous energy has been turned into a stupendous living, all-impelling force in *every country in the world save our own*.

FREE-TRADERS FAIL TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR OWN PROPOSITIONS

Now, it seems but fair that when a man advances a proposition he should prove it. The writer of "The Free-trade Movement" does not do this, and he thus leaves it to others to prove that his proposition is *undemonstrable*.

The question before us is this: "Has the writer any justification for his remarkable economical conclusion, or has he, in advancing this extraordinary proposition, committed an elementary error in economical law?" The full text of the paragraph which contains the unaccountable passage to which the whole nation—even including Free-traders themselves—is justified in taking exception is this—

"In no circumstances known at present could this country feed her enormous population of 40,000,000 people at their existing standard of subsistence; to be self-sufficing as regards food, a portion of the population would need to emigrate, and for the remainder, the majority must betake themselves to agricultural pursuits. Is the nation prepared to put back its progress and revert to that position in order that it may be self-sustaining, when by means of free exchange it is able easily to maintain its vast population in considerable profit."*

It is only with the latter portion of the paragraph we need deal here, as the questions involved in the first portion have already been dealt with.

If there be the slightest justification for these amazing conclusions, it follows that every one of those nations which has had the temerity to assume a *self-sustaining* position in regard to its food supplies, must necessarily *have put back its progress* to an extent that its trade and manufactures should be in a deplorable condition: its national credit seriously impaired,

* "The Free-trade Movement," p. 193.

and its people reduced to emigration to avoid starvation; while the majority would practically be driven back to the land.

Here is a little statement of facts showing the position of the United Kingdom and some other countries in respect to trade and manufactures, the people's savings, taxable area as determined by the Income-tax Returns of this country and Germany, emigration, etc., for periods varying from 1875 up to 1907.

COMPARATIVE IMPORTS *

	1896.	1906.	Percentage of Increase.†
	£	£	
United Kingdom . . .	441,808,904	607,888,500	37
Germany	211,771,000	394,410,000	86
France	151,944,000	225,092,000	49
Austria-Hungary . . .	58,816,000	97,550,000	67

EXPORTS

	1896.	1906.	Percentage of Increase.
	£	£	
United Kingdom . . .	240,145,551	375,575,338	56
Germany	173,217,000	312,651,000	80
France	136,036,000	210,620,000	69
Austria-Hungary . . .	64,500,000	99,170,000	54

COMPARATIVE EXPORTS ‡

(a) Domestic Produce and Manufactures

	1880-84.	1903-07.	Increase.	
	£	£	£	Per cent.
United Kingdom . .	234,000,000	338,000,000	104,000,000	44
France	138,000,000	195,000,000	57,000,000	41
Germany	155,000,000	287,000,000	132,000,000	85
United States . . .	165,000,000	340,000,000	175,000,000	106

NOTE.—United Kingdom figures exclude new ships and their machinery not recorded prior to 1899, German figures include ships and "improvement trade" since 1897.

* Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom, Cd. 4258 and 4265 : 1908.

† Percentages calculated by the author.

‡ The "Tariff-reformer's Pocket Book," 1909.

(b) *Manufactured Goods only*

	1880-84.	1903-07.	Increase.	
	£	£	£	Per cent.
United Kingdom . .	206,000,000	272,000,000	66,000,000	32
France	73,000,000	99,000,000	26,000,000	36
Germany	93,000,000	194,000,000	101,000,000	109

DEPOSITS IN SAVINGS BANKS

	United States. (Present Population 86 millions.)	Prussia. (Present Population 37 millions.)	United Kingdom. (Present Population 44 millions.)
	£	£	£
1875	185,000,000	50,000,000	68,000,000
1898	405,000,000	250,000,000	173,000,000
1907	699,000,000	*439,000,000	210,000,000
Increase since 1875	514,000,000	389,000,000	142,000,000
Increase per cent.	278	778	209

The United States figures are taken, at 5 dollars to the £1, from the United States Statistical Abstract.

The Prussian figures are taken from Mr. Consul-General Schwabach's Report on the Trade of the Consular District of Berlin for the year 1907.

The United Kingdom figures are taken from the Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom.

BRITISH INCOME TAX RETURNS

(From the Reports of the Commissioners of His Majesty's Inland Revenue, Cd. 3686 and 4226.)

Year ended March 31st.	Income on which Tax was received.
1897	£ 504,000,000
1907	640,000,000
<hr/>	
Increase, 27 per cent. or	136,000,000

PRUSSIAN INCOME TAX RETURNS

(From Report on the Trade of Germany for the year 1906, by Mr. Consul-General Schwabach, of Berlin.)

Year.	Total Amount subject to Income Tax.
1896	£ 313,000,000
1906	536,000,000
<hr/>	
Increase, 71 per cent. or	223,000,000

* 1906 figures.

EMIGRATION

(From Cd. 4258 and 4265: 1908.)

Germany.		
Population.	Emigration.	
1901	56,874,000	22,073
1902	57,767,000	32,098
1903	58,629,000	36,310
1904	59,475,000	27,984
1905	60,641,278	28,075
1906	61,177,000	31,074
1907	62,097,000	31,696
	7)416,660,278	7)209,310
Average	<u>59,522,897</u>	<u>29,901</u>

{ Roughly 1 in every
2,000 persons.

United Kingdom.		
Population.	Emigration.	
1901	41,458,721	171,715
1902	41,961,000	205,662
1903	42,371,000	259,950
1904	42,793,000	271,435
1905	43,221,000	262,077
1906	43,661,000	325,137
1907	44,100,000	395,680
	7)299,565,721	7)1,891,656
Average	<u>42,795,103</u>	<u>270,236</u>

{ Roughly 1 in every
160 persons.

In other words— $12\frac{1}{2}$ times as many British subjects find the necessity for emigrating from the United Kingdom as German subjects do from the Fatherland—a crushing indictment of the British Free-trade system.

NATIONAL DEBT

(From Cd. 4258 and 4265: 1908.)

	1886.	1896.	1906.
	£	£	£
United Kingdom . . .	739,882,117	652,286,000	788,990,187
Germany	30,574,000	110,536,000	180,263,000
France	986,475,129	1,036,572,355	1,035,382,276
Austria-Hungary . . .	—	552,070,000	626,090,000

The rise and fall of the volume of the National Debt is not an infallible guide of a nation's prosperity or adversity, and a decrease in a country's liabilities does not necessarily mean national prosperity.

This plain statement of fact offers evidence of so practical and irrefutable a quality as to the falseness of the conclusions arrived at by the writer of "The Free-trade Movement" as to leave him apparently without a vestige of justification for what must meanwhile be regarded, by every reasonably-minded person in the kingdom, as a most unwarrantable attack on the verity

of the economical position of the British people. These statistics clearly prove that none of these evils have happened to other countries by growing their own corn, which "The Free-trade Movement" postulates for Great Britain, nor have they—*put back their progress*. On the contrary, they have progressed more than we have, and the British public will determine if there is the slightest warrant for the position assumed by the writer of the work in question.

It has been conclusively proved by the position of other countries that "*to be self-sufficing as regards food*" is *not* to put back national progress, and, this being so, no man, whether he approaches so grave a matter from a purely party point of view for the sole purpose of catching votes, or from the less sordid point of view of the scientific student, as the writer of "The Free-trade Movement" appears to have done, can ever plead justification for misleading the people. He either knows what he is doing, or he does *not* know. If he knows and gives out to the world that which is not true, he wilfully deceives. If he does *not* know and yet sows an untruth, he may escape the charge of *wilful* deception, but he can never be exonerated for the mischief done. In the case we are considering it appears that the writer of "The Free-trade Movement," while doubtless believing in the conclusions which were forced upon him after a long study of the subject, gave to the world certain "beliefs" which it would appear were established on so unstable a basis as to be easily overturned the moment they came in contact with the solid structure of living truth.

A NETWORK OF FALLACIES

Indeed, it would appear that the arguments arrived at in "The Free-trade Movement," such as they are, are founded on a veritable network of fallacies, or on that still more dangerous quality—half truths. Tennyson truly said—

"A lie that is all a lie may be met with and fought outright,
But a lie that is half a truth is a harder matter to fight."

In every chapter of "The Free-trade Movement" a number of economic conclusions are arrived at which, while at first sight, being apparently convincing and, indeed, almost unassailable *as abstract principles*—are, nevertheless, utterly fallacious in most cases when reduced to their proper denomination, namely—*concrete examples based upon common-sense principles and the everyday requirements of the people*. A few of these airy economical bubbles have been pricked in these pages, but as the book we are quoting from is full of economic theorems and dicta,

based upon the abstract principles of a very *inexact* "science," rather than upon the practical, up-to-date needs of a strenuous people, it would be impossible in this work to do more than give, as has been done, a few examples of the fallaciousness of its author's reasoning.

To attempt to determine the many, ever-varying, and far-reaching domestic requirements even of a single family, by the hard-and-fast rules of "economic science," would be foolish; but to attempt to confine the multitudinous ramifications of the domestic economy of A PEOPLE, by the narrow, inflexible, and absolutely inapplicable "laws" of such a very slippery "science" as political economy, economics, or whatever term may be used, would be to try to confine the waters of an onrushing river in a fishing-net. The thing is obviously impossible, yet it is being attempted every day by men who devote their undoubtedly high mental powers to "scientific" research. "*I have endeavoured to deal with the subject in the scientific spirit of inquiry,*" said the writer of the book we quote from; and it is just this spirit which has done Great Britain incalculable harm, as we have explained in other chapters.

SCIENTIFIC LEGERDEMAIN

If a man be "scientific" enough he can solve any problem and expound any subject "scientifically"; and although his hearers may not be smart enough to controvert his conclusions, they nevertheless believe that though they may appear "scientifically" right, they know them to be fundamentally and practically wrong. The man who convinces people by his "laws," "isms," and "ologies," that it is better to allow the fertile lands of Great Britain to lie waste and unproductive than to convert them to the use and benefit of the nation, does irreparable harm to the people, and the time has come for plain speaking and hard hitting.

Fortunately others, having discerned the danger of this "scientific" teaching, have taken up the cudgels in behalf of common-sense. The following is from a recently published economical Chart, entitled, "National Remedies for Unemployment and Low Wages," published by Mr. B. Sansome of East Finchley, in March, 1909, and forms one of the many examples that might be cited:—

"ARE IMPORTS PAID FOR BY EXPORTS?"

THE PROFESSOR'S ANSWER

"Some time ago I received an invitation card to hear Professor Armitage Smith on Free-trade at the National Liberal Club, Whitehall. Mr. Smith, in the course of his lecture, said: 'If the London

County Council advertised for tenders for £100,000 worth of steel rails, and Belgium secured the order for £90,000, the London County Council would be saving £10,000, which they could spend on other goods, and it would be a clear profit to London and the country to the value of £10,000.' I put questions to Mr. Smith, and the following are the questions and replies :—

"*Mr. Sansome* : 'Do you agree with the estimate of the Blue Book that there is quite 60 per cent. wages paid on steel rails made in England?'

"*Mr. Smith* : 'Yes, I agree with that estimate.'

"*Mr. Sansome* : 'Then does it not follow that England lost £60,000 wages?'

"*Mr. Smith* : 'You forget that we should send £100,000 worth of soft goods to Belgium.'

"*Mr. Sansome* : 'How can that be so, when as a matter of fact, Belgium is sending us an increased quantity of goods year by year, and we are sending Belgium less goods each year?'—No answer.

"*Mr. Sansome* : 'I am not done with the loss yet. Would it be true if I were to say that the £60,000 wages, if paid to English workers, would have been paid over to the shop-keepers and tradesmen of the district in which the rails were made?'

"A gentleman in the audience said : 'You are making a loss of £120,000 if the order were given to Belgium.'

"*Mr. Sansome* : 'Yes, that is just what I am contending and proving.'

"Mr. Sansome further contended that, if we had protection, the greater part of £60,000 paid over to the tradesmen would be by them paid over to Lancashire and Yorkshire, and other home producers.

"Professor Smith hurriedly collected his papers, and Lord Welby quickly closed the meeting."

"SCIENCE" VERSUS SENSE

Here we find the writer of "The Free-trade Movement" continuing in the Lecture Hall and in the Club the same "scientific spirit of inquiry" which led him to give to the world the inferences, deductions, beliefs, and conclusions arrived at in its pages some years before, and the British people have now to determine for themselves between "Science" and common-sense. "Science" tells the people that Great Britain cannot grow her own corn, that her fields must therefore remain sterile, and her population emigrate, and that if we attempt to make ourselves "*self-sustaining*" the nation "*must put back its progress.*" Common-sense replies in common parlance—"bunkum"; we can grow all our own corn and other food-stuffs just as well as any nation in the world, and better

in respect to corn, because of the extra fertility of our soil ; we can convert every waste field into highly productive land ; we can stop the wasteful drain of excessive emigration which is sapping the virility of the nation : and, by creating in our midst a great agricultural industry, with numbers of subsidiary industries which must necessarily spring therefrom, we can give such an impulse to manufactures as would considerably ADVANCE national progress, instead of throwing it back.

Every man who happens to remain in possession of his sober senses, and is absolutely unbiassed by political considerations, untainted by the sordid influences of the Manchester School, and unaffected by the glamour which economic "science" casts over some of its students, knows perfectly well that all these things, and more, can be accomplished, and easily accomplished too, by the simple application of common-sense methods. He has no further inclination to listen to false teachers who have already done immeasurable harm to the British people, and who will surely in the end cause the economic destruction of the British Empire, unless the meretriciousness of their doctrines be explained and exposed by the strenuous efforts of those who have no purpose to serve, save to show the people how the application of common-sense methods to this, as to everything else in life, will serve them to far better purpose than listening to the nonsensical farrago about the necessity of applying the shifting laws of a slippery "science" to the simple requirements of everyday life.

NO MAN DERIDES REAL SCIENCE

✓ No sane man would lightly deride the enormous benefits that real science has bestowed upon the human race, nor would he deny the possibility of its application to many of life's affairs ; he would, on the contrary, be ready to admit that unless the very latest discoveries in mechanical and other science be at once applied to many of our industries they are apt to fall behind the times and lose their place in the race. He would not even stop at agricultural progression, but would frankly admit that in agriculture, as in other pursuits, the industry must be equipped and brought up-to-date by the application of the latest scientific discoveries in practical agriculture. There, however, he would draw a hard-and-fast line, beyond which his sanity would not permit him to go. For example—

- (a) He would not admit for a single moment that there are two opinions as to whether the people of this country, or that, should, or should not, cultivate their lands.

- (b) He would not admit that it is more profitable for any nation, *under any economic condition known to the human race*, to allow its soil to become waste and unproductive, producing no food for the people, nor affording them employment, and then employ foreign peoples to grow its food supplies and buy these from them.
- (c) He would not admit that the country which possesses in abundance vast areas of the finest corn-growing land in the world should be forced by ECONOMIC reasons—that is to say, the economic reasons promulgated and well understood by the Manchester School—to allow this enormous source of wealth and employment to run to waste.
- (d) He would not admit that any nation has the right to cripple or practically crush out of existence one industry, under the mistaken notion that others might be benefited in the process.
- (e) He would never admit that the simple question of whether man should, or should not, till the land, a question which has been thoroughly understood by peoples of all ages and settled by them thousands of years ago, should now become a question of “economic polemics,” because, forsooth, the interests of those engaged in certain other industries are said to be involved in the issue.
- (f) He would not admit that Great Britain or any other country which grows all its own food supplies and then becomes “self-sustaining” can possibly “PUT BACK ITS PROGRESS,” because the common experience of every other nation in the world proves that such a position is but a mere postulation and is opposed to actual facts, while it is, moreover, opposed to reason and offensive to the canons of COMMON-SENSE!

The British people, while having no particular objection to economic science, *per se*, would like to see it tempered with a judicious admixture of sense; and unless those who write learned books, showing how a nation can become rich and prosperous by neglecting its chief industry, and how a man can thrive by allowing his farm to become waste, can so temper their discourses, they are likely to end in failure.

CHAPTER XXXII

A SYNOPSIS

MANY questions of grave importance to the people have been considered in these pages, and those who have been interested enough to follow the writer so far have doubtlessly been impressed by the many facts that have been revealed, and the enormous need which exists for general enlightenment on the vastly complicated yet fundamentally simple agricultural question, and of the other questions involved therein. So many things have become manifest that it would be as well to bring them together synoptically, so that at least the main features of the questions dealt with may be easily recognised.

THE FUNDAMENTAL BLUNDER ABOUT THE LAND

The first thing that becomes clear—save to those who have some purpose to serve in maintaining existing conditions—is, that whatever else happens, the LAND must be set free to work out its appointed destiny.

No man having a plot of ground, and no country having millions of acres, can, under any economic conditions known to the people of the earth, afford to allow that land to lie uncared for, untilled, and unproductive, because to do so would be to set up an artificial condition of economics which would surely result sooner or later in disaster. To cultivate the soil is to obey a NATURAL LAW, not to do so is to disobey it; and in the history of the world there is not a single instance on record of a country having disobeyed that inexorable LAW with impunity.

In this age of rapid progress and much learning, men are apt to deride and set at naught many of the old laws and customs as being foolish and antiquated. Among them, the cultivation of the land has fallen into desuetude because "Economic Science" told the people it *could* be given up to

their own advantage. After the lapse of more than half a century of bitter experience and grievous results, it is found that this "Economic Science" is not only fundamentally wrong, but, what is worse, has actually been made the tool and plaything of a powerful party—the Manchester School—which is politically and financially interested, or fancies it is, in sacrificing agriculture to manufactures.

This incident serves as an example of human gullibility, of the danger of too readily accepting the teachings of "Science," and the Machiavelianism of political parties. It also furnishes an excellent illustration of how easily men may arrogate to themselves, and take unwarrantable liberties with, many things in life, unless checked and exposed. We see this in THE UNDUE ASSUMPTION OF SUPERIORITY BY FREE-TRADERS, referred to in Chapters II. and III., and not the least mischief of the situation is, that owing to sixty years of arrogant licence, every Free-trader, and many others besides, really believe that such blessings and benefits as are to-day enjoyed by the British people are the actual result of Free-trade. It is said that "A lie oft repeated bears the semblance of truth," and this old saw loses none of its force in its present application. Free-traders have had a long innings and have played their game with vigour and boldness. With the audacity born of sixty years of unbridled licence, they affirm that every stride in national progress made by the British people, in scientific invention and mechanical application, in arts, manufactures, trades, literature, learning, hygiene, food, music, lighting, housing, and sanitation; the electric telegraph, and the penny post; cheap and abundant newspapers, and the thousand and one benefits arising out of the natural progression of the human race owing to the numerous civilising influences of the last fifty years or so, are due to FREE-TRADE.* They conveniently ignore the fact that similar benefits and advantages have been shared in and enjoyed by every civilised nation in Europe, and in the world, and that in many of them *the relative progress has been greater than in our own*. But when they gravely affirm, or insidiously imply, that even our games and sports—football, cricket, and the rest of them—are also due to that much-belauded economic condition, then it becomes evident that Free-traders have been too long at the wickets and should be taken off, as they have entirely "lost their heads."

* See Chapter VII., "The Free-trade Movement."

THE ECONOMIC INCONGRUITIES OF FREE-TRADE

One of the most curious things about Free-traders is their imperviousness to ridicule. Free-trade is a veritable jumble of paradoxes and economic inconsistencies, and yet its votaries continue their absurd gasconading. Great Britain is the only great State which has Free-trade, and yet she far excels any other nation on earth—small or great—in foul pauperism, widespread distress, and growing unemployment. Cobden and his fellow manufacturer-reformers in the “forties” led the people to believe that the land would be tilled, distress and pauperism vanish, employment be plentiful, and general prosperity secured, by abolishing the Corn Laws, and banishing what in those days they called “Protection.” After sixty years of expectancy the people find that not only have none of these things been accomplished, but that poverty and unemployment have become so general as to breed widespread discontent and threaten revolution; indeed, it may truly be said that—given the opportunity—“the masses” were never more ripe for a general uprising than they are to-day, and although these facts are patent enough to “the man in the street,” the pachydermatous nature of the Free-trader cannot be brought to realise that these evils are, and must be, due to the unfortunate results of the economic system called FREE-TRADE, for the simple, yet irresistible, reason that for the last sixty-two years the country *has known no other system!*

There is abundance of land lying unproductive, and vast unemployment, but Free-trade *is incapable of bringing them together.* There is an immense British mercantile marine carrying more than half of the world’s trade and capable of giving work to vast numbers of our own unemployed, and yet our ships are largely manned *by foreigners.*

With unrivalled industrial skill and command of raw material, with a plethora of skilled labour and ample capital, we nevertheless prefer to buy in foreign markets, force our own workpeople to emigrate, and drive our capital abroad so that *foreign competitors may use it against us.*

With matchless facilities for growing our own food supplies, and thus affording employment to millions of our fellow-countrymen, we spend £172,000,000 each year abroad so that *the foreigner may grow them for us.*

With vast facilities for universal employment in our land, with numerous trades and manufacturing industries wherein productive lucrative work could be found for every man and woman in the country, we prefer to hug our rags and tatters to

our hearts and find occupation for the vast hordes of UNEMPLOYED in works that are unproductive and useless, and which serve no purpose but to increase the burdens of British rate-payers and tax-payers.

These are but a few of the many anomalies and grotesque results of FREE-TRADE, which should soon give place to other and better conditions. But the Free-trader discerns none of these outward and visible signs, and it is doubtful if anything in this world will arouse him to a sense of danger until his Free-trade structure is brought rattling about his ears like a pack of cards. His Free-trade system is as full of economic paradoxes, ludicrous inconsistencies, and grotesque commercial solecisms, as an egg is of meat, yet he sees it not, nor does he want to see it. Ridicule may kill that Free-trader, but it is doubtful if anything else will.

LOSS OF AGRICULTURAL WEALTH

When our most competent statisticians affirm that in thirty years agricultural wealth has decreased by £1,600,000,000 it is time the British people took note of the fact, for they may be sure that no country, however rich it may be in other respects, can lose *Sixteen hundred millions sterling* of its wealth without the people feeling it sorely. Loss of agricultural wealth means loss of a great industry, loss of employment, loss of a wage-earning power, loss to the people, and the marvel is that—the people have endured the loss so patiently. It also means extra rates to rate-payers and extra taxes to tax-payers, and the sooner those who provide the funds for municipal and Imperial expenditure realise this simple fact, the earlier will come that psychological moment when they will cry—halt! to the horse-leech policy of every Government, whether Tory or Radical. These patient “shellers out” have hitherto been to Governments what the aphides are to the ants—a source of never-failing and easily acquired wealth—but their eyes are opening to the fact that their surrendered millions no more mitigate the sufferings of the people, or remove the festering mass of pauperism which clings to them as a foul growth, than the toy spade of a child can remove the mighty mass of sand on the seashore. They, moreover, realise that this ever-present pauperism, distress, and increasing unemployment which demand £135,000,000 in Poor Rates and Public charities (see Chapters X. and XI.) from the people of this country every year, is not the result of normal, social, and economic conditions, but solely the outcome of an abnormal, selfish, and *vicious* system of national economics, born of the self-interests of a band of manufacturer-reformers

under Cobden, and kept alive by the self-interests of that powerful manufacturing section of the community known as the "Manchester School."

This awakening of the people to such astounding truths, although tardy, is none the less real and abiding, and the time has come for Governments to realise that the old order must give place to the new, and that the British people are no longer disposed to submit to a state of affairs as disgraceful as it is unnecessary, and which, while maintaining a fiscal and economic condition utterly unsuited to this or any other civilised country, only serves to bolster up the sordid interests of a comparatively small coterie of manufacturers and merchants. In spite of the denials of Governments and of political parties, their policy has been, and is, to trim their sails so as to serve EXISTING INTERESTS, which include *vested interests* and *class interests*.

The legislative measures of the Conservative Government, which had a long innings of some eighteen years, showed how they trimmed *their* sails to catch the political breezes, while the measures of the present Government show what course *they* steer. Neither of them tackles this burning question of pauperism and unemployment save from the old time-honoured custom of mulcting rate and tax-payers, and until they are forced by public opinion to abandon these predatory methods of raising the wind to feed the ever-open pauper maw, they will adopt no other.

But perhaps the most damning indictment against the fiscal and economical system set up in this country sixty odd years ago, and which men call, by misnomer, "Free-trade," is the fact that it costs 135 millions sterling in *State and public charities to maintain it*.

This is a view of the case which has not appealed to the average Englishman till quite recently, but now he finds that his heavy rates and taxes, and the never-ending and ever-increasing charities afford no real relief to the situation, the strain has become intolerable, and John Bull is at last determined to look into the matter himself. He at length realises that the State actually raises £35,000,000 annually in Poor Rates, and he knows that the vast majority of the British people are necessarily engaged year in and year out in helping their destitute brethren. He knows also the aggregate amount of these universal charities must be stupendous, and if they reach the colossal figure of £100,000,000 annually he would not be surprised.

It then occurs to him that any social, economic, or fiscal condition that demands £35,000,000 from tax-payers, and

another £100,000,000 from philanthropists *annually* to support it, is about as bad a state of affairs as could possibly exist, and he, moreover, discerns that if this adventitious bolstering up were withdrawn, the condition of the masses would be so awful as to cause instant revolution. The only conclusion John Bull can come to is—that this Free-trade system, which he has been obliged to adopt, *literally and truly costs the people £135,000,000 annually to maintain.*

IT COSTS £135,000,000 ANNUALLY IN CHARITIES TO BUTTRESS FREE-TRADE

This is the charge that will be vehemently denied by those who, for various reasons, are personally interested in maintaining existing conditions, but however much they may rave and bluster, the Government finds it necessary to raise £35,000,000 annually in Poor Rates, while what is called the—Philanthropic Public—find it equally necessary to contribute each year over £100,000,000 (see Chapter XI.) to provide merely for the most prominent and aggressive cases of pauperism, drunkenness, vice, crime, and sickness.

It is held by the anti-Free-traders that the poverty of the United Kingdom is so phenomenal as to constitute a shame to Governments, an unnecessary drain on national funds, an insuperable obstacle to the prosperity of the masses, a curse to the people, and a standing menace to national peace. Upwards of one-half of the entire population never cease in their efforts to mitigate, to some small extent, the sufferings of the other half, while the Salvation and Church Armies, through their Soup Kitchens and Night Shelters, the perennial “Relief Works” of the State, and the numerous dodges resorted to by Municipal bodies throughout the kingdom to find work for the poor and needy, all proclaim the fact that the British people are in a state of destitution, the like of which finds no parallel in the civilised world. The added fact that, in spite of this mighty effort, only the most acute cases of poverty are dealt with, furnishes indubitable proof that *the poverty and destitution of the British people is really beyond human power to grapple with effectually.* It is then deliberately affirmed that this mass of pauperism and unenviable destitution is the direct and inevitable result of a set of social and economic conditions that are peculiar to Great Britain, and as unsuited to *her* needs as they would be to those of any other civilised country.

This degrading and contemptible condition, which Socialists declare forces 39,000,000 of the population of this country to

the verge of destitution, is as unnecessary as it is cruel and disastrous; and when the people realise that this terrible suffering is nothing more nor less than a direct and unavoidable result of the suicidal Free-trade policy which SELF-INTERESTS have thrust upon the country, they will cast it from them as something that is loathsome and unclean.

But is there anything in the denial of Free-traders that the unenviable and unparalleled condition of the masses of our fellow-countrymen is not attributable to, or a result of, Free-trade? The degradation and pauperisation of a people is one of the gravest charges that could be brought against any administration or any political party, and, if brought, it should either be clearly disproved by the accused, or substantiated by the accuser.

In face of the enormous mass of evidence favouring the views of that great body of the British people who hold that the present deplorable conditions *are* a result of the Free-trade system, the mere denial of the Manchester School, and others who favour Free-trade, is obviously altogether insufficient. The system of economics on which the United Kingdom has been working for upwards of sixty years, was designed by Cobden and his manufacturer-reformers to do away with the destitution and unemployment of the times in which they lived; and while it would serve no purpose to compare the poverty and unemployment of the British people during the "hungry forties" with that of other nations at the same period, it becomes an urgent necessity, in the interests of the present generation, to make it clear *that the destitution and widespread unemployment of the people of this country to-day finds no counterpart in Europe or in any civilised country of the world*, in spite of the fact that in nearly every one of these countries the economic and fiscal system has been "Protection," and not "Free-trade," or—the *very antithesis* of our own. At all events, the anti-Free-traders' case is proved up to the hilt; the *onus* of *disproving* it now rests with those who bolster up the present system.

WILL TARIFF-REFORM ALONE AFFORD FULL EMPLOYMENT FOR ALL?

Is a question that should never be lost sight of by the people, because in its proper appreciation enormous issues are involved. Tariff-reform there must be, because the accumulated evidence of the last sixty years proclaims the fact; but in determining this point let us beware, "Lest we Forget." Tariff-reform is *one* factor in national prosperity, but alone it will not suffice. Every civilised nation that has shown progressive

prosperity during the last half a century and more, has combined Tariff-reform *with* Land-reform *and* universal agriculture, and it is to this happy combination, this blending of essential factors to success to which they owe their prosperity, *and not to the adoption of one of them to the exclusion of the other*. Each one of these countries first of all established agriculture as its *primal* industry, after which they set about building up and developing their manufactures. That they have succeeded in both of them is too manifest to need demonstration. Had they sacrificed the land industry, or even subordinated it to manufactures, they would as assuredly have failed as Great Britain failed, indeed, as she will again fail if she attempts to run British economics on the Tariff-reform platform alone. The land industry and other industries have so many affinities that to separate them would be to sever ties that would cause atrophy and death. To repeat what has been written on this subject would be mere supererogation; but to point out that we have had enough of folly and madness in the past by attempting to disregard the puissance of agriculture, is to counsel precaution. Agriculture and manufactures are so bound together as to be absolutely indissoluble, and not even "Protection" would repair the damage and fill the breach if Tariff-reformers were mad enough to trust to Tariff-reform alone.

THE "CHEAP" LOAF—A FREE-TRADE SHAM

The greatest economic fraud of modern times is that of the "Cheap" loaf of the Free-traders. It is needless to go further into the matter here, as the bubble has burst and the working classes at length realise what a veritable political "Will-o'-the-wisp" the whole thing was. Indisputable evidence from every conceivable source proves that *the price of bread is practically the same in every European country, including our own, in spite of the fact that in nearly every case those countries favour "Protection."* This meretricious "Cheap" loaf cry served its purpose for a time; but it has proved to be a dangerous, two-edged weapon to those who used it, and it has now turned and smitten the wielder. It is a commercial fact that the price of bread is not regulated by the particular tariffs adopted by this country or that, while it is also true that the price is, for some inscrutable reason, apparently outside and beyond the canons of economic law. It is, moreover, known that for thirty years after Great Britain adopted Free-trade, the price of bread was not reduced, and even when it commenced to fall, the market rates for wheat were affected rather by the opening up of railways in all countries, the application of steam to the mercantile marine,

the universal cheapening of land and sea transit, and the use of mechanical appliances to handling, than by Free-trade. That this is so is proved by the incontrovertible facts just referred to, namely, that *the price of bread is the same in all European countries irrespective of varying fiscal systems*. That there was no truth in the "cheap" loaf cry; that it was, in plain English, a deliberate lie purposely put forward by a great political party with intent to deceive, also becomes evident, and that it has done irreparable harm there is no doubt.

The question the British people should now determine is this—to what extent should political parties—admitting that they are equipped with much of the best brain-power in the country—be permitted to use their intellectual endowments in the manufacture of political falsehoods with the sole object of serving their party by deceiving the people, and doing incalculable harm to national interests? It is true that custom has sanctioned many things in politics that are regrettable; but when able public servants pollute the thinking principle of their brain by inventing sordid schemes for immoral purposes, the bad usage born of unbridled licence should be crushed out of existence by the irresistible force of public opinion. No private individual is permitted to indulge in acts that are publicly immoral or harmful to others, and no man who serves public interests, or no collective body of such servers of the State should be permitted to indulge in practices that are harmful to the commonweal. The time has now come to stop such immoral practices in national interests, and the people are right in demanding that the law should be considerably enlarged and extended so as to provide for such cases, or that a fresh Act be placed on the Statute book empowering the authorities to deal drastically with any proceedings on the part of public servants, or representatives of the people that are vicious, and therefore subversive of the public good.

OLD AGE PENSIONS—AN ADDITIONAL STATE CHARITY

Whatever scheme may exist in the fertile brain of Mr. Lloyd-George in respect to *future* arrangements, it is clear that the Old Age Pension Act of 1908 is nothing more nor less than a huge extension of the existing STATE CHARITIES. Whatever may be the needs of the masses, or the political exigencies of the Government, no justification can possibly exist for such a predatory piece of legislation as that launched on the country by the Chancellor of the Exchequer; indeed, the whole business is in complete agreement with that official's "hen-roost-robbing" policy which he so jauntily talked about

a few months ago, but of which he is now heartily ashamed. What justification can there possibly be for a legislative measure which unequivocally plunders the tax-payers to cover the default of present and past Governments? The people of this country had, and have, a perfect right to an Old Age Pension scheme of so comprehensive a nature as to provide literally for every case in the country, and that this scheme has not been in operation is a standing disgrace to every Government for the last three or four decades. But that fact does not, and cannot, justify the present Government—in its tardy awakening to the necessities of the position—in thrusting a piece of CLASS LEGISLATION on the country which robs one section of the community of six to eight millions annually, in addition to their other burdens, to support another section.

There is not a man in the kingdom who objects to the fundamental principle upon which all taxation is founded, namely, that the national cesses should fall upon the rich and not upon the poor; but this is just a particular case which proves the exception to the rule. Every man, whatever his position, should make provision for sickness and old age, and if he fails to do so—given the chance—he is neither a true man nor a worthy citizen. Bismarck gave the German people the chance twenty odd years ago, and they availed themselves of it to an extent that to-day £34,000,000 annually are paid out of the German Pension funds in Old Age and Sick pensions. The German scheme is CONTRIBUTORY, the work-people and employers subscribing upwards of—ONE-THIRD each, and the state subvention amounting to—less than ONE-THIRD.

The question the British tax-payers are deeply interested in is this—"Why did the Liberal-Radical Government, having the splendid example of the German scheme as a guide, devise a Pension scheme for Great Britain which is as predatory in its nature as were some of the autocratic enactments of the Plantagenet kings?" The answer is obvious—"Because they wanted to conciliate the Labour Party and the Socialists."

The famous epigram of Horace, paraphrased as under, fits the present Government.

"Make political capital, honestly if you can; if not, by whatever means you can, make capital."

The most significant feature of this miserable piece of legislation is that *after* it was made law and the tax-payers robbed of their millions, Mr. Lloyd-George was seized with a desire to visit Germany for the avowed object of *studying the German Old Age Pension system*. The public would

like to know—" *Why did he not go before?* " The obvious outcome of this must be one of two things—either Mr. Lloyd-George's visit to Germany was undertaken with the object of throwing dust in the eyes of the justly angered tax-payers, in which case nothing more will be heard of it; or, after passing his plundering piece of legislation, he awoke to the consciousness of its manifest injustice and was honestly desirous of repairing his error. If the latter be the case, it will bear fruit in due season. Let us await the *dénouement* of the play.

This NON-CONTRIBUTORY Pension scheme of the Government is born of Socialism, and it is of a spoliatory character. It is a piece of CLASS LEGISLATION, and is a dangerous quality, always recoiling, like a boomerang on those who launched it forth. Those who have been unjustly robbed should never cease in their demand to have this spoliatory Act wiped out of the Statute book and replaced by a wise, well-thought-out scheme, on the German principle, to which *all classes* would be expected to contribute. The present scheme is nothing more nor less than a new STATE CHARITY, and the country is sick and tired of charities, because it has found that most of them are really unnecessary, and that they only serve to emasculate the manhood of the nation.

THE PENALTY OF NOT GROWING OUR OWN CORN

One of the most grievous burdens imposed upon the British people, through the violation of a natural law in not tilling their land, is the enormous widespread loss resulting therefrom. This loss is incalculable for the reason that it has the properties of quicksilver, of running here and there and finding its way into every nook and cranny of human existence. It ramifies through every vein of the national life and affects every class of the community, directly or indirectly, and is so woven into the very being of the people, that no man can estimate its capacity for good or for evil. The direct loss in agricultural wealth alone in thirty years has been estimated at *sixteen hundred millions sterling*—and, stupendous though this be, it no more plumbs the depths of the people's losses than a ship's line can plumb the immeasurable depths of the sea.

Great Britain has been pledged to this suicidal course—as Free-traders tell us—"FOR GOOD OR FOR EVIL," and after sixty years of experience the verdict of the people is—"IT IS FOR EVIL!" Every by-election proclaims this fact, and every printed sheet—save those that still cling to the policy which

thrusts this EVIL on the country—exposes the monstrous fallacy of encouraging the foreigner to grow our corn, and other food-stuffs, when our own lands are lying untilled and our people unemployed.

Every sane man who wishes well to his country knows that we can grow practically all our own food and, by a wise system of Tariff-reform and Land-reform, employ our own people and stop that enervating drain of excessive emigration which has robbed the country of its virile strength during the last half-century. He knows that the sacrifice of agriculture involves the sacrifice of those numerous subsidiary industries which grow out of, and depend upon, the parent industry, and that the loss of both one and the other must inevitably result in widespread unemployment and poverty. It is also clear that the destruction of these great industries carries with it the loss of that immense purchasing power possessed by a numerous universal agricultural population in the plenitude of its prosperity. It is, moreover, manifest that as all agricultural produce, whether grown in foreign countries or on our own soil, must, by the operation of an economic law, be paid for *in other commodities*, our own agriculturists would necessarily be better customers of British manufacturers than are the farmers of the United States or other countries from which we now draw 75 per cent. of our food supplies. This is easily proved by the fact that our Imports *exceed* our Exports by £172,000,000,* which means that foreign growers, who supply us with £172,000,000 worth of agricultural produce every year, *buy short in British manufactures*.

There is, in fact, nothing but loss in every direction, loss that radiates from the neglected LAND industry and ramifies among every section of the people. It directly, or indirectly, affects every form of occupation, and runs along the social and economic lines of the country so that no individual, and no trade, profession, or industry, escapes its blighting touch. There is no single industry or group of industries that exercise over the affairs of a people the same far-reaching effect as the single industry of AGRICULTURE, and once it be interfered with, and its beneficence checked or cut off, no man is able to estimate the extent of the evil that must inevitably result.

Those who destroyed agriculture and prevented the people growing their own food supplies imposed penalties upon the country which no nation can bear with impunity, and they alone are responsible for the EVIL that has overtaken the British people.

* "Statistical Abstract for the United Kingdom," C.D. 4253: 1908.

BRITAIN'S DEPENDENCE UPON FOREIGN COUNTRIES FOR
HER FOOD

Not the least of the many evils arising from a destroyed agriculture is the fact that 75 per cent. of our wheat and flour comes from foreign countries. This means, in a nutshell, that, even in times of peace, the British people are entirely at the mercy of a group of "smart operators" in wheat, who might at any moment "corner" the world's wheat supply and send prices up to starvation point. If we were at war with a foreign power—Germany, for example—44 millions of people would starve in a month, for it is absolutely certain that Germany would first strike at our most vulnerable point—our weakness in self-sustenance. Once Germany decides on fighting us, she herself, through her secret agents, would commence by "cornering" wheat in all the great markets of the world *months before she declared war*, so that at the psychological moment she would be able to hurl her forces against a people enfeebled by short supplies, and discouraged by the hopelessness of their insular position and their utter dependence upon outside supplies that no longer came to satisfy their daily needs.

Now that German invasion is not merely a nightmare but a tangible, ponderable quantity, this state of affairs may, and assuredly *will*, happen once war breaks out with that country.

The British people are therefore right in demanding from Free-traders, and the Manchester School of politicians, what justification they can plead for thrusting upon the country an economic system which will as surely bring about the defeat of a great people and the destruction of their world Empire—soon or late—as the deadly virus of leprosy, once absorbed in the corporal body, destroys in time its entire structure.

Those who are responsible for the destruction of Britain's self-sustaining powers in the matter of food supplies must answer this question—*for they only can answer it*.

THE FALLACIES OF ECONOMIC SCIENCE

No man, who would maintain a reputable sanity of demeanour, would be fool enough to carp and cavil at science and rail against its application to human affairs, but no man should jeopardise his sanity by obstinately insisting that every item in the domestic economy of the great human family should be governed, regulated, and dominated by her cold, inflexible, and arbitrary LAWS, because such a position is really indefensible.

Cobden and his Free-trade following, with the avowed object of benefiting *manufacturing* interests, interpreted the doctrines of Adam Smith and the great economists of long ago in a manner which favoured the abandonment of our own agriculture. "Don't grow your own wheat if others can grow it cheaper for you" was, and is, the keynote of their policy, and this interpretation of Adam Smith and his fellow-economists insured the destruction of British agriculture.

So many evils have sprung out of a murdered agriculture, so many strange and unaccountable things have happened in our social and economic world to puzzle and confound the British people, so much destitution, unemployment, pauperism, strife, unrest, copious outflow of British capital to foreign countries, such a wasteful drain of emigration, so many incongruities in economics, and so many inconsistencies and paradoxes in the broad field of Sociology have cropped up to mystify people, that one hardly knows what *has* happened, while nobody can predict what is *going* to happen.

Cobden and his fellows, by stopping the natural flow of the great agricultural industry, dammed up the inlets and outlets of national life, which, once interfered with, will surely cause unlooked for and untoward results. Dam up a swirling torrent, and you will soon get results that will astonish you. Take away your dam, and the trouble at once ceases. Economic science may demonstrate—on paper—how to let your land lie waste and import your corn from a foreign country, in the same manner that astronomical science can demonstrate the story of the visible heavens; but astronomers cannot trace the stars to their source nor fathom the profound depths of inter-stellar space; nor can the economists trace or estimate the loss which radiates from an uncultivated country and ramifies through every section of public life, till it is lost in the distance of far-away results. Those who destroy the agriculture of a country launch into being a force of evil which gathers momentum as it proceeds on its fateful course, and no man can measure its scath nor trace the *alpha* and *omega* of its baleful results.

To apply the laws of a doubtful, slippery science like economics to the cultivation of a field or the cultivation of one's back garden, is to apotheosise science at the expense of sense. Of course both the field and the back garden, as indeed, every plot of land in this, and every other civilised country on earth, *must* be cultivated, otherwise, how are the people to be fed and employed? To ask SCIENCE to supersede SENSE is to do that which Adam Smith himself never would have done, and which he never asked his degenerate followers to do in his name. It is common-sense to cultivate the land, of this, or any other

country, for all that it's worth, and the height of folly and madness *not* to cultivate it, and any man who persuades the people to abandon their land and buy their food supplies from foreign countries simply deserves the punishment due to the committal of a wrongful act.

THE EVILS OF AN INSENSATE "PARTY" SYSTEM

There is perhaps not a man in the kingdom who objects to the "Party" principle, *per se*, but it is doubtful if, outside the narrow circle of that band of politicians who would sacrifice every interest to party, there is a man in the Empire who does not hold that, while the *principle* of party politics is right enough, the flagrant and ever-growing *abuse* of the system has wrought incalculable and irremediable wrong to national interests. Few there are who would like to see the "Party" system abolished altogether, because men recognise its sanity, and its essentialities to public service; but, practically, the whole nation recognises the sore abuses that unbridled licence has cast about it, so that to-day Public Good is, in most cases, completely subordinated to Party Interests.

This is a condition that all Englishmen deplore, and as they realise that the situation has become strained and intolerable, they therefore demand a cessation of that fatuous and insensate strife which is the chief characteristic of parliamentary usage to-day. The national arena at Westminster has been used far too long as a bear garden for the "bears" and "bulls," but the people have wearied of these dull *farceurs* and require a change from the ridiculous party farces to the real drama of national life.

To uproot a mighty tree, whose roots and fibres have taken strong hold in the earth, is not an easy task, yet it is done every day. To uproot a pernicious system, the roots of which have struck deep down in the national life, is not done every day, and is not so easy as the uprooting of a giant tree, yet it *can* be done. Educate public opinion to the fact that the abuses of the "Party" system in Parliament strangle effort, check public enterprise, retard national progress, and render useful and necessary reform IMPOSSIBLE, and the contemptible sordid strife and petty wranglings that take place daily in the national Legislative Assembly will soon give place to useful, practical work of a nature that will serve national interests and promote the welfare of the PEOPLE.

LAND TENURES : THEIR IMPORTANCE TO THE NATION.

Few people realise the enormous importance of suiting land tenures to the national life, nor do they realise how intimately so apparently remote a question affects their own individual entities. Without suitable land tenures the land will most likely remain untilled and unproductive. If the land of a civilised country remains unproductive, trouble and widespread loss ensues, and every chapter of this and other cognate works, shows how this loss runs along the highways and byways of life and affects every person in that unfortunate country ; hence, every individual is more or less affected by the system of land tenures obtaining in his own country.

You cannot make bread without flour, nor can you have successful and progressive agriculture without suitable land tenures. The thing is impossible. The British land tenures are a jumble of incongruities—a relic of feudalism, slightly tempered with pallid landlordism, tinkered by Cobden, patched up by Manchester, and maintained in their naked uselessness by the fatuous indifference, or, rather, the ignorance of the people. They are as useless to the British agriculturists as the flour would be to the baker without the oven ; and until the common-sense of the country is aroused to the necessities of the case, and a reasonable up-to-date system of working the land industry be demanded and set up as a permanent national institution, the troubles of the people, and that widespread destitution and unemployment which result from neglected agriculture, will, and must continue. Education in this matter will alone save the position, and it is to be earnestly hoped that the Press and other instructors will never cease in their efforts till every man in the country realises that suitable land tenures, whereunder every acre of available land in the country will be brought under cultivation, and worked in the interests of, and for the good of the people, will be established on a firm durable basis.

The only remaining point that need be referred to here, and one that should never be lost sight of for a single instant by the people of this country, is that upon which most of the questions considered in these pages revolve, namely—

FREE-TRADE : ITS FUNDAMENTAL ERRORS.

The first fundamental error of the reformers of sixty years ago was in detaching this country from among the congeries of nations and setting it apart as an entity requiring a separate

existence and special treatment. Nations, like individuals, are gregarious in their habits, and, if isolated, are apt to develop an amount of morbidity dangerous to their existence.

It was admittedly wise to turn to account the enormous wealth which this country possessed in its mineral and industrial resources, in the industrial skill of its people, and in its great mercantile marine; but it was unwise and quite unnecessary to suppose that, in order to accomplish this purpose, it was obligatory to create for it a separate and unique economic existence which is as alien to the economic usage of all civilised States as a tropical orchid is to the uncongenial climate of Lapland.

The production of mineral wealth, the development of industrialism, and the increase of national trade, could have been carried on quite well side by side with a great agricultural industry; indeed, this latter industry, if left to its natural line of progression, would have advanced proportionably, and have been contemporaneous with its sister industries in all progressive movements. That this is true is proved by the single fact that in every civilised country in the world, *except* our own, agriculture has developed side by side in progressive prosperity with all other industries.

Great Britain was, then, separated from the community of nations by a band of manufacturer-reformers, and made to undergo a separate existence. She was made to live apart from her sister States in respect to economic usage, and was subjected to a course of treatment so severe and yet so unnecessary that she has never recovered. This was the fundamental blunder.

The next monumental error was in regarding the unnatural outgrowth of evils, which necessarily resulted from so unnatural a proceeding, as a deep-seated disease requiring high professional skill and scientific knowledge in its treatment, because such an attitude was bound to attract a veritable host of "experts," who would prove as resourceful in their "scientific" remedies as a quack doctor with his antidotes, prophylactics, and other undesirable nostrums.

In damming the stream of agriculture the people's great source of employment was cut off, and, as a very natural result, the overflow is felt to-day in every profession, trade, and industry, causing congested labour markets, unemployment, poverty, and many other evils which so foolish, so unnatural, and yet so *unnecessary* an action was bound to produce.

The obvious course to pursue here was not to treat these results as belonging to a group of inevitable diseases which are as certain to appear in the body politic, from time to time, as

chicken-pox and measles appear in the corporal body, but to regard them as an inevitable result of a most unnatural action ; the dam impedes the current of the great agricultural industry, and all that is required to stop the overflow, and the mischief arising therefrom, is to *cut through the barrier*.

Instead of adopting this eminently sensible and practical course, those who have been responsible for the affairs of the commonweal have adopted the eminently *unpractical* course of dealing with effects rather than with causes ; they have failed to perceive that the many evils which have dogged the footsteps of the people for many a year are but the result of the violation of a natural law which will automatically cease as soon as the violation ceases—*but not before*.

The third and perhaps the gravest of the many blunders committed in the past and at the present day in connection with this country's agricultural industry is in supposing that, under any conditions which are likely to environ our mundane affairs, this or any country, being one of a community of civilised States, which are forced to adopt a common line of agricultural economy in the interests of the commonwealth, could possibly maintain itself in that state of general progressive prosperity which—other things being equal—every industrious and thrifty country has every reasonable right to expect, if its chief source of wealth production—agriculture—is destroyed.

This is the exact position of the United Kingdom to-day ; her agriculture has been destroyed, and she finds she cannot maintain herself in a state of *general* prosperity. Enormous wealth is admitted, but it belongs to the few and not to the many ; there is far too much precariousness of living ; too much anxiety for the morrow ; too much real destitution among the masses ; too many evidences of failure on all sides to warrant the assumption that all is well with the people.

In this respect the United Kingdom stands alone. Other nations have not destroyed *their* agriculture and, as a consequence, they are not suffering as this country is.

Here the question naturally arises, "Why are we in this position and why do we not get out of it?"

We are in this position because the Manchester School of reformers of the last century, in dreaming of a world-wide mighty Commercialism for Great Britain, set up certain economic conditions which carried with them the germs of economic destruction. Trades, manufactures, and a vast commercial-industrialism that would sweep the markets of the world and bring untold wealth to our shores were to be our portion, and it is admitted that, up to a certain point, the preachers of this doctrine justified their creed. Commercialism has exploited the

world's marts, gold in abundance has come to our shores, but it has gone into the pockets of the merchant and the manufacturer, while it has also benefited certain of our industrial workers. The *masses*, however, are still sunk in that same pitiable state of semi-destitution and of actual grinding, biting poverty in which they were in the thirties and "hungry forties" of the last century, and which called into being that band of reformers who subsequently gave to this country those fiscal laws whose effects we are now considering. Admitting, for the sake of argument, that those strenuous workers in the field of reform may have been honest in their convictions and sincere in their beliefs; and that the people of those days had many grievances and were in a condition demanding prompt aid and generous support, while reform of a drastic nature was imperative, they had no more right, when giving the country a new order of economy and establishing their vast industrial and commercial system, to supersede and subsequently destroy the great land industry, than we should have to-day if, in re-establishing agriculture, we foolishly and recklessly cast aside or destroyed our manufactures and commerce.

Three great fundamental economical errors were then made by those who gave to Great Britain her present economical system, but a still greater error is committed by those who cannot, or will not, see that it is in the perpetuation of the error and not necessarily in its inception, or in its first application, the danger proceeds, and until this simple fact is recognised and admitted, remedial measures are impossible.

No country in the world is in a position, nor ever can be in a position, to treat the greatest of all industries—agriculture—as a factor of little or no importance in whatever system of national economy it may choose to set up for itself, because this would be to advance a proposition that is not demonstrable by any laws that are known to man. History is incapable of recording a single instance where this has been done, but, on the other hand, it records several examples of the ruin of countries and the crumbling away of empires *because of the neglect of agriculture*.

Cobden and Bright, however, dreaming only of that commercial and industrial world supremacy which they were so anxious to win for this country, gave to Great Britain an economical system as unsuited to the practical daily needs of a great people, as the gauzy raiment of the tropics is unsuited to the cold regions of the arctic circle. Out of their sanguineness, and at their bidding, she threw aside her agriculture, as of no account, and arrogantly stood forth as the mistress of the seas, the controller of commercial and industrial destinies, the

champion of a new order of things, and the sole exponent of what Cobden boasted would become a new system of universal economics.

That all these grand schemes have failed to reach the lofty ideals of that interested band of manufacturer-reformers is simply and incontrovertibly proved by the pre-eminently unsatisfactory social and economical condition of the British people to-day. This condition has bred unrest, discontent, strife, Socialism, and class-war; and will, unless ameliorated by wise, far-reaching and long-needed reform, breed—REVOLUTION.

This simple and universally recognised fact speaks for itself, and constitutes, *in itself*, the most damning indictment that could possibly be brought against the utter unsuitableness of FREE-TRADE, and its evil effect on the condition and lives of the British People.

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