ESCOTT THOMAS SWEET

Social Transformations of the Victorian Age: A Survey of Court and Country

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T. H. S. Escott
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PREFACE

It may be well very briefly to explain the relation in which the present work stands to a survey, not a history, of modern England undertaken by the same author some years ago. That earlier work was originally published by Messrs Cassell and Co. in two volumes. It was reprinted, first by them, secondly by Messrs Chapman and Hall, in a single volume. Into that re-issue of his *England: Its People, Polity, and Pursuits* (the labour of revision being much lightened by the obliging help of Mr Francis Drummond), the author introduced certain references to social or legislative changes effected since the original edition of the work appeared. Without organic disturbance of its plan, and risk of consequent confusion to the reader, it would have been impossible to bring down that book to the year 1897. The writer does not in the following pages pre-suppose any knowledge of his former book on the part of the readers of his present one. He

has, however, held himself absolved from the duty of repeating in this book minute accounts of institutions fully described in its predecessor. Such repetition seemed the more undesirable because the earlier book is still in wide circulation here; while it has been translated into several European languages, and has been adopted as a text book in the higher grade State schools of Germany,[1] and of other countries. The method of workmanship adopted in *Social Transformations of the Victorian Age* is identical with that pursued in the case of *England, Etc.*

This new book being, like its predecessor, not a history, but a series of different views from a common standpoint, the sketches of national life and character as well as of national institutions at work, have in all cases been made from personal observation; supplemented by the assistance of the highest experts in their different departments to whom the writer had access. Often, he is glad to say, the same private friends who helped him in the seventies have been able to renew that help in the nineties. Thus, Sir Charles Dilke, Sir Robert Herbert, Mr Mundella, Mr Archibald Milman of the House of Commons, and Mr Albert Pell have generally and specifically repeated the assistance lent to him twenty years earlier. In most cases it is hoped the assistance given has been acknowledged in its proper place. In many cases the advantages of this service extend beyond any particular passage. In all which relates to the new schemes of local government the writer is particularly indebted to Mr Henry

[1] Edited by Dr Ernst Regel – Berlin, 1894.

Chaplin or members of his staff; to Sir Henry Fowler; to Sir Charles Dilke; to the Rev. J. Charles Cox, LL.D., of Holdenby, as in ecclesiastical matters to the Rev. A. L. Foulkes of Steventon, and to the Rev. H. W. Tucker, D.D., of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. In references to certain phases of social history, especially about the early railway period, he has learned much from Lord Carlingford, Mr Markham Spofforth, Mr J. C. Parkinson, and from Sir W. H. Russell. And finally he would specially thank several gentlemen of the Education Department, as well as the Vice-President himself, Sir John Gorst. It is hoped that, as in the case of the writer's *England*, so in that of his new book, the collaboration of those who are, in their different provinces, experts, has ensured a more uniform accuracy than in a volume dealing with such a variety of subjects would otherwise have been attainable.

T. H. S. E.

CHAPTER I
TWO EPOCHS OF VICTORIAN SOCIETY CONTRASTED

Difference between English society in the earlier and later years of the Queen's reign illustrated from the composition of Hyde Park crowds, first, when the Park was a playground for the Royal children, and a parade ground for social celebrities, secondly, as it has become since. Different generations of Victorian Royalty. Great noblemen, Lord Lansdowne, Lord Eglinton, Lord Shrewsbury, Lord Shaftesbury, The Duke of Wellington. Statesmen, Earl Grey, Sir Robert Peel. Other celebrities, social, or intellectual, or literary. The dandies, some of them sketched by Thackeray, Morgan O'Connell, the original of 'The O'Mulligan,' Alfred Montgomery, Alexis Soyer, Lord Adolphus Fitzclarence, 1848-51. Tall forms of Thackeray and Jacob Omnium overtopping the crowd. The editor of the *Times*, J. T. Delane, on horseback. The absence in later days of eminent individuals like these; the old editor and the new. A. W. Kinglake among the last riders in Hyde Park of veterans who write. Commerce in the Park and in society represented by 'King' Hudson before and after his fall. Lord Tollemache, of Peckforton, the last of great nobles familiar to English crowds.

As it is to-day, so, during the earlier years of the present

reign, both before and after the Great Exhibition of 1851, Hyde Park was the social parade ground, not only of the capital, but of the Kingdom. Then, as now, its human panorama was the representative reflection of the social conditions not less than of the typical personages of the era.

Throughout the later forties or the fifties, the loungers from the provinces were certainly not less numerous in Hyde Park than to-day. Foreign visitors were beginning to be a feature in the Metropolitan summer. But the scale on which the London season half a century ago was observed was so small as to resemble but faintly its successors known to the present generation. Society scarcely exceeded the dimensions of a family party. Hyde Park itself seemed a Royal pleasure ground first, a popular resort afterwards, to which strangers were, as to the Park at Windsor, admitted by favour of the first Constitutional Sovereign, to behold the pastimes of the rising generations of Royalty. The little boy and girl, steering their ponies through the maze of carriages, horses, or pedestrians, were the Prince of Wales and the Princess Royal. Observers noted with appreciative criticism the progress made from day to day by the young riders. Other of the Queen's descendants of age still more tender, followed with their parents in an open carriage, the exact build of which had been introduced by the Prince Consort, and were manifestly being instructed by their father or mother in the art of acknowledging gracefully the respectful salutations of spectators.

The company crowding the Park, and most familiar to London

onlookers differed from the crowds of succeeding decades, first, in the monotony of its composition, secondly, in the commanding ascendancy of some among the individuals whom it numbered. This was a kind of feudal age in our social development. The monarch was surrounded by subjects, the splendour of whose station, or the lustre of whose endowments caused them to shine forth in their exalted firmament, with a light of their own not reflected by, though comparable with, that of Royalty itself. Two noblemen, during the first quarter of a century of the Queen's reign, one Scotch, the other English, seemed to eclipse the rest of the peerage. The Earl of Eglinton, of the period now referred to, was famous, even among Englishmen, from the tournament held some years earlier in 1839 at Eglinton Castle, and described by Mr Disraeli in his last novel, *Endymion*. The lady who had been the Queen of Beauty upon the occasion, the Duchess of Somerset, was then a synonym for all which women envy or men admire. When she appeared in Hyde Park, the crowd gazed at her carriage with the awed admiration that they bestowed on those born to thrones. North of the Tweed, Lord Eglinton summed up to his adoring countrymen, in his own person, all the influence, the dignity, the splendour, the power, and all the other attributes of greatness with which the principle of birth could be endowed. What Lord Eglinton was in Scotland, or to the natives of Scotland in London, Lord Lansdowne[2] had long been to all classes of Englishmen, not more

[2] The grandfather of the fifth Marquess. As Lord Henry Petty, he had so long since

in his native county than in London. Here, during the earlier Victorian seasons, he was conspicuous in Hyde Park, generally by his perfect demeanour of high breeding, specially by this blue coat and voluminous white neck investment. After him, slowly riding on a horse whose familiarity can best be expressed to readers of to-day by comparing it with that sometime attained by the white cob of Mr Lowe, Lord Sherbrooke, there appeared, in the blue coat and white trousers of the old régime, the figure before whom all heads instinctively uncovered, the great Duke of Wellington. On horseback, also, were two other men, second only in eminence to the Duke himself, Lord Palmerston, and Sir Robert Peel. The first still wore his years lightly and was as much at home in the saddle as in the House of Commons. Sir Robert Peel, still a remarkably handsome man, had the enthusiasm of the equestrian. Those who can recall the loose connection between Bishop Samuel Wilberforce and the steed which he bestrode, can form an idea of the 'seat' of the great Sir Robert.

Next to the representatives of the reigning family and to the statesmen who were the props of the young Queen's throne, the attention of the Hyde Park crowd was fixed upon a little group of gentlemen, remarkable for the perfection of their toilettes, and for the special attention manifestly bestowed upon their hair, not as to-day cut down to the scalp, but falling gracefully over the white collar. These were the dandies. The last of the tribe has

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as 1806 been Chancellor of the Exchequer. In 1848 he was President of the Council, and led the peers in the Russell Government. Died 1863.

not long passed away. But as a race they have left no successors. The late Mr Alfred Montgomery had for his associates Count Alfred D'Orsay, whose Christian name was perpetuated by a dandies' club. 'The Alfred' flourished in Albemarle Street till a decade or two since. Its founder survived till the nineties, Alexis Soyer, high priest of the mysteries of the fine art of cookery as well as the original of Thackeray's 'Mirobolant' in *Pendennis*. Others who sat for their portraits to the novelist were well known in the fashionable section of the Hyde Park crowd. Morgan John O'Connell, a leader of dandies, was of course there. There, too, was that other O'Connell, known by his friends as Lord Kilmarlcock, from whom Thackeray never denied that he had taken the traits of The O'Mulligan. Possibly, too, there might have been seen here Mr Arcedeckne, whom the same novelist has immortalised in 'Harry Foker,' and who thus early in the Victorian era prefigured the social friendship since grown more common between the gentlemen who live to labour, and their comrades who live to enjoy. Still more noticeable among the Hyde Park loungers on foot, standing not far from D'Orsay and Montgomery were the two inseparables, the then Sir George Wombwell and Lord Adolphus, better known as 'Dolly,' Fitzclarence, the latter curiously like Lawrence's picture of George IV.

The editor of the *Times*, J. T. Delane, scarcely less powerful in the social and political system than in his own office, would have been mistaken, by those who did not know him personally,

for the plain country gentleman whose life he liked to lead. His square, neatly compacted figure, with cleanly shaven upper lip, and penetrating, but pleasant, expression of eyes, was among the last to enter and to leave the Park. Not less well known to most Londoners and to many provincials were two of Mr Delane's literary friends, though not both of them wrote for his paper. One of these was Thackeray, towering above all the smaller men. The other was tall Thackeray's taller friend known to his contemporaries as 'Big' Higgins, still better known to the public at large as Jacob Omnium. The two were generally to be found together. The eyes of all passengers were strained, and their tongues silenced as these two tall lumbering figures manœuvred slowly up or down the Row; not so much ridden in then as it was afterwards.

But neither the intellectual workers, nor the social butterflies attracted more attention than a middle-aged, rather over-dressed lady in a very gorgeous carriage, which might have become a Lord Mayor, and a big, heavy man, with drab-coloured, wiry hair, who sometimes sat beside her. The chariot and its occupants seemed to interest the country visitors in the Park more than did the distinguished persons already mentioned. The gentleman was George Hudson, the 'railway King,' who had not only made a fortune himself, but had been the cause of many others rolling in wealth scarcely less than his own. Within a few years he was still visible in the same enclosure, not, however, in the gaudy equipage, but as a pedestrian. The crash, in fact, had come.

King Hudson had fallen on evil days. But having dragged none down in his descent, nor disclosed any secrets of the prison house, he kept friends who helped him in his adversity. The house at Knightsbridge, which is now the French Embassy, knew of course Hudson no more. Its fashionable assemblages since it became a diplomatic residence cannot have been more brilliant than those which met there when Hudson was its master. Nor, indeed, has its social splendour since been eclipsed by any of those more recent hosts whom commercial success has incorporated among the sons and daughters of fashion. Hudson's dinner table, or Mrs Hudson's reception room, were graced, habitually by the great Duke of Wellington, by the Duke of Cambridge, and occasionally by other Princes of the blood Royal. Nor, during his decline, did Hudson fail to carry himself with good humour, and even dignity. His simple, harmless, almost pathetic vanity had perhaps combined with his shrewd Yorkshire common sense to support him under his adversities. A sum which realised £600 a year had been subscribed for him, the trustees of his annuity being Sir George Elliot, and Mr Hugh Taylor. His wife and his sons were alive. But he preferred living in a solitary lodging in London. His freedom from all anxiety made this season of eclipse, he protested, the happiest time of his life. A courteous recognition from the great Lord Grey in the Park, or the kindly concession to him of the chair which he had occupied, in other years, in the smoking room of the Carlton, shed something more than a transitory gleam of comfort upon

his darkened fortunes, and were recited by the old man with his north country burr to the friends with whom, to the last, he used to dine. Like another fallen star of a different system, in an earlier age, Beau Brummell, Hudson passed several years of his eclipse at a hotel in Calais, where he was visited by more friends than had ever looked in upon the great dandy of the Georgian epoch during the twilight hours of his life.

Such, then, were the chief among the more representative figures to be met with on the brightest and most varied of the social parade grounds of the capital during the earlier years of the Victorian epoch.

No single element conspicuous in the Hyde Park of the later years of the Victorian era was absent from that earlier crowd at whose composition we have glanced. The social prominence of English plutocracy whether represented by the great money brokers, whom, Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic, Piccadilly has always known, or by Yorkshire Hudson, whom it knew fitfully during the short spell of his splendour, has been, from Elizabethan or still earlier times, a feature and a force in the social economy of the town. That which, seen between the Magazine and Apsley House, would have most surprised Hyde Park loungers in the early Victorian days, had they been able to lift the curtain of the future, is not the fact of the best coaches of the Four in Hand Club being owned by men whose names have no English sound, and whose taste for horseflesh is not hereditary; but rather the vogue now attained by prevailing bicycles. Even here, perhaps,

one ought rather to recognize the reintroduction of a fashion whose idea is as old as the hobby horse itself than a mode as indisputably modern as the safety wheel or the pneumatic tyre.

The Princes and Princesses who once rode their ponies between Albert and Stanhope Gates are now bearing a part in the government of Empires, but are seldom for long unrepresented in the moving and glittering throng. The 'city' in the Row is not a novelty. The Church began with Archbishop Tait to be more prominently represented than was ever known before. The most emancipated of bygone occupants of Lambeth would scarcely have looked forward to the time when a cavalcade composed of archiepiscopal children, led by a Primate himself in the van, with his Chaplain bringing up the rear, would canter to and fro along the Row. Hyde Park is not to-day visited by early water drinkers who believe in the virtues of the probably forgotten spring in Kensington Gardens hard by. But not many hours after dawn, the novelty, as to early Victorian observers it would have seemed, may be witnessed of ladies and gentlemen issuing in bands from their Tyburnian or Kensingtonian homes to gain an appetite for breakfast, and a store of fresh air for the day's confinement, by making at least once the circuit of the Park while the roads are at their emptiest, and the dewdrops still glisten on the flowers.

Something else than the extended popularity of London's most serviceable 'lung' is suggested by the contrast between Hyde Park as it is now, and as it was three or four decades since. The dandies are not the only feature in the social landscape one

looks for in vain. The commanding personalities of individuals of either sex which seemed common on every social plane thirty or forty years since have largely disappeared now. The levelling influences of a democratic epoch have reduced to a uniformity of unheroic proportions those who represent in our public places the interests, the occupations, the achievements, or the society of their day. It is called a prosaic age. It is certainly, as compared with its predecessors, a lilliputian one. At the very zenith of his power, Mr Gladstone in the streets or parks of London, never fixed the attention of the crowd to the same degree as his political master, the great Sir Robert Peel. The adroit, accomplished, and singularly successful soldier, who, since the Duke of Cambridge's retirement, has been Commander-in-Chief, resembles the Duke of Wellington in stature. Neither Lord Wolseley, nor any of his contemporaries, compels as yet from street crowds the mute veneration and awe which the simple fact of his unrivalled pre-eminence as a subject secured for the Duke of Wellington whenever he set foot in Piccadilly, or turned his horse's head in the direction of the Horse Guards down Constitution Hill.

Outside the Royal Family there is no great lady who like an earlier Lady Jersey is greeted as a queen by crowds to which she can only be a name. In the same way, the average of efficiency in journalism was never so high as at present, nor the editing as well as the writing and compiling of newspapers ever more competently performed. The editor, however, of the stamp of John Thaddeus Delane does not, nor by the circumstances of

the time could, any longer exist. The responsible head of a great newspaper office has necessarily become less a creator of public opinion, less even of an interpreter, which Delane signally was, of middle class English thought, than the custodian of a commercial interest, the vicegerent of a proprietor who regards the journal, first, as a great organ of public opinion; secondly, as the instrument for achieving his own patriotic purposes in his own way. While Delane was yet living, the able conductor of another great daily journal was ambitious to fill a place like Delane's in the social and political system. It was a sad mistake. In journalism, more than anywhere else, as this gentleman ought to have known, given the requisite capacity which he undoubtedly had, a man may exercise almost any power he likes on condition that he himself remains in the background, and neither in jest nor earnest magnifies his apostleship too much. The consequence was, in the particular case now spoken of, that after some years of patient forbearance on the owner's part, his solicitor waited on the editor one fine morning at his country house, and curtly handed the gentleman, who thought himself indispensable, a formal note of dismissal. Stories were told of occasional collision even between Mr Delane and the proprietary of the great newspaper. These were for the most part doubtless apocryphal. The one thing which observers knew for certain was that when the commercial master of the newspaper appeared during the evening in the same room as its literary controller, Mr Delane generally found that he had an engagement at his office.

Some years after the date at which Hyde Park retrospectively has been presented, the best, if not the only, well known man of letters to be observed on horseback was A. W. Kinglake, the historian of the Crimean war. When he passed away there was left stout-hearted, short-tempered Anthony Trollope, who, up to the time of his fatal seizure, pounded his sturdy cob so many times round the enclosure between Cumberland and Albert Gates, just as a few hours earlier in his study, whether in or out of the vein, he had completed a fixed number of words of his new novel. These knights of the pen are followed (1897) by Frederic Harrison, Leslie Stephen and W. S. Lilly. The last quarter of a century in London finds us with many adequate representatives of national industry and achievement. The hero who in any department sums up the exploits and the tendencies of his age will with difficulty be found. The fact that it is the day of great successes does not prevent its being comparatively the age of small men. So long as the veteran Lord Tollemache, of Peckforton, survived to drive his team in its harness of untanned leather from Marlborough Gate to Portman Square, the peerage in its social aspect did not lack one whom Carlyle would have admitted to be in his way a hero. Since 1890, when Lord Tollemache died, Burke and Debrett contain no name whose owner is the cynosure of the holiday crowd in at all the same degree as that last survivor of those noblemen whose figures at an earlier period of this reign were as well known to the popular eye as their position or eccentricity was celebrated in popular talk.

CHAPTER II
THE NEW WEALTH

Commercial plutocracy not seen in England for the first time under Queen Victoria, but dates from Queen Elizabeth or earlier. Wealth, birth, intellect, often united in England. City traders being Lord Mayors who from 1452 onwards have founded noble houses. The chief elements in the new nineteenth century wealth considered. Gold discoveries in California 1848, in Australia 1850. Their transforming influences at home and abroad. Expert opinions of the period on the consequences and the durability of the new gold. Different views and calculations of Sir Archibald Alison, Sir Roderick Murchison, Chevalier and Cobden. A new civilization resting on gold. Australian millionaire farmers preceded millionaire gold diggers. Effects of new gold upon circulating and fixed wealth of England tested by property assessments.

'I respect the aristocracy of birth and of intellect. I do not respect the aristocracy of wealth.' The remark is attributed to the great, or second, Sir Robert Peel. It proceeds upon a confused view of the social principles indicated by the words. It comes, somewhat inappropriately, from the political successor of the William Pitt who bestowed more peerages upon the possessors of mere wealth than any Minister before his time had done.

The distinction drawn by Sir Robert Peel between the different aristocracies of England involves some misconceptions of social history. In Austria there existed during the last century, there perhaps survives faintly to this day, an antagonism between the principles of birth and of wealth such as England has never known. With more than conventional fitness is the Premier of the day, whether peer or commoner, the guest on each 9th of November of the First Magistrate of London City. Within five centuries, at least fourteen noble houses have been founded by ten Lord Mayors.

In 1452 Sir Godfrey Feilding, mercer, was the Lord Mayor from whom the Earls of Denbigh descend. Five years later another trader, Sir Godfrey Boleine sat in the chair of Whittington. One of his lineage, a generation or two later, as Earl of Wiltshire, gave Henry VIII. his second wife, and England her first Protestant Queen. Some ninety years thereafter, Lord Mayor Sir John Gresham, grocer, supplied from his numerous family a Duke of Buckingham, and a Lord Braybrooke. In 1557 Sir Thomas Cooke, draper, was installed in the Mansion House. To his descendants at least two patents of nobility were granted, the peerages of Salisbury and of Fitzwilliam. In 1570 a clothworker, Sir Rowland Heyward, became chief of the City Corporation. He was the ancestor of the Marquises of Bath. Fifteen years subsequently to this date, Sir Wolston Dixie, of the Skinners Company, was at once the Sovereign of the City and the forerunner of the peers bearing the titles of Compton

or of Northampton. During the earliest years of the seventeenth century there reigned to the East of Temple Bar Sir John Houblon, a grocer. His descendants were to number amongst them the Irish Viscounts who in the fulness of time gave to Queen Victoria in Lord Palmerston the most popular and powerful Premier during the first half of her reign. Within another hundred years Lord Mayor Sir Samuel Dashwood, vintner, became a progenitor of future nobles only less prolific than his sixteenth century predecessor, Sir Thomas Cooke. Those who sprang from him obtained in due course the peerages of Warwick and Brooke. When in 1711, as Tory Ministers, Harley and Bolingbroke dined at the Guildhall, they were entertained by Sir Gilbert Heathcote whose posterity was ennobled by the styles of Aveland and Donne. One of Lord Salisbury's Christian names, and his second title, that of Viscount Cranborne, perpetuate the memory of the Sir Christopher Gascoigne who was Lord Mayor of London during the first Ministry of Henry Pelham, in 1753.

These instances serve circumstantially to remind us that the titled, like the untitled aristocracy of the country has always represented, as it represents to-day, in nearly equal proportions industry and intelligence in enterprise, perhaps even more than antiquity of descent. The dramatic circumstances of his rise and of his fall; the extent to which the latest developments of science, adventure and speculation were embodied in the person and in the career of the York linendraper's son, make George Hudson, the 'railway King' specially conspicuous amongst those on whom

shrewdness and opportunity conferred material success. But the type is not merely as old as the present century. It has existed as long as English civilization itself.

When Queen Victoria came to the throne, there was little in the signs of the times to betoken as near at hand the national prosperity which was firmly established before she had been seated on her throne five and twenty years. National depression followed the exhaustion of English energy and finance which had been caused by the struggle with France. Long after the heavy war taxation had ended with Waterloo, and the conqueror of Waterloo had as ruler of the State reduced army expenses to an unexpectedly low figure, the national fortunes were at an alarmingly low ebb. Sinecures had been nearly abolished. A further saving of expense had been expected by the partial or practical disbandment of the Yeomanry. But between 1815 and 1845 the series of bad years was broken only in 1822-5. Even then, English enthusiasm at the liberation of South America from Spanish rule was followed by reaction consequent upon the sinking of British millions in loans to the Spanish Republics of the New World. During the first decade of the Victorian epoch, better harvests coincided with the importation of gold in small quantities from the Ural mines. The railway enthusiasm provided fresh employment for the working classes. More even than by gold and railways was done by the fiscal reforms due to Cobden, Bright, Peel, Villiers and Gladstone to give impetus to trade, and commerce, and to make England the market of the world.

Hence the origin and multiplication of English millionaires. The country was thus gladdened by fitful gleams of a long unknown prosperity. But budgets continued to be bad, and Whig finance was in chronic disrepute. During no small part of a century, English exports had remained almost stationary at £51,000,000 a year. The distress was aggravated by the cotton spinning failures of 1842-3. On the eve of these the Burnley guardians told the Home Secretary of the inadequacy of their funds for the relief of local necessities. So gloomy indeed seemed the national fortune, that the Government of the day sold the Crown rights over Epping Forest. Nor as a fact was it till the forty-fifth year of the Queen's reign that in 1882, this historic pleasure ground presented those scenes with which it is chiefly identified to-day.[3]

The first of the most striking transformations of the Victorian era took place in the eleventh year of the Queen's reign and continued during two or three years thereafter. The gold discoveries in California began in 1848. They differed from those which had preceded them elsewhere on American soil in the circumstance that the new treasures were distributed among the entire population, and were not confined to a small band of despotic aliens, as had happened under the sway of the Spanish chiefs and the Incas of Peru. In 1850-1 the same precious metal as three years earlier had been yielded to diggers on the Californian slopes and on the banks of the Sacramento

[3] But much of the Forest being saved by the Common rights had not at any time been enclosed.

River was found to exist in the alluvial plains of Ballarat in our own Australian colonies. The practical value of these new sources of wealth was variously regarded by political critics and scientific economists. The French Chevalier, and our own Cobden predicted as a result of the new gold supplies a fall in the value of money, a revolution in property, the doubling of wages and prices and the impoverishment of capitalists. Others foretold the speedy exhaustion of the new gold mines. That view was sanctioned by the expert authority of the famous geologist, Sir Roderick Murchison, who spoke of the limits of the recently discovered gold as 'Nature's Currency Restriction Act.' Sir Archibald Alison, not an incautious person, and certainly no friend to innovation, elaborately supported a contrary opinion. He engaged in a series of minute calculations for the purpose of showing that the gold supply now available could not be used up within four centuries. When the alluvial soil was drained of its precious deposits, there would, as Alison argued, remain the parent rocks, the cost of working which seemed likely to diminish and not to increase with time. Nor was this authority less sanguine as to the beneficent effects upon all classes and interests of the new gold. Commerce, he argued, would be promoted at every turn. With increasing production there would be fresh employment, a practical decrease in taxation, and generally in the payments made by the poorer classes to the rich. Before the Australian discoveries of 1850, scarcity of gold had, as Alison contended, raised the value of money, and

emphasized the difference between the rich and the poor. The Currency Restriction Act had been passed in 1844. 'Nature's Grand Currency Extension Act' was the name given by the historian to the fresh sources of wealth revealed in Bendigo and Ballarat. The facts and figures were something to the following effect. The discoveries of 1850-1 had added sixteen or eighteen millions to the world's money in comparison with the eight or ten millions which in the fifteenth century and onwards had been provided by Mexico and Peru. On the other hand the economist Chevalier anticipated that, as a consequence of the new gold, money in ten years would fall by one half. 'In 1800,' so ran the argument of this economist, 'the annual addition to the gold of Christendom was barely two and a half millions. In 1848 it amounted to thirty-eight millions. In 1858 the total was a hundred and ninety millions. Hence,' he insisted, 'between 1858 and 1868 the additions to the world's available stock of the precious metal would be at least as much as the aggregate of additions during the three preceding centuries, that is four hundred millions sterling.' The stages in this induction may be thus briefly epitomized. During the three and a half centuries since the voyages of Columbus and of Cabot opened the New World to the Old, two thousand millions sterling had been added to the gold and silver of our planet. The hectolitre of wheat before A.D. 1492 cost in Paris from 2s. 6d. to 2s. 9d. Between 1848-58 it cost 16s. 8d. In other words if the usual grain test be applied, money had fallen during three and a half centuries to

nearly one-sixth of its original value. It was upon calculations like these as well as upon certain other considerations that Chevalier based his argument that the fresh influx of gold would make money fall again by three-fourths of its value. This was in effect to say that to procure the same amount of subsistence as hitherto four times as much gold would be required. Cobden's anticipations were to the same effect. So general was the belief of an impeding depreciation of gold and appreciation of silver that Holland actually demonetized gold and adopted silver as its standard money. All these fears were doomed to disappointment. The hopes were more than realized. The third quarter of our present century has proved the most prosperous which modern Europe or the world has ever known. A careful and voluminous writer on this subject, the late R. H. Patterson[4] attributes this miscalculation to the 'famous currency principle' which grew up after the great war.

The agencies that have changed the material basis underlying the structure of English society were thus fairly now in operation. They were supplemented by other circumstances all tending to produce the same result. Chief among these was the fact of the English coal supply surpassing that of other countries in its abundance and its universal distribution by land and sea. The character and the progress of the Victorian era are due in no small degree to the sagacity and shrewdness of the Prince Consort. He was now the first to recognize that the time had come when

[4] *The Age of Gold*, vol. i. p. 37.

the cultivation of the artistic sense was alone needed to make the English workman the best in that world of which from the days of Chatham onwards, his country had been pre-eminently the workshop. French industry had not even yet recovered from the blow dealt to it by the revolution of the last century. That effacement of an earlier régime had differed in important particulars from all analogous movements in earlier ages. The havoc, the massacres, the proscriptions and confiscations of ancient Rome during her passage from a Republic to an Empire, had seriously affected the highest classes alone. The substitution for the French monarchy of a Robespierre first, of a Napoleon afterwards, had involved all orders in a common ruin. The Queen's husband made it the business of his life to insure the maintenance of the advantage which history itself had thus given to English industry and manufacture, and which the fresh supply of the precious metal directly favoured.

The universal attraction to Englishmen of the Australian gold fields may be summarized in a very few facts and figures. In 1852 the English emigrants to the treasure stores of the Antipodes were 369,000; a larger number, that is, than was represented by the increase of the Queen's subjects at home through the excess of births over deaths. Our population in fact stood still in order that Australia, like California, might be peopled. During the four or five years of the gold fever under the Southern Cross, we sent out 1,356,000; more, in other words, than the whole population of Scotland at the time of the Union. The annual average of

English emigrants was thus a trifle over a quarter of a million. Somewhat later, the collapse of the railway mania in England and the potato famine in Ireland, swelled the average total of this annual exodus to nearly half a million.

Other results of the influx of gold during the second Victorian decade remain to be epitomized. The precious metal in the Bank of England, from less than eight millions in 1847, increased to twenty-two millions in 1853. The Bank rate during the whole decade was two per cent. The growth of trade was suddenly but steadily promoted. During 1853, twenty millions more of gold money than within any preceding twelvemonth changed hands among the public. Incidentally, it should be mentioned that a belief in the permanence of the low interest rate just mentioned caused Mr Gladstone, when Chancellor of the Exchequer in April 1853, to bring forward a scheme for the conversion of a portion of the three per cent. Consols, into Consols bearing a lower rate of interest, and that the interest on Exchequer Bills was a penny a day or one and a half per cent, per annum. The harvests of 1853-4 in England had been bad. The fresh purchases by the gold mine countries of English goods fully compensated us for the loss from this cause. The value of that custom may be judged from the figures which show the cost of life at the gold mines. In the early fifties flour rose to four times, meat to five times their usual value. An egg or a pill cost a dollar each.[5]

[5] While these lines are being prepared for the press there appears in a London newspaper a statement of the prices current at the Western Australia gold fields in

For a miner in tolerable luck £2 were not an exceptional day's earnings. Nor between the years 1849-55 and onwards were the effects of the gold discoveries on foreign and domestic trade less noticeable. Within a single period of twelve months, the value of our exports increased by one-fourth. Most of these were required by consumers in California or in Australia as the case might be. The rise of wages owing to the rush to the gold fields amounted in 1851-2 nowhere to less than twenty per cent.; in some trades it was twenty-five per cent. In London the price of bricks was increased by fifty per cent. Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham shared the general prosperity. Agricultural labour was not paid at a rate proportionate to its scarcity. The extent of that scarcity may be judged from Sir Morton Peto's suggestion that the Militia should be called in to complete the operations of harvesting which were interrupted by the inducements offered

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the summer of 1896. They may be compared with the figures given in the text and are as follows: – Tea 3s., flour 10d., sugar 1s., bacon 3s., beef and mutton 4d. to 8d., cheese 2s. 6d., coffee 3s., tobacco 8s., and preserved potatoes 1s. 9d. per lb.; milk (condensed) 1s. 9d. per tin; flour 20s. per 50 lbs.; and eggs 10s. a dozen; but the cost of living generally, as compared with earnings, is low. On the Ashburton River gold fields mutton is 4d., beef 6d., flour 10d., tea 3s., sugar 9d. to 1s., preserved potatoes 1s. 6d., salt 1s., rice 1s., and oatmeal 1s. 3d. per lb. On the Yilgarn gold fields meat is 9d. to 1s. a lb., flour 10s. to 30s. per 50 lb. bag, tea 3s. 6d. a lb., and other provisions are equally scarce and dear. At Coolgardie, to the east of Yilgarn, flour costs £3 per 200 lbs., bread 1s. per 1½ lb. loaf, butter 2s. 3d. per lb., potatoes 6d. per lb., sugar 8d. per lb., tinned milk 1s. 3d. per lb., bacon 1s. 9d. per lb., salt 6d. per lb., and board and lodgings £3 to £7 a week. On the Murchison gold fields in the North, the prices per lb. are: Flour 8d., sugar 8d., tea 3s. 6d., tobacco 6d., fish 1s. 6d., mutton 8d., beef 8d., butter 3s., and tinned meats 1s. 3d.

by contractors to navvies at wages varying between four shillings and threepence, and four shillings and sixpence a day. Thus the competition of the gold fields industry was directly instrumental, not only in increasing trade, and therefore production and wealth in the mother country, but in improving the condition of the industrial classes at home.

This rise in wages was not however a pure gain. Before the end of 1855 prices had increased by nearly one-half. The Preston strike of 1853-4 opened that campaign between industry and capital which has been paid for by the representatives of both with so serious a deduction from their profits. Before the Preston strike, the unions had been mainly political organizations; thereafter they became industrial. Meanwhile on the other side of separating oceans new Englands were being created with incredible rapidity by the new gold. Already indeed Her Majesty's subjects, without leaving their native land knew something of the Eldorado which Australia constituted even before the treasures of Ballarat and Bendigo had been unearthed. While as yet the nugget was a prize of the future, fortunes were realized by the shearing of flocks. Long before the 1851 Exhibition the Australian millionaire, returned to his native land, had become familiar to Victorian London. He did not yet often live in Grosvenor Square. He was to be found frequently in the best houses of the scarcely less palatial Westbourne Terrace or at a later date in Rutland Gate. The gold which enriched England created Australia, whose capitals can scarcely be said

to have existed before the thirteenth or fourteenth year of the present reign. Gold gave to Victoria civilization and government. It built Melbourne. The same omnipotent agency changed New South Wales from a sparsely-inhabited tract to a populous and prosperous State. The extreme youth, as national life is computed, of Australia will perhaps best be realized when it is remembered that the founder of Melbourne, John Pascoe Falkner was yet alive, and welcomed to his capital the Duke of Edinburgh on the occasion of his visit to the Antipodes in 1860; and that Henty, Falkner's associate and senior, survived at least to 1882.

In no department of industry were the immediate profits of Australian gold more appreciable than in our transoceanic mercantile marine. During the fifties European emigrants crowded every ship. Seamen's wages leapt up by a bound to £4 a month.[6] Between 1851 and 1859 the annual rate of emigrants was a hundred thousand. The gold raised during this period in Victoria fell little short of eighty nine millions. Imports rose to thirty pounds per head of the Victoria population, exports rose to fifty-six pounds per head. Previously to 1851 New South Wales could not be said to possess a foreign trade. In less than thirty years, by 1878, this commerce was reckoned annually by thirteen millions of exports, fifteen millions of imports. In New South Wales, too, the gold excitement was followed immediately by prosperity in coal fields which yielded not less

[6] Still more than this was given to get men on the home voyage from Melbourne.

than a million sterling. These are the circumstances that, rather than any domestic speculations or industries, explain the growth of the London plutocracy which has been so prominent a feature of the era now under consideration. Under Queen Elizabeth and the Cecils, fortunes made by lucky ventures in American and Indian trade were conspicuous. Under the Georges, after the victories of our great Admirals Howe, Jervis, Anson, foreign wealth was poured into England continuously long before large revenues were realized by the development of our mineral wealth. It has been already said that during some time after the Queen's accession there prevailed general distress chequered by the influx of gold from Russia and by the beginnings of railway enterprise. From the earliest fifties a change for the better set in, with what results the income tax returns will show. The impost was extended to Ireland in 1855. In that year the assessed incomes were three hundred and eight millions. Ten years later the amount was three hundred and ninety-six millions. After another decade it was five hundred and seventy-one millions. In the financial year 1882-3 the figures were £612,836,058.

CHAPTER III
TRANSFORMATION BY STEAM

All projects of increased speed in locomotion denounced when first proposed. Sir Henry Herbert, M.P., in seventeenth century, on journeys between Edinburgh and London in a fortnight. Parliament on railways. Lord Clanricarde, Colonel Sibthorp, etc. George Hudson, the railway King. Charles Guernsey, the original of Thackeray's 'de la Pluche.' Progress and sequel of the railway fever of 1846. The Queen's first railway journey. Hudson and his fall. Comparison between mines and railways as sources of national wealth. Mr W. H. Mallock's demonstration that the working classes of the United Kingdom have increased in wealth more noticeably even than the upper classes.

The truth of Mr Disraeli's humorous description, in his Edinburgh speech of 1868, of boots at the Blue Boar agreeing with the chambermaid at the rival Red Lion about the folly and iniquity of railways, appears to be rooted in the constitution of human nature. All readers are familiar with the picture of the English traveller, drawn by Mr Apperley in his famous *Quarterly* article, *The Road*. This imaginary passenger had gone to sleep in the days when public conveyances could not be counted on to perform more than some half dozen miles an hour. He awakes

in the era of the lightning coaches and quicksilver mails timed to perform twice that distance within the sixty minutes. If, as archæologists say, a certain Ericthonius of Athens[7] invented some fifteen centuries B.C. the first chariot of which authentic record exists, he, too, was perhaps regarded as an enemy rather than as a benefactor by some among his amazed contemporaries. More than 3,000 years after the Attic revolutionary an English Member of Parliament, Sir Henry Herbert, said that a man who proposed to travel to and fro between Scotland and England within seven days each way would be voted fit for Bedlam.

By 1843, thirteen years, that is, after the historic steam locomotive between Manchester and Liverpool which caused the death of Mr Huskisson, the great railway systems of England existed in a form more or less complete. Eighteen hundred miles in all were open for traffic. Parliament had authorized the expenditure on them of seventy million pounds. Sixty million pounds had been so spent already. An average of three hundred thousand passengers was carried weekly. Neither by the opinion of parliament nor of the public were railways regarded with unequivocal favour, or even at all times with toleration. Colonel Sibthorp could say in the House of Commons that he considered all railways as public frauds and private robberies. Lord Fitzwilliam, Lord Lansdowne, the Duke of Wellington, Lord Clanricarde, all spoke of George Stephenson's invention in the same contemptuous tones. The *Morning Post* in February

[7] See *Our Railways*. By John Pendleton. Cassell & Co.

1842 dwelt with satisfaction on the fact that 'the Queen never travels by railway;' while Prince Albert who did sometimes patronize the train between Windsor and London was obliged only too often to protest: 'Not quite so fast, Mr Conductor, if you please!' Within four months of the *Morning Post's* announcement, the *Railway Times* was able to record that Her Majesty made her first trip on the Great Western. A few months later the Royal passenger accomplished the distance between Southampton and Vauxhall in less than two hours without a hitch. Five years subsequently the Queen and Prince Consort journeyed to Cambridge for the installation of His Royal Highness as Chancellor in a train driven, as Her Majesty records, by George Hudson, the railway King. Between 1836 and 1846 the English mind was fairly reconciled to the new method of transit. The day had finally gone by when, as they had done a little previously, a firm of London solicitors could refuse the business of the Brighton line on the plea that coaches would drive off the trains in a month. From 1836 and onward the Liverpool and Manchester, the London and Birmingham, and the North Midland lines were all paying ten per cent. During 1846, the year of the railway mania, 440 railway Bills passed authorizing the construction of 8,470 miles and the raising of £180,138,901.

This was the zenith of the shortlived splendour of George Hudson, the railway King. He has been seen already in these pages, amid the Hyde Park crowd in the early forties, resting his large heavy person in his wife's chariot. The man himself

had first become known on the City Board of Health in York. Afterwards he was elected Mayor of his native town. In that capacity he made the acquaintance of George Stephenson. In 1845 the son of the York linendraper, now a power in the railway world was returned to the House of Commons as Member for Sunderland. His parliamentary career is alone, if at all, remembered to-day by the frequent encounters on the floor of the House between himself and Mr Bernal Osborne. Diverting memories of these were often recalled for the benefit of his friends by Hudson's antagonist, with the generous admission of the raconteur that he had, in the ex-King, usually found his match, if not in humorous retort and thrust, yet in substantial argument. Two years after the 'King' drove the engine which took the Queen and her Consort to Cambridge, suspicions of Hudson's motive and conduct took (April 19, 1849) a definite shape. The shareholders of the Midland demanded a Committee of Inquiry. The incriminated Chairman resigned his post, and quietly accepted his permanent eclipse. It was noticed to his credit at the time, and has not since been denied, that he made no efforts at self exculpation, disclosed no names or confidential transactions, and thus refused, as unquestionably it was in his power to do, to associate persons of the highest consideration with himself in his fall. Hudson was only the type of a class whose members were invested by the railway passion of the period with brief splendour and unsubstantial prosperity. In the Upper House, Lord Clanricarde mentioned how Charles

Guernsey, a broker's clerk, had subscribed fifty-two thousand pounds for shares in the London and York line. This was the undoubted original of Thackeray's 'de la Pluche.' The total of his gains appears to have amounted to thirty thousand pounds. The essential facts of the sequel with very little of fictitious amplification are given by the novelist.

A reaction, as has been seen, followed the morbid enterprise of 1846. Its results, however, have endured to the present hour. In 1845 the United Kingdom possessed only two thousand four hundred miles of iron way. The capital invested upon these was only eighty-eight millions. Before 1850, the capital had increased to two hundred and thirty millions. To-day the aggregate miles of the railways of the United Kingdom are little, if at all short, of twenty thousand. The expenditure has been six hundred and thirty millions. The gross annual income is sixty millions. In order to appreciate with approximate accuracy the part played by the steam locomotive in the creation of nineteenth century wealth in England, or to define with practical distinctness that familiar term 'the railway interest;' it is necessary to examine this matter more in detail. In 1855 the total of capital represented by the United Kingdom railways was £297,584,709. In 1894, the latest date to which the Board of Trade returns are published, the total was £985,387,855. After forty years, therefore, the railway investments of these Islands had increased by £687,803,146.

Another chief source of national wealth and industrial employment during this reign has been provided by mining

enterprise. In respect of the money value of each, what are the relations which the yield of subterranean labour has borne to the enterprises of steam upon the surface of the earth? In 1855 the value of all the minerals brought to the light of day is expressed by the figures £29,579,001. The figures referring to railways for the same year were, it will be remembered, seen to be £21,507,599. This comparison between the two shows therefore that in 1855 the mines exceeded the railways in value in round numbers, by eight million pounds. The exact figures of the excess were £8,071,402. Forty years later this balance is more than redressed. In 1894 the total of mineral wealth was £80,900,453. The entire railway receipts were £84,310,831. In other words, the surface opulence of the United Kingdom had not only made good its inferiority to the subterranean wealth, but had advanced beyond that rival, in round numbers, by three and a half million pounds. The exact figures were £3,410,378.

The interesting analysis of the resources of the different orders of the community contained in Mr W. H. Mallock's 'Classes and Masses' supplies tolerably conclusive evidence that the results of mining and railway enterprise have been distributed not very unequally between the rich and the poor, or, as Mr Mallock rather puts it, between income tax payers on £1,000 or upwards a year and those who, earning less than £150 a year, pay no income tax at all. His estimate is that the population of England contains seven hundred thousand families, equal to a total of three million souls, 'with means of subsistence, insufficient,

barely sufficient, or precarious.' Although these figures represent the entire population at the Norman conquest, Mr Mallock is able to show that relatively to all inhabiting this realm the necessitous class has decreased, not increased. In the seventeenth century, one-third of the dwellers in Sheffield, then (1615) as to-day a great manufacturing centre, were dependent on charity. Thirteen years after the Queen's accession (*i. e.* 1850), out of every two hundred of our population nine were paupers. In 1882 the proportion of pauperism was only five. Between 1850 and 1897 the population has increased from twenty-eight millions to thirty-eight millions. The income-tax payers have increased from one million and a half to nearly eight millions.[8] Incomes between £150 and £1,000 have increased from three hundred thousand to nine hundred and ninety thousand. Incomes above £1,000 have increased from twenty-four thousand to sixty thousand; or, as this authority finds it more convenient to put it, the middle class has grown by six hundred and ninety thousand. The rich have been re-inforced by only thirty-six thousand. On the other hand Mr Mallock is able to dispose of the fallacy that during the present reign the very richest class have grown richer still. In 1850 the incomes of fifty thousand pounds and upwards were seventy-two thousand; in 1897 they are nearer a hundred thousand; thus while the fairly well-to-do middle classes have increased by hundreds of thousands, the professional plutocrats measure their

[8] Brought down to 1897 instead of 1881, these *mutatis mutandis* figures are derived from Mr Mallock's most useful book.

increase only by a few simple thousands. Briefly summarized, the arithmetical argument of Mr Mallock is as follows. In 1800 the whole wealth of the country was two hundred and forty million pounds. Of that amount the workers took one hundred and eleven million pounds, leaving for the middle classes and the rich one hundred and thirty million pounds. Three quarters of a century later, or more exactly in 1881, Mr Mallock's latest date, making his argument still more applicable to 1897, the total of national wealth was one thousand three hundred millions. Of this the workers had six hundred and sixty millions. The working classes had thus, from being twenty millions behind the rich at the opening of the century, advanced twenty millions beyond the rich towards its close. From these figures, the inference is fair, and indeed irresistible, that railways like other inventions have contributed to the material prosperity of all classes equally, and have not enriched the capitalists alone.

Notwithstanding George Hudson, who has become merely a memory, or Charles Guernsey, the stockbroker's clerk who was his lowly imitator, the railway plutocracy would seem to be a phrase more full of sound than of practical meaning. If to this remark the name of Vanderbilt be objected, the true facts of the case rather confirm than disprove the present remark. 'Commodore' Vanderbilt was a rich man before he ever owned a railway share. He sold a fleet of steamers to purchase control of the New York Central Railway. Had he invested the capital realized by this preliminary transaction in any of the industries

of his nation, such as the tinning of beef from a cattle ranche in California, or the curing of bacon at Chicago, he might have made the same or an even larger fortune. Railway diplomacy was only the accidental employment of Mr Vanderbilt's extraordinary genius for creative finance. The same talents exercised upon any other material, or expended in any other career could scarcely fail to have commanded same results. In another department of the industry afforded to intellect by the steam locomotive, Charles Austin made two fortunes out of railway Bills. His abilities as an advocate were probably unequalled among the generation to which he belonged. Since Austin's day lawyers of the same, or something like the same capacity have amassed wealth not inferior to Austin's out of electric patents practice, or in other branches of law which have been specially in request at the moment. While the railway fever of the forties was at its height, a little man with an intellectual head covered by a proverbially shabby hat might often of an afternoon have been seen walking down Parliament Street. He never failed to bestow a copper upon the crossing sweeper at the point where the Home Office stands to-day. Formerly the contractor usually lavished on the man a four-penny bit. But times were bad. The vail was reduced to a quarter of that amount. The donor humorously anticipated the day when he might be glad of a reversionary interest to the broom and shovel employed outside the Horse Guards. That calamity, which of course never seriously threatened, was averted. The little gentleman with the ostentatiously neglected head-gear,

Thomas Brassey, was a millionaire long before he built his last railway. But his contemporary, Thomas Cubitt, made the same fortune out of building Belgravia. Railways have also often enriched the landowners through whose estates the lines have run. So high an authority as Mr Samuel Laing holds that the owners of the soil have been over compensated by the companies generally for the acquisition of their land. To this, however, the country gentlemen would reply that in countless instances they have received no more than the agricultural value for their acres.[9] Certainly the profits of this class from railways have not exceeded the gains which have accrued from the selling or leasing of other property for building purposes. The railway interest, then, as a phrase scarcely points to the existence of railway shareholders as a caste or even a separate class. Railway shares, as the statistics above quoted show, are distributed in fairly equal proportions through all classes of the community. The learned professions, especially the Church, are represented as well as the State or capital in these proprietorial bodies. In the great majority of instances, the separate sums held are small. Thus, ten years ago, the London and North Western Railway with its ninety millions of capital had about thirty thousand debenture and stock holders. Three thousand pounds scarcely represent what could be regarded as a plutocratic investment. As for the men who were the early captains of railway industry, they none of them secured

[9] In the West of England, with which the writer is specially acquainted, this is generally the case.

more than modest competences. Vignoles, Stephenson, Brunel, Hackworth, Allport, Cawkwell, Grierson; none of these founded, none of their descendants are likely to found, territorial families. Sir Daniel Gooch, so long the chairman of the Great Western, left six hundred thousand pounds to his posterity. The greater portion of this sum was made, not in railways, but in coal and in telegraphs. Sir Edward Watkin, who is still with us, and to whose enterprise neither the mountain precipice nor the realm of air is inaccessible, has perhaps been not less prospered. It would not however be easy to multiply instances of railway opulence like these.

On the other hand Arkwright of the spinning jenny has founded two rich county families. His rival, Hargreaves, established another. The true conclusion on this subject seems to be that the wealth invested in our railways is only one, if the most conspicuous manifestation of the wealth of the community. No better summary of the facts could be found than the shrewd phrase into which George Stephenson condensed the whole subject. 'The country made the railways, and in return the railways made the country.' The prosperity of the manufacturing classes which has coincided with the Victorian era provided the money that built the railways. In return the early development of our railway system enabled us to get so far in advance of Continental nations as merchants and manufacturers that our rivals have not yet caught us up, and perhaps never will.

The future development of the English railway system may

be a tempting and instructive topic for speculative experts, but is not for a general survey, such as the present. The issues between traders and framers of railway rates for the carriage of merchandise are periodically expressed in the demand for the acquisition of the iron roads, like the telegraphic wires, by the State. The mighty sections of the Anglo-Saxon race on either side of the Atlantic present the two great exceptions to the State proprietorship or State control of the public locomotives. Seeing that half the railway mileage and capital of the world belongs to the United Kingdom and to the United States, these exceptions are themselves of considerable importance. The incorporation of the railway systems of the United Kingdom into the national service would, it has been calculated, involve the doubling of the annual Budget, and an addition to the permanent Civil Service of five per cent, of our male population. If this estimate be correct, it seems likely that a Minister of the Crown will think even more than thrice before he seriously proposes the assumption of such a responsibility by himself and his colleagues.

Apart from his general obligations to the work on Railways (2 vols. Cassell & Company, 1894, by Mr John Pendleton), the writer expresses his grateful acknowledgment for valuable help in this portion of his work privately received from Mr Acworth, the great authority on modern railways throughout the world, and from Mr A. J. Wilson, the eminent writer on financial and commercial topics.

CHAPTER IV
THE ARISTOCRACY OF WEALTH AND ITS MANIFESTATIONS

Contrast between the London of the forties and the London of to-day. Gas and steam chiefly mark the century. City traders still living at Islington. The theatre not yet an institution. The parks still uncared for. Thames pollutions still recall Dickens' description of Quilp's home. The future South Kensington cabbage beds or waste ground. Absence of enormous fortunes outside commercial millionaires. Evidence of increasing national prosperity afforded by statistics of picture sales. The growth of these sales from Charles I. till to-day. The Beckford, the Horace Walpole and other sales. Gradual rise in value of great masters. Memorable sales and personages at Christie's. Gainsborough's Duchess of Devonshire episode.

The chief resemblance between the London which Queen Victoria first knew, and the capital as it was seen by her subjects on her jubilee anniversary in 1887, is the appearance of the steam locomotive at the railway termini and upon the waters of the Thames. Passing to more permanent characteristics, only the great national buildings would enable those present at Her Majesty's coronation to identify the pre-Exhibition Metropolis with the capital of to-day. Even Hyde Park, that, as has been

seen, was then, as now, the recreation ground of polite London, presented an aspect very different from its appearance on the approach of the sixtieth commemoration of the commencement of the reign. Like all the other Royal enclosures, the Hyde Park of the forties or fifties was decorated by no flower beds and was in other respects habitually ill-kept. General sanitation had yet to reach its infancy. The Thames remained almost as unwholesome and repulsive a stream as at an earlier epoch the Fleet Ditch had been. Dickens' description in *The Old Curiosity Shop* of 'Quilp's' haunts was a sketch from life equally graphic and accurate of the condition of the river's shore between London Bridge and the Strand. The site of the river embankments of to-day swarmed at low water with mudlarks gathering fragments of coal and other refuse which had dropped from the wharves that lined the banks on both sides of the river. If the ladies who to-day take tea on the Terrace of the House of Commons had exposed themselves so persistently on the spot where that structure now stands, instead of catching a catarrh, they might have feared a pestilence. Even in the course of the short suburban drives made by the coaches of the Four-in-Hand Club after their meet at the Magazine, the ladies who to-day occupy the box seat would have run the risk of being shocked by the sight of corpses hanging on the gallows. Lord Grey's Reform Act had been added to the Statute Book before this relic of barbarism disappeared. The midlands were busy with preparations for the first appeal to genuine constituencies when certain electoral

canvassers, merrily pursuing their work outside Leicester were horror-stricken amidst their fun by the sight of a lifeless form fashionably dressed in blue coat and gilt buttons swinging to and fro on a gallows tree by the roadway. The body was that of a young master printer, who had been hung for a particularly abominable murder. More decent times happily were near. This, which many men now living can remember, was the last gibbet that ever disgraced the Queen's highway. The city workers when they did not dwell above their offices, lived for the most part at Islington, still a country suburb, or took the bus or coach to and fro between the more rural Tottenham or Highgate and their counting room or shop. The ground which is to-day covered by the mansions, the hotels, and the flower beds of South Kensington was then either used as cabbage gardens, nursery grounds, and riding schools, or was given up to the loafers and ruffians of the streets, who chose the forenoon of Sunday as the time for settling their differences with their fists.

As a popular institution the theatre was practically unknown to the early Victorian era. The old patent houses were supported precariously. Their rivals of more recent date were on the chronic verge of bankruptcy. Night after night popular actors and actresses performed to empty benches. Pleasure seekers from the West were more likely to make up a party to see a man hanged than to make up a party for the play.

The new millionaires came in with the new gold. At this earlier date, the men who had realized great fortunes in business,

who did not belong on the one hand to the wealthy territorial noblesse, or to the financial plutocracy on the other might be counted on the fingers of a single hand. The Rothschilds had been settled among us for a century. Their opulence had passed into a proverb. Other names belonging to the millionaire category were Arkwright, Strutt, Jones Lloyd, better known to the present generation as Lord Overstone, and Hope. The forerunners of that aristocracy of wealth which sways society to-day, of the Guests, the Crawshays in the iron trade, had not yet appeared. Half a century had passed since the second Pitt had declared that 'every man with forty thousand a year had a right to a peerage.' The Listers, the Holdens, and others were already prosperous manufacturers in the Bradford district. The brewing interest already knew its Basses and its Guinnesses. The peerages and the baronetcies with which these families have since been decorated were reserved for a much later stage of the reign. Even the uncrowned kings of the Australian or Californian gold mines had no subjects in London till the World's Show of 1851 had passed into history. The gradual advancement of the great retail traders typified by the name Peter Robinson, or Maple, to a corresponding dignity on a different level did not take place till our own decade. The social polish and refinement which are the attributes of the new wealth to-day, had not half a century since become dreams of fancy. Rude plenty and coarse splendour characterized the entertainments and the dwellings of the early Victorian plutocracy, as they had marked the hospitality of our

Saxon or Norman ancestors. It is a commonplace of conversation to say that none can foretell where the movement which during the last half century has set in with all classes is to stop. Not only the wages of the working classes, but the payments of professional and every kind of skilled industry have increased at a rate predicted to be impossible; but every shilling buys from thirty to fifty per cent. more than formerly of the necessaries and comforts of life. The Prince Consort, as has been already said, did more than any other individual of his day to quicken English workmanship with the artistic sense. The task that waits for accomplishment now is seemingly to develop intelligence and thrift in the masses. If this work be carried to the point which may be expected from the progress made during the last half century, the conditions of the national life in England cannot fail to improve more rapidly than anywhere else in the world.

The new municipal buildings which have risen in all the great towns of the kingdom during the last four or five decades; the warehouses, offices, and shops that, if seen in Venice, would be admired for the artistic splendour of their exteriors, but which pass unnoticed on the Thames, the Mersey, and the Irwell; these are some among the outward and visible signs of the progressive prosperity of all classes of the community, since the treasures of Australia and California first were poured into England, and since the Serbonian bog of Chat Moss was turned into a safe and solid track for the steam engine. Other indications, not less conclusive and perhaps more picturesque,

of the same truth are the decoration of the outskirts of every town with private villas set in landscape gardens which half a century ago would have seemed worthy of Chatsworth, and with public parks not less cared for than Royal pleasure grounds, the acquisitions of corporate enterprise, or the gifts of individual munificence. The hard facts and figures which have accumulated since in 1846 the British ports were opened to the merchandise of all nations explain in detail the transformation that has been witnessed. During the quarter of a century before the repeal of the Corn Laws, the total value of English exports, of products, of manufactures was one thousand and eighty-five millions. During the twenty-five years that followed the repeal, the value was three thousand and thirty-one millions; in other words, an increase of nearly two hundred per cent. The second quarter of a century since Free Trade, that is from 1871-1896 has raised the total value of our exports to six thousand two hundred and ninety-nine millions; and this in the face of the great and continuous fall of prices during recent years. Our import trade has expanded even in greater proportion. The total value of imports of merchandise during the years between 1871-1895 was nine thousand seven hundred and sixty-three millions. These figures do not exhaust the national profits of Free Trade. Our increased business with the great markets of the world abroad has meant a vast extension of employment among the masses at home. There is not only more work to be done. It is paid for at a higher rate than was ever known. Articles of necessity, not more than of luxury

never before known in industrial households, are to-day common beneath the workman's roof. With comfort, sobriety, and thrift, which are indeed the parents of comfort, have increased too. The Chancellor of the Exchequer in his last Budget stated that within ten years the deposits of the savings banks have more than doubled. The evidence furnished by statistics of pauperism is not less significant. In the spring of 1896 poor relief was given to 739,021 as compared with 897,370 in 1857. And this although the population had grown in forty years from nineteen millions to over thirty millions. In 1857 the ratio of paupers to inhabitants was more than 47 in 1,000. In 1896 the ratio is 24 in 1,000.

The proof of national prosperity afforded by the income-tax returns was given at length in the preceding chapter. Entirely to exhaust the statistical evidence available for the propositions now advanced there may be cited the figures connected with the National Debt. This is being paid off out of the successive surpluses of annual revenue over expenditure. In 1856 after the Crimean War, the Debt stood at eight hundred and twenty-nine millions, or about £29, 12s. per head of the population. In 1895 it had been reduced to six hundred and sixty millions, or about £17, 6s. per head of the population. The amount of the Debt in March 1896 was six hundred and fifty-two millions. Thus, in the last thirteen years, the money responsibilities of the nation have been reduced by one hundred millions. Enthusiasts for Richard Cobden's memory have therefore some reason for declaring that since the measure which the genius of himself and John

Bright conceived, and the statesmanlike energy of Mr Villiers promoted, was written on the Statute Book, a new England has been created. Nor has anyone seriously denied the connection during the régime of Protection between wheat at from 53s. to 112s. a quarter and the intolerable distress of the working classes in town and country expressed in ricks blazing and Riot Acts read. With the first relaxation in the Protective Tariff, some improvement began. It continued very gradually but certainly till at last the new prosperity as shown by the figures and facts already cited was fairly established.

The prices commanded by famous pictures at the great art sales of the present and preceding periods have not uniformly attested the correctness of the popular criticism. They have, however, at all times afforded a practical criterion of the growing wealth of the country, and above all of the standard of expenditure current among the educated classes; seen in this light, the figures are not irrelevant to the present purpose. Picture sales have been a feature in the social and artistic life of England during more than two centuries. In 1649, by order of the Parliament, the collection of Charles I., the most discriminating and perhaps the greatest of Royal patrons of art, was offered to public competition. It realized a trifle less than fifty thousand pounds, probably not half of what it cost its original owner, who is said to have paid for the 'Mantua' pictures alone eighty thousand pounds. At a later sale, however, many of these paintings found purchasers at from £500 to £800 apiece.

Thus, even in these early days, was the coming rise in artistic values faintly foreshadowed. But no continuous increase was yet noticeable. Not quite a century after this, Harley, Lord Oxford's celebrated collection was dispersed. The polite education of the well-to-do classes had then made considerable advances. The first of the Indian Nabobs had returned home with the spoils of the Pagoda Tree in his pocket to end his days in the coffee houses of St James's. The commercial classes were generally prosperous. Many Sir Vistos, complying with the whisper of the familiar demon 'had a taste.' The conditions of the time were therefore not unfavourable for prices conspicuously higher than had been given for the Stuart collection. Nevertheless, the interest aroused by the Oxford sale was so languid, art fanciers were so little enterprising, that the highest price recorded on this occasion was eighty-nine pounds, five shillings for the 'Jacob and Laban' of Sebastian Bourdon. The Italian masters commanded on an average only five guineas apiece. A superb specimen of Claude Lorraine encouraged no bidder beyond twenty-seven pounds, six shillings. Holbein's since famous portrait of the Duchess of Suffolk went for fifteen pounds, four shillings and sixpence. Rembrandts scarcely found purchasers at twelve guineas or even six. Pictures then supposed to be by Michael Angelo could be had for a few pounds. The highest price paid at the Oxford sale, the only one running into three figures was one hundred and seventy-five pounds, five shillings, for Van Dyck's 'Sir Kenelm Digby and family.' On the other hand, a second Van Dyck of unrecorded

title went for five pounds, fifteen shillings. This was the period in which Hogarth's masterpieces were bought for prices ranging between a maximum of eighty-eight pounds and a minimum of twenty-seven pounds. This depreciation did not continue long. Soon after the Oxford sale of 1741, the paintings by which Hogarth is best known were readily purchased at a thousand pounds apiece. Even, however, after the nineteenth century had opened, no sudden rise in art values took place. In 1823, at Beckford's Fonthill sale, the principal treasures only realized an average of thirty-one pounds each, the whole collection of pictures, four hundred and twenty-four in number, produced thirteen thousand two hundred and forty-nine pounds, fifteen shillings. In the year before the great Exhibition at the King of Holland's sale, a 'Holy Family' attributed to Raphael found no bidder beyond two hundred and fifty pounds.[10] A European sensation was created by the agent of the Russian Emperor giving on this occasion, three thousand, three hundred and thirty-three pounds for a chef d'œuvre of Leonardo da Vinci. But the 'Trinity' by Rubens was not considered specially cheap at six hundred and fifty-eight pounds. Famous portraits by Dutch masters at three hundred and thirty pounds each were looked upon as extravagant. The characteristic profusion of the famous Marquis of Hertford in paying fourteen thousand pounds for some ten or twenty pictures furnished during some weeks the talk to the town. In

[10] These figures are taken from 'Art Sales,' by George Redford, privately printed, 1882.

another quarter of a century, in 1876, at the Bredel sale, the 'Enamoured Cavalier' by an artist not of the highest distinction, realized a price almost unprecedented then, but often repeated and increased since, of four thousand, three hundred pounds. That the upward movement of prices, to culminate some time later as will presently be seen in a memorable transaction of the saleroom, had fairly started twenty years ago, is evident from the details of the present retrospect. That the new development was at that date in its infancy may be inferred from the fact that at the Albert Levy sale in 1876 a landscape by Gainsborough which has since changed hands for thousands secured only a few shillings over three hundred and sixty-seven pounds. Eight years later at the Quilter sale of 1884, the enhanced value of foreign masters formed a much more conspicuous testimony to the growing affluence of the classes which supply the virtuosi of these later days. On that occasion the 'Heidelberg' of Turner was after a keen competition knocked down for not much less than two thousand pounds. The same artist's 'Zurich' in the same year went for twelve hundred and sixty pounds, nearly twice as much as it had secured only a decade earlier. Incidentally for those to whom such facts and figures are interesting on artistic, and not social, grounds, the conclusion from such an analysis as has now been attempted seems to be that since the Strawberry Hill sale and later the Bernal sale, the best works have continuously and conspicuously increased in value, but that, especially in the case of later Italian painters, Guido, etc.,

pictures of moderate merit have become a drug in the market. If Sir Robert Walpole was the first of modern parliamentarians, his son was equally the eighteenth century founder of the existing race of art connoisseurs. During the April and May of 1842, the collection of the toy villa whose Gothic pinnacles overlook the Thames yielded in round numbers thirty thousand pounds. After an interval of fourteen years the treasures of Ralph Bernal, whose death deprived the House of Commons of a Chairman of Committees as that of his son was afterwards to eclipse its gaiety, formed the event of the season of 1856. In the course of a thirty-one days' sale the total realized was twice that of the Walpole sale, in other words more than sixty thousand pounds.

These figures seem insignificant when contrasted with the heroic prices of our own epoch. Of these only a few and not the highest have yet been glanced at. Compare with the modest totals just mentioned the competition and the sums of money, both without precedent, expended in Christie's salerooms during the seventies and eighties of the century. The rostrum mounted by the auctioneer may be, as is said, identical with that used in the earliest days of the house a century ago. It is the only visible link with the past still remaining. The quality of the crowd of buyers is not more changed than the prices which they are prepared to give; or the national opulence which these prices indicate. In those earlier days the salerooms were in Pall Mall instead of King Street, St James's. These premises were only vacated, as many now living can remember to clear

the way for the still youthful Royal Academy before it had, on its journey to Burlington House, reached the stage of Trafalgar Square. The keen Celtic face of Doyle, director of the Irish National Gallery; the strikingly handsome and Venetian profile of Sir Frederick Leighton; the delicately chiselled and thoughtful features of Woolner, more than creditable as a sculptor, far more than merely graceful as a poet; these among the company of possible buyers represented the professionally expert element. The late Sir William Gregory with his fine brow and leonine head, whose many-sided culture suggests the complete man of the Herbert of Cherbury type whom our ancestors worshipped; another Irishman on whom a picture acts as a magnet on steel, Lord Powerscourt; among Scots Lord Rosebery; the Duke of St Albans whose physiognomy in those days recalled his Stuart ancestry; the interested and intelligent presence of a representative of that exotic wealth which has encouraged English industry and art so much, Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild; these are among the best known members of the general circle. Nor should there be omitted the form of a tradesman whose position next to the auctioneer, and whose telegram and account book in hand proclaim his occupation. This is Mr Agnew, pre-eminently a creation of the new wealth of the Victorian epoch, as well as the promoter of not a few artists' prosperity. To-day the enterprising trader is to prove himself the idol of the saleroom by paying the largest sum ever known to have been given for a single painting. And that in opposition to

the peer of the longest purse of the day, the late Lord Dudley. That noble connoisseur by his bid of ten thousand guineas seems at first to have secured for Park Lane Gainsborough's portrait of the Duchess of Devonshire, who won by her kiss the Westminster election for Charles Fox. Just as the hammer of fate is about to descend, the dealer intimates an advance. Amid applause, such as salutes the Derby winner on Epsom Downs, Mr Agnew[11] is declared the possessor of the incomparable canvas for the price, as yet unheard in any saleroom, of ten thousand one hundred guineas. Three years before this, in 1873, 'The Sisters,' also by Gainsborough, had brought six thousand, six hundred and fifteen pounds. Fourteen years after its first sale, in 1887, the same painting realized nine thousand, nine hundred and seventy-five pounds. Recent changes in the law of entail have undoubtedly tended to promote these unprecedented prices. The chief cause, however, is the general augmentation of wealth and the more lavish scale and ideas of expenditure that have penetrated all classes of the community.[12]

[11] Now Sir William Agnew.

[12] All the details of art prices given in this chapter are derived from Mr G. Redford's authentic record of art sales, first privately printed in 1888. For other information the writer is indebted to the late Sir J. E. Millais, P.R.A.

CHAPTER V
THE RICH MEN FROM THE EAST

Specific instances of the fusion with native elements of the owners of foreign wealth, especially in the case of the Jews. Growth in England from early days of Hebrew plutocracy. Different views as to number of Jew families, the names of these as preserved by Jewish writers. Westminster Abbey under Richard III. and Henry VII. completed with Jew money. Later settlements of Jews in England date from Charles II. Under George III. the prosperity of the Goldsmids foreshadows the future power of the Rothschilds. Early beginnings of the Rothschilds, on the Continent and in England. Rothschild and Waterloo; Rothschild and the Bank of England. Services of the family to the English State. Their method of using their wealth under Baron Lionel and his successors. Their example to others of their race and their work amongst their own people.

The close assimilation of the newer elements of English life to the older; the gradual but unchecked identification in pursuits, habits, culture and tastes of the aristocracy of wealth with that of birth have been already mentioned. More detailed illustration of these distinctive movements of the Victorian era are necessary to enable us to form an adequate idea of the personal and enduring influence exercised upon the society of England by

those who since their national dispersion, have in all countries illustrated in themselves the chief developments and agencies of wealth. From the popular expressions sometimes employed about the Jews in England to-day, one might suppose they had become considerable among us only during the Victorian epoch. Few people, as they look at Westminster Abbey, remember that this monument of the national Christianity which the piety of Edward the Confessor began was completed under Richard III. and Henry VII. with money levied from the Jews.[13] Under Henry III. the sufferings of the chosen race in England had been severe. Thereafter, a gradual but progressive improvement in their position took place. But so late as 1633, according to a Hebrew authority named Haham, quoted in the *Anglia Judaica*, astounding though the statement sounds, there were only twelve Jewish families in this country. The distinction of re-establishing the race on British soil has been claimed for the protectorate of Cromwell. It really belongs to Charles II., and actually occurred during the first few years after the Restoration. One of the comparatively few Anglo-Jewish conversions to Christianity took place about this time. Close to the Abbey, which his ancestors' wealth had completed, in the church of St Margaret's, Westminster, an Israelite physician, Speranza Collins, abjured the faith of his fathers, and was formally received into the Anglican Communion by Dr Warmester, Dean of Westminster. By the time that the house of Brunswick was established on

[13] See Picciotto's Anglo-Jewish History for all these early facts about the Jews.

the throne, the fabric of Anglo-Jewish plutocracy had well nigh built itself up. The great natural philosopher Emmanuel Da Costa, whom the Italian Jews of the eighteenth century furnished to England, compiled a list by name of all his countrymen living under the sovereignty of George III. In this list there are no Rothschilds. The patronymics of most frequent occurrence are Rodrigues, and Goldsmid. This latter seems to have been the Semitic family which, under the third George, occupied the position most closely analogous to that filled by the house of Rothschild under Queen Victoria. The country houses in the Sheen and Richmond district with their deer parks and vineries owned by Abraham and Jacob Goldsmid, foreshadowed distinctly the later beauties in the same region of Gunnersbury, if not of the more distant Mentmore.

At the close of the eighteenth century, the Frankfort Rothschilds, the friends and bankers of the Prince of Hesse-Cassell, were a power in Germany only second to that of the Empire. The capital on the Main had from the days of Charlemagne been a trading centre. During the sixteenth century, its fairs caused the place to be the market of the world, and three hundred years later may have given to the Prince Consort[14] the first idea of the great Exhibition in Hyde Park. Long before Mayer Amschel Rothschild, the founder of

[14] The idea of the Exhibition being 'universal' was not that of the Prince, but of the Committee of the Society of Arts. It was first suggested in fact by Mr Thomas Winkworth.

the firm died, the prices of Frankfort were being studied as closely as those of Antwerp or Rotterdam. The third brother of Anselm Mayer, who controlled till 1855 the Frankfort branch, was evidently the first great financial genius of his family. His enterprise and judgment made him the Crœsus of Europe. They also at a critical point in his career prompted him to save from ruin more than one Paris bank reeling under the effects of North American insolvencies. At the close of the last century, the English business of the Rothschilds was transacted by the firm of Van Notten. A dispute with a Lancashire manufacturer on whom Germany and Austria depended for their cotton goods, sent Nathan Mayer Rothschild from Frankfort to England. In this way the English house came into existence, and the necessity for foreign agents outside the family ceased. The Napoleonic wars, as is well known, largely contributed in their successive incidents to the earlier fortunes of the family. Already the first Rothschild had speculated largely in the bills on the English Government given by the Duke of Wellington for the support of the British troops. Settled in London he provided the channels for the regular transmission of funds to the forces in the Peninsula. Early in 1800, he was the first man on the London Stock Exchange. His agents followed in the train of every regiment. His couriers in their specially chartered ships were on every sea. Rothschild himself, unseen by others, watched the Battle of Waterloo. He crossed the Channel in a fishing boat, and arrived in London, to find it full of rumours of the English defeat. Casually appearing

on the Stock Exchange, he received the condolences of the City on his ruin. Only he himself knew what his investments were. Instead of being ruined, he had added a million to the family wealth. Such at least is the conventional account. The foregoing details are in substance taken from an entertaining volume by John Reeves on *The Rothschilds*, published by Messrs Sampson Low.

The present writer has, however, some reason to question the accuracy of the tradition of a Rothschild secretly watching the great battle. The account that Baron Lionel's friends generally gave is as follows. During the great Corsican's usurpation of the First Magistrateship in the French State, the lawful possessor of the Throne, Louis XVIII. was living in retirement in Belgium.[15] The Rothschilds, on the early morrow of the decisive battle, sent a courier to the King's villa near Ghent, to gather from the reception of the news by His Majesty how the fortune of the day had gone. The King's sitting room was on the ground floor with windows looking on the garden. In that enclosure the Rothschild emissary took up his station, so that, himself unseen, he could observe what passed on the other side of the windows. Presently a rider, fresh from his horse, still booted, spurred, and mud splashed, entered the chamber, made a low obeisance to its dethroned occupant, who, on his part, graciously extended his fingers which the messenger gently touched with

[15] Most of the time he was at Ghent. His stay there is known in French history as *La cour de Gand*.

his lips. Hence the outside spectator inferred Napoleon's defeat, and proceeded at once to his principals in London. As an English financier this is the Rothschild who popularized foreign stocks and loans in this country by causing the interest and dividends to be paid in London, instead of, as heretofore, abroad. Four years after Waterloo, he first identified himself closely with the English Government by undertaking a loan of twelve millions. His profit on the transaction was one hundred and fifty thousand pounds. With this sum he bought Gunnersbury, formerly the home of Amelia, aunt of George III., which had since passed into the hands of a private citizen named Copland. The Rothschilds naturally and honourably took their place among the lords of the soil in their adopted country. He who is now spoken of encountered, perhaps provoked, much opposition from rival financiers, and more than once measured swords with the Bank of England which had hesitated about technicalities of discount. Shortly after this the New Court potentate called at the Bank bringing with him a sum of twenty-one thousand pounds in £5 notes,[16] each deposited in a separate bag. Seven hours were occupied in changing this paper into gold. For the time the general business of the establishment was arrested. The strategy succeeded completely. The next day it was announced that in future the Rothschild bills would be taken as the Banks'.

[16] These anecdotes are given from Mr Reeves' volume already mentioned. They are suggestive of incident if not uniformly accurate in fact. The correction of the Waterloo incident given above commended itself to some among Baron Lionel's friends who would be likely to know.

In the July of 1836 a pigeon fluttered in through the open window of the New Court counting house. The bird had travelled from Frankfort; it brought the news of the death in his native town of the great head of the firm. Many religious ceremonies of the Hebrew race have, during these last few years, been converted into great functions of modish society. The ceremonial series began when the body of the first great Rothschild known to England, in the presence of the whole Corps Diplomatique attached to the Court of St James's, was committed to the earth in the East End cemetery of his race. With that event the latter day history of the Rothschilds begins. Henceforward the business was to be conducted by Nathaniel Mayer Rothschild's four sons in England, together with their uncles abroad. Of these sons Nathaniel settled in France, Lionel, Nathan Mayer and Anthony managed the English firm. Under the régime of Baron Lionel Rothschild whom many now living remember well, the first great act of association with the English Government was in 1847 the Irish Famine Loan, supplemented as it was by munificent subscriptions for the relief of the distress which the failure of the potato crop had caused. Seven years later Baron Lionel carried out the sixteen millions loan for the English Government. The transaction for which the Lionel administration is best remembered by the present generation is the advance for the purchase of the Suez Canal shares in 1876. The announcement of that negotiation by the Prime Minister of the day in conjunction with his compatriots in the City, came as a surprise to the English

people at large. It has, however, on the highest authority since transpired that when in 1874 Mr Disraeli took office, he had already decided upon acquiring for England a preponderating interest in the international waterway. Nor is it impertinent to assume that during the Sunday visits which the statesman, as Mr Disraeli and as Lord Beaconsfield, paid to the suburban home of Baron Lionel, this scheme may sometimes have been discussed. Four millions was the sum advanced by New Court, one hundred thousand pounds represented the total of the Rothschild 2½ per cent. profit.

By this time Baron Lionel had been in possession of a seat in the House of Commons some ten years, won though that seat had been only after a prolonged struggle. At the beginning of the century no Jew magistrate or sheriff existed. In 1837, Sir David Salomons became sheriff of London and Middlesex, but the true faith of a Christian test prevented him from serving. Eventually, to oblige the City, Lord Chancellor Campbell introduced a Bill removing this disability. Parliament, however, was still closed against the Jew. Ten years later Lionel Rothschild, with Lord John Russell, was elected M.P. for London. The Jewish Parliamentary Relief Bill, supported by Mr Disraeli as well as Mr Gladstone, passed the House of Commons, to be thrown out in the Lords. In 1850 another measure shared the same fate. The sixth decade of this century had come before the first Rothschild took his place on the green leather benches. Mr Disraeli's last novel, *Endymion*, as rich as any of its predecessors

in personal portraits, contains in the character of Mr Neuchatel, the banker, the most graphic pen and ink sketch of the financier now mentioned. In the grounds of Gunnersbury, statesmen of both parties, diplomatists from every Court, foreigners of every grade of distinction met each other. Here Mr Disraeli chatted amicably with Lord Palmerston, the turbulence of whose foreign policy he was fresh from denouncing in the House of Commons. Hither Louis Napoleon, when an exile in London, drove in his friend Count Alfred D'Orsay's cabriolet. Here the veteran Lord Lyndhurst instructed in habits of English thought his aptest pupil, then a showy but still obscure politician soon to become the pillar of the Tory party. It was by Baron Lionel that the Rothschild hospitalities were begun on the scale on which they have since continued. First came the marriage of Baron Lionel's eldest daughter, Leonora, to her relative, Alphonse Rothschild. Persigny, then French Ambassador in London, made a speech which the Paris Academy recognized as classical in its perfection. Mr Disraeli, always pre-eminently happy on these occasions, delighted host, hostess, and guests by a coruscation of glittering antitheses, and flashing epigrams in affectionate honour of the bride and bridegroom. The ex-Lord Chancellor, Lord Lyndhurst himself, in whose honour the Baroness Mayer had given a fête a few days earlier at Mentmore, said a few words so happy in their arrangement, so dignified in their cadence that they were subsequently set to candidates for the Newcastle medal at Eton to translate into Attic prose.

Not twenty years have passed since, on Baron Lionel's death in 1879, the fortunes of the house have been controlled by the Lord Rothschild of to-day with his brothers Alfred and Leopold as his partners. The loans for the Hungarian, Brazilian, and Chilian Governments are only a portion of the New Court enterprises since 1879. In the eyes of England and of Europe, their most important undertaking has been in relation with Egypt. In 1885, at the moment that the Western powers were at diplomatic feud with each other about the land of the Pharoahs, Egypt itself drew more and more near to complete bankruptcy. The calamity was only averted by monthly advances from the Messrs Rothschild upon no legal security, but on the strength of a private note from the late Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville. This is the testimony of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach speaking as Chancellor of the Exchequer after he had succeeded Mr Gladstone in 1885. The nine millions loan issued in that year was, of course, highly successful for its negotiators. But this good fortune had been preceded by an anxious season of protracted risk encountered with unfailing public spirit.

The Semitic capitalists of the century have been compared to a foreign garrison quartered in every European country, never completely fused with the native population, always separated from the national life, and potentially hostile to the domestic interests of the land which it occupies. In the case of the financial family whose connection with Victorian England has now been summarized this description is not borne out by the

facts. Their activity as financiers and generosity as citizens during calamitous seasons like the Irish famine, are only specimens of the services rendered by the Rothschilds to their adopted country. No exceptional distress comes upon any portion of the United Kingdom without eliciting a letter of womanly sympathy from the Queen, and the opening of a subscription list in the City. At the head of this list the name of the New Court firm is tolerably sure to be seen. Members of a race whose history is like that of the Jews one of razzias, confiscations, disqualifications, patiently borne and slowly overcome, can scarcely be expected to betray no consciousness of these antecedents in their habit and speech. The bearing of the Jew, whatever pinnacle of greatness he may have climbed, is traditionally the bearing of a man on the defensive, prepared, if he sees an opening, to anticipate the necessity of resentment by showing his ability to repel offence. Those who, whether by individual experience or by ethnic tradition, have been schooled in experiences like these, are not likely to show morbid delicacy in their deportment towards others. The mart and the bourse to which the Jews have been driven are defective schools of social culture. Asiatic plutocrats are sure, therefore, wherever they may be settled, to provoke enemies in the very act of creating clients and dependents. The English Rothschilds of every generation have found opportunities of performing private not less than public kindnesses. In spite of, or rather perhaps because of this, they have wounded many susceptibilities, for there may be an

insolence of neediness not less than of wealth. Fairness, however, requires the admission that the successive representatives of the great Semitic house in respect of the performance of the duties of citizenship as well as in the wise, not less than the beneficent use of wealth, have set an example to the fellow countrymen of their adoption in general, and to their financial rivals in particular. The employment of great wealth in accordance with the principles of magnificence and of taste was esteemed so highly by the cultivated Greeks of old as to receive from Aristotle a concrete illustration in his category of virtuous characters. The same tradition was preserved and exemplified in those republics of mediæval Italy that wore the closest resemblances to the older democracies of Hellas which history records. It was not unknown in England at that period when London was to the Englishman what Florence had been to the Florentine under the Medici, or, at an earlier age, what the City of the Violet Crown had been to the contemporary of Pericles. A similar sense of the public usefulness and patriotic obligations of great wealth animated the citizens of London under our own Edwards, and had previously found many modes of effective expression under Elizabeth. Those were 'the gorgeous days' in which the trader of one of the great chartered companies in the Indies or across the Atlantic, having made some exceptionally successful venture, on returning safely to his native land, and to the township which had been his cradle, was wont to testify his gratitude to Providence by embellishing the place of his birth with buildings or gardens, with

galleries or terraces, many of which, as in the case of the gifts of Sir Thomas Gresham, the first of the great loan negotiators, endure to this day, not only in the college which bears his name, but in the Royal Exchange. By no family, not of English birth; by few Englishmen themselves, either under Queen Victoria or her predecessors, have the public and national responsibilities imposed by financial success, or by hereditary millions, on their possessors been recognized so frankly, or been illustrated with so happy and impressive a blend of splendour and propriety, as by the descendents of the bankers of the Princes of Hesse-Cassel who in the first days of this century issuing from their natal judengasse at Frankfort established themselves in England, and at the same time, or shortly thereafter, fixed their emporia in the great Continental capitals as well.

Whatever their natural pride in the creative power of their wealth, no one can lay it to the charge of the Rothschilds that in the use of this instrument they have lost sight of their duties to the land of their adoption. In any faithfully written chronicle of English art or sport since both were organized among us on their present plan, the name of this family must fill no small space. Their services to the breed of horses may be surmised from the popularity of Baron Lionel Rothschild's success in the race for the Derby with Favonius in 1871, as well as from the popularity which his son has since won in the same pastime. Their private houses are museums of art which have encouraged English not less than Continental talent, and which are open to every visitor

who is interested in their contents. Since the Rothschilds were settled in Piccadilly and Mayfair, many others of their race have made a position in the polite life of the capital and of the country. That each of these, to mention only Murrietas, Oppenheims, Bischoffsheims, have fixed the ends and regulated the scale of their expenditure with a regard for refinement as well as pomp, and that the more prominent members of a no longer despised race have been incorporated thoroughly into the ranks of the native gentry, is due largely to the personal initiative and influence of the New Court dynasty. Nor is it merely their wealth and the influence which money has brought that have placed the Rothschilds at the head of Semitic settlers in England. Their loyalty to their nation has never been eclipsed by other interests. They have not only endowed hospitals and built synagogues. They have always exerted a pacific and unifying influence upon the various and sometimes mutually conflicting Hebraic factions; at one time they have reconciled to each other different schools of Teutonic Judaism. At another they have performed the same good office for Israelite communities outside their own Teutonic pale.

CHAPTER VI
SOCIAL CITIZENSHIP AS A MORAL GROWTH OF VICTORIAN ENGLAND

Private and individual efforts which have quickened the sense of citizenship in England and bridged the gulf between rich and poor. Historic and abiding influences of the Young England movement of 1846. How it facilitated the Factory Acts and prompted private owners to open their parks to the public. Temple Gardens and Lincoln's Inn. Effect produced by the brothers Mayhew with their *London Labour* and *London Poor* during the fifties, and also by certain articles in the *Times* and *Quarterly Review*. Lord Shaftesbury, the Poor Man's Peer. Origin of Public School and University settlements in great towns. Edward Denison and his friends before Arnold Toynbee. Individual example acting on public or corporate owners. Educate the public and actuate legislation when the time is ripe for it. Sir Erasmus Wilson's gift of Cleopatra's Needle preceded beautification of Thames Embankment.

The practical sense of citizenship by which, in the preceding chapter, the Jewish community in England has been seen to be animated is among native Englishmen themselves pre-eminently

the development of the Victorian era. Its manifestation in the capital was preceded by its active display in the provinces. Few individuals of our epoch have more appreciably and definitely impressed the image of their genius on the social history of their age, than Benjamin Disraeli, first, and only, Earl of Beaconsfield. This is not the occasion on which to examine his position in, and services to, the public life of the period, as well as his place in the inner economy of the polite world. In the social movement of the industrial classes of the community, especially in their relations with their more highly placed neighbours, the work done by this remarkable man is not less conspicuous than it is seemingly enduring.[17] The political school which, at the outset of his career his genius created, that of Young England in the ninth year of the present reign, did not last long as a political organization. It was never intended to do so. Of the little coterie whose inspiring literature is contained in the trilogy of romance that is constituted by *Coningsby*, *Sibyl*, and *Tancred*, the sole survivor is the Duke of Rutland. Even he, perhaps, is better known to many readers as Lord John Manners. He was first introduced to the general public by the style of 'Lord Henry Sidney' in his friend's earliest novel. With pardonable pride in a letter incorporated by the editor of the *Quarterly Review* in an article on *Sibyl*,[18] the Duke of Rutland points back to the

[17] While Lord Palmerston has become a historical name, Lord Beaconsfield's precedents are daily, alike by friends and foes, cited as living forces.

[18] See *Quarterly Review*, July, 1896.

undoubted service which the sentiment generated by the Young Englanders rendered to Lord Shaftesbury, then Lord Ashley, and to Mr Oastler in their gradually successful efforts to pass the First Factory Act as well as generally to soften, perhaps even to sweeten the daily lot of the suffering, the defenceless, and the poor. At that time, the humane and religious fervour of Lord John Russell had not yet leavened, as it soon afterwards did, aristocratic Whiggism. Mr Gladstone's spiritualizing touch was still to be laid upon the party that he was yet to join. The scientific economists of the school of Peel, comprising as they did Cobden and Bright, were the enemies of the movement. Even the pioneer of that movement, who afterwards nobly vindicated his claim to the title of the Poor Man's Peer, was indignantly asked what he, Lord Shaftesbury, had been doing, when Lord Ashley was fighting for the Ten Hours Bill of 1844.[19]

His virtuous indignation obscured this critic's view of the fact that the peer he praised was identical with the peer he denounced.

If this were the context in which to illustrate the political permanence of the Young England agency, it would be enough to point to the perpetuation in the knights, dames, and chancellors of the Primrose League, of the sensibility to picturesque or semi-feudal effects which inspired Disraeli and his friends in their manipulation of Conservative sentiment. These qualities, at an interval of just half a century, were to reappear in

[19] This anecdote was often told by Lord Shaftesbury.

Disraeli's aptest[20] pupil, Lord Randolph Churchill. As a social and unpolitical testimony to the quickening power of the new England propaganda, when its promulgation was an affair of yesterday, it may be mentioned that at the Queen's accession, as for many years thereafter, it was comparatively an unknown thing for the private parks surrounding gentlemen's houses in the provinces to be used as people's pleasure grounds. Show places on such a scale as Blenheim or Chatsworth existed then as they exist to-day. Even in the case of the former of these, in præ-*Coningsby* or ante-Victorian days, it is not likely to have occurred to a Duke of Marlborough, as it did occur to the seventh successor of John Churchill, being the eighth Duke, to engage a special train to convey several thousands of East End children from their native courts and alleys to the undulating woodlands of his Oxfordshire park. Within a few years of the appearance of *Coningsby*, Eaton was only one of the great parks which, so long as certain reasonable restrictions were observed, became not less free to town or country labourers with their wives and children than Kensington Gardens, or, as what till our age was called Battersea Fields.[21] Royal patronage had not been withheld from the movement. The memories of the present generation stop short of a time when Windsor Park, together with the gardens and terraces of the Castle, was inaccessible to excursionists by the Great Western Railway to view the natural panorama bright

[20] Not, however, the most appreciated by his master.

[21] Now of course Battersea Park.

with all the beauties of 'blossom week,' or to hear the band on the slopes play the favourite pieces of the Queen. The capital was not yet fully abreast with this piece of social progress. Long after the gardens and the general maintenance of the public parks endowed them with fresh attractions, the private pleasure grounds of corporate owners were closed. The new philanthropic reforms were introduced here by the noble structure of the Thames Embankment. The Temple Gardens had, indeed, long been open. The flower beds and their careful tending were still to come. The Benchers of Lincoln's Inn were more exclusive. The new buildings, as they are called, flanking this enclosure, date from 1845. The Lincoln's Inn Fields' theatre had disappeared in 1848. Nearly half a century was still to elapse before the leafy paradise in the heart of this austere kingdom of Chancery law was to ring with childish voices from the courts and alleys which abut on Chancery Lane.

Within fifty years of the Queen's accession, the personal example of that Lord Shaftesbury whose name has been mentioned already was to bear rich fruit. In the *Times* newspaper during the earlier sixties, there appeared a leading article on the subject of the homeless poor of London. It was equally noticeable for the humanity which inspired it, and for its vigorous and graphic expression. Not long before this, an interest, then entirely new, had been imparted to the grim subject by an essay in the *Quarterly Review* based on the then comparatively recent volumes about London labour and the London poor by the

brothers Mayhew. A host of writers have treated this subject subsequently. Many of them, conspicuously the late Thomas Archer, with a thoroughness and freshness of knowledge scarcely inferior to that with which it had been approached by the Mayhews. But in their hands the topic was absolutely new. Without hyperbole, in literal truth, the West End was then not only ignorant of how the East End lived, but with very rare individual exceptions, entirely indifferent to the mingled squalor and tragedy of that existence. Horace Mayhew survived to a vigorous and remarkably handsome old age, dying only a few years ago. His work on the deeper depths of London poverty was the one effort of his life. All his energies were thrown into it. The work when finished, if it did not exhaust him, left him so depressed by the misery which he had been investigating that he had no mind to return to the lighter departments of periodical letters wherein his career commenced, and his earlier reputation was made. A long period of social indifference and legislative lethargy as to the condition of the very poor in the capital and in other great towns now ensued. In 1865, the first editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Frederick Greenwood, conceived the idea of commissioning his brother James, a well known writer on social subjects, to pass a night in the casual ward of a workhouse, rumours of abuses in the management of which were then attracting attention. About a year after this, a winter of exceptional severity afflicted the poorest portions of London, near the Docks and elsewhere, with the combined calamities of

lack of labour, and as a consequence with famine, firelessness, and pestilence. Three friends, each of them then young men, all Conservatives by conviction and all under the influence of the philanthropic teaching of Disraeli's novels, were in the habit of frequently meeting with a view of maturing some scheme for the relief of that destitution at the East End, with which existing agencies of help had proved themselves impotent to deal. One of these belonged to a well known Shropshire family, Baldwyn Leighton.[22] Another, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, has since become Chancellor of the Exchequer. The third was a son of a former Bishop of Salisbury. Edward Denison was equally quick to master the dominant facts in a social situation, and to take the action that seemed the best thereupon. Within a few days, he decided that the first step towards remedying the evils recorded morning after morning in the newspapers must be personal acquaintance with their magnitude, and their origin, as well as with the habits and homes of the distressed masses. Denison, therefore, established himself in a small house in Whitechapel, the very heart of the necessitous district.

Since then, the example thus set has been followed frequently. Denison of course was sometimes visited in his East End lodging by his West End friends. These returned, bringing with them a more vivid sense of the industrial suffering just outside the doors of the polite world than literary descriptions, however graphic,

[22] Who, to the regret of all who knew his abilities, died February 1897, having exercised influence rather than achieved distinction.

could convey to the perfunctory reader of the morning paper. Other incidents were to prove unexpectedly instrumental in deepening the interest of well-to-do Londoners in their destitute neighbours. Within a year or two of Denison's mission, the Fenian outrage at Clerkenwell Prison not only robbed many poor families of their breadwinners, but left them literally homeless. Disraeli, at that time Prime Minister, sent down his private secretary to distribute alms among the victims of the explosion. Mr Montague Corry, since Lord Rowton,[23] saw sad and strange sights during this charitable errand. His recital of these experiences was followed by liberal subscriptions to the sufferers from Pall Mall and Mayfair. From that day to this, not only has the stream of charity flowed less sluggishly; there has been also awakened a new personal and intelligent interest in the condition of the most squalid of poverty's perennial children. That feeling has not evaporated in charitable doles. Substantial funds have been organized by private or corporate munificence for improving the dwellings of the poor and for practically testifying the neighbourly solicitude of more fortunate citizens.

The demoralizing effects of public executions were exposed by Thackeray. His essay, 'Going to see a man hung' gave shape, and eventually success to the movement for the hanging of criminals within, and not outside, the prison walls. So, at an earlier day, Dickens, who of all our greatest writers was the first

[23] While he yet lives, his enduring monuments are his blocks of working men's dwellings in the King's Cross district and elsewhere.

to interest the public in the waifs and strays in the London streets, had initiated in *Oliver Twist* a social demand for workhouse reform. The best causes are liable to abuse and caricature. There have been moments when, since the Mayhews wrote, sympathy with the lot of the London poor has seemed in danger of becoming overdone, or being degraded into a fad, a craze, a fashionable hobby, and thus of ceasing to be an actuating conviction. The modish popularity of 'slumming' as it used a few years ago to be called had of course its absurd aspects, but was, nevertheless, not an unhealthy sign. It could be compared to the froth upon the surface which concealed, and did not necessarily weaken, the stimulating and strengthening qualities below. Whether this philanthropic curiosity was displayed in town or country, the social truth of which it constituted evidence was that the commercial spirit and its harsher influences, not unfortunately uncommon among the upper classes in the early days of the new poor law, were becoming obsolete, and that the class fusion born of class sympathy to which De Tocqueville has attributed our later freedom from organic revolutions was in steady process of evolution. Edward Denison came first of all, and could only see with the eye of faith the fruits which his example was to bear in the beneficent experiment of Arnold Toynbee and in the People's Palace. So it has continued, till to-day the University and public school settlements in the East End of London and in other great cities are institutions not less deeply rooted than the parochial system itself. The kindly

work is not confined to a single sex. St Margaret's House, Bethnal Green, the ladies' branch of the Oxford agency, presided over by Mrs Burrows, is as firmly established as the homes founded by Trinity or Christ Church in the same neighbourhood. Throughout the English speaking world, the same beneficent inspiration seems to have been almost simultaneously operative. One hears of analogous enterprises in the great cities of Australia and in the United States. The American movement even claims seniority over the English. Andover House, Boston, was in full working order before the cognate agencies in our own capital were complete. The devotion of Trade Unionists to their Union has been employed as a figure to illustrate the mutual loyalty to a great and good idea of those brought up in the same College or University or public school. This reciprocal enthusiasm has now been active and productive long enough to entitle it to the praise of solidity and permanence. The public and legal provisions for quickening the sense of citizenship in town and country will presently be examined in detail. That which seems important to bear in mind is that the legislature did not interpose its machinery until the private agencies, social or moral, already recapitulated, had done their work. Even the improvement in the open spaces of the capital which is so marked a feature in metropolitan progress during the last few decades, has been helped or encouraged largely by private initiative. The late Mr Matthew Arnold recognized as a graceful and original act of public service, the transport of Cleopatra's Needle from

Alexandria to London at the cost of Sir Erasmus Wilson. Before the obelisk was established on the Thames Embankment the municipal authorities had prepared a home for it and converted into daintily kept pleasure grounds the little enclosures by the side of the riverain promenade.

CHAPTER VII
THE NEW ERA IN ENGLISH PARISHES

Reflection of the Estates of the Realm in the old divisions of rural life in England. Modifications in the system introduced by recent changes in local government. The English village as it now is. The public house as a place of resort largely displaced by the parish meeting room. The quickened sense of civic life shown in the speech and bearing of the villagers. The exact functions of the Parish Council, or Meeting. Relations between Parish and District Councils. Retrospect of English Poor Law system. Greater popularity of the District Councils. Other duties than of Poor Law Guardians discharged by District Councils. Clergy and Squires. How affected. District Board's composition. Its relations with magistrates, and popular feeling.

Before 1894, English parishes in rural districts possessed, as they still do, three centres of local life. The State was represented by the squire, or chief landowner, often, as may still be the case, an absentee. The Rectory, or Vicarage, with the neighbouring church was the geographical depository of spiritual power. The village inn, or public house, was the place of popular meeting, and with its adjoining skittle-alley was the source of popular amusement. Here the gossip of the neighbourhood

was discussed, or the local newspaper read. London journals did not, and do not, often enter remote neighbourhoods in the provinces. The doings of the Imperial Parliament, or the Concert of the European Powers were, as they remain, of little interest to the rural tillers of the soil in comparison with the wages paid by the farmers in the district, the supervision, or the lack of it, exercised by lords of the land over the cottages of the poor. Nothing more struck the stranger who wished to acquire information as to the daily lot of the rural population, and as to opportunities for their improvement, than the prevailing ignorance or indifference about the facts of their daily life. It was not exactly Christian acquiescence in chronic want and squalor as a Divine dispensation. It was rather an unreasoning suspicion as to the motives of the enquirer, and as to the consequences to themselves of the answers given, which, if it did not seal the villagers' lips, restricted their replies to inarticulate grunts or evasive generalities.

Within the fifth decade of the present reign, all this has either changed entirely or has been appreciably modified. The public house, or inn, stands indeed where it stood. The tap is no longer the parish club room. Even the skittle-alley has lost many of its attractions. The authority of the Manor House has been divested of the superstitious sanctions with which it was once clothed. The squire and the parson are regarded as well-meaning persons with a good deal of human nature, after all, about them. As for the geographical centre of village existence, it is no longer the roof

tree of the publican, but the village meeting hall. This, in the majority of cases, would never have existed but for the initiative of the clergyman. He it is who with no parliamentary sessions to attend during half the year, with no town house always ready to receive him, passes most of his time among his own people; and thus combines in his own person, very often, the two separate principles of Church and State. This village assembly room is furnished with the chief county and market town newspapers. It is without carpets or draperies, and does not consequently retain tobacco smoke. If, therefore, the villager likes a dry pipe while he reads, or chats, it may at stated hours be allowed him. Gradually, therefore, he has grown to regard the place as his betters regard the House of Commons, as the best club of which he knows. The publican may suffer, but all other members of the little community have gained.

At the present moment, the manner and the countenances of the rural company, apart from the subjects of their more than usually animated conversation, indicate a season of exceptional importance. The truth is, that an election for the village parliament is imminent. Whether the name be parish council or parish meeting, the reality is the same. That reality since Sir Henry Fowler's amendment in 1894 practically implies Home Rule for every parish in rural England. The franchise is in effect universal. Without regard to income or place of domicile every parishioner whose name occurs in the local government or parliamentary register has a vote, and is in addition entitled to

attend the parish parliament. So systematic is the preservation of the separate individuality of every village, that where the number of inhabitants is below[24] 300, and the gathering is called a meeting, not a council; no association of that particular village with others is allowed to supersede the separate meeting. The executive body is thus always the parish meeting. The grouping order necessary for the amalgamation of parishes for council purposes is never given without the closest scrutiny by the County Council first, or confirmed by the Imperial authority in London afterwards. In no case is the parish meeting dispensed with. Amongst the groups we have seen discussing their affairs, one might have noticed women as well as men; for though by the decision of the Court of Appeal in the case of Drax *v.* Ffook, women can vote as occupiers and not as owners, they are, whether spinsters or wives, eligible to be parish councillors. Should the parish be without a village hall, the schoolroom is the usual place of assembly. The one spot peremptorily forbidden by the law is the public house; unless no other rendezvous be procurable for love or money. It is still too early to pronounce definitely as to the permanent effect of these institutions. The general tendency has perhaps been towards the falsification alike of the extreme hopes and fears which they first raised. Their jurisdiction includes all the functions of the old vestries and their officers, together with other novel and more drastic prerogatives. The discussions are often limited to dull details of mechanical

[24] The guarantees against undue delegation are stringent and successful.

routine, but are sometimes, as to-day, sufficiently animated. In the typical parish (a generalization from actual experience), the question of opening or closing footpaths across fields chances closely to divide parochial opinion. A little time ago, the vexed problem was the limits of a village green which had been so much diminished by encroachments as to cease almost to exist. Another issue that a little while hence will furnish material for debates not less vivacious is that of allotments for cottagers. Here as in the other cases, there is a strong faction on either side. A heavy parochial whip has been sent out by the two sets of leaders. If the matter is decided in the affirmative, and the allotment or village green extension, as the case may be, is carried, a measure of expropriation may follow, should the County Council, as superior body, sanction the scheme, and should the Local Government Board, after hearing the case of the dissidents, confirm the parochial proposals. As a check to parochial extravagance, the money to be advanced by the central authority is not to exceed one-half the value of the local rates. Inheriting the power of the vestries which they displaced, the bodies now mentioned have in their hands the appointment of overseers of the poor. 'One man, one vote'[25] is the universal principle. The employers of labour, that is the farmers, are consequently liable to be placed in the minority by their servants. Hence proceeded the assertion that the signal

[25] Opinions vary as to the workability of this clause in the shape in which it left the Lords.

withdrawal of the farmers from the Liberal party, as being morally responsible for the measure, largely brought about the crushing defeat of the Gladstonians at the general election of 1895. If the farmers were animated by any such resentment towards the party which they identified with the real authorship of the Act, the feeling has already to a great extent passed away. What remains of it will no doubt evaporate as eventually sentimental grievances of this kind seldom fail in England to do. Impartial evidence, gathered at first hand, does indeed show that the increased mutual knowledge generated between farmers and their hands in the parish meeting room has resulted in an actual improvement of the relations between the two classes. All the national processes which legislative change sets in motion have worked slowly in England. It was not till the third or fourth appeal to the constituencies under Household Franchise was made that the permanent results of the peaceful revolution in 1868 could be computed with even approximate accuracy. The final consequences of the extension of the franchise to counties by the Liberals in 1884 have not yet declared themselves. It would, therefore, be premature as yet to make any definite deductions, social or political, as to the working of a system which has been operative only since 1894.

One thing more about them may, however, be said. As in the case of the farmers where, with a fair measure of conciliation and tact, the occupiers of the soil find their official intercourse with its tillers unexpectedly harmonious, so as regards the relations

between the villagers and the clergyman, in the position of the latter as the spiritual, and often inevitably to a great degree the temporal, head of the community. Briefly stated, the effect of the Parish Meeting, or Parish Council, is to restore to the villagers certain of the rights which, in the old Manor Courts, they had possessed. Where the clergyman combines with the practical sense of an educated man a freedom from a suspicious antipathy to the civic activities of his flock, there is not only no jealousy of the parson's intervention in the deliberations of the parish hall; but the experience which he is likely to bring to the work is welcomed by the councillors as a valuable aid to their discussions. If, when standing for a seat on the council, the rector issues an address savouring of dictatorial self-assertion; if from his pulpit he prescribes a plan for the conduct of these elections; the reverend gentleman may find himself at the bottom of the poll. When, however, he deals with his parishioners on the assumption of their equality in all non-religious matters with himself, he disarms or prevents jealousy. He has a fair chance of being chosen by acclamation to the president's chair at the little Board.[26] Parish Councils have for the first time in the rural history of England developed a sense of responsibility among those to whom a decade ago the idea of rural citizenship, with obligations as well as rights, was unintelligible. They have,

[26] *E.g.* In a typical Surrey village, where there are no Nonconformists, the Chairman is the Vicar, but of 38 Gloucestershire parishes, where dissenters abound, only in two or three.

therefore, impressed the minds of those concerned in them with some sense of power. Thus far, no tendency has been displayed to use that power in a revolutionary fashion. A body which, like the average parish parliament, numbers from five to eleven, is not likely to prove a tempestuously democratic, or violently revolutionary assemblage. Finally, though, on the requisition of three members to the chairman the council may be convened at any time, its actual convention is never brought about more than thrice, and seldom more than once in a twelvemonth. Not the least good which this institution carries with it in most neighbourhoods is its creation of wider, less mean, more liberal interests in daily life, and with these interests, subjects of conversation for the village community more generous than private affairs of individual households; – what Hodge, the ditcher, does so late at night in the neighbourhood of the squire's game preserves; how much money the carpenter's wife paid for her new bonnet; or how her daughters afford so gaudy a display of Sunday finery. That the new machinery has thus far worked with less friction than might have been expected may be inferred from the statistics courteously forwarded to the present writer from the Local Government Board under date August 7th 1896. As has been said already, the Imperial authority at Whitehall acts as arbitrator in all cases of difference between the popular Parish Councils and the more exclusive County Councils as to the acquisition of land for allotments. At the time now mentioned, it was the calculation of the President of the Local Government

Board that four cases had occurred of appeals by Parish Councils against the refusal of the County Council to make the allotment order; and that in fourteen cases in which orders have been made by County Councils, eight protests against them have reached the Local Government Board from persons immediately interested.

Ascending from the lowest deliberative unit in the new scheme of local self government one passes from the Parish Council to the District Council. If it can be questioned whether the average villager as yet fully appreciates the gift of power made to him by the legislature in 1894, no such doubt can exist as to those bodies that are a little higher in the deliberative scale, the District Councils. The local parliament in the parish hall may sometimes be unattended by a single cottager. The District Council, if it be not as yet popular, is at least never neglected. Seats on it were from the first objects of local ambition. This is only what might have been expected in an age, a marked feature of which is the quickened interest of all sections of the community in whatever affects the health or comfort of the labouring classes. The District Council, as its name implies, has a more than parochial dignity. Its jurisdiction is practically commensurate with the sphere of the old Rural Sanitary Authority. The relief of pauperism however, forms a first and special care of this body, the members of which are also the Guardians of the Poor. Its place of assembly is the chief small town of the neighbourhood; not indeed the County town, but generally a convenient town where there happens to be a railway station. The District Council

has already contracted certain associations of local fashion. The ladies of the country side have entered warmly into its business, and often constitute a majority of its most active members. There is, of course, the complaint of impulsiveness brought against the District Councillors. Thus the domestic idea is regarded by them with more respect than it secured from their predecessors, the Boards of Guardians. Guardians were elected by the plural vote of the larger ratepayers. They had, moreover, to satisfy a property qualification in their own persons. District Councils in theory know nothing of, and in practice are affected little by, such conditions. The ex-officio magistrate, without which no Board of Guardians was complete, is systematically absent from the new District bodies. The *personnel* of the new Councils, which occupy a place midway between the Parish and the County assemblies, presents a notable contrast to that of the superseded Boards of Guardians. County magistrates are not, in virtue of that office, ordinary members of these bodies, which are almost solely elective. The dignity of the body, however, is well maintained. The chairman of the District Council becomes, in consequence of that position, a County magistrate with powers as plenary as if he were the nominee of the Lord Lieutenant. Sometimes, of course, the chairmen of the District bodies are already magistrates. That is, however, the exception. There now exist in the United Kingdom about a thousand elective magistrates, being chairmen of District Councils. By far the greater part of these are new to their legal responsibilities. A few are working men.

One District Council in Northamptonshire is presided over by the master of a small railway station on the Midland line. Another has for its chairman an agricultural labourer; a third is controlled by an ex-policeman; a fourth by one who supports himself on the cultivation of sixteen acres of land. The effect of popular election is not limited to the discharge of those duties connected with pauperism and sanitation that are the primary concern of the District bodies. Assessment committees, and school attendance committees are both drawn from the District Councils. The latter of these, it is generally admitted, have done their work better since they ceased to be composed exclusively of employers of labour, and since they have become representative of industry as well.[27]

The Poor Law, which has been in force during the whole of the Victorian era, was, as scarcely needs to be said, among the earliest achievements of the Reformed Parliament. Bitter and prolonged as was the resistance to portioning out the country afresh for the relief of pauperism instead of congregating the poor of each parish in their own workhouse, the beneficent results of the change have long since been universally admitted. 'The new Bastilles' was the name first given to the unions which the Act of 1834 created, by the opponents of the Bill, with a view to excite popular feeling against it. Only the most hardened paupers, who objected on principle to industry of any

[27] Urban District Councils have taken the place of Local Boards; they are in fact town councils of those districts which are not incorporated into municipalities.

kind, complained of the modicum of labour exacted from the occupants of the new workhouses. Even these shirkers have become reconciled to some sort of industry. The improvement in the habits of the whole working class was conspicuous and immediate. Thus, as in his History of the period, Mr Molesworth points out,[28] in four unions of the Midlands, there were in 1834, 954 able-bodied paupers. In June 1836 there were only 5. All the rest were in regular work. In the county of Sussex, the most inveterately pauperized in England, there were in 1834, 6,160 paupers. The Act had not been in operation two years before this total was reduced to 124. By 1836 the Act had become operative in twenty-two counties. The average of the reduction of the rates in these was 43½ per cent. The Commissioners of Enquiry, on whose report the new legislation was based, predicted that the application of their principles would restore and improve industry, would create or confirm habits of thrift, would increase the demand for labour as well as the wages of the labourer, and generally would promote the welfare of those who lived by manual toil. The Queen had not ascended her throne when the erewhile opponents of the Measure confessed that these anticipations were already fulfilled. It was not to be expected that bodies so essentially different from the old Boards of Guardians as the District Councils are would administer the Poor Law in the same spirit or on the same principles as their predecessors. Few socio-economical questions of the

[28] Molesworth's *History of England*, vol. i. p. 19.

day have provoked controversy so bitter, or divided skilled and conscientious partizans into such mutually envenomed factions as the conditions on which relief from the rates should be granted to the necessitous poor. The uncompromising advocates of the workhouse test system, compulsory residence, that is, within the workhouse walls, maintain that in this way only can systematic pauperization be avoided, and that so alone will the not uniformly industrious poor realize the stigma of coming upon the rates. On the other hand, it may be argued that in innumerable cases timely charity from the common fund will prevent the utter break up of a needy, but not necessarily indolent home. Paupers, it may be said, who will not work, and who are, therefore, not proper objects of compassion, are never kept by any sense of pride or shame from taking up their quarters in the local union. Thus, may it not be false economy to make absolute destitution and homelessness a preliminary condition of parochial help? On these points, those who differ will never agree. What it is now relevant to point out, is that the administrative methods of the new Councillors have very generally shown a reaction from the more stringent, and less sympathetic policy of the old Boards of Guardians. Thus, the workhouse test is far less often than formerly made the condition of poor relief.

Organization in every department of activity or interest is the most conspicuous movement of the last quarter of this century. Some years must yet elapse before we know the exact point to which the legislation now reviewed has disciplined

and stimulated the inhabitants of rural England. The object of the controllers of the vestries that the Parish Meetings have superseded was to keep village administration in the hands of a privileged and comparatively leisured minority. Hence it was not unusual to fix the hour for the vestry meeting at 9 a.m.; when of course the male population would be at work in the fields. Under the Act of 1894 the Parish Councillors are bound to hold their sittings in the evening after the day's work is done. From a historical point of view this legislation cannot be charged with being revolutionary. The powers which the new bodies have assumed in checking encroachments upon common land and other like offences are indeed considerable. That prerogative is not an innovation. It is rather a revival of the authority which in the old Manor Courts, presided over by the steward of the Manor lord, the freeholders could exercise. Beyond question, the most far-reaching and important change introduced into country life by the new machinery is the infusion of the elective element into the nominated magistracy. This has not yet received the attention it deserves. Under the earlier régime, as has been said, certain guardians had a seat at the Union Board because they were magistrates. Under the existing dispensation certain Justices of the Peace owe their place on the magisterial Bench to the fact of their performing the duties of District Councillors and Guardians of the Poor. The relations between the two positions are thus exactly inverted. That the tendency of this change is to soothe the suspicions once widely prevalent as to the principles on which

Justices' justice was administered does not seem disputable. It has also positively increased the respect in the rural mind for the law itself as the expression of wisdom and equity. The cordiality with which the older magistrates, nominated to the Bench by the Lord Lieutenant, have generally welcomed their popularly chosen colleagues has undoubtedly strengthened this wholesome sentiment. Finally, the same career in the local polity as of old remains practically open to men serving on the Commission of Peace. Where the old J.P. Guardian was a man who did good work on the Union Board, he seldom now is debarred from doing it still. Even when he is locally unpopular, a well-earned reputation of ability or aptitude for affairs is pretty sure to bear down purely personal objections and secure his return to the District Board; a tolerably conclusive proof of the fitness of the parochial constituencies for the measure of autonomy which they have received.

CHAPTER VIII
THE NEW ERA IN ENGLISH COUNTIES

General effect of the legislation of 1888 on the English County system. Some analogy between the principles of corporation reform (1835) and County administration reform (1888). But the earlier act did not touch, as the later did, the power of magistrates in Quarter Sessions. Social circumstances, *e. g.*: the growth of an educated and leisured class of residents in country towns which have made the time ripe for the new legislation, and distributed throughout England a new class of capable local administrators. Contrast between County town life before and since the establishment of County Councils. Social pictures of county supremacy on Sessions days in the old era at hotels and shops. County self government has not destroyed the old County traditions nor deprived the old administrators of their former career. Exact functions of County Councils, and points of administrative communion between them and the old magistrates. Local idiosyncrasies of these Councils, North and South.

The legislation of 1888 has influenced the entire scheme of life in provincial England. The social prestige of the County system, centred in the extra-judicial power of the magistrates

at Quarter Sessions, had not been affected prejudicially by the Corporation Reform Act with which, two years before the Queen's accession, the Whig Ministers in the newly reformed Parliament supplemented the Poor Law changes. The principle underlying the County Council Act of 1888, and before that the Corporation Act of 1835 was the same. Both marked a return to a more ancient but a less exclusive system rather than a sudden introduction of a new. Like the monarchy itself, the borough corporations were in their beginnings genuinely popular. As in the case of the Throne, so in that of the provincial polities; it was the Tudor sovereigns who narrowed and enervated the privileges of their subjects. Under the Plantagenets and throughout the Middle Ages, the corporations were elected by popular constituencies, the freemen of the town. Contracted in their scope under Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, these charters of urban freedom were, under the Stuarts, so remodelled as to transfer from the burgesses to the Crown the appointment of municipal officers. Municipal liberty having passed away first, municipal purity gradually followed. The abuses in civic life had at last equalled the corruptions which reduced parliamentary elections to a farce. Within a year of Lord Grey's Reform Act, the urban scandals became too gross to be ignored longer by a comparatively purified House of Commons. As in the case of the procedure with reference to the Poor Law, so in the business of municipal reform a Commission was appointed to investigate the corporations of the United Kingdom. The

national enthusiasm for the men who had carried electoral reform against the House of Lords, against the Duke of Wellington and against the King was soon followed by a Tory reaction. In the hope of regaining for his party some of the popularity which it had lost, Lord John Russell in the summer of 1835 submitted the new measure to the House of Commons. Two millions of Englishmen were affected by the scheme. The then existing municipal bodies had been shown as little to represent the property, the intelligence, even the population of the towns as the unreformed Legislature had reflected the convictions and desires of the Kingdom. Charitable funds, bequeathed by former benefactors for the impartial relief of local want, had by the abuses of years, been diverted wholly from their original purpose. They were dispensed habitually to the political friends of the men who had for the time the upper hand in the affairs of the borough. These moneys seldom mitigated any honest distress; they were squandered in the periodical junketings of the authorities of the township, with the political partizans who were their fellow feasters. Two novelists of our time have drawn famous pictures of the same great nobleman. The original of Disraeli's 'Lord Monmouth' in *Coningsby* was the Marquis of Hertford, whose henchman, the 'Mr Rigby' of the novel, was the John Wilson Croker of real life. Thackeray's 'Marquis of Steyne' in *Vanity Fair* was the other literary likeness of the same titled original. In real life the Marquis of Hertford, as 'an honest burgess,' was a chief member of the Council of Oxford

city. The Right Honourable John Wilson Croker, his lordship's steward, and his confidant in all things were the chief associates of this eminent noble in the control of the municipality of the University town. The Corporation Act of 1835 swept away these scandals, and made municipal government a fairly popular reality. Thenceforward in all corporate boroughs, the Town Council was chosen by resident inhabitants rated to the relief of the poor. Since 1835 the power of the magistrates in boroughs is exercised by the borough bench with an appeal to Quarter Sessions, that is, to the County. The measure did not a little towards re-establishing the popular privileges which had existed before the Tudor encroachments. London was not included in the Act. With that exception, all English towns on the Queen's accession had for two years been in the enjoyment of self-rule. Cobden is one of the many opponents of caste exclusiveness who have testified to the purity and efficiency of the unpaid magistracy in their functions of County administrators. These persons were of course never responsible to any constituent body. They satisfied the property qualification by the possession of £300 in land, or by the receipt of an income of £100 a year. Notwithstanding the thoroughness of the work done by them on the Quarter Sessions committees for regulating extra-judicial business, they represented no interest except that of the party enjoying political power, the supreme embodiment of which was the Lord Lieutenant of the County.

Meanwhile, there had been great changes in the composition

of the residents at, or in the neighbourhood of the chief provincial towns of England. The close of the Crimean War reinforced the class now mentioned by the addition of educated, but not generally wealthy, men, who desired peacefully to spend the residue of their days in districts with which family ties made them familiar or which conveniences of sport or education rendered attractive. The absorbing powers of the capital have progressively increased during recent decades. Opulence and fashion have swollen the great public schools of the country to unmanageable dimensions. Still, to a large percentage of English parents in the upper middle class, Eton and Harrow are not the only two possible schools of the realm; life may be lived as pleasantly, and more economically, in provincial centres like Bedford, Ipswich, Bath, or Cheltenham as within the metropolitan radius. Schools, not less than hotels, have become matters of joint stock enterprise, and of federal proprietorship. The excellent places of teaching which abound in such towns as those just mentioned are pre-eminently a product of the Victorian era. Thus it has come to pass that, at innumerable spots throughout provincial England, during recent years there have settled families, not pretending to historic antiquity or distinction, but still agreeably supplementing the social resources of the County district. Many, perhaps most of these newcomers have served the Queen in peace or war, abroad as well as at home, and are thus likely to have acquired administrative experience of different sorts. These are just the people qualified to relieve their older neighbours, the

local squirarchy, in their administrative work. If the machinery for establishing County Councils had been created in the era of the Corporation Reform Act, or during the first half of the present reign, it would have been premature, would at least comparatively have failed, instead of proving, as it has done, a signal success. How this institution works will best be judged by contrasting certain phases of County town life to-day and in the pre-County Council epoch. To visit such a town on a day when the magistrates were sitting at Quarter Sessions was like making an excursion into feudalism. One used to alight at the stable yard of the chief hotel to find no room for one's horse. The County's steeds had possession of the best stalls. They could not of course be displaced by, or consort with, the quadrupeds of less considerable riders. Inside the building, the same tale was retold and on every storey illustrated afresh. The apartment normally the coffee room was consecrated to the exclusive use of a select party of County justices who were still at luncheon. The drawing room on the first floor was in the occupation of the women kind of their relatives who were just about to refresh themselves after shopping with a cup of tea. The member of the general public who entered the chief shops of the place on the day devoted to County customers found himself and his patronage at a discount. The tradesman, in civil terms, profoundly regretted his inability to attend to the chance comer until he had satisfied the needs of the County justices' ladies who were expecting every moment to be called for by their lords from the Sessions House.

Socially, not less than geographically, the County continues to exist. The wives and daughters of the country gentlemen who are County J.Ps. set the fashion in their neighbourhood and are still regarded as moulded out of a clay slightly superior to that of which their neighbours consist. But as an object of fetish worship the County has in most districts disappeared. The chief linen draper in the town, as he watches the County ladies, in their dilatory fashion, toy with one fabric after another, can scarcely suppress a look of impatience on his well disciplined face. He happens to be, not less than the father and husband of these ladies, himself a member of the new County parliament. He is exercised by a fear lest the special committee of the body on which he is serving should have decided the question of certain alterations in the approach to the local capital in which he is interested, before he has had time to get to the place of meeting. Unconsciously, perhaps, his manner towards the lady relatives of his council-colleague, the squire and magistrate, has lost something of its old deference. Still, the foundations of the social system remain the same. The fusion between classes of which the County Council is the expression rather than the cause has not brought us appreciably nearer the revolution and the Red Republic than had been done by the earlier parliamentary reforms. Here, as in the case of the District bodies, the law of the survival of the fittest is unrepealed, amid the administrative changes of the hour. County magistrates who are specially qualified for County administration are elected to

the new Councils in numbers sufficient to leaven these bodies. The service that they performed on the committees of the old Sessions is still discharged by them on the Boards that are of more recent growth. The venue of their exertions is changed. The opportunity of their labour remains the same. Probably the association of County gentry with country town traders widens the view of the squires, acts as an incentive to greater energy, and is actually productive of better work. Certainly, since this machinery has been in operation the intellectual resources of the chief centres of population within the jurisdiction of the County Council have been improved. New art and science museums have come into existence. The people's parks, which were already known in country towns, are better kept. New reading rooms and libraries have opened their doors.

During the rather more than half a century that elapsed between the Corporations Act of 1835, and the Local Government Act of 1888, the chief reforms effected were in the province of sanitary administration, were mainly due to the efforts of individuals, such as Mr Stansfeld in 1872, and were generally incorporated in the Public Health Act of 1875. These sanitary measures contained the principle on which the area of the United Kingdom was finally redistributed. For the purposes of County Councils, England is mapped out into sixty-one administrative counties. Each of the electoral divisions of which the County consists has a Councillor of its own. The electors are practically almost identical with the

parliamentary constituencies. In the case of municipalities inside the County area, the Local Government Board decides the share of representation to which it is entitled, and allots to it on the Council one or more members, as the case may be. In addition to the councillors created by purely popular election, a certain number of aldermen, not to exceed one-fourth of the whole body are chosen by co-optation among the Councillors themselves. The term of Council office is three years. The chairman, however, who is not forbidden to receive a salary, holds his place only for one year. Like the District chairman, the County president too, without satisfying any pecuniary qualification, becomes, by virtue of his office, a County magistrate.[29] Like the Council electors, the chairman and the six co-opted aldermen are subject only to the condition of having the County vote. As in parliamentary elections so in County elections, the polling is by ballot. The incidental expenses, however, which are strictly regulated by the number of the constituency, are defrayed, not by the candidate or his friends as in parliamentary competitions, but out of a County fund. The prerogatives of magistrates in whatever appertains to the licensing of public houses, and exercised in Quarter and Special Sessions, are untouched by the new bodies. With that exception, the functions of Quarter Sessions are superseded practically by the Councils. As a consequence, the sessional attendances of the magistrates have largely fallen off; though there still exist many

[29] As a fact, the County chairman is most likely a J.P. already.

opportunities for joint action between the new Councils and the old Sessions. For instance, the County police is controlled by a committee whose members are selected from the old magistrates and the new Councillors. Again, when the object is to acquire fresh land for popular use; to open or endow local museums or libraries, to establish emigration funds to the Colonies or elsewhere, united action between the two bodies is usual, but not compulsory.

It has been seen already that the Local Government Board at Whitehall looks for the endorsement by the County Council of the Parish Council's proposal to acquire land for allotments and, with that purpose, to obtain loans from the State purse. Similarly, the borrowing powers for less local objects of the Councils are definitely limited. The consent of the Imperial authority is needed to enable the Council to borrow for permanent works or to issue County stock. The Council's annual Budget is closely criticized not only in debate by the Councillors themselves, but by the Local Government Board. The property rated to the County Rate which is the security for all loans is inspected periodically by Imperial officers. The accounts are examined by Imperial auditors. Meanwhile, it may be conjectured justly that the considerable remnant of country gentlemen of the old school, that is, the nominated magistrates, who have seats on the new Councils, secure a salutary continuity of administration and expenditure between the new régime and that which preceded it. There is, of course, far more of local variety and of adaptability

to the needs of special neighbourhoods in the composition of the Councils than it was ever possible there should be in the *personnel* of the Quarter Session administrators. This fact would alone make it unsafe, as may be seen by one or two instances, to generalize about these bodies. If in the Midlands, in the Metropolitan shires, and in the South Western counties, power remains to a great extent in the hands of the old order, and only the tenant farmers on a large scale have influence on the Councils, the experience of the northern mining districts and of Wales is very different. Throughout the Principality, as well as on the Gloucester and Monmouth frontier, the small farmers, who are Nonconformists to a man, find themselves, for the first time in their lives, a decisive power in their neighbourhood. The same is the case in Durham. Here the colliers, also for the most part Nonconformists, containing among them many of the finest, most upright, and manly specimens of the English race, practically dominate the Council of the Northern shire.[30]

[30] For valuable facts and figures, bringing this chapter down to the latest date the writer is indebted to Mr Henry Chaplin and his staff at the Local Government Board, as for much other useful help to Sir Henry Fowler, Sir Charles Dilke, the Rev. Charles Cox, D.D., and to Mr G. W. E. Russell.

CHAPTER IX
COUNTY COUNCILS AND CLASS FUSION

Reasons why London was not included in the Corporation Reform Act of 1835. Popular character of its municipal government contrasts with Royal encroachments of various periods. Various schemes and commissions of City reform since the Queen's accession. 1853 Commission alone produced practical result in the establishment in 1855 of Metropolitan Board of Works. Relations between this Board and the City. In 1888 Board of Works superseded by London County Council. Exact relations between London County Council and the City Corporation. National and Imperial uses of Lord Mayor illustrated. Possible changes of the future. Class fusion illustrated by titled Mayors and other provincial usages.

The London County Council, which has little in common with the bodies already examined except the name, has been reserved to a chapter dealing chiefly, like the present, with the polity of the capital. For the exclusion of London from the Corporation Act of 1835, sufficient reasons, whether of principle or procedure, may be assigned. To the former category belongs the fact that the City Corporation, even during the encroachments of the Tudors and the Stuarts, had, unlike other

towns, maintained its original liberties. It was, amid all its vicissitudes, not, as were the corporations described above, a self chosen, but a popularly elected, body. Secondly, the Corporation Commissioners did not think that a period within three years of Lord Grey's Reform Act, before the ground swell of the excitement, caused by that measure, had subsided, was suitable for deciding complex and far-reaching issues like those presented by the civic system grouped round Guildhall. At the same time the Commissioners expressly recorded their opinion that the magnitude of the problem ought not indefinitely to postpone an attempt at its solution and that the difference between the administrative problems of the provinces and the capital was one chiefly of degree. In their separate report of 1837 the Commissioners confined their observations on municipal London to cautious negatives. The suggestion of creating a congeries of Metropolitan municipalities had even then been made, as it has often been renewed since. This proposal was officially condemned on the ground that it would only remove an anomaly by provoking an abuse. At the same time, certain functions of local administration were specified which, within the Metropolitan area would be performed most efficiently and economically under the control of a single authority. In 1853 a special Commission enquiring into the affairs of the City Corporation, among various, but not very definite proposals, hinted that the seven parliamentary boroughs, of which London then consisted, might supply the machinery for a heptarchy of

municipalities administratively associated in a central Board of Works. That body was to be composed of persons chosen by the different boroughs of the capital. No active steps were taken towards the heptarchical subdivision of the capital. But in 1855 the Metropolis Local Management Act was introduced by Sir Benjamin Hall. The result was the Metropolitan Board of Works, which remained an active power until it was superseded by or incorporated in the London County Council of 1888. All the then existing parishes and vestries of London sent members elected by the vestries to this central body. The Board of Works supplied the long desiderated unity of administration. If during its thirty-three years of rule it made many enemies, it also effected great improvements. In 1884 the Administration of Mr Gladstone produced a fresh measure of London reform. The chief feature of this was the absorption by the City of the powers of the Metropolitan Board, and the redistribution of parochial functions concentrated upon the City Corporation but now to be divided among new local bodies. This proposal proved equally unacceptable to the City which was already overburdened, and to the parochial bodies which were soon to be superseded. It had, however, advanced the question a perceptible degree; had renewed popular interest in London reform, and helped to create the public opinion which, four years later, in 1888, enabled the Cabinet of the day to include London in the Bill for establishing County Councils throughout the kingdom.

In the provinces, as has been seen, the County Councils

practically have taken over the civil and administrative duties of magistrates formerly exercised at Quarter Sessions, but have in no way touched the judicial functions of these gentlemen as representatives of the Queen's justice. In the same way, the London County Council has left absolutely unimpaired the judicial power of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen organized in their various courts to execute and administer the civil and criminal law according to the historic traditions of the capital. The Common Council of London City has, therefore, to-day the powers which belong to an ordinary borough council. Outside the City limits, the London County Council with respect to drainage, sanitary arrangements generally, new streets and local improvements of all kinds, in courteous, rather than compulsory, concert with the City discharges the functions of the former Board of Works, or of a County Council in the provinces.

That this friendly association between the two Metropolitan bodies, the old and the new, should be practicable is what a knowledge of the past would lead one to expect. In civic affairs London has always been an encouragement and example to provincial townships. The magnitude of its area, the preoccupation of its inhabitants with the complex interests and exhausting activities of their daily life render London, as Cobden and others have always discovered, an impracticable headquarters for political agitation. But long before our great provincial centres had been possessed with that intense feeling of corporate life which is now the boast of Manchester or

Liverpool, Birmingham, Sheffield, or Leeds, the traders who did their business under the shadow of Guildhall were united by a citizenship scarcely less stimulating and constraining than that of the little Republics of old Greece. One, and each of them, they took a patriotic pride in the material perfection to which the conveniences or comforts of their existence had been brought. Thus, as Lancashire has seen with exultation the reflection of its collective life in the great cities on the Irwell, or the Mersey, the entire Kingdom and Empire have always recognized the symbol of their unity as well as of their greatness in the prosperity or in the institutions of London City. Nor does anything more impress the mind of our foreign neighbours or our Colonial fellow-citizens than the response to appeals for help in the day of distress which issue from the Mansion House as from the heart of the English race. It is thus no exaggeration to say that the past records and contemporary services of London have proved of some moral use in promoting the success of the very latest municipal reforms. That a final stage in the evolution of London government has yet been reached no one believes, least of all the men who completed the preliminaries for the formation of the London County Council. The Commissioners of 1886-7 have themselves pointed out the anomaly of applying to London, even though it be called a County, that form of administration which is primarily intended for provincial shires necessarily identified not with commerce and trade, but with rural pursuits and interests. The City Corporation and the London County Council will

both be relieved when the existing period of transition with its occasional friction and confusion is terminated. The relations between the two bodies must necessarily be mutually those of armed vigilance rather than of cordial alliance. What is known as the Unification Commission was, it must be remembered, appointed at the instance of the London County Council. The chief points of the proposal thus made was as earlier paragraphs have shown practically to merge the City in some new municipal body to the East of Temple Bar. As matters are, while the Lord Mayor and Aldermen are not County Councillors of London, the City of London has four representatives on the Council. These, however, are not the nominees of the Corporation, but are chosen by the ordinary civic constituency, the ratepayers. As a matter of fact, though by a coincidence, of the four present representatives on the Council of the City, one is an Alderman, and another a common Councilman. But they were not chosen in these capacities. As little therefore as the vestries or as the local boards is the Corporation directly represented in the London County Council, which was created by the Act of 1888. When, in addition to its hospitable and charitable functions, the services rendered by the City to the cause of national education are remembered; when it is considered that nearly all the great Guilds help by exhibitions to support poor students at the Universities, and that they also make regular and liberal contributions to the Science and Art department at South Kensington as well as to the Finsbury Institute for the technical training of mechanics and

artizans, the extreme unwisdom of any scheme of London reform which shall, by wounding the pride, discourage the generosity of the historic interests now mentioned, becomes self-evident.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.