

VARIOUS

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TO THE SHOPKEEPERS OF GREAT BRITAIN

Gentlemen, – As it is customary for most men about this season of the year, when accounts are balanced and squared, to take a serious survey of the posture of their affairs, and to examine into their business prospects, perhaps you may not consider a few observations, touching the welfare and position of that important class of the community to which you belong, either impertinent or ill-timed. You are aware that, for the last year or two, Her Majesty's Ministers have been in the habit of opening Parliament with a congratulatory assurance of the continued, and even augmented, prosperity of the country. The reason why such statements were made, altogether irrespective of their truth or falsehood, is obvious enough. In a political point of view, they were necessary for the vindication of the measures which Government either originated or adopted. To have admitted that the country was not prospering under the new commercial system, would have been considered by the public as tantamount to an acknowledgment that the policy which dictated those measures was vicious; and that the Whig ministry, if not deficient in duty, had at least erred sorely in judgment. In private life, we rarely meet with that degree of candour which amounts to an unequivocal admission of error in point of judgment – in public life, such an admission is altogether unknown. Failure may indeed be acknowledged when the fact becomes too evident to admit of further denial; but the causes of that failure are never attributed to their real source. Not only the purity of the motive, but the wisdom of the conception, is vindicated to the last. In this case, however, failure is totally denied. So far from being put upon their defence, the Whigs maintain that they have achieved a triumph. Their averment is, that, with the exception of the agricultural producers, among whom they allow that a certain degree of distress prevails, all other classes of the community are prosperous. Even for the agriculturists there is balm in store. The prosperity of the other classes is to react upon them; so that, within some indefinite period of time, we shall all find ourselves in circumstances of ease and comfort which have hitherto been unknown in our land.

With you the benefit is represented, not as prospective, but as present. The agriculturist may have to wait a little longer, but you are already provided for. Your cake is baked; and we are assured that you are eating it in thankfulness and joy. If this is really the case, there is no more to be said on the subject. If the harvest of Free Trade has actually yielded you such a large measure of profit, it would be madness in anyone to decry that line of policy in your hearing. You constitute the class which, from its peculiar position and vocation, is better qualified than any other to judge accurately, and from experience, of the degree of prosperity which is actually known in the country. The verdict of twelve shopkeepers, given after an inspection of their books for an average of years, ought to be of more weight, in settling the merits of any disputed commercial question, than the random assurances of a dozen cabinet ministers whose reputation and official existence are bound up in the vindication of their own policy. The reason of this is perfectly obvious. Your profit is simply a commission upon your sales. You do not produce or manufacture articles of consumption – you simply retail them. Your profit depends upon the briskness of trade, that is, the amount of demand. It rises or falls according to the general circumstances of your customers. In good times you make large profits; in bad times those profits decrease. One while your stock sells off rapidly; at another, it remains upon your hands. Your interest is inseparable from that of the great body of consumers by whom you live. You have little or nothing to do with the foreign trade; for, whatever be the nature, of the articles in which

you deal, you sell them in the home market. You have, therefore, the best opportunity of estimating the real condition of your customers. The state of your own books, and the comparative degree of ease or difficulty which you experience in the collection of your accounts, furnish you with a sure index of the purchasing power of the community. Compared with this criterion, which is common to every man among you, tables of exports and imports, statements of bank bullion, and such like artificial implements as have been invented by the political impostors and economists, are absolutely worthless. When our sapient Chancellor of the Exchequer, or Mr Labouchere, tell you, with an air of unbounded triumph, that the exportation of calicoes to China or Peru has mightily increased – and therefore argue, without condescending to inquire whether such exportation has been attended with any profit at all to the manufacturers, that the prosperity of the country is advancing at a railway pace – you may indeed be gratified by the statistical information, but you will fail to discover in what way the public are benefited thereby. It is pleasant to know that there are fifteen millions of gold in the vaults of the Bank of England, and that, so long as this hoard remains undiminished, there is little chance of a commercial crisis, or a violent contraction of credit. But we take it you would be infinitely better pleased to know that sovereigns were circulating freely from hand to hand amongst the people, and that your customers had their pockets so well filled as to enable them to purchase largely, and to pay their accounts when due. To you any depression whatever is a serious matter – a depression which assumes a permanent appearance cannot be much short of ruin. Therefore you ought most especially to take care that no false representation is made regarding your circumstances, which may be the means of perpetuating a system that has already proved detrimental to a large body of your customers.

Were we to take for granted the ministerial statement of prosperity – which no doubt will be repeated next February – your Whig minister being an incorrigible cuckoo – this paper would certainly not have been written. But, having had occasion early to doubt the truthfulness of this vernal note, and having taken some pains to examine the statements which from time to time are issued by the great houses engaged in commercial and manufacturing industry, as also the accounts of the present condition of the poor, which have excited so much public interest, we have really been unable to discover any one influential class, beyond the money-lenders and creditors, or any one large and important branch of industry, which can, with truth, be described as prospering, or will confess to the existence of such prosperity. Shipmasters, manufacturers, merchants, iron-masters, and agriculturists, all tell the same tale. This is very strange. You may possibly remember that Mr M'Gregor, once Secretary to the Board of Trade, and now member for Glasgow, the great commercial city of Scotland, estimated the additional amount of wealth which was to accrue to Great Britain, in consequence of the repeal of the Corn Laws, at two millions sterling per week! Upon what data that profound gentleman, who thus enunciated the prophecy and assumed the mask of Midas, proceeded in his calculation, we know not, and perhaps it would be superfluous to inquire. It certainly was a good round sum; for, by this time, without insisting upon compound, or even simple interest, it should have amounted to rather more than one-half of the national debt; but unfortunately nobody will own to having fingered a farthing of the money. In recalling to your memory this little circumstance, it is by no means our intention to offer any disrespect to the intellectual powers of M'Gregor, for whom, indeed, we entertain a high degree of veneration, similar to that which is manifested by the Mussulman when he finds himself in the company of a howling dervesh. We merely wish to reproduce to you one phantom of the golden dream, which, five or six years ago, when the fever of gain was epidemical, possessed the slumbers of so many; and having done so, to ask you, now that the fever is gone, whether it was not indeed a phantom? We are wiser now – at all events, we have had more experience – and the producing classes tell us very distinctly, and quite unanimously, that they have derived no benefit whatever from the commercial changes which have taken place. Capital, whether invested in ships, factories, mines, or land, is less profitable, and therefore less valuable, than it was before; and in some instances, where the depression has been most heavy, it has been almost annihilated.

These are not our statements, but the statements of the several interests, as put forward by their own representatives. They are statements which emanate alike from the Free-Trader and the Protectionist. Men may differ as to the cause, but they all agree as to the grand fact of the depression. So that, when we hear ministers congratulating themselves and the country upon its general prosperity, and, *pari passu* with this congratulation, find the accredited organs of each of the great branches of productive industry vehemently asserting that they are exceptions from the general rule, an anxious believer in the probity of all parties has his faith somewhat rudely shaken.

We believe that, collectively, you are the best judges as to this disputed matter. As the real wealth of the country depends upon the amount and value of its yearly produce – as from that annual creation, when measured by the monetary standard, and circulated through a thousand channels, all our incomes are derived – you, who supply the whole population with the necessities and luxuries of life, (fabricated by others, but passing through your hands,) must necessarily have the best means of knowing whether the circumstances of that population have, on the aggregate, been bettered or made worse. When Napoleon in the bitterness of his heart declared that we were a nation of shopkeepers, he uttered no terms of reproach, though he intended to convey a taunt. Your position in the community is such that you cannot flourish independent of its general prosperity. The exporting manufacturer, and even the foreign merchant, may multiply their gains, and realise fortunes, whilst other classes, whose wellbeing is far more important to the stability of the empire, are hastening to decay. Such phenomena are common in old states, when the process of dissolution has begun. The parasite lives and thrives, while the tree round which it has wound its tendrils is crumbling into rottenness. But such is not your case. Your interests are identical with those of the productive classes, for without them you could not exist. Ill-remunerated labour – unproductive capital – lessened means – deteriorated property – are things which affect you as deeply as though you were the direct sufferers or losers. Upon the wealth of your customers depends your own. And therefore, in such an important crisis as the present, when the existing commercial system of the country is vigorously assailed by one party, and as obstinately defended by another – when facts and statements apparently of much weight are adduced on either side, to serve as arguments for the overthrow or the maintenance of that system – when some cite statistical tables to prove that the country must be prosperous, and others adduce real evidence to show that the reverse is the case – you cannot afford to sit idly by, without throwing the weight of your testimony and experience into one or other of the scales. You have had admirable opportunities of noticing the working of the Free-Trade system. It matters not what were the original prepossessions of any of you, or what might have been your opinion with regard to the merits of this or that scheme, while it was still in embryo and untried. A more complex question than that of Free Trade, as affecting the importation of corn, probably never was presented to the public consideration. Many excellent, judicious, and thoroughly patriotic men, relying upon the truth of statements which were regarded by others as mere plausible theories, were willing to submit to the experiment. And when, by the grossest act of political perfidy that was ever perpetrated – an act which future times, if not the present, will stigmatise with deserved opprobrium – the last and most important change, save that which subsequently assailed our maritime interest, was suddenly effected, it was the declared opinion of the majority that the new system must at least have a trial, until its real results were developed, and until it became apparent to the nation whether or not Free Trade would operate for the advantage of the people, as its advocates and promoters had predicted.

Here we must, for a moment or two, however unwillingly, digress. The later measures of Free Trade have assailed interests so important and so strong, that its former and earlier advances, stealthily and cautiously made, have almost faded from the public view. Free Trade, as a political system, did not alone strike at the agricultural or the shipping interest. Since the days of Mr Huskisson, who brought with him into active life the principles which he had imbibed in youth from his associates in French Jacobinism, the principles of Free Trade have been gradually but cautiously applied to various branches of British industry. The slow and insidious nature of the movement on the part of the

statesmen, who, even then, were yielding to the influence of the modern economical school, showed their distrust of the system, which, if true, ought at once to have been openly promulgated. Like the late Sir Robert Peel, Huskisson was destitute of that manly courage which scorns concealment or deceit, and walks steadfastly to its goal. Cunning was an ingredient of his nature: whatever he did was accomplished by tortuous methods, and vindicated upon false pretences. The tendency of that policy which he commenced was to maintain by all means, at all hazards, and at the sacrifice, if needful, of every other interest, the manufacturing supremacy, of England in the foreign market – an object for which we still are striving, though at the imminent risk of the dismemberment of the British empire. It is due, however, to the memory of Mr Huskisson, to remark, that, although the originator of this policy, he does not seem to have contemplated the extent to which it would be carried out by his successors. His opinions upon the subject of protection to agriculture were clear and decided: "There is no effectual security, either in peace or war, against the frequent return of scarcity, but in making ourselves independent of foreign supply. Let the bread we eat be the produce of corn grown among ourselves; and, for one, I care not how cheap it is – the cheaper the better. It is cheap now, and I rejoice at it, because it is altogether owing to a sufficiency of corn of our own growth; but, to insure a continuance of that cheapness, and that sufficiency, we must insure to our own growers *protection against foreign importation*, which has produced those blessings, and by which alone they can be permanently maintained." The time, however, was fast approaching when the reins of government were to fall into the hands of a scion of the manufacturing body, in whose eyes the momentary supremacy of party was of more importance than any principle of national policy. There is no more curious page in history than that which records the rise of British manufactures towards the close of last century. Invention after invention, whereby manual labour was superseded by machinery, and the power of production almost indefinitely multiplied, paved the way for that monopoly which our manufacturers enjoyed for at least a quarter of a century, during which time every other country in Europe except our own was devastated by war, and the peaceful arts forgotten or overthrown. It was during that period that the gigantic fortunes of the Arkwrights and the Peels were made, and that influence secured to the manufacturing body in the British House of Commons which it never possessed before. But with the return of peace the monopoly disappeared. By invention in mechanical appliances, Britain had the start of other nations in the creation of manufactures; by war, she was enabled long to enjoy the undivided benefits. But inventions are not the property of a single nation; they pass from one to another with the rapidity of lightning; they are available by the foreign, even more easily than by the domestic, rival. Hence it very soon became apparent that other states were preparing to compete with us in those branches of industry which had proved so exceedingly profitable. France, Belgium, Germany, Russia, Switzerland, and America, all entered keenly into the contest; and then commenced that decline of prices which has continued, almost without intermission, to the present hour. Reciprocity treaties were tried, but were in fact of little avail; for the great bulk of the English exports consisted of those very textile fabrics which it was the object of each country to produce for its own consumption, if not to export to others. During the war, both the expenses of government and the interest of the National Debt had doubled in amount, and the monetary changes effected in 1819 added at least one-third to the weight of that augmented burden. In order to make this taxation bearable, the industry of the people was protected in their own market by a scale of customs duties, which prevented the influx of foreign produce at rates which must have annihilated the British workman. Protection is a clear necessity which arises out of taxation. If the tobacco, tea, coffee, sugar, beer, soap, and other articles of the labourer's consumption, are taxed in order to maintain an expensive establishment, and to defray the interest of an enormous debt, he must have a compensation of some kind. The only kind of compensation which can be granted, and which the wit of man can devise, is to be found in an equitable scale of duties, by means of which all produce imported into Britain shall be taxed as heavily as though it had been reared, grown, or made up on British ground by British labourers. Unless this be done, there is no fair competition. The less

burdened foreigner must ultimately carry the day against the heavily-taxed Englishman. And when we consider that all taxes must be paid out of produce, there being no other source whatever from which they can be drawn, the importance of maintaining the market value of our produce at a point equal to the pressure of our taxation will at once become apparent.

There are, however, plausible, though in reality most fallacious grounds, upon which the Protective System may be assailed. In this, as in every other country, the first and most important branch of industry is that which provides food for the population. To that all others are subordinate. It is impossible to estimate the amount of capital which has been laid out upon the soil of Britain, first in reclaiming it from a state of nature, and, since then, in maturing and increasing its fruitfulness. But some idea may be formed of its magnitude from the fact that, in 1846, the annual agricultural produce of the United Kingdom was valued, according to the prices then current, at £250,000,000. Whatever imperial taxation is imposed on other classes of the community is shared equally by the agriculturists; and they are, moreover, exposed to heavy local rates, from which the others are comparatively free. It is a received maxim in political economy – we ought rather to say a rule of common sense – that all taxes and charges paid by the producer, over and above his necessary profit, fail ultimately to be defrayed by the consumer – that is, that such taxes and charges form a component part of the selling price of the article. There is no specialty whatever in the case of corn or provisions to exempt them from the general rule. But all restrictions which tend to enhance the price of the first necessities of life are obnoxious to that section of the people who, from ignorance or incapacity, cannot understand why bread should be dear in one country and cheap in another. They, too, are subjected to their share of indirect taxation, and the knowledge that they are so taxed in the consumption of articles which constitute their only luxuries, renders them doubly impatient of a system which, on the authority of wicked and designing demagogues, they are led to believe was invented by the landlords solely for their own benefit. Thus heavy taxation, however engendered, must always be fraught with great peril to the permanency of a state. The burden of such taxation falls most heavily upon the land, and yet the agriculturist is expected to provide food for the people as cheaply as though he were altogether exempt from the burden.

The reason why the exporting manufacturers, and those politicians who entered thoroughly into their views, were so bent upon the destruction of the Corn Laws, was twofold. In the first place, the competition in foreign markets threatened to become so strong, owing to the rapid development of textile industry on the Continent, that it was necessary to lower prices. England had given machinery and models to the Continent, and the Continent was now fighting her with her own weapons, and at a cheaper cost, as labour abroad is less expensive than it is here. In order to bring down the value of labour in England, for the purpose of protracting this grand manufacturing contest, it was necessary to lower, in some way or other, the price of food in England, and this could only be accomplished by free admission of foreign supplies. In short, their object was to bring down wages. On this point we have the testimony of Mr Muntz, M.P. for Birmingham, as early as February 1842. He wrote as follows: – "Say what you will, the *object* of the measure is *to reduce wages*, and the *intention* is to reduce them to the Continental level. I repeat it, the Corn Laws very materially support labour in this country... Why, the professed object of the repeal is to enable the English merchant to compete with the foreigner, and how can he do that *unless by a reduction of wages*, which reduction will be upon all trade, home and foreign?" Mr John Bright was not less clear as to the necessity of such reduction of wages in order to maintain our exports: "If the tariff in Russia imposed a heavy duty on English yarn, and if English yarn went there and had to be sold at the same rate as the yarn of the Russian spinner, he (that is, the Russian spinner) not paying the heavy duty, it followed that we must, *by some means or other*, make our goods cheaper by the amount of duty which we paid, and to do that *it was absolutely necessary that the wages of the operatives in this country should be reduced.*" And Mr Greg of Manchester, a leading member of the Anti-Corn Law League, wrote as follows: – "In the only remaining item of the cost of production – that is, the wages of labour – foreign nations have a decided advantage; and

although a free trade in provisions, by lowering them here, and raising them abroad, might regulate the difference, I doubt if it ever could be entirely removed. Better education, more sober habits, more frugality, and general forethought, together with cheaper food, will no doubt enable our people to live in much greater comfort than at present UPON CONSIDERABLY SMALLER EARNINGS." These extracts sufficiently disclose the designs of the Free-Traders against the wages of the workman. In the second place, it was believed by many of them, that, by sacrificing the agriculturists, they would be able to turn the attention of other countries, especially America, from the prosecution of their rising manufactures. They argued, that if we were to surrender and secure our provision market to foreign states, they would return the compliment by allowing us to manufacture for them – in other words, that the foreigners were to feed England, and England was to clothe the foreigners! This precious scheme has since been avowed, seriously and gravely, by men who have seats in the present House of Commons; and, so far as we can understand their language, the philosophers of the *Edinburgh Review* consider this a most sensible arrangement!

The agricultural interest, however, was of too great magnitude to be attacked at once. Several outworks were to be gained before the citadel was summoned to surrender. Accordingly Mr Huskisson began, and Sir Robert Peel continued, that system of commercial relaxations, (which, some five-and-twenty years ago, was exposed and denounced in this Magazine,) annihilating some branches of industry and depressing others – pauperising whole districts, as in the Highlands, and merging the villages in the towns – until the time seemed ripe, and the opportunity propitious, for the accomplishment of the grand design. It is not now necessary to dwell upon the circumstances which attended the change in the Corn and Navigation Laws – these are still fresh in the memory of all of us, and will not soon be forgotten. Our object in this digression was simply to remind you that Free Trade, in its insidious and stealthy progress, has warred with other interests than those which belong to the agricultural and the maritime classes.

Neither is it necessary at present to advert to the gross inconsistencies of the system – to the restrictions which it still continues upon that very branch of industry which it has laid bare to foreign competition. Let us take the system as it is, of which you have had now nearly three years' experience, dating from the time when the ports were opened.

Three years constitute a long period for the endurance of a commercial experiment. During that time you have had ample opportunity of observing how the system has worked. Are you richer or poorer than you were before the experiment began? If the former, Free Trade has worked well; if the latter, it is a mischievous delusion.

This is a question which you alone can answer – or rather, every man must answer it for himself. But this much we may be allowed to say, that, from what information we can gather regarding the state of general trade – from the sentiments which we have heard expressed by many of the most respectable of your own body – the experiences of the last year have not been such as to give you much encouragement for the future. If it is so, then you will do well to consider whether or not you ought to lend that great political influence which you undoubtedly possess, in support of a system which has not only failed to realise the anticipations of its founders, but has actually diminished in a great degree the power of purchase of the community.

This is no trivial matter to any of us, least of all is it trivial to you. The next general election will be, in its results, by far the most important of any which has taken place for centuries. If, in the new Parliament, all idea of a return to the Protective System is abandoned, we may prepare ourselves for that most dismal conflict which can convulse a country – a war against taxation, and ultimately against property. For – rely upon this – heavy taxation and cheap produce are things which never can be reconciled. You may, if you please, hand over the home market of Britain to the foreigner, and allow him, without toll or custom, to supply our wants with produce of his own rearing; but, if you do so, what is to become of our own population, and their labour? – and how are you to levy those taxes which labour alone can supply? That manufacturing interest, for which such desperate sacrifices

have been made, is daily losing ground in the markets of the world. The fact will brook no denial, and it is admitted even by its own members. America has refused the bait offered to her by the Free-Traders, and is engaged heart and soul in the cotton manufacture, for which she possesses within herself the command of the raw material. *To those countries which supply us with corn, our exports of manufactures have alarmingly decreased.* We may continue to glut (for that is what we are doing at present) the markets of India and China, and our export tables may exhibit a cheering increase in the amount of yards of calico sent out; but, unless the trade circulars are utterly mendacious, the speculation has been, and will continue to be for a long tract of time, unprofitable. The fact is, that the extent and value of our foreign trade in manufactures is little understood by most of us, and grossly exaggerated by others. It constitutes, after all, a mere fraction of the national production. The consumption of manufactures at home is, or was, before the late changes were made, twice as great as the whole amount of our annual exports. The prosperity of this country does not depend upon the amount of wares which it sends or forces abroad, though that is the doctrine which is constantly clamoured in our ears by the political economists – a generation of ridiculous pretenders, of whom it is only necessary to know one, in order to form an accurate estimate of the mental capabilities of his tribe. It depends on our own labour, on our own internal arrangements, and on that reciprocity between man and man, and between class and class of our fellow-subjects, which is the only real security for the peace and tranquillity of a kingdom. Those exporting manufacturers, who rummage foreign markets, are no better than so many buccaneers. Their object is to evade the burden of taxation at home, and, wherever they can with advantage to themselves, to bring in foreign labour, untaxed and untolled, to supersede that of the British workman.

You cannot have failed to remark that the arguments which are now put forward by the Free-Traders, in support of their system, are totally different from those which they advanced while recommending it for the adoption of the country. How often were we told, during the struggle which preceded the repeal of the Corn Laws, that all the apprehensions expressed of a permanent fall in the value of produce, and of overwhelming importations from abroad, were purely visionary! Learned statisticians undertook to prove by figures that the whole quantity of grain which could be brought into this country was absolutely insignificant, and that it could not disturb prices. Mr James Wilson of the *Economist*, in his valuable tractate entitled *Influences of the Corn Laws*, which was published eleven years ago, thus favoured the public with *his* anticipations for the future, in the event of the repeal of the Corn Laws: —

"Our belief is," says the sage of Westbury, "that the whole of these generally received opinions are erroneous; that if we had had a free trade in corn since 1815, the average price of the whole period, actually received by the British grower, would have been higher than it has been; that little or no more foreign grain would have been imported; and that if, for the next twenty years, the whole protective system shall be abandoned, *the average price of wheat will be higher than it has been for the last seven years*, (52s. 2d.,) or than it would be in the future with a continuance of the present system; – but with this great difference, that prices would be nearly uniform and unaltering from year to year; that the disastrous fluctuations would be greatly avoided, which we have shown, in the first proposition, to be so ruinous under the present system."

For this very notable sentiment, Mr Wilson was clapped on the back by the Manchester men, and commended thus in the seventh circular of the League: – "We are much indebted to Mr Ibbotson of Sheffield, *Mr James Wilson*, and our esteemed correspondent, for labouring to prove to the landlords that they may safely do justice to others, without endangering their own interests. And we think very much has been done towards justifying their opinions, *that the money price of grain would not be lowered even by the total repeal of the Corn Laws!*" Sir Robert Peel, in the memorable debates of 1846, attempted to justify his experiment on the ground that previous commercial relaxations had been found beneficial to the parties who were directly engaged in the trade, his inference being, that the same result would follow in the case of the agriculturists. Unfortunately the data upon which

he proceeded were altogether fallacious; for, notwithstanding his dexterity in selecting figures, and bringing out balances which were apparently favourable, it was clearly demonstrated by Lord George Bentinck, that in no one instance whatever had those relaxations proved favourable to the British producer, and that many of them had moreover occasioned a large loss to the public revenue. But the language held by Sir Robert Peel, upon that occasion, cannot be construed otherwise than as the expression of an opinion that, by the repeal of the Corn Laws, prices would not be materially disturbed – at all events, that they would not be lowered so as to fall below the remunerative point.

The immense influx of foreign grain which followed the opening of the ports in 1849, and the immediate fall of price, were calculated to alarm not only the farmers, but even that section of the Free-Traders who believed conscientiously that the productive powers of Europe and America were unequal to the supply of so very considerable a surplus. It is no wonder that the farmers were frightened, when they saw grain coming in at the rate of a million of quarters per month! They were, however, told by the highest Free-trading authorities in both Houses of Parliament, and the same view was violently maintained by the Liberal press, that their fears were altogether groundless; that such importations could not possibly be maintained; and that the first inundation was simply caused by an accumulation of corn at the foreign ports, stored up in readiness for the opening of the English market – a contingency which could not happen again. The utmost pains were taken, by those who had consented to the repeal of the Corn Laws, to persuade the farmers that the low prices of 1849 were attributable principally to the superabundance of the harvest at home; and they were exhorted to wait patiently, but hopefully, for the advent of better times. In short, every means were taken to persuade the agriculturists that they were labouring under a temporary but not a permanent difficulty, and that a very short time would suffice to restore them to their former condition. But no one attempted to maintain, in 1849, that, if wheat continued to sell at or about 40s. per quarter, its cultivation could be profitable in Britain; and when, at a later period, one or two rash theorists attempted to broach that doctrine, they were instantly put to silence by the overwhelming nature of the proof which was brought against them – not the least instructive part of it being the admissions of the leading Free-Traders as to what really was, on an average of years, the remunerative price of wheat to the British grower.

It is now clearly established, that, under Free Trade, 40s. per quarter is a price which the British farmer cannot calculate on receiving. The averages of England are now about 36s. per quarter, being 20s. lower than the sum which Sir Robert Peel considered as the lowest which could remunerate the grower. Therefore, taking the average yield of good wheat-land at four quarters per acre, it appears that, by continuing to grow that kind of grain which is convertible into ordinary bread, the farmer must be a positive loser to the extent of *four pounds per acre*! In other words, even suppose no rent at all were taken for the land, wheat cannot continue to be grown at a profit in Great Britain, so long as the averages remain below 40s.; and we leave a large margin to the credit of improved husbandry and strict economy, exercised, as it must be, at the expense of the labourer's wages. That such is the present condition of the British farmers – a hopeless one, unless a legislative remedy is applied – will brook no denial. Last year we were told of farms letting at an increase of rent, and of other symptoms of agricultural prosperity, whereof nothing now is heard. The fact of the depression – if we may use so mild a term in respect to a branch of industry which is now merely existing upon capital, not by income – is beyond all possibility of doubt or cavil. The causes of it are obvious; and it now only remains to be seen whether we can afford to allow agriculture to be extinguished from among us, or at best raised to that point which will afford a bare subsistence to the grower, without the risk of involving the rest of us in a like calamity.

You may have heard it said – for it has been often written – that it signifies little to the people of this country from what source they receive their bread. It is worth your while to examine into this. That a loaf baked of American flour, grown in the valley of the Mississippi, may taste quite as well in the mouth of the consumer as a loaf of English material is a circumstance which we can readily

believe; but is this all that is to be considered? Does the American bear any part of our national taxation? Does he contribute, directly or indirectly, to the burdens which are common to the British producer? Does he deal with any of you, and can you call him a customer? These are the questions which you ought to ask yourselves, in making up your minds on this matter; and if you will only examine the subject patiently and dispassionately, your own common sense will lead you to a just conclusion. Let us suppose that all the food which you purchase and consume was grown on a foreign soil, and admitted free of duty. You might then have cheap bread, but, as a necessary consequence, you would lose more than half your customers. Unless people have money they cannot buy; and if agricultural production were to be abandoned in the British islands, all those who derive their incomes – not only directly, but indirectly – from the soil, would necessarily be stripped of their means. Are you aware of the fact that, on a minute analysis of the census of 1841, it appeared that the relative numbers of the population of Great Britain and Ireland, supported and maintained by the two great sources of production, agriculture and manufactures, were as 18,734,468, dependent on the first, to 8,091,621, dependent on the second? Do you believe that the country can remain prosperous, if you strike a deathblow at the produce which maintains more than two-thirds of its inhabitants?

Let us go a little farther, and suppose – what may hereafter be the case – that other countries could undersell us in the home market in the article of manufactures – that America, France, or Germany could send us cotton and woollen stuffs, and other ware, cheaper than we could make them at home. In that case, where would be the sources of our income? All industry would be prostrated – for you know very well that a losing trade will not and cannot be carried on long, and that the time will soon arrive when, through the failure of capital, it must be abandoned. In such an event, what would become of our population, with their labour entirely destroyed? How could the taxes be levied, and the expenses of government paid, to say nothing of the interest of the National Debt? Great cheapness you would have, no doubt, but nobody would be able to buy.

If cheapness is a blessing in food, it is a blessing in clothing and in everything else. The rule admits of no exception. It is as advantageous for any of us to save a pound on the price of his coat as a penny on the price of his loaf. Bread is, no doubt, the most important article of the workingman's consumption, but at the same time it is no less a fact that the raising of food is the most important part of the production of the labouring-classes. Without home labour, all capital in this country would be annihilated, or at least would depart from it. Labour depends entirely upon wages, and wages upon the market price of the article produced. If from the introduction of foreign labour, in the shape of products, the price of any article is forced down below the cost of production, then wages begin to fall, and in the end production is extinguished. Why is it that foreign countries have imposed heavy duties upon our exported articles of manufacture? Simply for this object – that their own manufacturers, who give employment to large numbers of their population, may not be undersold by ours, nor those means of employment annihilated. In acting thus, these governments perform a paternal duty to the people – shielding them against the competition of an older manufacturing power, and preparing them hereafter, when skill and capital are acquired, to enter neutral markets, with a fair chance of ultimately overcoming the other.

It stands to reason that, with an equal degree of energy on the part of its inhabitants, the country which is the least heavily burdened must distance others in all branches of industry, where nature does not oppose a barrier, or place it at a disadvantage. The mineral wealth of England, and our priority in manufacturing invention, gave us for a long time an advantage over all other nations. America was not advanced enough to enter into the lists of manufacturing competition; the distracted state of the Continent, and the perpetual presence or apprehension of war, effectually prevented the European states from attempting to rival Britain. But since that time vast changes have taken place. The mineral resources of other countries have been developed. Some idea of the manufacturing power which America now possesses may be formed from the enormous increase of her domestic production of iron and coal. In 1829, the amount of iron manufactured in the United States was 90,000 tons; in

1848, it had risen to 800,000 tons. The coal raised in 1829 was 37,000 tons; in 1849 it was 3,200,000 tons. In the article of cotton, which is our great manufacturing staple, America has the inestimable advantage of growing the raw material – an advantage which never can be counterbalanced, as, even if we were to obtain our supplies from some other quarter, the expenses of freightage must still continue to be great. In fact, to all appearance, our supremacy in the conversion of cotton is already doomed. That branch of industry rests upon no substantial basis. It rose like an exhalation, and so it will disappear. These are not merely our opinions, but those of the most shrewd and calculating of the Free-Traders. Hear Mr Greg of Manchester on this subject, previous to the repeal of the Corn Laws: —

"At present we are undersold by foreigners in neutral markets in all the staple articles of English manufacture. In the articles of cotton, hosiery, and cutlery, which amount altogether to three-fourths of our exports, this is notoriously the case. In cotton fabrics the Swiss undersell us in several markets. In cutlery Sheffield is immensely undersold by the Alsace, and our exports are yearly decreasing. In hosiery, the case is still worse. Saxon hosiery, after paying a duty of 20 per cent, is sold in London 25 to 30 per cent cheaper than the produce of the Leicester and Nottingham looms. In Leicester the stocking frames have diminished from 16,000 in 1815 to 14,000 in 1840; whilst in Saxony, in the same time, they have increased from 4590 to 25,000. The English manufacturer pays 2s. 6d. for the same work that the French manufacturer gets done for 2½d. The American cutlery market (the most important of all) has been wrested from us, and our exports of that article to all the world have fallen from £1,620,000 in 1831 to £1,325,000 in 1841. *How far with cheaper food, no taxes on the raw material, and no duties but for the sake of revenue, we might yet recover our lost superiority, is a matter for grave consideration.* I do not believe we could either in woollens or hosiery; and even in the cutlery or cotton trade I think it very doubtful. Now, under a free commercial system, the raw material would be nearly the same in all countries, and the advantage, where there was one, would be generally on the side of foreigners. France and Italy would have an advantage in silk, and America in cotton; the current expenses would also be nearly equal. The machinery of foreign nations even now is not very inferior to our own, and is daily and rapidly improving; their capital is fast accumulating, and the yearly interest of it approximating to our own rate."

Here, you see, is a confession of opinion by a leading Free-Trader, that even the cheapening of food, by which he means the reduction of the wages of labour, will not suffice ultimately to secure us the supremacy of the foreign markets. He is perfectly right. In this insane, and we believe almost entirely unprofitable competition with the rest of the world, we must infallibly be overcome. No cheapness of food can countervail the pressure of our heavy taxation. The cotton-lords, if they could, would fain bring down the price of labour to the Continental level, which doubtless would enable them, for a long time, to prolong the contest; but this they cannot do, if our national engagements are to be fulfilled, and our most valuable institutions maintained. So long as the revenue duties exist, labour cannot be forced down to that point. But, in the mean time, agriculture may be ruined, and the home trade, by which alone you subsist, be palsied. In fact, the present struggle lies between the home trade and the foreign trade. One or other of these must ultimately succumb. The effect of our present commercial system is to paralyse the home trade, by decreasing the value of all kinds of domestic produce; by lowering all incomes, and consequently reducing the amount of the internal business of the country. It has enabled our manufacturers, for the time, to make a show of larger exports than before; but it has not, according to their own acknowledgement, at all enhanced their profits. It may have enabled them to lower their prices, but it has not increased their returns.

And no wonder that it should be so. Except in the most miserable and unimportant quarters, our relaxations have been met by augmented tariffs instead of eager reciprocity. The nations of the world have refused to sacrifice their advantages, to renounce their prospects, and to become Free-Traders at the call of Britain. Their statesmen thoroughly understood the motive of the ingenuous offer: they were not to be cozened even by the plausibility of Sir Robert Peel. It is almost melancholy now, when we remember what has actually taken place, to revert to the peroration of that statesman's speech delivered on 16th February 1846. A more lamentable instance of delusion, as to the true feeling and position of other countries, was never perhaps exhibited. Mark his words: —

"Many countries are watching with anxiety the selection you may make. Determine for 'Advance,' and it will be the watchword which will animate and encourage in every state the friends of liberal commercial policy. Sardinia has taken the lead. Naples is relaxing her protective duties, and favouring British produce. Prussia is shaken in her adherence to restriction. The government of France will be strengthened; and, backed by the intelligence of the reflecting, and by conviction of the real welfare of the great body of the community, will perhaps ultimately prevail over the self-interest of the commercial and manufacturing aristocracy which now predominates in her Chambers. Can you doubt that the United States will soon relax her hostile tariff, and that the friends of a freer commercial intercourse — the friends of peace between the two countries — will hail with satisfaction the example of England?"

How strangely did this remarkable man, whose career in all time coming will be a warning to the aspiring statesman, misunderstand the true nature of his country's position! In order to tempt reciprocity he opened the British ports — that is, he conceded gratuitously the only condition by which we ever could have hoped to insure it! At the expense of the British agriculturist he opened the British market to the foreigner, in the expectation, as he expressly declared, that the boon would be repaid by measures which would prevent the rise of manufactures abroad, and restrain other nations from employing capital profitably, from entering into rivalry with Britain, and from using those natural advantages which were ready to their hand; and which, if used, could not fail to add to their wealth, and to furnish employment for millions of their increasing population! Most egregious was the blunder, and terrible is the penalty which we are certain to pay for it, if we do not retrace our steps.

It is always useful to know what intelligent men of other countries think of our system. They survey and examine it without those prejudices which are apt to beset all of us, and are better able than ourselves to determine with what degree of favour it will be received, or is received, by those who are removed beyond the scope of our immediate observation. Certainly, of all others, from their affinity to ourselves, and their proverbially shrewd acuteness in all matters of commercial detail, the Americans are most likely to form an accurate estimate both of our position and our prospects in regard to foreign trade. It is well worth our while to read and consider the following opinion of Mr Carey, the most distinguished Transatlantic writer on points of political economy. It occurs in his work entitled *The Harmony of Interests*, published in America so late as December 1849.

"Men are everywhere flying from British commerce, which everywhere pursues them. Having exhausted the people of the lower lands of India, it follows them as they retreat towards the fastnesses of the Himalaya. Affghanistan is attempted, while Scinde and the Punjaub are subjugated. Siamese provinces are added to the empire of Free Trade, and war and desolation are carried into China, in order that the Chinese may be compelled to pay for the use of ships, instead of making looms. The Irishman flies to Canada; but there the system follows him, and he feels himself insecure until within the Union. The Englishman and the Scotchman try Southern Africa, and thence they fly to the more distant New Holland, Van

Diemen's Land, or New Zealand. The farther they fly, the more they use ships and other perishable machinery, the less steadily can their efforts be applied, the less must be the power of production, and the fewer must be the equivalents to be exchanged; and yet in the growth of ships caused by such circumstances, we are told to look for evidence of prosperous commerce!

"The British system is built upon cheap labour, by which is meant low-priced and worthless labour. Its effect is to cause it to become from day to day more low-priced and worthless; and thus to destroy production upon which commerce must be based. The object of protection is to produce dear labour – that is, high-priced and valuable labour, and its effect is to cause it to increase in value from day to day, and to increase the equivalents to be exchanged, to the great increase of commerce.

"The object of what is now called Free Trade, is that of securing to the people of England the further existence of *the monopoly of machinery*, by aid of which Ireland and India have been ruined, and commerce prostrated. Protection seeks *to break down this monopoly*, and to cause the loom and the anvil to take their natural places by the side of the food and the cotton, that production may be increased, and that commerce may revive."

In short, the harmony of interests is regarded in America as the grand point of aim for the statesman. With us, our most important home interests, on which depend the welfare of by far the greater part of our population, are sacrificed to prolong a struggle in which our exporting manufacturers cannot possibly be the victors, and from which, even at present, they derive little or no profit.

Now, let us ask you to consider for one moment, what is the natural effect, upon the whole of us, of a forcible diminution of prices, and depreciation of produce. Here we shall borrow an illustration and argument from our adversaries, referring to a point which is in the recollection of all of you, and about which there can be no possible mistake. You will recollect that the Liberal and Free-trading journals, almost without exception, as well as most of the defenders of the Peel policy in the House of Commons, attributed much of that general depression and stagnation of trade which followed the repeal of the Corn Laws to the losses sustained by the failure of the potato-crop in 1845-6. Was there a general want of confidence visible – were the shopkeepers scant of custom – was there a less demand than usual within the country for home manufactures – was there a decline in the price of iron – all was laid at the door of the unfortunate potato. Since Cobbett uttered his anathema against the root, it never was in such bad odour. To every complaint, remonstrance, or lamentation, the reply was ready – "How can we remedy a calamity of this kind? The potato has done it all!" At that time it was very convenient, nay, absolutely necessary, for the Free-Traders to discover some tangible cause for the gross failure of their predictions. They looked about them in every direction, and they could discover nothing except the potato which could endure the blame. Now, although we believe that this esculent has been unduly reviled, and made to bear a greater burden than was its due for political misfortune, we nevertheless accept the illustration at the hands of our opponents, and we beg you to mark its significance. The loss of the potato-crop in Great Britain and Ireland, during the year in question, has been variously estimated, but if we assume it to have been £20,000,000 we are making a very large calculation indeed. So then, *according to the Free-Traders, the loss of twenty millions of agricultural produce* was sufficient to bring down profits, embarrass trade, and cause a stagnation in home manufactures! And yet, when Mr Villiers came forward in the beginning of 1850, and told you, in his capacity of proposer of the Address to the Crown, that £91,000,000 were *annually* taken from the value of the agricultural produce of the country, you were expected, and directed, to clap your hands with joy, and to congratulate one another on this symptom of the national prosperity!

The sum of twenty millions lost by the failure of the potato-crop – a single event, not one of annual occurrence – was taken from the country's power of produce; and *therefore*, said the Free-Traders, there was stagnation. But they, of course, could not help it. Of course they could not; but what

about the ninety-one millions of *annual* loss, which is equally deducted from the internal expenditure of the country? About *that* we do not hear a word. And yet ask yourselves, and that most seriously – for it is time that we should get rid of all such pitiful paltering – whether there is any difference whatever between the two cases, except that the one was an isolated casualty, and that the other is an annual infliction to which we are subjected by statute? Weigh the matter as you will, you cannot, we are satisfied, be able to detect any difference. If the grower of grain at present prices has no remuneration for his toil, or return for his capital, he cannot buy from you, any more than could the farmer whose crop perished by the potato disease. What caused the stagnation? The failure of the power to purchase, because there was no return for produce. What causes the stagnation? Precisely the same thing perpetrated by Act of Parliament.

Do not, we beseech you, allow yourselves to be fooled any longer by the jesuitry of these political economists, but apply your own reason to discover the cause of the present depression. Do not believe them when they talk about exceptional causes, affecting temporarily the industry of the nation, but certain immediately to disappear. If you were to live as long as Methusaleh, no one year would elapse without furnishing those gentlemen with a special and exceptional cause. One year it is the potato disease; another the French Revolution; another the Great Exhibition. Heaven only knows what will be their excuse next year – perhaps the new Reform Bill, or some other similar godsend. You are the particular class upon whom the deception is to be played, and for whose especial benefit the fraud is concocted. The producers know very well how they stand, and what they have to expect. They can be no longer cajoled by assurances of higher prices, by vague promises of profit after the disappearance of "the transition state," or by impudent averments that, by an entire change of system and the expenditure of more capital, they will be able to maintain themselves in affluence. To do the Free-Traders justice, they have for some time desisted from such attempts. They now address their victims, through their organs, in a fine tone of desperado indifference, telling them that, if they do not like the present arrangement, the sooner they go elsewhere the better. And the people are taking them at their word and going. Hundreds of thousands of tax-payers are leaving the country as fast as possible, carrying with them the fragments of their property, and bequeathing to those who remain behind their share of the national burdens. But in your case, the Free-Traders cannot yet afford to pull off the mask. They are apprehensive that you should see them in their real character; and therefore, so long as you are likely to be amused with "specialties" and "exceptional causes," these will be furnished to you gratis, and in great variety. There seems, however, to be an apprehension among their camp that you are beginning to evince suspicion. Recent elections have not been quite as they should be; and in the seaport and large commercial towns there are evident symptoms of mutiny. So, by way of diverting your attention, you are likely to have a measure of Reform next year, possibly as satisfactory in its result as the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, upon which Ministers cleverly managed to concentrate the whole public attention throughout last session, and then, having carried it, allowed its provisions to become a dead letter, almost before the ink, which made the measure complete, was dry! We say this, not as opponents of an extension of the suffrage – for on that point we reserve our opinion until the details are fully before us – but as enemies and loathers of a miserable system of chicane and deception which has now crept into the public counsels, and which threatens very speedily to destroy the independence of public opinion, by opposing state obstacles to its free and legitimate expression. We ask any of you, fearlessly, to look back at the records of last session, and then say whether the country was not degraded and stultified by the act of the Prime Minister? Right or wrong, at his invitation and call, the Protestants of Great Britain demanded a security against what they considered an intolerable instance of Romish insolence and aggression. They received it from Parliament; and the moment it passed into the hands of the executive power, it became as worthless as the paper upon which it was written! And why was this? Simply because the object was gained – you had been amused for a whole session. If nothing was intended to be done in the way of repelling aggression, and if Ministers durst have told you so a year ago, there were many points affecting your more immediate

interests which would have been forced upon their attention. But they were very glad to escape from such discussions under cover of a Protestantism which they did not feel, and an affected indignation of Papal claims, which they had done everything in their power, by diplomatic agency, to encourage; and, having escaped the perils of one session upon that ground, they will strain every effort to turn your attention from your own position, during the next, by bringing forward some measure which they hope may enlist your sympathies, or provoke controversy, so far as to render you indifferent to the real nature of your position. The selection of the battlefield is the oldest trick in strategy. Get up the appearance of a battle, and people will flock from any distance to witness it, regardless of their own interest. Lord John Russell is famous for bloodless fields, which resolve themselves into reviews – shall we have another such in the course of the approaching session?

That manufactures are now exceedingly depressed, and have been so for a long time, notwithstanding the reduction in the price of food consequent upon foreign importations, is an admitted and notorious fact. We have from time to time kept this before the public view by quoting from the trade circulars; and though further evidence may be unnecessary, we shall subjoin extracts from the last accounts received from three seats of industry, two of which are represented in Parliament by Colonel Peyronnet Thompson and Mr Feargus O'Connor. Gloomy as they are, they are by no means the worst which we have had occasion to cite during the last two years.

"Bradford, *November 6.* – The market here does not show any symptom of improvement in the demand for any kind of combing wools. All seem in wonder and anxiety as to what may be next expected, for to buy none are willing, whether with stock or without. The staplers appeared to expect that the spirited buying of colonial wools would give a tone of confidence, but that appears to have no effect. The spinners pause when they contrast the comparative high prices of English wool, especially those of the finer class, with what they were in 1848, when yarns were at the present prices, and will not buy with the certainty of making so great a loss as a purchase would entail. The supply of Noils and Brokes was never so limited as at present, and the small quantity making brings full prices. The business doing in yarns is certainly small, and the transactions confined to immediate delivery. No one seems inclined to enter into engagements for distant delivery. For to go on at the present prices of yarns is worse than madness, the price for low numbers of good spinning and standing having reached 8s. per gross, and those of a secondary class sold, if reeled, for what may be the instructions to the commission houses, who have needy parties pressing sales. The quantity so offering is not so great, but the sacrifices which have now for so long been made render the position of the trade exceedingly embarrassing. *The production continues to be daily curtailed, and from the whole district the same cheerless tidings are received. Some large houses, who have never reduced their operations before, have adopted it, their loss being so immense, and the whole condition of the trade so thoroughly disjointed.* In pieces the business during the week has not shown any feature of increased activity, and the stocks in the manufacturers' hands are somewhat increasing, but not so fast as last year at this period, and especially in Coburgs and fancy goods: the former are chiefly made in this district, and not in Lancashire, for the ruinous price has driven them on to other classes of goods adaptable to their looms; and for some months several large houses have been engaged in making Bareges for the American market. This has prevented mousselines-de-laine being made to stock, and, perhaps for many years, this branch of the trade has not opened with so small a stock on hand.

"Nottingham, *November 6.* – In lace we have no improvement to notice this week in the general sale of goods, and, with very few exceptions, there is a great falling off in demand; but, as many of the manufacturers are wisely

lessening their production, we do not anticipate any serious losses resulting from the present temporary stagnation. Many are stopping their frames to make fresh designs altogether; which, if done with good taste, some advantage may result from present difficulties. In hosiery our trade is not so much depressed as we had reason to anticipate. There is still a fair business doing in wrought hose, and a little increased demand for 'cut-ups,' as well as gloves made of thread and spun silk. The price of yarn is low, which is in favour both of the manufacturer and merchant.

"Leicester, *November 6.* – The unsettled state of the price of workmanship for straight-down hose has caused a great depression in that branch, and led to nearly a total cessation of work, many hosiers declining to give out until prices are settled. In wrought hose a better business is doing, though not so good as usual at this season. Yarns continue dull of sale."

Now, why do we insist upon these things? For two reasons. In the first place, we wish you to observe that the cheapness of manufacturing products does not of itself induce consumption. There must be buyers as well as sellers in order to constitute a market, and the tendency of our late legislation has been to diminish the means of the former. It by no means follows that, if we have cheap food and cheap manufactures, the relative position of all classes can be maintained. Never forget *that our burdens all the while remain at a fixed money rate*, and that, as the value of produce is lowered, the weight of those burdens is aggravated. This consideration, which is now well understood, is beginning to tell strongly against the doctrines of the Free-Traders, even with some of those, who were once their ardent supporters. Mr James Harvey of Liverpool, late a member of the Anti-Corn-Law League, but now a strenuous opponent of their system, thus chronicles the leading cause of his conversion. We quote from his pamphlet just published, *Remunerative Price the Desideratum, not Cheapness*. He says: – "My suspicions were first awakened by the blind devotion of the Manchester school of political economy to the doctrine of CHEAPNESS; for it struck me as a self-evident proposition, that to buy cheap is to sell cheap, in which case there can be no possible gain, but a positive loss, arising from the necessary aggravation of all fixed charges." In order to place the producers of this country in the same position as before, it would be necessary to reduce all fixed charges, the interest of debt both public and private, the expenses of government, and all salaries and annuities, to an amount corresponding to the forced decline of prices. This would be called a war against property; but, in reality, the war against property began when the Legislature admitted foreign untaxed produce to compete with the produce and labour of our tax-paying population at home.

Our second reason for drawing your attention to the cheerless prospect of manufactures, has reference to the sacrifices, not only indirect but direct, which the other classes of the community were called upon to make in order to prop them up. In the first place, the Property and Income Tax, which we are still called upon to pay, was imposed by Sir Robert Peel expressly for the object of effecting "such an improvement in the *manufacturing interests* as will react on every other interest in the country." He admitted that it was an unjust and partial impost, and therefore promised that it should be only temporary – however, we have endured it for ten years, and the Whigs will no doubt make an effort to continue it still longer. Here, then, you have a sum of five millions and a half annually confiscated for the benefit of the manufacturers, who were relieved from taxation to that amount. So far for sacrifice the first. Then came sacrifice the second, in the shape of Free Trade, mulcting the productive classes of this country to the extent of at least five-and-thirty per cent of their annual returns. Then came sacrifice the third, which handed over the carrying trade to the foreigner.

Now, considering that all these sacrifices have been made for the encouragement of manufactures, or at least with that professed object, is it not, to say the least of it, extraordinary that they have not thriven? How are we to account for a result so wholly contrary to the avowed anticipations of our statesmen? The explanation is, after all, not very difficult. All these sacrifices have been made, not for the great body of the manufacturers, but for a mere section of them. We

possess no authentic official information as to the amount of manufactures consumed at home; but we have records, more or less trustworthy, of the amount of our exports, and these are used to mislead the minds of the multitude as to the actual extent and relative importance of our trade. England has no more title than France has to the character of the workshop of the world. We are driven from the markets of civilised countries by the protective duties imposed by their governments for the righteous and prudent purpose of fostering native industry, and we are compelled to seek our marts among people who are not yet so far advanced in political economy as to detect the enormous discrepancy between our principles and our practice. Listen to Mr Harvey's sketch of our foreign trade: —

"From the theories and systems I turned my attention to passing events and recorded facts: I saw the West Indies prostrated; Canada thrown into a state of revolt, succeeded by a smothered feeling of discontent; Ireland depopulated; the magnificent resources of India undeveloped; and the British farmer reduced to the dire necessity of paying rent out of capital. I also perceived that the change in our commercial policy had substituted a cosmopolitan cant in the place of patriotism and nationality. To become the friend of every country but his own had become the pride and the glory of statesmanship. Foreign goods were admitted, duty free, into our ports, in the vain hope of reciprocity being established; but our manufactures were subjected to heavy imposts on the Continent of Europe, and in the United States. China, unversed in the mysteries of political economy, only levies five per cent upon our goods, whilst, in direct contravention of our pet notions of Free Trade and reciprocity, we impose a tax of 300 per cent upon her teas. Our hopes have been disappointed, our calculations falsified. We are the dupes of our own fantastic ideas and Quixotic concessions. We are the laughing-stock of the Old and the New Worlds. The Germanic Zollverein shuns our overtures; the American excludes our ships from his seaboard."

Can these things be controverted? We defy the ingenuity of mankind to do it.

So much for the foreign trade; but there still remains the home trade, in which by far the largest portion of our manufacturing capital is embarked, and which furnishes a much greater amount of employment to British labour than the other. You see what is the state of that trade, notwithstanding the savings which may have been effected by the lowered price of food, and also notwithstanding that partial protection which several branches of it are still allowed to retain. One word as to that incidental point. Mr Cobden is reported to have said, that he did not care how soon these remnants of protection were abolished. Let him be as good as his word, and, IF HE DARES, rise up in his place in the House of Commons, and make a motion to that effect. We shall then have an opportunity of testing the exact nature of his principles. To what cause can such a depression as this, so long and continuous, be attributed, except to a general curtailment of demand on the part of the consumers, arising from the insufficiency of their means to make purchases as before? You are probably aware that what is called strict economy in families is not favourable to the interests of manufacture or of trade. Of manufactures of all kinds there must be a certain yearly consumption, based upon the necessities of the people. Besides food, men require clothes to cover them, and houses in which to dwell, and those houses must be more or less furnished. But between the bare supply of such necessities, and that point which is considered by persons, according to their tastes, education, or habits, as constituting comfort, there is a wide interval. Nothing is a more sure criterion of the wealth and income of a people than the ordering of their homes, and the manner of their living; and the traveller who passes from one country into another can at once form an estimate, from such appearances, of their respective wealth or poverty. Diminish income, and a reduction is immediately made. All superfluities are lopped off and renounced. The broker, who deals in second-hand articles, drives a larger business than the man who is the vendor of new ones; and even in domestic labour there is a large economy practised, by

reducing establishments. That this must be so, will be evident on the slightest reflection. Reduce a man's income from £1000 to £800 or £600, and he will, if he has any wisdom or prudence, cut down his expenses to meet the fall. It is upon the home manufacturer in the first place, and upon the shopkeeper secondly, that these reductions tell. The one finds that his amount of production is much greater than the demand; the other does not turn over his capital nearly so rapidly as before. Add to this that the home manufacturer, in many branches, is exposed to strong foreign competition. Sir Robert Peel, in his last alterations of the tariff, did indeed continue Protection – more largely than is generally understood, for the mere amount of revenue-duty drawn from importations of foreign articles, adapted to compete with ours in the home, is no criterion of the Protective value – to some branches of industry; but others were exposed without shelter, and have since suffered accordingly. It is undeniable that a very large amount of foreign manufactures, which have paid no duty at all, or merely an elusory one, are consumed within this country – thereby inflicting extreme injury upon British labour, and depressing trades which, though severally not important, give in the aggregate, or ought to give, the means of employment to thousands. Regard the subject in any light you will, this cheapness, of which we have heard so much, just amounts to a diminution of the income of every class, except the annuitants and fund-holders, while it consequently renders the payment of the fixed burdens more grievous to every one of us.

You, gentlemen, to whom we have ventured to submit these remarks, have a very great deal in your power. You can, by your decision, either confirm the present policy, or cause it to be reversed; and your own experience will suffice to show you in what manner the system has worked. Statists may parade their figures, economists may puff their plans, statesmen may indulge in high-coloured pictures of the success which they expect to follow their measures – but the true test of every measure which has a practical tendency will be found in the effect which it produces upon the circumstances of the people, and especially upon those of the middle classes. We, who have, from the very first, anticipated the baneful effects of this attack upon British industry – we, who have no more connection than any of yourselves with territorial aristocracy, and who consider the welfare of the people as the grand object which it is the duty of the Government to promote – ask you to apply your own reason to the facts which are before you and in your reach, and to decide and act accordingly. It was, we knew from the very beginning of this struggle, impossible that you could decide until the effects of the Free-Trade experiment became visible and palpable among yourselves. We foresaw that it was only through the suffering and impoverishment of the producers that the practical lesson could reach you, and that, until this took place, it was of little use to invoke your aid, or even to entreat your judgment. Probably, by this time, you will have formed an accurate estimate of the value of the doctrines promulgated by the babblers on political economy – a sect which has never yet been allowed to interfere with the internal affairs of any nation, without producing the most disastrous results. To them we are indebted for that change of the currency which has added fully one-third to our fixed burdens, and for those complex monetary arrangements which insure periodically the return of a commercial crisis. But whatever you may think of them, do not allow yourselves to be influenced by their representations, or by those of their accredited organs. The time for theory is over. You have now to deal with facts, regarding which every man of you is competent to form an opinion. We do not ask you to accept our statements implicitly, any more than those of our opponents – though, if we did so, we might hold ourselves justified on this ground, that the greater part of our evidence is taken from the admissions of our adversaries. We appeal to your own experience, and upon that we leave you to decide.

And do not be afraid to give free utterance to your opinion. There exists not in this land – there exists not in all the world, the power which can rise up against you. The British producer on the one hand, and the exporting manufacturer on the other, may have conflicting interests not altogether reconcilable with the public good, for isolated interest always begets selfishness; and where individual or class profit is concerned, principle is apt to be overlooked. But you are, eminently, THE CLASS

to pronounce upon conflicting opinions. Your interest is that of the nation whose pulse is beneath your finger. You can tell, with greater accuracy than others, whether any political prescription has stimulated the circulation of the blood, or caused it to run torpidly in the national veins. You can mark the changes in the circumstances of your customers, and from these you can form an estimate whether or not the late experiment has been successful.

If, judging by that test, you should think it has been successful, our case is lost. We, who have advocated the Protective Principle in legislation, cannot continue to maintain it, if those whose incomes depend mainly upon British custom find themselves advantaged by measures which have reduced the value of British produce. In matters of this kind there is no abstract dogma involved, on the strength of which any man could make himself a creditable martyr. Men have died for their faith or for their allegiance, believing either to be their highest duty; but no one in his senses will spend a lifetime, or any considerable portion of it, in combating absolute facts. The reason why Protection is still a living principle – the reason why it finds so many supporters among the learned and the thoughtful – the reason why it is progressing step by step towards triumph – is because, in the minds of those who advocate it, there is a strong and deep-rooted conviction that you already know that the opposite system has entirely failed to realise the predictions of its advocates, and that you feel that its permanency is contrary to your interest, and to that of the great body of the people. If we are right in this conviction, then we are entitled not only to solicit, but to demand, your earnest co-operation. These are not times for political cowardice, or weak suppression of opinion. Liberty of thought, and liberty of the expression of sentiment, are our unalienable prerogative; but of late years, and in the hands of a certain party, that prerogative has been scandalously overstretched. We now hear men – even members of the Legislature – threatening the country, and you, with hints of insurrection, in case you exercise your undoubted right of pronouncing a free and unbiassed judgment upon any point of commercial policy. Let the caitiffs bluster! They know, from the bottom of their ignoble souls – for none save an ignoble soul would have dared to conceive that such threats would intimidate any man of British birth or blood – that their menace is as meaningless and vain as their miserable motives are apparent. Let them bluster! They, the advocates of lowered wages – they, the combatants for lengthened labour – they, the crushers of the infants, have no large margin of operative sympathy upon which they can afford to trade. Had John Fielden been alive, he could have told you what these men were, and what sympathy they were likely to command. Well do the workmen know with whom they have to deal!

Let us not be misunderstood. We never have underrated the difficulty of a change such as we contemplate; but no difficulty attending that, is for a moment to be put into the balance against the general welfare of the country, if, on reflection, and on considering your own position, you shall be of opinion that the interests of the country demand that change. But, at any hazard, we cannot afford to go down-hill. To bring us, as the Manchester men contemplate, to the Continental level in point of wages as well as expenditure, is to seal the ruin of the British empire, burdened as it is; or, in the least dangerous view, to necessitate repudiation. That matter is, as we have said before, for you to decide; and the period for your decision is rapidly drawing near. On the next general election depends the fate of the country, and – without saying one syllable more upon the merits of the systems at issue – the decision or inclination of your body will form the most important, because it must be considered, as between conflicting interests, the most impartial element, of the expression of British opinion.

THE JEW'S LEGACY

A TALE OF THE SIEGE OF GIBRALTAR

CHAPTER I

The note-book of my grandfather, Major Flinders, contains much matter relative to the famous siege of Gibraltar, and he seems to have kept an accurate and minute journal of such of its incidents as came under his own observation. Indeed, I suspect the historian Drinkwater must have had access to it, as I frequently find the same notabilia chronicled in pretty much the same terms by both these learned Thebans. But while Drinkwater confines himself mostly to professional matters – the state of the fortifications, nature of the enemy's fire, casualties to the soldiery, and the like – and seldom introduces an anecdote interesting to the generality of readers without apologising for such levity, my grandfather's sympathies seem to have been engrossed by the sufferings of the inhabitants deprived of shelter, as well as of sufficient food, and helplessly witnessing the destruction of their property. Consequently, his journal, though quite below the dignity of history, affords, now and then, a tolerably graphic glimpse of the beleaguered town.

From the discursive and desultory nature of the old gentleman's style, as before hinted, it would be vain to look for a continuous narrative in his journal, even if it contained materials for such. But here and there a literary Jack Horner might extract a plum or two from the vast quantity of dough – of reflections, quotations, and all manner of irrelevant observations, surrounding them. The following incidents, which occurred at the most interesting period of the long and tedious siege, appear to me to give a fair idea of some of the characteristics of the time, and of the personages who figured in it; and accordingly, after subjecting them to a process analogous to gold-washing, I present them to the reader.

After a strict blockade of six months, reducing the garrison to great extremity for want of provisions, Gibraltar was relieved by Sir George Rodney, who landed a large quantity of stores. But about a year after his departure, no further relief having reached them except casual supplies from trading vessels that came at a great risk to the Rock, their exigencies were even worse than before. The issue of provisions was limited in quantity, and their price so high, that the families, even of officers, were frequently in dismal straits. This has given rise to a wooden joke of my grandfather's, who, although he seldom ventures on any deliberate facetiousness, has entitled the volume of his journal relating to this period of the siege, *The Straits of Gibraltar*. He seems to have estimated the worth of his wit by its rarity, for the words appear at the top of every page.

The 11th of April 1781 being Carlota's birthday, the Major had invited Owen (now Lieutenant Owen) to dine with them in honour of the occasion. Owen was once more, for the time, a single man; for Juana, having gone to visit her friends in Tarifa just before the commencement of the siege, had been unable to rejoin her husband. In vain had Carlota requested that the celebration might be postponed till the arrival of supplies from England should afford them a banquet worthy of the anniversary – the Major, a great stickler for ancient customs, insisted on its taking place forthwith. Luckily, a merchantman from Minorca had succeeded in landing a cargo of sheep, poultry, vegetables, and fruit the day before, so that the provision for the feast, though by no means sumptuous, was far better than any they had been accustomed to for many months past. The Major's note-book enables me to set the materials for the dinner, and also its cost, before the reader – viz. a sheep's head, price sixteen shillings, (my grandfather was too late to secure any of the body, which was rent in pieces, and the fragments carried off as if by wolves, ere the breath was well out of it) – a couple of fowls, twenty shillings, (scraggy creatures, says my ancestor in a parenthesis) – a ham, two guineas – raisins and flour for a pudding, five shillings – eggs, (how many the deponent sayeth not,) sixpence each – vegetables, nine and sixpence – and fruit for dessert, seven and tenpence. Then, for wine, a Spanish merchant, a friend of Carlota's, had sent them two bottles of champagne and one of amontillado, a present as generous then as a hogshead would have been in ordinary times; and there was, moreover,

some old rum, and two lemons for punch. Altogether, there was probably no dinner half so good that day in Gibraltar.

At the appointed hour, the Major was reading in his quarters (a tolerably commodious house near the South Barracks, and at some distance outside the town) when Owen appeared.

"You're punctual, my boy; and punctuality's a cardinal virtue about dinner-time," said my grandfather, looking at his watch; "three o'clock exactly. And now we'll have dinner. I only hope the new cook is a tolerable proficient."

"What's become of Mrs Grigson?" asked Owen. "You haven't parted with that disciple of Apicius, I should hope?"

"She's confined again," said my grandfather, sighing; "a most prolific woman that! It certainly can't be above half-a-year since her last child was born, and she's just going to have another. 'Tis certainly not longer ago than last autumn," he added musingly.

"A wonderful woman," said Owen; "she ought to be purchased by the Government, and sent out to some of our thinly-populated colonies. And who fills her place?"

"Why, I'll tell you," responded the Major. "Joe Trigg, my old servant, is confined too – in the guardroom, I mean, for getting drunk – and I've taken a man of the regiment, one Private Bags, for a day or two, who recommended his wife as an excellent cook. She says the same of herself; but this is her first trial, and I'm a little nervous about it."

"Shocking rascal that Bags," said Owen.

"Indeed!" said my grandfather; "I'm sorry to hear that. I didn't inquire about his character. He offered his services, saying he came from the same part of England as myself, though I don't recollect him."

"Terrible work this blockade," said the Major after a pause. "Do you know, if I was a general in command of a besieging army, I don't think I could find it in my heart to starve out the garrison. Consider now, my dear boy," (laying his forefinger on Owen's arm,) – "consider, now, several thousand men, with strong appetites, never having a full meal for months together. And just, too, as my digestion was getting all right – for I never get a nightmare now, though I frequently have the most delicious dreams of banquets that I try to eat, but wake before I get a mouthful. 'Tis enough to provoke a saint. And, as if this was not enough, the supply of books is cut off. The *Weekly Entertainer* isn't even an annual entertainer to me. The last number I got was in '79, and I've been a regular subscriber these twelve years. There's the *Gentleman's Magazine*, too. The last one reached me a year since, with a capital story in it, only half-finished, that I'm anxious to know the end of; and also a rebus that I've been longing to see the answer to. 'The answer in our next,' says the tantalising editor. It's a capital rebus – just listen now. 'Two-thirds of the name of an old novelist, one-sixth of what we all do in the morning, and a heathen deity, make together a morsel fit for a king.' I've been working at it for upwards of a year, and I can't guess it. Can you?"

"Roast pig with stuffing answers the general description," said Owen. "That, you'll admit, is a morsel fit for a king."

"Pooh!" said my grandfather. "But you must really try now. I've run through the mythology, all that I know of it, and tried all the old novelists' names, even Boccaccio and Cervantes. Never were such combinations as I've made – but can't compound anything edible out of them. Again, as to what we do in the morning: we all shave, (that is, all who have beards) – and we yawn, too; at least I do, on waking; but it must be a word of six letters. Then, who can the heathen deity be?"

"Pan is the only heathen deity that has anything to do with cookery," said Owen. "Frying-pan, you know, and stew-pan."

My grandfather caught at the idea, but had not succeeded in making anything of it, or in approximating to the solution of the riddle, when Carlota entered from an inner room.

"I wish, my dear, you would see about the dinner," said the Major; "'tis a quarter past three."

"*Si, mi vida,*" (yes, my life,) said Carlota, who was in the habit of bestowing lavishly on my grandfather the most endearing epithets in the Spanish language, some of them, perhaps, not particularly applicable — *niño de mi alma*, (child of my soul,) *luz de mis ojos*, (light of my eyes,) and the like; none of which appeared to have any more effect on the object of them than if they had been addressed to somebody else.

Carlota rung the bell, which nobody answered. "Nurse is busy with de *niña*," she said, when nobody answered it; "I go myself to de *cocina*," (kitchen,) — she spoke English as yet but imperfectly.

"There's one comfort in delay," said the Major; "'tis better to boil a ham too much than too little — and yet I shouldn't like it overdone either."

Here they were alarmed by an exclamation from Carlota. "*Ah Dios! Caramba! Ven, ven, mi niño!*" cried she from the kitchen.

The Major and Owen hastened to the kitchen, which was so close at hand that the smell of the dinner sometimes anticipated its appearance in the dining-room. Mrs Bags, the new cook, was seated before the fire. On the table beside her was an empty champagne bottle, the fellow to which protruded its neck from a pail in one corner, where the Major had put it to cool; and another bottle of more robust build, about half-full, was also beside her. The countenance of Mrs Bags wore a pleasant and satisfied, though not very intelligent smile, as she gazed steadfastly on the ham that was roasting on a spit before the fire — at least one side of it was done quite black, while the other oozed with warm greese; for the machinery which should have turned it was not in motion.

"*Caramba!*" exclaimed Carlota, with uplifted hands. "*Que picarilla!*" — (What a knave of a woman!)

"Gracious heavens!" said my grandfather, "she's roasting it! Who ever heard of a roast ham?"

"A many years," remarked Mrs Bags, without turning her head, and still smiling pleasantly, "have I lived in gentlemen's families — " Here this fragment of autobiography was terminated by a hiccup.

"And the champagne bottle is empty," said Owen, handling it. "A nice sort of cook this of yours, Major. She seems to have constituted herself butler, too."

My grandfather advanced and lifted the other bottle to his nose. "'Tis the old rum," he ejaculated with a groan. "But if the woman has drunk all this 'twill be the death of her. Bags," he called, "come here."

The spouse of Mrs Bags emerged from a sort of scullery behind the kitchen — a tall bony man, of an ugliness quite remarkable, and with a very red face. He was better known by his comrades as Tongs, in allusion probably to personal peculiarities; for the length of his legs, the width of his bony hips, and the smallness of his head, gave him some distant resemblance to that article of domestic ironmongery; but as his wife called herself Mrs Bags, and he was entered in the regimental books by that name, it was probably his real appellation.

"Run directly to Dr Fagan," said the Major, "and request him to come here. Your wife has poisoned herself with rum."

"'Tisn't rum," said Bags, somewhat thickly — "'tis fits."

"Fits!" said my grandfather.

"Fits," doggedly replied Mr Bags, who seemed by no means disturbed at the alleged indisposition of his wife — "she often gets them."

"Don't alarm yourself, Major," said Owen, "I'll answer for it she hasn't drunk *all* the rum. The scoundrel is half-drunk himself, and smells like a spirit-vault. You'd better take your wife away," he said to Bags.

"She can leave if she ain't wanted," said Private Bags, with dignity: "we never comes where we ain't wanted." And he advanced to remove the lady. Mrs Bags at first resisted this measure, proceeding to deliver a eulogium on her own excellent qualities, moral and culinary. She had, she said, the best

of characters, in proof of which she made reference to several persons in various parts of the United Kingdom, and, as she spoke, she smiled more affably than ever.

"*La picarilla no tiene verguenza*," (the wretch is perfectly shameless,) cried Carlota, who, having hastily removed the ham from the fire, was now looking after the rest of the dinner. The fowls, cut up in small pieces, were boiling along with the sheep's head, and, probably to save time, the estimable Mrs Bags had put the rice and raisins destined for a pudding into the pot along with them – certainly, as Owen remarked, a bold innovation in cookery.

Still continuing to afford them glimpses of her personal history, Mrs Bags was at length persuaded to retire along with her helpmate.

"What astonishing impudence," said the Major, shutting the door upon her, "to pretend to be a cook, and yet know no better than to roast a ham!"

Carlota, meanwhile, was busy in remedying the disaster as far as she could; cutting the ham into slices and frying it, making a fricassee of the fowls, and fishing the raisins out of the pot, exclaiming bitterly all the while, in English and Spanish, against the *tunanta* (equivalent to female scoundrel or scamp) who had spoilt the only nice dinner her *pobrecito*, her *niño*, her *querido*, (meaning my grandfather,) had been likely to enjoy for a long time, stopping occasionally in her occupations to give him a consolatory kiss. However, my grandfather did not keep up the character of a martyr at all well: he took the matter really very patiently; and when the excellent Carlota had set the dinner on the table, and he tasted the fine flavour of the maltreated ham, he speedily regained his accustomed good-humour.

"It is very strange," he said presently, while searching with a fork in the dish before him, "that a pair of fowls should have only three wings, two legs, and one breast between them."

It certainly was not according to the order of nature; nevertheless the fact was so, all my grandfather's researches in the dish failing to bring to light the missing members. This however, was subsequently explained by the discovery of the remains of these portions of the birds in the scullery, where they appeared to have been eaten after being grilled; and Mrs Bags' reason for adopting this mode of cooking them was also rendered apparent – viz., that she might secure a share for herself without immediate detection.

However, all this did not prevent them from making the best of what was left, and the Major's face beamed as he drank Carlota's health in a glass of the remaining bottle of champagne, as brightly as if the dinner had been completely successful.

"It is partly my fault, Owen," said the Major, "that you haven't a joint of mutton instead of this sheep's head. I ought to have been sharper. The animal was actually sold in parts before he was killed. Old Clutterbuck had secured a haunch, and he a single man you know – 'tis thrown away upon him. I offered him something handsome for his bargain, but he wouldn't part with it."

"We're lucky to get any," returned Owen. "Never was such a scramble. Old Fiskin, the commissary, and Mrs O'Regan, the Major's wife, both swore the left leg was knocked down to them; neither would give in, and it was put up again, when the staff doctor, Pursum, who had just arrived in a great hurry, carried it off by bidding eightpence more than either. Not one of the three has spoken to either of the others since; and people say," added Owen, "Mrs O'Regan avers openly that Fiskin didn't behave like a gentleman."

"God knows!" said my grandfather, "'tis a difficult thing in such a case to decide between politeness and a consciousness of being in the right. Fiskin likes a good dinner."

The dinner having been done justice to, Carlota removed the remains to a side-table, and the Major was in the act of compounding a bowl of punch, when there was a knock at the door. "Come in," cried Carlota.

A light and timid step crossed the narrow passage separating the outer door from that of the room they sat in, and there was another hesitating tap at this latter. "Come in," again cried Carlota, and a young girl entered with a basket on her arm.

"'Tis Esther Lazaro," said Carlota in Spanish. "Come in, child; sit here and tell me what you want."

Esther Lazaro was the daughter of a Jew in the town, whose occupations were multifarious, and connected him closely with the garrison. He discounted officers' bills, furnished their rooms, sold them everything they wanted – all at most exorbitant rates. Still, as is customary with military men, while perfectly aware that they could have procured what he supplied them with elsewhere at less expense, they continued to patronise and abuse him rather than take the trouble of looking out for a more liberal dealer. As the difficulties of the garrison increased, he had not failed to take advantage of them, and it was even said he was keeping back large stores of provisions and necessaries till the increasing scarcity should enable him to demand his own terms for them.

His daughter was about fifteen years old – a pretty girl, with hair of the unusual colour of chestnut, plaited into thick masses on the crown of her head. Her skin was fairer than is customary with her race – her eyes brown and soft in expression, her face oval, and her figure, even at this early age, very graceful, being somewhat more precocious than an English girl's at those years. She was a favourite with the ladies of the garrison, who often employed her to procure feminine matters for them. Carlota, particularly, had always treated her with great kindness – and hence the present visit. She had come, she said timidly, to ask a favour – a great favour. She had a little dog that she loved. (Here a great commotion in the basket seemed to say she had brought her *protégé* with her.) He had been given to her by a young school friend who was dead, and her father would no longer let her keep it, because, he said, these were no times to keep such creatures, when provisions, even those fit for a dog, were so dear. He was a very good little dog – would the Señora take him?

"Let us look at him, Esther," said Owen – "I see you have brought him with you."

"He is not pretty," said Esther, blushing as she produced him from the basket. He certainly was not, being a small cur, marked with black and white, like a magpie, with a tall curling over his back. He did not appear at all at his ease in society, for he tried to shrink back again into the basket.

"He was frightened," she said, "for he had been shut up for more than a month. She had tried to keep him in her bedroom, unknown to her father, feeding him with part of her own meals; but he had found it out, and had beaten her, and threatened to kill the dog if ever he saw it again."

"*Pobrecito!*" (poor little thing,) said the good Carlota – "we shall take good care of it. *Toma,*" (take this,) offering him a bit of meat. But he crept under her chair, with his tail so depressed, in his extreme bashfulness, that the point of it came out between his forelegs.

Carlota would have made the young Jewess dine there forthwith, at the side-table still spread with the remains of the dinner; but she refused to take anything, only sipping once from a glass of wine that Carlota insisted on making her drink of. Then she rose, and, having tied the end of a string that was fastened to the dog's collar to the leg of the table, to prevent his following her, took her leave, thanking Carlota very prettily.

"*A Dios, Sancho!*" she said to the little dog, who wagged his tail and gave her a piteous look as she turned to go away – "*A Dios, Sancho,*" she repeated, taking him up and kissing him very affectionately. The poor child was ready to cry.

"Come and see him every day, my child," said Carlota, "and when better times come you shall have him again."

CHAPTER II

Lazaro the Jew was seated towards dusk that evening in a sort of office partitioned off by an open railing from a great store filled with a most motley collection of articles. Sofas, looking-glasses, washing-stands – bales of goods in corded canvass – rows of old boots purchased from officers' servants – window curtains lying on heaps of carpeting and matting – bedsteads of wood and iron – crockery and glass – were all piled indiscriminately. Similar articles had also overflowed along the passage down the wooden steps leading to the square stone court below, which was lumbered with barrels, packing-cases, and pieces of old iron. This court was entered from the street, and an arched door on one side of it, barred and padlocked, opened on a large warehouse, which nobody except the Jew had set foot in for many months.

The Jew himself was a spare, rather small man, with a thin eager face, small sharp features, and a scanty beard. Being by descent a Barbary Jew, he wore the costume peculiar to that branch of his race – a black skull-cap; a long-skirted, collarless, cloth coat, buttoned close, the waist fastened with a belt; loose light-coloured trousers and yellow slippers – altogether he looked somewhat like an overgrown scholar of Christ's Hospital. He was busied in turning over old parchment-covered ledgers, when an officer entered.

Von Dessel was a captain in Hardenberg's regiment. He was a square, strong-built man, about forty, with very light hair, as was apparent since the governor's order had forbidden the use of powder to the troops, in consequence of the scarcity of flour. His thick, white, overhanging eyebrows, close lips, and projecting under jaw gave sternness to his countenance.

"Good afternoon, captain," said the Jew; "what I do for you to-day, sare?"

"Do for me! By Gott, you have done for me already, with your cursed Hebrew tricks," said the captain. The German and the Jew met on a neutral ground of broken English.

"I always treat every gentleman fair, sare," said the Jew. "I tell you, captain, I lose by that last bill of yours."

"*Der teufel!* who gains, then?" said Von Dessel, "for you cut me off thirty per cent."

The Jew shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't make it so, sare; the siege makes it so. When the port is open, you shall have more better exchange."

"Well, money must be had," said the German. "What will you give now for my bill for twenty pounds?"

The Jew consulted a book of figures – then made some calculations on paper – then appeared to consider intently.

"Curse you, speak!" said the choleric captain. "You have made up your mind about how much roguery long ago."

"Captain, sare, I give you feefty dallars," said the Jew.

The captain burst forth with a volley of German execrations.

"Captain," said the Jew presently, "I like to please a gentleman if I can. I give you one box of cigars besides – real Cubas – one hundred and feefty in a box."

The captain at this broke forth again, but checked himself presently on the entrance of the Jew's daughter, who now returned from the Major's. She advanced quietly into the room, made a little bow to the captain, took off and laid aside her shawl, and, taking up some work, sat down and began to sew.

Von Dessel resumed his expostulation in a milder tone. The Jew, however, knew the money was necessary to him, and only yielded so far as to increase his box of cigars to two hundred; and the captain, finding he could get no better terms from him, was forced to agree. While the Jew was drawing out the bills, the German gazed attentively at Esther, with a good deal of admiration expressed in his countenance.

"I can't take the money now," said he, after signing the bills. "I am going on duty. Bring it to me to-morrow morning, at nine o'clock."

"I'm afraid I can't, sare," said Lazaro; "too moch business. Couldn't you send for it, captain?"

"Not possible," said the German; "but you must surely have somebody that might bring it – some trustworthy person you know." And his eye rested on Esther.

"There's my dater, sare," said the Jew – "I shall send her, if that will do."

"Good," said the captain, "do not forget," and quitted the room forthwith.

He was scarcely gone when a pair with whom the reader is already slightly acquainted, Mr and Mrs Bags, presented themselves. The effects of their morning conviviality had in a great measure disappeared.

"Your servant, sir," said Bags. The Jew nodded.

"We've got a few articles to dispose of," pursued Mr Bags, looking round the room cautiously. "They was left us," he added in a low tone, "by a *diseased* friend."

"Ah!" said the Jew, "never mind where you got 'em. Be quick – show them."

Mrs Bags produced from under her cloak, first a tin teakettle, then a brass saucepan; and Mr Bags, unbuttoning his coat, laid on the table three knives and a silver fork. Esther, passing near the table at the time, glanced accidentally at the fork, and recognised the Flinders crest – a talbot, or old English bloodhound.

"Father," said she hastily, in Spanish, "don't have anything to do with that – it must be stolen." But the Jew turned so sharply on her, telling her to mind her work, that she retreated.

The Jew took up the tea-kettle, and examined the bottom to see that it was sound – did the same with the saucepan – looked at the knives narrowly, and still closer at the fork – then ranged them before him on the table.

"For dis," said he, laying his hand on the tea-kettle, "we will say one pound of rice; for dis (the saucepan) two pounds of corned beef; for de knives, a bottle of rum; and for de fork, seex ounces of the best tea."

"Curse your tea!" said Mr Bags.

"Yes!" said Mrs Bags, who had with difficulty restrained herself during the process of valuation, "we doesn't want no tea. And the things is worth a much more than what you say: the saucepan's as good as new, and the fork's silver –"

"Plated," said the Jew, weighing it across his finger.

"A many years," said Mrs Bags, "have I lived in gentlemen's families, and well do I know plate from silver. I've lived with Mrs Milson of Pidding Hill, where everything was silver, and nothing plated, even to the handles of the doors; and a dear good lady she was to me; many's the gown, she giv me. And I've lived with –"

Here the Jew unceremoniously interrupted the train of her recollections by pushing the things from before him. "Take what I offer, or else take your things away," said he, shortly.

Mr and Mrs Bags grumbled considerably. The tea they positively refused at any price: Mr Bags didn't like it, and Mrs Bags said it disagreed with her. So the Jew agreed to give them instead another bottle of rum, a pound of onions, and two pounds of beef; and with these terms they at length closed, and departed with the results of their barter.

During the altercation, a soldier of another regiment had entered, and stood silently awaiting his turn to be attended to. He was a gaunt man, with want written legibly in the hollows of his face and the dismal eagerness of his eye. He now came forward, and with trembling hands unfolded an old gown, and handed it to the Jew.

"'Tis no good to me," said the latter, giving it back, after holding it against the light; "nothing but holes."

"But my wife has no other," said the man: "'tis her last stitch of clothes, except her petticoat and a blanket. I've brought everything else to you."

The Jew shrugged his shoulders and spread out his hands, in token that he could not help it.

"I swear 'tis her last!" reiterated the man, as if he really fancied this fact must give the garment as much value in the Jew's eyes as in his own.

"I tell you I won't have it!" said the Jew, testily.

"Give me only a loaf for it, or but one pound of potatoes," said the soldier: "'tis more than my wife and four children have had among them for two days. Half-rations for one, among six of us, is too hard to live."

"A pound of potatoes," said the Jew, "is worth four reals and a-half – eighteenpence; your wife's gown is worth – nothing!"

"Then take this," said the man, beginning frantically to pull off his uniform coat; "anything is better than starving."

The Jew laughed. "What!" said he, "you think I don't know better than to buy a soldier's necessaries, eh? Ah, ah! no such a fool, I think, my friend. What your captain say? – eh?"

The man struck his hand violently on the table. "Then give me – or lend me," said he, "some food, much or little, and I'll work for you every hour I'm off duty till you're satisfied. I will, Mr Lazaro, so help me God!"

"I got plenty of men to work for me," said Lazaro; "don't want any more. Come again, when you've got something to sell, my friend."

The man rolled up the gown without speaking, then lifted it over his head, and dashed it into the furthest corner of the store. He was hurrying from the place, when, as if unwilling to throw away his last chance, he turned back, gathered it up, and, thrusting it under his arm, quitted the store with lingering steps, as if he even yet hoped to be called back. No such summons reached him, however; but, immediately after he was gone, Esther rose and stole softly down the stairs. She overtook him at the street-door opening from the court before mentioned, and laid her hand on his arm. The man turned and glared on her. "What! – he'll buy it, will he?" said he.

"Hush!" said Esther – "keep it for your poor wife. Look; I have no money, but take these," and she placed in his hand two earrings hastily detached from her ears.

The man stood looking at her for a space, as if stupified, without closing his hand on the trinkets that lay on the palm; then, suddenly rousing himself, he swore, with tears in his eyes, that for this service he would do for her anything on earth she should require from him; but she only begged him to go away at once, and say nothing, lest her father should overhear the transaction, who would certainly be angry with her for it.

Bags and his wife had stopt in a corner of the court, to pack up their property in a commodious form for conveyance, and had witnessed this scene in silence. As soon as the soldier had, in compliance with Esther's entreaties, disappeared, Bags came forward.

"And your father would be angry, would he, my dear?" said he.

"Oh, very – oh, so angry! Please don't stop me," she said, trying to pass him.

"And what'll ye give me not to tell him, now?" asked Mr Bags. "Ain't ye got nothing for me?"

"No – oh, no – indeed, nothing. Do let me pass."

"Yes, you have; you've got this, I think," said Bags, snatching at a silver-mounted comb glistening in her hair, which, thus loosened, all fell down on her shoulders as she darted past him. "And now," said Mr Bags, inspecting his prize, "I think me and that 'ere cheating Jew is quits for the silver fork. I'll allow it's plated now."

CHAPTER III

Early the next morning (the 12th of April) a rumour went through the town that an English fleet was signalled as in sight. The news roused the starving people like electricity. The pale spectres of men that, on the previous day, had stalked so gauntly through the dreary streets – the wretched, sinking women, and children careworn as grandfathers – poured forth, with something like a natural light in their hollow eyes, to witness the joyful spectacle. The sea-wall of the city was, like the margin of a vast pool of Bethesda, thronged with hopeful wretches awaiting the coming of the angel.

The streets were instantly deserted. Those who could not leave their homes got on the housetops, but the great mass of the population spread itself along the line-wall, the Grand Parade and Alameda, and the heights skirting the chief slopes of the Rock. Moors and Jews, Spaniards and English, citizens and soldiers, men, women, and children, of all ages, grades, and nations, ranged themselves indiscriminately wherever they could obtain a view of the sea.

For some time the wished-for sight was delayed by a thick fog that spread itself across the Straits and the entrance of the bay. A murmur rose from each successive rank of people that forced itself into a front place on the line-wall. Terrible doubts flew about, originating no one knew where, but gaining strength and confirmation as they passed from mouth to mouth. On the summit of the Rock behind them the signal for a fleet flew steadily from the mast at Middle Hill; but still in this, as in all crowds, were some of little faith, who were full of misgivings. Many rushed up to the signal station, unable to bear the pain of the delay. My grandfather noticed the Jew Lazaro among the throng, watching the event with an anxious eye, though his anxiety was from the opposite cause to that of most of the spectators. The arrival of supplies would at once bring down the price of provisions, and rob him, for the present, of his expected profits; and as each successive rumour obtained credence with the crowd, his countenance brightened as their hopes fell, and sank as they again emerged from despondency.

Not far from him was an old Genoese woman, wearing the quaint red cloak, trimmed with black velvet, that old Genoese women usually wear in Gibraltar. She hovered round the skirts of the crowd, occasionally peering beneath an uplifted arm, or thrusting it between two obstructing figures, to catch a glimpse, though it was evident that her dim eyes would fail to discern the fleet when it should come in view. Her thin shrivelled features, relieved against her black hood, were positively wolfish from starvation. She frequently drew one hand from beneath her cloak, and gazed at something she held in it – then, muttering, she would again conceal it. My grandfather's curiosity was roused. He drew near and watched for the reappearance of the object that so engrossed her. It was a blue mouldy crust of bread.

The wished-for spectacle was at length revealed. "As the sun became more powerful," says Drinkwater, rising into positive poetry with the occasion, "the fog gradually rose, *like the curtain of a vast theatre*, discovering to the anxious garrison one of the most beautiful and pleasing scenes it is possible to conceive. The convoy, consisting of near a hundred vessels, were in a compact body, led by several men-of-war – their sails just filled enough for steerage, while the majority of the line-of-battle ships lay to under the Barbary shore, having orders not to enter the bay, lest the enemy should molest them with their fireships."

Then rose a great shout – at once the casting-off of long-pressing anxiety and the utterance of delight. Happy tears streamed down haggard faces overgrown with hair, and presently men turned to one another, smiling in the face of a stranger neighbour as in that of an old friend, while a joyful murmur, distilled from many languages, rose upward. Assuredly, if blessings are of any avail, the soul of Admiral Darby, who commanded the relieving fleet, is at this moment in Paradise.

Friends and relations now began to search for one another in the crowd, which broke quickly into knots, each contriving how to enjoy together the plenty that was to descend upon them. My grandfather's eye at this juncture was again attracted by the old Genoese woman. When the crowd

shouted, she screened her eyes with her withered hand, and, with her nostril spread, her chin fallen, in her eagerness gazed towards the sea – but presently shook her head, discerning nothing. Then she plucked by the arm a joyful Spaniard.

"*Es verdad? Por Dios, es verdad?*" she cried; "*jura! jura!*" – (Is it true? Swear by Heaven it is true.)

"*Si, si,*" said the Spaniard, pointing; "*es verdad,*" ('tis true.) "You may see them yourself."

Instantly the old woman, for the last time, drew forth her treasured crust, and began to devour it, muttering, as she tore away each mouthful, "*Mas mañana! mas mañana!*" (I shall have more to-morrow – more to-morrow!)

After the crowd had partially dispersed, Owen was returning to his quarters to breakfast, when, as he paused to open the door, he heard a voice he thought he knew crying out in affright in the rooms opposite, where Von Dessel resided. Presently the door of the quarters was opened, and the flushed and frightened face of Esther Lazaro appeared, as she struggled to escape from Von Dessel, who held her arm.

"Señor, señor, speak to the gentleman!" she cried to Owen.

"Leetle foolish girl," said Von Dessel, grinning a smile on seeing him; "she frightens at nothing. Come in, child" – trying to shut the door.

"Why don't you let her alone?" said Owen; "don't you see she doesn't like you?"

"Pouf!" said the captain. "We all have trouble with them sometimes – you must know that well."

"No, by Jupiter!" cried Frank Owen. "If I couldn't gain them willingly, they might go to the devil for me. But you hurt her – pray let her go – you must indeed."

"Do you mind your own affair," said the captain, "and don't meddle;" and, exerting his strength, he drew Esther in, and partially succeeded in shutting the door – she calling the while again on Owen to help her. Frank stepped forward, and, putting his foot against the door, sent it into the room, causing Captain Von Dessel, who was behind it, to stagger back with some violence, and to quit his hold of Esther, who ran down stairs.

"Very good, sir," said the captain, stalking grimly out of his room, pale with rage. "You have thought right to interfere with me, and to insult me. By Gott! I will teach you better, young man. Shall we say in one hour, sir, in the Fives' Court?"

Owen nodded. "At your pleasure," said he, and, entering his own quarters, shut the door.

Meanwhile my grandfather walked about with the telescope he had brought with him to look after the fleet under his arm, enjoying the unusual sight of happy faces around him. And he has remarked it as a singular feature of humanity, that this prospect of relief from physical want inspired a far more deep and universal joy than he had witnessed in any public rejoicings arising from such causes as loyalty or patriotism evinced at a coronation or the news of a great victory; and hence my grandfather takes occasion to express a fear that human nature, as well as other nature, is, except among the rarer class of souls, more powerfully and generally influenced by its animal propensities than by more refined causes.

He was so engrossed with the philanthropic pursuit of enjoying the joy of the multitude, and the philosophic one of extracting moral reflections therefrom, that he quite forgot he had not breakfasted. He was just beginning to be reminded of the circumstance by a feeling of hollowness in the region of the stomach, and to turn his steps homeward, when a light hand was laid on his arm. My grandfather turned, and beheld the face of the young Jewess looking wistfully in his.

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