

were burning within the bay; the storehouses within the Mole were on fire. The blaze illumined all the bay, and showed the town and its environs almost as clear as in the day-time; instead of walls, the batteries presented nothing to the sight but heaps of rubbish; and out of these ruins the Moors and Turks were busily employed in dragging their dead. When the fleet had anchored a storm arose—not so violent as the storm which here destroyed the mighty fleet of Charles the Fifth, and left his magnificent army, which had landed to subdue the barbarians, to perish by sword and famine—but a storm of thunder and lightning, which filled up the measure of sublimity, at the close of the twelve awful hours of battle and slaughter.

On the morning of the 28th, lord Exmouth wrote a letter to the Dey, who had himself fought with courage, in which the same terms of peace were offered as on the previous day. "If you receive this offer as you ought, you will fire three guns," wrote lord Exmouth. The three guns were fired, the Dey made apologies, and treaties of peace and amity were finally signed, to be very soon again broken. The enduring triumph of this expedition was the release, within three days of the battle, of a thousand and eighty-three Christian slaves, who arrived from the interior, and who were immediately conveyed to their respective countries.

CHAPTER XXI.*

Meeting of Parliament.—Reception of Lord Castlereagh.—Debates on the Address.—Government defeated on the proposed renewal of the Property-Tax.—Marriage of the Princess Charlotte.—Unpopularity of the Prince Regent.—Complaints of Agricultural Distress.—Depression of Commerce and Manufacturers.—Causes assigned for the depression of Industry.—Reduction of the Circulating Medium.—Unfavourable Season.—Riots and outrages in Agricultural Districts.—Renewal of Luddism.—Private Benevolence.—Progress of Legislation for Social Improvement.—Criminal Laws.—Forgeries of Bank Notes.—Police of London.—Gas-Light.—Mendicity and Vagrancy.—Law of Settlement.—General Administration of Poor Laws.—Inquiry into the State of Education.—Savings' Banks.—Game Laws.

THE Imperial Parliament assembled on the 1st of February, 1816. At this opening of the Session the ministry met the representatives of the people with all the pride and confidence of a success beyond hope. The march to Paris, twice over, says a conspicuous actor in the politics of that hour, was sufficiently marvellous; "but it appeared, if possible, still more incredible, that we should witness lord Castlereagh entering the House of Commons, and resuming, amidst universal shouts of applause, the seat which he had quitted for a season to attend as a chief actor in the arrangement of continental territory."† Why incredible? Lord Castlereagh in the House of Commons was the impersonation of a great national triumph. The parliamentary majority cheered the Minister for Foreign affairs as he would have been cheered by any other assembly, when he came home flushed with success. For a little while the nation might bear even the presumption of those

* The period comprised in this Chapter, and in Chapter XXII., embracing the annals of 1816 and 1817, has been previously treated of by the author of "The Popular History" in "The History of the Peace," published in 1846. This work, begun by him, was continued and completed by Miss Martineau, and therefore bears her name. Although in the present history the author proposed only to occupy about half the space of what he had previously written, he felt the extreme difficulty of relating the same events, and expressing the same opinions, altogether in new words. Having stated his difficulty to Messrs. Chambers, who are now the proprietors of the copyright of "The History of the Peace," he has received from them a very kind permission, to condense the original narrative, or adopt any passages, at his own discretion. Whilst this licence relieves the author from an obvious embarrassment, he has nevertheless been desirous to avoid a mere transcript of any large portion of what he had previously written. But he has not made the useless attempt to distinguish between the new matter and the old, hoping that he has amalgamated the separate parts so as to produce a harmonious result.

† Brougham's "Speeches," vol. i. p. 634: Introduction to Speech on Holy Alliance.

who claimed all the merit of the triumph. On the first night of the Session, it was clearly seen that there was to be a limit to what Parliament would bear. The Chancellor of the Exchequer declared his intention to continue the Property or Income Tax, on the modified scale of five per cent. This avowal was the signal for one of the chief battle-cries which were to lead on the scanty forces of Opposition.

In a debate in the Committee of Supply, lord Castlereagh used a memorable expression which roused a spirit in the country of deep hostility—almost of disgust: “He felt assured that the people of England would not, from an ignorant impatience to be relieved from the pressure of taxation, put everything to hazard, when everything might be accomplished by continued constancy and firmness.”* From the moment of this offensive declaration the Income Tax was doomed. The people had not borne the taxation of so many years of war with a heroism such as no people had ever before shown, to be taunted with ignorant impatience of taxation, now that they had won peace. The presumption of the government at this period was calculated to produce a violent reaction throughout the land. Men really thought that the old English spirit of freedom was about to be trampled upon when the debates on the Treaties took place, in which lord Liverpool moved the Address. Lord Grenville proposed an amendment, which deprecated in the strongest language “the settled system to raise the country into a military power.” In the House of Peers the government had a majority of sixty-four. Lord Holland entered a protest against the Address, in terms which embodied his speech upon the Treaties, and expressed the opinions of that section of the Opposition: “Because the treaties and engagements contain a direct guarantee of the present government of France against the people of that country; and, in my judgment, imply a general and perpetual guarantee of all European governments against the governed.” In the House of Commons the Foreign Secretary moved the Address upon the Treaties. An amendment was proposed by lord Milton, which deprecated the military occupation of France and the unexampled military establishments of this country. The debate lasted two nights, the Address being finally carried by a majority of a hundred and sixty-three. What was said on both sides was, to a considerable extent, the regular display of party conflict. The exultation of the government at the settlement of their war-labours looks now scarcely more inflated than the fears of some members of the Opposition that the confederated arms of

* Hansard, vol. xxxiii. p. 455.

the despots of Europe might be turned against the liberties of England. The practical business that was at hand—the enforcement of economy, the alleviation of distress—was the matter of real importance that was to grow out of these debates.

The Corporation of London took the lead in the national expression of opinion against the Property Tax. It was not only the anti-ministerial party of the City that joined in the petition of the corporation:—the judgments of mercantile men against the continuance of the tax were almost universal. The dislike of the rural population was as fixed as that of the inhabitants of towns. The battle against this tax was one of the most remarkable examples of parliamentary strategy that was ever displayed. For six weeks the Opposition, headed by Mr. Brougham, availed themselves of all the means of delay afforded by the forms of the House. As petitions against the tax were presented night after night, debates on the petitions prevented debate and division on the reading of the Bill. It was the 17th of March before the resolutions for the continuance of the tax were presented to the House. The division of the 18th of March, upon the motion of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in a Committee of Ways and Means, was terminated in half an hour by the impatience of the House. For the continuance of the Property Tax 201 members voted; against it, 238. This defeat of the government dispelled the belief that resistance to taxation was “ignorant impatience.” The Chancellor of the Exchequer took a somewhat remarkable course after this defeat. He voluntarily abandoned the war-duties upon malt, amounting to about 2,700,000*l.* The decision of the House would compel him to resort to the money-market,—in other words, to raise a loan. “It was of little consequence that the loan should be increased by the amount of the calculated produce of the malt-duty.” Lord Castlereagh said, “it was a matter of indifference whether they took a loan of six or eight millions.” This was the “indifference”—the result of a long course of unbounded expense—that required all the efforts of the people and of their friends, during many years, to change into responsibility.

The inquisitorial character of the Property Tax had some influence in producing the popular hostility to its continuance. The returns of the taxpayers were then scrutinized with a severity which has been wisely put aside in the present times. But during the pressure of war-expenditure, and long afterwards, the imposition and collection of other taxes were rendered as odious as possible to the people. The government employed, to an extent which scarcely seems credible now, an army of common informers,

through whose agency the system of penalties was enforced. Southey attacked this disgrace of our nation as being ten times more inquisitorial than the Holy Office of Spain. "This species of espionage has within these few years become a regular trade; the laws are in some instances so perplexing, and in others so vexatious, that matter for prosecution is never wanting." He describes how "a fellow surcharges half the people in the district; that is, he informs the tax-commissioners that such persons have given in a false account of their windows, dogs, horses, carriages, &c., an offence for which the tax is trebled, and half the surplus given to the informer." Harassed and perplexed—summoned from distant parts to appear before the commissioners—the persons informed against give up the trouble and expense of seeking justice; pay the penalty and bear the surcharge.*

The debates upon the Army Estimates, which eventually caused some reduction—the rejection of the Property Tax—the searching inquiry into the Civil List—the agitation of the question of sinecure officers—were indications of the feeling which any government would have to encounter that did not resolutely determine that a season of peace should be a season of economy. When the details of the Civil List exhibited items of wanton and ridiculous luxury, the members of the Administration themselves were pained and humiliated. When the same ministers proposed the magnificent establishment for the Princess Charlotte and Prince Leopold, upon their marriage, not a dissentient voice was heard in Parliament. The nation saw in this marriage of the presumptive heiress of the Crown—a marriage of affection—some assured hope that public duties might be fitly learned in the serenity of domestic happiness. The private virtues were felt to be the best preparation for the possession of sovereign power. The idea of a patriot queen discharging all her high functions with steady alacrity, confident in the affections of her people, of simple habits, of refined and intellectual tastes, her throne sanctified by the attributes of womanly affection—such hopes were something to console the nation for the present endurance of authority that claimed only "mouth-honour," without love or respect. The marriage of the Princess Charlotte was hailed as a public blessing. It took place at Carlton House, on the evening of the 2nd of May.

One of the most painful circumstances of this period, and one pregnant with danger, was the general contempt for the character of him who now wielded the sovereign authority. The military triumphs of the Regency made the nation only consider how

* "Espriella's Letters"—Letter xvi.

strongly in contrast to the elevation of that heroic time were the cravings for ease and indulgence, the reckless expenditure upon childish gratifications, of the Regent. The attacks of the press upon his sensual follies made him hate the expression of public opinion. That voice was heard in a place where the character and actions of the sovereign are usually unnoticed, even in the greatest freedom of parliamentary debate. The Prince of Wales was in "all but name a King." Romilly describes a scene in the House of Commons, which took place in a debate on the 20th of March, in which Brougham, he says, made a violent attack upon the Regent, "whom he described as devoted, in the recesses of his palace, to the most vicious pleasures, and callous to the distresses and sufferings of others, in terms which would not have been too strong to describe the latter days of Tiberius." He adds, "it is generally believed that, but for the speech of Brougham's, the ministers would again have been in a minority. . . . Brougham's speech was very injudicious as well as very unjust, for, with all the Prince's faults, it is absurd to speak of him as if he were one of the most sensual and unfeeling tyrants that ever disgraced a throne."* Nevertheless, although satire ran riot in ridicule of the unbounded and effeminate luxury of Carlton House, in spite of *ex officio* informations, there was wanting some authoritative voice to proclaim that the mightiest of the earth are unworthy of their high station when they live for their own pleasures alone. The declamation of Mr. Brougham might be unstatesmanlike, but it was not without its use.

When the government, in the name of the Prince Regent, informed Parliament that "the manufactures, commerce, and revenue of the United Kingdom were in a flourishing condition," the exception of Agriculture was a sufficient announcement that the cry of "Distress" was near at hand. Amidst the best and the worst species of opposition—the power of argument and the weakness of tumult—a Bill was in 1815 hurried through Parliament which absolutely closed the ports till the price of wheat rose to 80s. This law was passed during a season of wonderful abundance. It produced the immediate good to the landed interest of preventing the abundant supply being increased by importation; but the effect which it produced to the nation was to dry up the resources in years of scarcity which the foresight of other countries might have provided. The war-and-famine price of 1812 was again reached in the latter part of 1816, in 1817, and in 1818. The golden days of the deity that is found in no mythology, the Anti-Ceres,

* Romilly's "Life."

were returned. But the people were starving. Misery and insurrection filled the land.

A year after the hasty enactment of a Corn-Law in 1815, amidst riots in the metropolis and the provinces, a majority of the landed interest came to Parliament to ask for the remission of peculiar burthens, and to demand fresh protection. The landed interest of 1816 had but one remedy for every evil—unequal remission of taxation conjoined with protection. They desired themselves to pay less to the State than their fellow-subjects; they required the State to limit their fellow-subjects to that exclusive market for the necessaries of life which should dry up the sources of profitable industry, and thus make their taxation doubly burthensome. On the 7th of March Mr. Western laid upon the table of the House a series of fourteen Resolutions, which declared the "unexampled distress" of those whose capitals were employed in agriculture. They demanded the repeal of so much of the Act of 1815 as should allow foreign corn to be warehoused, so that only British corn should be stored; and urged an advance of money by the government to such individuals as might be inclined to buy up our native produce. The principle upon which all this was advocated was a sufficiently broad one: "That excessive taxation renders it necessary to give protection to all articles the produce of our own soil, against similar articles the growth of foreign countries, not subject to the same burthens;" and "that it is therefore expedient to impose additional duties and restrictions on the importation of all articles, the produce of foreign agriculture." It is a remarkable example of the power of the landed interest in the House of Commons, that these assertions and unconditional demands were received not only with tolerance but respect. The day-spring of economical politics had scarcely yet dawned. The strength either of the Ministry or the Opposition essentially depended upon the numerical force of the country gentlemen. The commercial and manufacturing interests were most imperfectly represented. The landed aristocracy had retained official power, in association with a few "clerkly" workers, from the earliest feudal times. The admission of a merchant to the councils of the sovereign would have been deemed pollution. The mill-owners had carried us through the war; yet as a political body they were without influence, almost without a voice. There was no one in the House of Commons, who had either the courage or the ability to probe the wounds of the agricultural interests, which were thus paraded before the nation. The Resolutions of Mr. Western in 1816 came to no practical result; for the chief reason, that the forced abandonment of the property-tax, and

the voluntary relinquishment of the war malt-duty, had really left very little within the reach of Government to be offered as a further boon to the landed interest.

"Manufactures and Commerce," said the speech of the Prince Regent, "are in a flourishing condition." This was to rely upon the bare figures of Custom House returns. In 1815 the declared value of British and Irish produce and manufactures exported was fifty-one millions, being six millions more than in 1814. Well might the commerce of the country seem to be flourishing. Those who knew the real workings of that commerce were not so deceived. Mr. Baring, on the second night of the Session, declared, "that he saw more loss than gain in this great increase of export." When the destruction of the power of Napoleon in 1814 had opened the ports of the continent to our vessels; when the consumption of our exports no longer depended upon a vast system of contra-band trade; it was universally thought that there could be no limit to the demand for British manufactures and colonial produce. If, under the anti-commercial decrees of our great enemy, the shipments to European ports had been twelve millions in 1811, why should they not be doubled in 1814? And accordingly they were doubled. The most extravagant profits were expected to be realized. The ordinary course of trade was forsaken, and small capitalists as well as large, at the outports as well as in London, eagerly bought up colonial produce, and looked for golden returns. "The shippers found to their cost, when it was too late, that the effective demand on the continent for colonial produce and British manufactures had been greatly over-rated; for whatever might be the desire of the foreign consumers to possess articles so long out of their reach, they were limited in their means of purchase, and accordingly, the bulk of the commodities exported brought very inadequate returns."* A very slight consideration will explain the causes of this enormous mistake. In the first place, the continent was wholly exhausted by the long course of war; by the prodigious expenditure of capital that the war had demanded; by the wasteful consumption of mighty armies embattled against the oppressor; by the rapine of the predatory hordes that were let loose upon their soil; by confiscation. The people had necessarily the greatest difficulty to maintain life; they had little to spare for the secondary necessaries—nothing for indulgence. The merchants of our own country—the nation in general—had been so accustomed to the outward indications of prosperity at home during the course of the war, that they had no adequate idea that war was the great destroyer of

* Tooke's "History of Prices," vol. ii. p. 8.

capital, and that it essentially left all mankind poorer. In the second place, what had the continent to give us in exchange for our coffee and sugar, our calicoes and our cutlery? The old mercantile school still existed amongst us, who thought that the perfection of commerce was to exchange goods for money, and that a great commercial nation might subsist without barter. But the continent had no money to exchange for English products, even if the exploded theories of the balance of trade could have found any realization. The continent, exhausted as it was, had its native commodities, but those we refused. We doggedly held on in a course of commercial regulation which belonged only to the infancy of society. We perpetuated foreign restrictions and exclusions of our own manufactured produce, by persistence in a system which other nations of necessity regarded as the cause of our manufacturing superiority. We did not then know how essentially this system retarded our own national progress. We listened to those who, on every side, clamoured for exclusive interests. Agriculturists and manufacturers, landowners and shipowners, equally shouted for protection.

The state of the American trade of 1816 was described by Mr. Brougham, after speaking of the disastrous results of the continental speculations:—"The peace with America has produced somewhat of a similar effect; though I am very far from placing the vast exports which it occasioned upon the same footing with those to the European markets the year before; because ultimately the Americans will pay; which the exhausted state of the continent renders very unlikely."* Let us remark that we did not prevent the Americans paying in the only way in which one great people can pay another—by the interchange of commodities which each wants, in return for commodities of which each can produce a superfluity. We shut out their corn, but we did not shut out their cotton. But we went farther with the United States in the recognition of just commercial principles than with any European nation. By the treaty of Ghent, in 1814, both countries agreed to repeal their navigation laws, and "the ships of the two countries were placed reciprocally upon the same footing in the ports of England and the United States, and all discriminating duties chargeable upon the goods which they conveyed were mutually repealed."

The distresses of the agricultural and the commercial interests were coincident; for the means of purchase amongst all classes were exhausted. The capital which was to impel their profitable industry was dried up. There was "a very general depression in

* Brougham's Speeches," vol. i. p. 519.

the prices of nearly all productions, and in the value of all fixed property, entailing a convergence of losses and failures among the agricultural, and commercial, and manufacturing, and mining, and shipping and building interests, which marked that period as one of most extensive suffering and distress."* Some proclaimed that the depression and the distress were caused, not by the exhaustion of war, but by "the transition from a state of war to a state of peace." The theory upon which this delusion was upheld was this:—"The whole annual war expenditure, to the amount of not less than forty millions, was at once withdrawn from circulation. But public expenditure is like the fountain tree in the Indian paradise which diffuses in fertilizing streams the vapours which it was created to collect and condense for the purpose of more beneficially returning and distributing them."† According to this logical imagery, or imaginative logic the capital of a nation in the pockets of its proprietors is "vapour;" it becomes a "fertilizing stream" when it condenses into taxes. It assumes that there is more demand when the capital of a country is expended by government, than when the same capital is expended by individuals. It assumes that the expenditure of capital by government in subsidies, in the wasteful consumption of armies, in all the tear and wear of war, is more profitable than the expenditure of capital in the general objects of industry which create more capital. It assumes that the partial expenditure of capital by government in its victualling offices, is more profitable than the regular expenditure of the same capital left in the pockets of the tax-payers, to give them an additional command over food and raiment,—over the comforts and elegancies of life. This fallacy, as well as many others connected with the depression of industry at the close of the war, has been disproved by the long experience of peace. We had arrived in 1816 at the highest point of war exhaustion. The expenditure of government in the eleven years between 1805 and 1815 was very nearly 900,000,000*l.* In 1815 the revenue raised by taxation was 72,000,000*l.* Upon a population of fifteen millions in the United Kingdom this was a rate per head of 4*l.* 16*s.* The rate of taxation per head upon the population of the United Kingdom in 1860 was 2*l.* 8*s.* There was the same aggregate amount of taxation, but the burden was divided between twice the number of tax-payers.

The partial return to a real standard of the currency at the period of peace was considered by many to have been a main if

* Tooke's "History of Prices," vol. iii. p. 12.

† "Quarterly Review," July, 1816.

not the sole cause of the distress and embarrassment which we have described. Nevertheless, the Bank of England at the peace scarcely contracted its issues at all. In August, 1813, the circulation of bank-notes was nearly twenty-five millions; at the same season in 1814 it was twenty-eight millions; in 1815 twenty-seven millions; in 1816 only half a million less. The utmost amount of the depreciation of bank-notes was in 1814, when a hundred pounds of paper would only buy 74*l.* 17*s.* 6*d.* of gold—a depreciation of about 25 per cent. In 1815 and 1816 a hundred pounds of paper would buy 83*l.* 5*s.* 9*d.* of gold—a depreciation of nearly 17 per cent. Thus the rise in the value of money, which Cobbett, and many others of less violent politics, declared had produced the wide-spreading ruin of 1816, by causing a proportionate fall of the prices of commodities exchanged for money, was not more than 8 per cent., as compared with the period when the value of an unconvertible paper-money was at the lowest. It is no less true that a vast amount of paper-money was withdrawn from circulation at this period, by the failure of many country-banks, and the contraction of their advances by all who were stable. This was a consequence of the great fall of agricultural produce—a consequence of the diminished credit of the producers. When the restriction upon cash payments by the Bank of England was, in 1816, agreed to be renewed for two years, the bearing of the continuance of the restriction upon the state of prices was not overlooked. On the 1st of May, 1816, Mr. Horner, on his motion for a Committee to inquire into the expediency of restoring the cash payments of the Bank of England, said that, “from inquiries which he had made, and from the accounts on the table, he was convinced that a greater and more sudden reduction of the circulating medium had never taken place in any country than had taken place since the peace in this country, with the exception of those reductions which had happened in France after the Mississippi scheme, and after the destruction of the assignats. The reduction of the currency had originated in the previous fall of the prices of agricultural produce. This fall had produced a destruction of the country bank-paper to an extent which would not have been thought possible without more ruin than had ensued. The Bank of England had also reduced its issues, as appeared by the accounts recently presented. But without looking to the diminution of the Bank of England paper, the reduction of country paper was enough to account for the fall which had taken place.”* William Cobbett, in November, 1816, maintained, not

* Hansard, vol. xxxiv. p. 143.

unreasonably, although he exaggerated the extent of the diminished issue of bank-paper, that if, with reduced prices of commodities the debt and taxes had come down too, there would have been no material injury.*

That the paralysis of industry which marked the latter months of 1815 and the beginning of 1816 was most felt by those whose voices of complaint were least heard, by the working population, was soon made perfectly manifest. There was a surplus of labour in every department of human exertion. Mr. Brand declared in Parliament, at the end of March, speaking especially of the agricultural population, that “the poor, in many cases, abandoned their own residences. Whole parishes have been deserted; and the crowd of paupers, increasing in numbers as they went from parish to parish, spread wider and wider this awful desolation.”† Discharged sailors and disbanded militiamen swelled the ranks of indigence. If the unhappy wanderers crowded to the cities, they encountered bodies of workmen equally wretched, wholly deprived of work, or working at short time upon insufficient wages. But another evil, of which we find no parliamentary record, amidst debates on the prevailing distress, had come upon the land to aggravate discontent into desperation. While the landowners were demanding more protection, and passing new laws for limiting the supply of food, the heavens lowered; intense frosts prevailed in February; the spring was inclement; the temperature of the advancing summer was unusually low; and in July incessant rains and cold stormy winds completed the most ungenial season that had occurred in this country since 1799. In January the average price of wheat was 52*s.* 6*d.*; in May it was 76*s.* 4*d.* The apprehensions of a deficient crop were universal in Germany, in France, and in the south of Europe. The result of the harvest showed that these apprehensions were not idle. The prices of grain in England rapidly rose after July; and at the end of the year, rye, barley, and beans had more than doubled the average market price at the beginning; wheat had risen from 52*s.* 6*d.* to 103*s.*

“The matter of seditions is of two kinds,” says lord Bacon, “much poverty and much discontentment.” Both causes were fully operating in Great Britain in 1816. The seditions of absolute poverty—“the rebellions of the belly,” as the same great thinker writes—were the first to manifest themselves. Early in May, symptoms of insubordination and desperate violence were displayed among the agricultural population of the eastern counties.

* “Political Register,” November 30, 1816.

† Hansard, vol. xxxiii. p. 671.

These "poor dumb mouths" soon made themselves audible. They combined in the destruction of property with a fierce recklessness that startled those who saw no danger but in the violence of dense populations, and who were constantly proclaiming that the nation which builds on manufactures sleeps upon gunpowder. In Suffolk, nightly fires of incendiaries began to blaze in every district: threshing machines were broken or burnt in open day; mills were attacked. At Brandon, near Bury, large bodies of labourers assembled to prescribe a maximum price of grain and meat, and to pull down the houses of butchers and bakers. They bore flags, with the motto, "Bread or Blood." At Bury and at Norwich, disturbances of a similar nature were quickly repressed. But the most serious demonstrations of the spirit of the peasantry arose in what is called "the Isle of Ely." When we regard the peculiar character of this portion of the country, we may easily understand how a great fall in the prices of grain had driven the land out of cultivation, and cast off the labour of the peasantry, to be as noxious in its stagnation as the overcharged waters of that artificially fertile region. That country was then very imperfectly drained, and the rates for the imperfect drainage being unpaid by many tenants, the destructive agencies of nature were more active than the healing and directing energies of man. It is well known, too, that in the fen countries the temptation of immediate profit had more than commonly led the farmer to raise exhausting crops, and that the nature of the land, under such circumstances, is such, that a more provident tillage, and abundant manure, cannot for a long time restore it. The high prices of wheat from 1810 to 1814 had supplied this temptation. The Isle of Ely, in 1816, had become somewhat like Prospero's isle, where there was "everything advantageous to life, save means to live." It was under such circumstances that, on the 22nd of May, a great body of insurgent fen men assembled at Littleport, a small town on the river Lark. They commenced their riotous proceedings by a night attack on the house of a magistrate. They broke into shops, emptied the cellars of public houses, and finally marched to Ely, where they continued their lawless course of drunkenness and plunder. For two days and nights these scenes of violence did not cease; and the parish of Littleport was described as resembling a town sacked by a besieging army, the principal inhabitants having been compelled to abandon their houses in terror of their lives, leaving their property to the fury of this fearful band of desperate men. There could, of necessity, be but one termination. The military were called in, and a sort

of skirmish ensued, in which blood flowed on both sides. A large number of rioters were finally lodged in Ely gaol. Then came the sure retribution of the offended laws. A Special Commission was issued for the trial of the culprits. Thirty-four persons were convicted, and sentenced to death, on charges of burglary and robbery, of whom five were executed.

Incendiary fires, attempts at plunder, riots put down by military force, spread alarm through districts chiefly agricultural. The distress which had fallen upon the manufacturing and other non-agricultural portions of the population was manifested in many signal ways. At the beginning of July, a body of colliers, thrown out of employment by the stoppage of iron-works at Bilston, took the singular resolution of setting out to London, for the purpose of submitting their distresses in a petition to the Prince Regent, and presenting him with two waggons of coals, which they drew along with them. One party advanced as far as St. Alban's, and another reached Maidenhead Thicket. The Home Office took the precaution of sending a strong body of police, with magistrates, from London, to meet these poor fellows, and induce them to return; and they were successful. The distresses of the workmen in the iron trade were quite appalling. Utter desolation prevailed in districts where iron-works had been suspended. The workmen in these districts used to be surrounded with many comforts. They had saved a little money. The factories were shut up, the furnaces blown out, the coal-pits closed. Then the neat cottages, where hundreds of families had lived in comfort, were gradually stripped of every article of furniture; the doors of these once cheerful dwellings were closed; the families were wandering about the country, seeking for that relief from private charity which the parishes could not supply them. Depredation was very rare. Later in the year, the miners and colliers connected with the great iron-works in the neighbourhood of Merthyr assembled in a tumultuous manner, and their numbers gradually swelling till they reached ten or twelve thousand, they finally extinguished the blast at several works, but did little other damage. These men were on very reduced wages, but their distress does not seem to have been nearly so great as the utter destitution of the Staffordshire colliers.

The Luddite insurrection of 1812 had never been wholly put down.* In 1816, it broke forth with new violence. At Loughborough, in July, many frames employed in the manufacture of lace were destroyed with the same secrecy as in 1812. Armed