

THE NATIONAL DEBT,

FROM THE PEACE OF PARIS, 1815, TILL 1837.

Peace			Principal.		Interest.	
			£	£	£	£
George III.	56 & 57	1816	845,968,483	32,055,350		
		1817	839,382,145	31,591,927		
		1818	840,583,664	31,485,753		
		1819	836,530,982	31,168,540		
		1820	834,900,960	31,354,749		
	George IV.	1 & 2	1821	827,984,498	31,105,319	
			1822	835,297,294	29,722,533	
			1823	827,489,164	30,142,582	
			1824	819,023,672	29,174,122	
			1825	809,811,468	28,987,773	
William IV.	3 & 4	1826	808,826,590	29,415,102		
		1827	805,008,942	29,328,782		
		1828	809,032,289	29,167,877		
		1829	799,799,542	29,067,658		
		1830	784,803,997	28,325,936		
		1831	782,716,684	28,329,986		
Victoria	5 & 6	1832	781,457,599	28,351,318		
		1833	774,730,379	28,481,181		
		1834	773,234,401	28,517,236		
		1835	788,664,201	29,135,811		
Victoria	7 & 1	1836	789,496,896	29,667,464		
		1837	787,529,114	29,537,333		

See continuation on page 439.

THE GROWTH OF THE DEBT.

Period.	Debt.	Interest.	Years of war.	Increase of Debt in Years of war.	Remarks.
1691	3,130,000	332,000			
1701	12,552,486	1,219,147	1691-1697	11,392,925	French War.
1714	36,175,460	3,063,135	1702-1713	21,932,622	War of the Succession.
1748	75,812,132	3,165,765	1718-1721	14,025,424	Continental Wars.
1763	132,716,049	5,032,733	1740-1748	22,531,551	Pitt's Administration.
1792	239,663,421	9,432,179	1756-1763	58,141,024	American War.
1815	861,039,049	32,645,618	1774-1783	104,681,213	War of French Revolution and against Napoleon.
Decrease of National Debt, 1816 to 1837				£854,080,387	
				73,590,535	

CHAPTER X.

Social condition of Great Britain at the period of the Accession of Queen Victoria.—Occupations of the People.—Growth of Cities and Towns.—London.—Increase of Houses.—Supply of Food.—Improved means of Communication affecting that supply.—Cheapening of the necessaries of life.—Conveyance of Mails by Railway.—Limited Postal accommodation.—Public Health.—Inquiry into the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Classes.—Exposure of the unfitness of many Dwellings for healthful occupation.—Workrooms without ventilation, such as those of Tailors and Milliners.—Public arrangements influencing the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population.—Neglect and ignorance universal.—Want of Drainage.—Inadequate Water supply for the preservation of cleanliness.—Public Baths and Washhouses unknown.—Interments within the precincts of large Towns.—Public Walks not provided.—State of the Factories.—Number of Workers in Textile Manufactures.—Beginnings of improvement.—Mining Population.—Employment of Children and Women in Mines.—Agricultural Labourers.—Operation of the New Poor Law.—Neglect of the Labourers by the richer Classes.—Miserable Cottage accommodation.—Dorsetshire Labourers.—Field employment of Women and Children.—Crime in England and Wales.—Juvenile Delinquency.—General state of Education.—First aid of the State to voluntary exertions.—Increase of Schools and Scholars.—Limited ability to read and write amongst the adult population.—General aspects of English Society.

IN the celebrated description of Macaulay of "the state in which England was at the time when the Crown passed from Charles the Second to his brother," he rests its necessary imperfection upon the "scanty and dispersed materials" from which it was composed. In now attempting a description of the state in which the United Kingdom was at the time, or about the time, when the Crown passed from William the Fourth to his niece, we have not the same apology for its incompleteness. The materials from which it must be composed are embarrassing, not from their scantiness but from their fulness,—not from their dispersion in scarce and curious tracts, in private letters and diaries, in the observations of foreigners, in estimates of national wealth resting upon no solid bases, in county histories, in meagre newspapers, in old almanacs. In 1837 we were passing out of the transition state of very imperfect statistics to the period when every aspect of our social condition was to be delineated; when every dark corner was to be explored; when every fact connected with Education, Public Health, Crime and Punishment, Industrial Employment, Pauperism, was to be recorded and tabulated;—the period of Commissioners and Boards—the period when, according to Sydney Smith, "the whole earth

was, in fact, in Commission." Out of several hundred Official Reports we may to some extent learn what we were a quarter of a century ago, and be enabled to answer the question, "Are we improved?"

In commencing our survey of what Shaksperé, in his famous comparison of "the state of man in divers functions" with the working of "the honey-bees," calls "a peopled kingdom," we beg to repeat what we said at the outset of this History, that we do not apply the term "People" to any distinct class or section of the population. We especially protest against the abuse of the term "People" which some amongst us have adopted from the modern literature of France, when they assume that the non-capitalist portion of the industrious classes are exclusively "the People." The intelligent public officers to whom has been committed the superintendence of the Census during the last twenty years have classified the "Occupations of the People" as the occupations of the entire community.

The Census of 1841 is sufficiently near the date of the accession of Victoria to furnish a tolerably correct estimate of the various functions performed in that great working-hive of which she was the queen-bee. In the spring of that year, out of the entire population of England, Wales, and Scotland, amounting to nearly nineteen millions, nearly eight millions, male and female, were distinctly classified by their occupations. They were the supporters of the residue of the population, including children of all ages. Speaking in round numbers, three millions were engaged in commerce, trade, and manufactures; a million and a half in agriculture; seven hundred thousand were labourers not agricultural; a hundred and thirty thousand formed the army at home and abroad; two hundred and eighteen thousand were employed on the sea and in inland navigation; sixty-three thousand were professional persons, clerical, legal, and medical; a hundred and forty thousand were following miscellaneous pursuits as educated persons; seventeen thousand were in the government Civil Service; twenty-five thousand were parochial and other officers; eleven hundred thousand were domestic servants; five hundred thousand were persons of independent means; and two hundred thousand were alms people, pensioners, paupers, lunatics, and prisoners. This wonderful variety of stations and pursuits constitutes the distinctive character of modern British civilization. All are held together upon that great principle which Plato sets forth in emphatic words: "It is not alone wisdom and strength which makes a State simply wise and strong. But order, like that harmony called the diapason, is dif-

fused throughout the whole State, making both the weakest, and the strongest, and the middling people, concert the same melody."

A very large proportion of the three millions of the people engaged in commerce, trade, and manufacture were necessarily to be found in the cities and towns. In 1811, at the commencement of the Regency, there were in England only twelve of the cities and towns whose population exceeded thirty thousand; in Scotland there were four above that number. In 1841, taking the same limits of places as in 1811, there were thirty-one cities and towns in England with a larger population than thirty thousand, and in Scotland six. In the course of thirty years the London of one million ten thousand people had become the dwelling-place of one million seven hundred thousand; * Manchester and Salford, which thirty years before 1841 numbered a hundred and ten thousand, held two hundred and ninety-six thousand; Liverpool of one hundred thousand had reached two hundred and sixty-four thousand; Birmingham with eighty-five thousand had added a hundred and five thousand to its number; Leeds with sixty-two thousand had added ninety thousand; Bristol with seventy-six thousand had added forty-six thousand. Sheffield, Rochdale, Norwich, Nottingham, each under forty thousand, had about doubled their numbers. Plymouth and Portsmouth had grown in a less proportion. In Scotland, Edinburgh had increased from a hundred and two thousand to a hundred and sixty-six thousand; Glasgow from a hundred thousand to two hundred and seventy-four thousand; Paisley, Aberdeen, Greenock, had doubled their numbers, each exceeding sixty thousand. Of non-commercial places the extension of Brighton and Cheltenham were the most remarkable; in thirty years they had quadrupled their populations. The growth of the smaller provincial seats of trading and manufacturing industry was as remarkable as the instances we have selected of the greater places. Of the sixty-eight chief cities and towns of Great Britain whose comparative population is exhibited in decennial periods by the Census of 1841, the total amount of the population was two million six hundred and ninety-two thousand at the commencement of the Regency, and five million three hundred and forty-one thousand, three years after the Crown passed to Queen Victoria. During the period of thirty years, when the population of sixty-eight principal towns had increased 100 per cent., the aggregate population of England and Scotland had increased only 54 per cent., that is, from twelve million to eighteen million five hundred thousand.

* In the Census of 1814 more extended limits of London were given as adopted by the Registrar-General, which gave the population as 1,873,676.

The one million seven hundred thousand of the people of London in 1841 were inhabiting two hundred and sixty-three thousand houses. Since 1811 the number of houses in the metropolitan district had increased in a much higher proportion than the increase of population. There had been rapidly going on since the Peace, not only in London but in every part of the country, that want which appears never to be satisfied,—the demand for more houses, whatever number of houses are built. In London, during the half century from 1811 to 1861, there has ever been an increasing number of the people ready to pay rent,—people beginning housekeeping, people seeking better house accommodation than the old dwellings, people turning their city houses into warehouses and daily going to and fro in search of health in suburban air. One of the most curious social problems at the period of the Queen's accession, as it had been the marvel of several previous generations, was the apparent difficulty of feeding even five hundred thousand, much more a million, a million and a half, two millions, of human beings, collected together in places more or less densely peopled, comprised within a circle whose radius was four miles from St. Paul's.

In 1841, the metropolitan district of the Registrar-General comprised a population of nearly nineteen hundred thousand on a radius considerably smaller than that of the plan given in the census of 1831, which, in a radius of eight miles, comprised a population a little under eighteen hundred thousand.

A proclamation of Elizabeth against the extension of London exhibits the dread of the Government that the increasing multitudes "could hardly be provided of sustentation, of victual, food, and other like necessaries for man's relief, upon reasonable price." The economists of our own day have shown how visionary would be such a dread under the self-regulating movements of the present social organization. The greatest wonder that London presented to a New Zealander who was brought to England some years ago, was the mystery of feeding an immense population, as he saw neither cattle nor crops. The enormous number, and the fluctuations in their number, of the persons to be fed; the quantity and variety of the provisions to be furnished; the necessity in most cases for their immediate distribution in convenient localities; the accurate proportion of the supply to the demand, so as to be ample without waste;—these considerations point to the difficulty, as well as the paramount importance, of furnishing their daily rations to a host far greater than any army which a commissariat upon the grandest scale could undertake to sustain even for a single day. "This

object," says Dr. Whately, "is accomplished far better than it could be by any effort of human wisdom through the agency of men who think each of nothing beyond his own immediate interest,—who, with that object in view, perform their respective parts with cheerful zeal, and combine unconsciously to employ the wisest means for effecting an object the vastness of which it would bewilder them even to contemplate."*

What appeared to the economist so vast an undertaking in the London of 1831, must at the first glance have appeared a greater difficulty in 1841, when the population had still gone on rapidly increasing. But during that decennial period the means of communication had been so largely increased that the certainty of the supply of food, both as to its abundance and the time occupied in its transit, could be more accurately measured. The corn-barge was still duly sailing from the maritime counties to the port of London to bring the produce of many thousand acres for sale in Mark Lane; the steamboat was also moving up the Thames to bring corn quickly from the ports of the Baltic; and the first steamships from England had crossed the Atlantic in 1838 to contribute to the transportation of that supply of foreign produce which was scantily poured in till the fetters of Protection were knocked off. The cattle of Smithfield were still travelling in vast droves from the north by Highgate, and from the eastern counties by the Whitechapel Road; but the Birmingham Railway was already bringing large numbers to market in better condition and at a lower cost than were effected by the drovers' toilsome march. That railway, and the few others that were gradually being opened, brought also to London large quantities of country-killed meat. In the smaller articles of produce, London, by the agency of steam-vessels, had now an almost inexhaustible supply from foreign ports. Fresh vegetables and fruits came to Covent Garden Market from Portugal; the Pas de Calais sent millions of eggs from its small farms; and the eggs which Ireland exported to England, as well as Scotch eggs and English eggs brought in coasting vessels, justify the calculation that the London population had in the first year of the Queen an annual supply of a hundred millions of eggs collected from sources which were not accessible thirty years before. In 1813 a great meeting of noblemen and gentlemen was held in the Thatched House Tavern, St. James's, to establish a Fish Association, the object of which was to insure a better supply of that luxury of the wealthy in the metropolis. It was scarcely in the contemplation of this meeting that the humbler

* Introductory Lectures on Political Economy, 1831.

markets where the poor congregate should ever have an adequate supply of a perishable article, then brought up the river by hoys dependent upon wind and tide, or carried by stage-coaches at a large increase of the first cost. It has been stated in an interesting little volume,* that when salmon were brought from Scotland in sailing vessels, one cargo in three was totally spoiled from the voyage being protracted by adverse winds. The steam-boats were in 1837 delivering some hundred tons of salmon from Scotland to Billingsgate. A few years later the railways from the southern coast were rendering the turbot and the sole almost as cheap in the London markets as in the fish-shops of the fashionable watering-places near which they were taken. Within the last ten years, the electric telegraph has come to the aid of the railway, by apprising the fish-dealers in London when there is a glut of fish—as of mackerel, which is sometimes taken in extraordinary quantities. Instead of perishing on the shore, the mackerel thus finds its way to thousands of consumers, “alive, alive, O;” as the itinerant dealer was allowed to proclaim on a Sunday morning in the old days of slow conveyance.

As important as the equalization of prices in the necessaries of life by improved means of conveyance, was the more rapid communication beginning to be effected in the transmission of letters. The Railway System was so far established in 1838, that an Act of Parliament was passed in that year for providing for the conveyance of Mails by railroads. The mails between Manchester and Liverpool were conveyed by railroad as early as 1830; but between London and every town in Great Britain the comparatively slow mode of conveyance continued to prevail. Upon the reduction of the Newspaper Stamp from fourpence to a penny in 1835, the despatch of Newspapers through the post office was so greatly increased that some of the mails were obliged to run without their usual number of passengers, the contractors being indemnified for their loss. The addition to the old mode of conveyance enabled day-mails to be despatched, when the routine of the post office had been revolutionized by Rowland Hill. The organization which was necessary to ensure the triumph of a cheap and uniform rate of Postage was so little developed when the Queen came to the throne, that there were only three thousand post offices in England and Wales, while the number of parishes was eleven thousand. It was estimated that a fourth of the population were entirely destitute of postal accommodation. Four hundred of the Registration districts, the average extent of each being nearly

* “Our Exemplars. Poor and Rich,” p. 123.

twenty square miles, were without a post office. Yet when we consider what was the cost of postage at that time, we may possibly come to the conclusion that the facilities afforded for sending and receiving letters were ample. The number of chargeable letters in 1839 was in the proportion of four letters per annum to each individual of the population of England and Wales; three in Scotland; one in Ireland. Large as this number may seem when compared with the period of Mr. Palmer's reforms in 1784, when the first mail coach left London, we can only judge of its comparative littleness when we learn that the average of England and Wales in 1861 was in the proportion of twenty-four letters to every one of the population; nineteen in Scotland; and nine in Ireland.* A representative of the spirit which sees nothing but evil in every great social improvement wrote thus in his Diary of July 8, 1839: “The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in bringing forward his Budget, has proposed that the postage on a single letter should be reduced to one penny. This will increase the number of idle scribblers; be of little benefit to the lower classes who seldom have occasion to write; and is likely only to advantage the commercial houses and bankers who can well afford to pay the postage.” † The greatest benefit to his country which the organizer of cheap postage has effected—a benefit which he may contemplate with the honest pride of every man who feels that he has not lived for himself alone—is that he has given a motive for education to “the lower classes,” who now often “have occasion to write;” that he has linked together the affections of households that have become separated by distance, so that even to the colonist in Australia a letter can now find its way as cheaply as it once travelled from London to Windsor.

The distribution of the food of London to its two hundred and sixty-three thousand houses was accomplished more by the agency of shop-keepers than by the stall-sellers at markets. The costard-monger, who derived his name from the apple which he sold, was still the great purveyor of vegetables in the silent streets of the suburbs. He had almost wholly passed away from the busy streets. The orange-woman standing on the pavement with her basket had nearly ceased to traffic. The millions of oranges that steam had brought ripe from the Antilles were to be found in every quarter where there was a fruit-shop or a stall. The public

* In a Lecture delivered at the Royal Institution in 1862, Mr. M. D. Hill brought together a vast body of interesting facts on the Postage System, which we trust he will publish in some permanent form.

† Raikes's “Diary,” vol. 3.

places of refreshment in 1837 were not essentially different from those of the beginning of the century as far as regarded the chop-house and the eating-house. But there were two important changes. The institution of Clubs had materially contributed to the luxurious comforts of the higher classes at a far less expense than that of the old tavern; and the two thousand Coffee-houses that had sprung up in London, where the artizan could obtain his cup of tea or coffee for three half-pence or two-pence and read the newspapers and periodical works, was an advance indicating a very different state of society from that which prevailed in the exclusive days of the Regency.

Valuable to every class of the London population as was the partial cheapening of some of the necessaries of life by the gradual equalization of prices produced by improved conveyance, the physical and moral condition of the great bulk of the people would have been little improved, as long as they were compelled to crowd in districts undrained, in perishing houses ill-ventilated, in pestilential courts and alleys from which typhus especially and every form of contagious and epidemic disease never departed. It is difficult, with all the recorded experience of the better time that has succeeded the first awakening to the consideration of the great question of Public Health, to believe that we are only looking back a quarter of a century when we trace what the humbler classes of London, and of all other great towns, were enduring when Victoria became our Sovereign. Three years before her Majesty's Accession, the public mind was roused, in some degree, to the consideration of this evil in the metropolis by a distinguished architect, Mr. Sydney Smirke; and before a road was made from the east end of Oxford-street direct to Holborn, he pointed out that there was a district—known by the names of The Rookery and the Holy Land,—the retreat of wretchedness, the nest of disease, the nursery and sanctuary of vice. There was scarcely a single sewer in any part of it. Where the plague once raged there was then constant fever. There were houses in which squalid families were lodged in the proportion of twenty-four adults and thirty children to nine small rooms. There were Lodging Houses in which sixty persons occupied nightly a pestilential den of filth and depravity. There were many such places in other quarters of the town. Under the authority of the Poor Law Commissioners in 1838, Dr. Arnott and Dr. Kay made a laborious investigation into the prevalence of fever in the metropolis; and Dr. Southwood Smith carried on similar inquiries into some of the causes of sickness and mortality to which the poor are peculiarly ex-

posed. When their Reports were published, even thoughtful men, as well as those who had rarely looked below the glittering surface of society, were little prepared for such a revelation of the details of the mass of vice, misery, and disease, which existed in close contiguity with the most opulent parts of the great city. In 1839 an Address to her Majesty from the House of Lords, prayed that a similar inquiry should be instituted with regard to the labouring classes in other parts of England and Wales; and such an inquiry was in 1840 required to be extended to Scotland. This duty was undertaken by the Poor Law Commission; and their Report, prepared by Mr. Chadwick, embraced the evidence not only of their Assistant Commissioners, but of numerous medical men of the highest authority. The miserable dens of the working classes in London, inhabited not exclusively by the lowest in condition and in morals, were not unfrequently surrounded by the luxurious mansions of the rich and fashionable, and commonly by the well-constructed houses of the middle ranks. The proportion in which each class bore up against the ills which flesh is heir to are indicated, however imperfectly, by returns of the comparative mortality amongst the average of a town population. The lowest in the scale of well-being indicated by duration of life were the mechanics, labourers, and their families; the highest in the scale were the families of the gentry and professional persons; the medium place was that of the tradesmen and their families. Comparative poverty, no doubt, had a large share in this result; but the peculiar character of the dwellings of each, and the habits of filth and intemperance induced by the total unfitness of many tenements for healthful occupation, had a much larger share in that astounding difference in the death-rate, which showed that the families of the most opulent classes lived twice as long as those of their least fortunate neighbours. In closed courts where the sunshine never penetrated, where a breath of fresh air never circulated, where noxious vapours filled every corner from the horrible cesspools, where the density of population was so excessive as in itself to be sufficient to produce disease, where a single room was often occupied by a whole family without regard to age or sex,—the wonder is how the poor lived at all, uncared for by the rich, who knew them not—neglected by their employers, who in some trades exposed them to labour in workshops not far superior in ventilation to the Black Hole of Calcutta. Amongst these careless and avaricious employers the master-tailors were the most notorious, who would huddle sixty or eighty workmen close together, nearly knee to knee, in a room 50 feet long by 20 feet

broad, lighted from above, where the temperature in summer was 30 degrees higher than the temperature outside. Young men from the country fainted when they were first confined in such a life-destroying prison; the maturer ones sustained themselves by gin, till they perished of consumption, or typhus, or delirium tremens.* One of the most eminent of our living physiologists says, "Mr. Chadwick has shown that many are driven to drinking gin as affording a temporary relief to the feelings of depression and exhaustion produced by living in a noxious atmosphere." † The overworked class of milliners and dressmakers employed in the larger work-rooms of London, ill-ventilated, and rendered doubly injurious by the constant habit of nightwork, when the air was still more deteriorated by gas and lamplight,—this suffering class of young women was being constantly renewed, more than one-half dying of lung diseases before they had attained the average age of twenty-eight.

In the General Report of 1842, next in importance to the inquiry into the condition of the residences of the labouring classes, was the investigation into the public arrangements external to the residences which influenced the sanitary condition of the mass of the population. In London, in the seats of manufacturing industry, in the ports, in the boroughs with a moderate number of inhabitants, in the smallest towns and villages, there was ample evidence of neglect and ignorance, so manifest, and yet so little observed by the people themselves and by the local authorities, that after twenty years of remedial measures, we look back with horror upon the state of the towns in which the father of a family of the present day passed his infancy and boyhood. It was the same throughout the land, whether under the palatial walls of Windsor Castle, or under the crescents of Bath built upon the brows of the hills, or in the steep lanes climbing up to the Cathedral of Durham, or in the open channels in the wynds and closes of the romantic city of Edinburgh, or in the enormous seats of factory labour in Lancashire and Yorkshire, or in Liverpool the great emporium of Commerce which was fast rivalling London—wherever there was a want of drainage, there were always disease, and misery, and families rendered destitute by premature deaths. In Liverpool there were eight thousand cellars occupied by thirty thousand people, few of which cellars, from the absence of drains and sewers, were entirely free from

* Compare the vivid descriptions in "Alton Locke" with the evidence in the "Sanitary Report" of 1842, pp. 98 to 104.

† "Psychological Inquiries." By Sir Benjamin C. Brodie Bart. 3rd edit., p. 78.

damp, and most of them were inundated after a fall of rain. In a Report laid before the British Association for the Advancement of Science it was stated, that the proportion of the population of Liverpool that lived in cellars was 13 per cent., of Manchester 11¼ per cent., of Salford 8 per cent., of Bury 3¼ per cent. In Ashton, Staleybridge, and Dukinfield, where only about 1½ per cent. of the population lived in cellars, the death-rate was abundantly kept up by the common practice, rendered necessary by the insufficient dwelling accommodation, of three, four, five, and even six persons sleeping in one bed.

In the poorer districts of London, such as Whitechapel, and in nearly every city and town of Great Britain, the supplies of water were wholly inadequate to preserve the cleanliness and consequent health of the labouring population. It has been ascertained in all sanitary inquiries that an adequate supply of water had a most advantageous effect on the health of the people. In 1841 there was not a house of the labouring classes in the Whitechapel district in which the water was laid on. Where the poor had to fetch water from the pump or from the plug in the street at a considerable distance, they would rarely take the trouble to obtain the supply without which their dwellings and their persons would be marked by that absence of cleanliness which is almost always accompanied by a low state of morals.

At the commencement of the Queen's reign there was no public provision in London, nor as far as we know in any of the provincial towns, for promoting cleanliness amongst the poor by the establishment of Public Baths and Washhouses. In 1832, when the cholera first appeared in England, there was a poor woman named Catherine Wilkinson, who was so impressed with the necessity of cleanliness as a preventive to the disease, that she encouraged her neighbours to come to her comparatively better house, which comprised a kitchen, a parlour, three small bed-chambers, and a yard, for the purpose of washing and drying their clothes. The good that was manifest induced some benevolent persons to aid her in extending her operations. The large amount of washing done in one week in a cellar, under the superintendence of this excellent woman, represented the amount of disease and discomfort kept down by her energetic desire to do good without pecuniary reward. Such was the origin of public baths and washhouses, which Catherine Wilkinson had the satisfaction of seeing matured in Liverpool in 1846, in a large establishment under the Corporation, to the superintendence of which she and her husband were appointed. In 1844 an Association for promoting Cleanliness