amongst the Poor hired an old building in the midst of a dense and indigent population near the London Docks, and fitted it up as a bath-house and a laundry. What has been since done by this first step in the promotion of cleanliness amongst the poor is one of the most interesting circumstances in our social progress. A quarter of a century ago London was behind every other country in Europe in a provision for convenient and inexpensive public baths. A warm bath, if such could be found without traversing five hundred streets, would have cost the mechanic as much as a week's dinners. Such a bath may now be procured for twopence.

Equally injurious to health as an insufficient supply of pure water was the prevailing custom twenty years ago of burying the dead in towns. In March, 1842, a Select Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to consider the expediency of framing some legislative enactment (due respect being paid to the rights of the clergy) to remedy the evils arising from the interment of bodies within the precincts of large towns, or of places densely peopled. Their Report averred that England exhibited, especially through its capital, "an instance of the most wealthy, moral, and civilized community in the world, tolerating a practice and an abuse which has been corrected for years by nearly all other civilized nations in every part of the globe." A Supplement to the General Sanitary Report was prepared by Mr. Chadwick in 1842 on the subject of Interment in Towns. It is full of the most curious facts, which contributed to awaken public attention to this national disgrace. The parochial divisions of the metropolis, and the rapid increase of the population in each division, had filled the graveyards in the very heart of the densest neighbourhoods, in a manner which was truly described by a witness before the Parliamentary Committee as "sickening and horrible." Liverpool and Manchester had established Cemeteries long before London had attempted this partial remedy of an enormous evil. In 1832 an Act was passed for the formation of a cemetery at Kensal Green. The cemeteries of Norwood and Highgate were added some eight or ten years later, but all these were for the opulent. The parish graveyards still continued open in their constantly increasing abomination. It was the same nearly in every other city and large town, till almost absolute powers were given to the government to put down the evil by the strong hand.

A Committee of the House of Commons was appointed in 1833 to consider the best means of securing open spaces in the vicinity of populous towns, as Public Walks and places of exercise, calculated to promote the health and comfort of the inhabitants. London had its parks in the west-end: but the east, inhabited by a dense population, presented no opportunity to the toiling artisan to enjoy the fresh air without a long walk beyond the region of chimneys. In the seats of the three great manufactures of the kingdom, cotton, woollen, and hardware, whilst the wealth of the large towns had increased in proportion to the increase of population, no provision had been made to afford the people the means of healthy exercise or cheerful amusement. Debasing pleasures naturally took the place of innocent recreations.

In 1831 one of our most lucid prose writers, whose beauty of style was not altogether based upon a solid foundation of wisdom, speaks of the factory system, which was an inevitable consequence of the application of invention and discovery to manufacturers, as "a wen, a fungous excrescence from the body politic: the growth might have been checked, if the consequences had been apprehended in time."* He describes this system as one "which in its direct consequences debases all who are engaged in it; a system that employs men unremittingly in pursuits unwholesome for the body and unprofitable for the mind." In 1841 the total number of persons engaged in the cotton manufacture was about half a million. The total number employed upon all textile fabrics in Great Britain was eight hundred thousand, of which number about four hundred and fifty-three thousand were males, and three hundred and forty-six thousand were females. Many of the evils which Southey exaggerates, in the dread which ultra-Toryism had of artisans and factory-workers,—of all whom they believed could not be regimented into obedience, as they imagined to be possible with the agricultural labourers,—had in 1833 begun to be remedied by legislative interference. These evils had grown up in the rapid development of the powers of the steam-engine; but in 1841, when the textile factories employed five hundred and fifty-five thousand of both sexes above twenty years of age, and two hundred and forty-five thousand under twenty years, the number of very young children had been greatly reduced, the hours of labour were rendered more moderate, and the education of children, with a proper regard for their health, was a duty to be provided for.† Much remained to be done, but a beginning had been made. Independently of the unwholesome dwellings in which many of the factory operatives were compelled to abide at the epoch of which we are writing, their health was better cared for, during their hours of labour, than in the miserable workshops in which too many artisans then earned their bread.

* Southey, "Colloquies," vol. i. p. 171.

† *Ante*, p. 146

In 1841 the number of persons employed under ground in Mines was about a hundred and ninety-four thousand,—about an eighth of the total numbers employed in the cultivation of the surface. More than one-half of this number were employed in coal-mines. In 1840 a Commission was appointed to inquire into the employment of the children of the poorer classes in mines and collieries. The Report of that Commission, presented to Parliament in 1842, exhibited in some mining districts a state of things, with regard not only to children but to women, which could scarcely be paralleled by any of the barbarous practices which have contributed to make negro slavery so abhorrent to the feelings of the people of England. Till this Report was presented, few were aware that a child of six years of age, with a girdle round his or her waist, to which was attached a chain passing under the legs, and fastened to a cart, had thus to drag a load on all fours through avenues not so good as a common sewer. Children and women who were not employed in dragging loads by the girdle and chain had to carry loads of coal on their backs up steep ascents equal in distance to the height of St. Paul's, fourteen times a day. An old Scotchwoman said to one of the Commissioners, "You must just tell the Queen Victoria that we are quiet, loyal subjects; women-people here don't mind work; but they object to horse-work; and that she would have the blessings of all the Scotch coal-women if she would get them out of the pits, and send them to other labour." Through the employment of children the seeds of painful and mortal disease were sown, which were steadily developed as they advanced to maturity; but their moral corruption, through their subjection to uneducated and ferocious men and the indiscriminate employment of girls and boys, was as serious an evil, of which the evidence was perfectly clear. Children of seven years of age, of amiable temper and conduct, who went for one season into the collieries returned greatly corrupted, and, as one witness emphatically said, "with most hellish dispositions." The effect of this employment upon women was to produce a total ignorance of all domestic duties; it wholly disqualified them from even learning how to discharge the duties of wife and mother. This awful misuse of the labour of children and women proceeded not from the necessities of the collier's family but from his own gross and sensual indulgences. It was in evidence that many of the miners worked only eight or nine days in a fortnight, and then spent the large earnings of two-thirds of their working-time in drinking and gambling. Throughout the Staffordshire collieries cockfighting was the ordinary amusement of the population. Their vices had been transmitted from father to

son; the employment of women and children was a relic of former days of barbarous ignorance in the general community. In these cases the slave-driver of his wife and children was the father of the family. But there was another species of slavery in the apprenticeship of orphan boys or paupers to "butty" colliers—those who took assistants or partners in their work.* It was the custom of many of these hard taskmasters to take two or three apprentices at a time, supporting themselves and families out of the labour of these unfortunate orphans, who from the age of fourteen to twenty-one never received a penny for themselves, by a servitude in which there was nothing to learn beyond a little dexterity readily acquired by short practice. The cruelties which were sometimes endured by these unhappy boys appear now to belong to the times of Elizabeth Brownrigg; yet there is nothing in the story of her whipping her apprentices to death that could not be exceeded by the admission of a collier that he had been in the habit of beating his apprentice with a flat piece of wood in which a nail was driven, projecting about half an inch. There are middle-aged men at the present time amongst us, who having escaped from the horrors of a pit-boy's life twenty years ago, detail the cruel punishments that were inflicted by those who knew no mode of enforcing obedience but that of brutal severity.

The total number of Agricultural Labourers in Great Britain in 1841 was a little above one million one hundred and thirty-eight thousand, of which number fifty-six thousand were females. Since 1811 the proportion of the agricultural to the commercial and miscellaneous classes of the people had been gradually diminishing. The general condition of the agricultural labourers of the South, at the period of passing the Act for the Amendment of the Poor Law, has been already indicated.† The amended law had been in operation for three years, when a Parliamentary Inquiry was instituted upon complaints of its administration. The evidence regarding three rural Unions occupied nine-tenths of the labours of the Committee. In 1834 the labourers had manifested a lawless spirit of opposition to the operations of the new law. In 1837 they had become aware that the intention of the amended law was to raise them to a better condition instead of grinding them down. They had increased wages and greater regularity of employment; they had not to endure the degradation of receiving as alms what they had a right to demand as the wages of their industry. Un-

* "Butty. A working companion; a comrade. Not so general with us as amongst the miners and colliers."—*Miss Baker's Northamptonshire Glossary.*

† Chap. vi. pp. 150 to 158.

doubtedly there was individual suffering in the transition from the allowance system to the stern refusal of aid to the able-bodied labourer. In 1840 a great thinker, who had looked below the surface of immediate evils, thus wrote: "Let us welcome the New Poor Law as the harsh beginning of much, the harsh ending of much! Most harsh and barren lies the new plougher's fallow-field, the crude subsoil all turned up, which never saw the sun; which as yet grows no herb; which has 'out-door relief' for no one. Yet patience: innumerable weeds and corruptions lie safely turned down and extinguished under it; this same crude subsoil is the first step of all true husbandry; by Heaven's blessing and the skyey influences, fruits that are good and blessed will yet come of it." * But the time was yet distant when what was wanting in the New Poor Law towards placing the agricultural labourer in his proper relation to the whole social system would be supplied, not by what is called the charity of the rich, but by their feeling of brotherhood towards those who sat with them in the same place of worship, and whose children were christened in the same font as their children. There was a great deal to be done by education before the agricultural labourer could be rendered provident and moral by instruction; before the poor should cease to be abject, and the rich should cease to be overbearing; before the friendly intercourse between man and man, which religion and philosophy equally prescribe, should stand in the place of that proud reserve and that suppressed insolence which were the remaining badges of feudality. The time was still distant when, to say nothing of the sympathy arising out of an enlarged public sentiment, land-proprietors and rich cultivators would be ashamed to let the labourers and their families inhabit cottages inferior to the thatched stables and cattle-sheds of the slovenly farmyards of a quarter of a century ago. A recent writer says of Dorsetshire, that "the next thing after the advent of Judge Jefferies that gave the county a downright shake from end to end was the crusade of S. G. O." † What was that crusade of one who seldom put his lance in rest except to tilt against some armour-clad oppressor? The publicity given by this famous correspondent of the "Times" to the miserable condition of the Dorsetshire labourers produced a controversy in Parliament, in which facts alleged against the neglect of the landowners and farmers of that country were attempted to be disproved. The "Times" then employed a Commissioner to see with his own eyes what was the real condition of a county held to be chronically be-

* "Chartism," by Thomas Carlyle, p. 22.
† "Quarterly Review," April, 1862, p. 285.

hind the age. That Report was entirely confirmatory of all that had been alleged of the excessively low rate of wages, which in most cases was about seven shillings a week; of the oppression exercised over the labourer who did job-work, by his master giving him whatever the master liked; of the system of paying the labourers partly in kind, when they were compelled by the farmers to take an inferior quality of corn called "grists" at a price equal to or above the market price of the best grain; and of the disgraceful state of the labourers' cottages, small, inconvenient, and so entirely unfit for the decent accommodation of a family that in some cases nine persons slept in one room. Lord Sidney Godolphin Osborne (S. G. O.), rector of Bryanstone, near Blandford, in Dorsetshire, had in 1842 testified to the physical and moral injuries to the labourer of a dwelling of the most confined space without anything like proper drainage. His evidence was taken by one of the Special Assistant Commissioners, who reported "on the Employment of Women and Children in Agriculture." Of the early employment of children of both sexes in the fields the greatest evil was to be found in their removal from school before they had acquired the commonest rudiments of knowledge. The employment of women was injurious in their being withdrawn from the proper superintendence of their families, and in that consequent absence of domestic comfort which in most cases drove the labourer to the beer-shop.

In 1836 a Commission was appointed to inquire as to the best means of establishing an efficient Constabulary Force in the counties of England, for the prevention of offences, the detection of criminals, and the protection of property. The Report of this Commission showed that there was an average of a hundred thousand commitments annually of the able-bodied population; and that from eleven thousand to twenty thousand persons were constantly in gaol. Crimes of violence were gradually decreasing, though crimes characterized by fraud were increasing in a still greater proportion. The criminal population of London, and of a few of the larger towns, had been kept within narrower bounds than in the time of George the Fourth, by the establishment of a vigilant Police Force. In the rural districts there was no power but that of the parish constable to prevent the most extensive system of depredation. Even the labouring classes were constantly plundered of the produce of their gardens and garden allotments. "There is no protection for us," said a labourer to a clergyman near Bath. The altered character of criminal punishments, as exhibited in the sentences passed in the years before and after the accession of the

Queen, is very remarkable. In 1834 four hundred and eighty persons were sentenced to death; in 1838 a hundred and sixteen. In 1834, eight hundred and ninety-four persons were sentenced to transportation for life; in 1838 two hundred and sixty-six; in 1834 two thousand four hundred were sentenced to transportation for seven years; in 1838 under nineteen hundred. There was a proportionate increase in the sentences of minor punishments. The number sentenced to terms of imprisonment or to summary punishment was eleven thousand five hundred in 1834; it was thirteen thousand in 1838. The per-centage of criminals unable to read and write was, in 1840, 33·32 for England and Wales. The proportion of criminals unable to read and write was 7 per cent. more in the agricultural counties than in the manufacturing and mixed counties.

It was found, upon an average of five years, 1838 to 1842, that more than one-third of those committed for trial at the assizes were under twenty years of age. The records of summary convictions exhibited a frightful amount of juvenile delinquency. It was estimated that in London thirty thousand of those who have been called the Arabs of civilization, depending from day to day on the uncertain support of mendicancy and plunder, were under sixteen years of age. There was a district lying near Westminster Abbey, called "The Devil's Acre," where depravity was universal; where professional beggars were fitted out with all their appliances of imposture where there was an agency office for the hire of children to be carried about by forlorn widows and deserted wives to move the compassion of street-giving benevolence; where young pickpockets were duly trained in the art and mystery which was to conduct them in due course to an expensive voyage for the good of their country. A Scotch gardener, Andrew Walker, attempted to weed the Devil's Acre; and in 1839 set up a school, in a stable, for reclaiming and instructing the wretched children who swarmed around him. This was the beginning of "Ragged Schools" in London. In that year died John Pounds, the Portsmouth cobbler, who for many years had been rescuing poor children in a similar way, in the populous town where he earned a scanty living. In the course of his benevolent career he had been the gratuitous instructor of five hundred children, who without him would have swelled the numbers of the criminal population. When the Queen came to the throne there was not a Ragged School in London, Liverpool, Manchester, or Birmingham. Bristol was the first great town in which such an institution was organized. Aberdeen led the way in Scotland, to attempt the abatement of juvenile delinquency by the establishment of Industrial Schools.

In that sermon upon the accession of Victoria with whose prophetic aspirations we concluded our last chapter, the preacher, taking a short view of the duties which devolved upon the young Queen,—what ideas she ought to form of her duties,—and in what points she should endeavour to place the glories of her reign,—says, "First and foremost, I think the new queen should bend her mind to the very serious consideration of educating the people. Of the importance of this I think no reasonable doubt can exist. It does not in its effects keep pace with the exaggerated expectations of its injudicious advocates, but it presents the best chance of national improvement."

A quarter of a century is past since these words were uttered. The necessity that was first and foremost in the thought of the sagacious divine, and the especial application of his words, can only be adequately measured, and properly understood, by referring to the fact that up to the period of the accession of queen Victoria the government had scarcely considered it a part of its duty to interfere with the course of private benevolence in rendering assistance to the general education of the people. In 1834, however, lord Althorp, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, had proposed a vote of 20,000*l.* for assisting in building schoolhouses. This sum was to be placed at the disposal of the Treasury; but the government was to take the recommendations of the National Society and of the British or Lancasterian Society, in its appropriation. Grants of nearly similar amount were made by Parliament in 1835, 1836, and 1837. During those four years a sum, double to that contributed by Parliament, had been supplied by the private funds of individuals towards the erection of schools. The same private funds, in addition to the old endowed charities, had been deemed sufficient to carry on the great work of rescuing the people out of the thick darkness in which too many of them were groping their way through life. In February, 1839, the government first constituted a Board of Education, consisting of five Privy Councillors, with the President of the Council as the head of the Board. It was proposed that the distribution of the votes of Parliament for the promotion of education should be confided to this Board, which was especially charged with the formation of Normal Schools. In June of that year a vote of 30,000*l.* was proposed by the government, and was only carried by a majority of two in the House of Commons. After a debate of three days, two hundred and seventy-three members voted an amendment to the ministerial proposition, praying the Queen to revoke the Order in Council by which the Board of Education had been appointed. An address

of the same character was carried by a large majority in the House of Lords. But the government, with a firmness for which every poor child born in the reign of Queen Victoria has cause to be grateful, persevered in its plan.

We have thus anticipated the regular course of our notice of parliamentary proceedings that we may proceed to the last, but not the least important, point of our estimate of the social condition of the great body of the people at the accession of the Queen. In the debate of June, 1839, Mr. Wyse, one of the lords of the Treasury, who, as Member for Waterford, had during several sessions laboured with unwearied diligence to rouse the House of Commons to sanction even the faintest beginnings of a national system of education, boldly maintained that, instead of standing the highest in rank in point of civilization, this country might be regarded as being almost the lowest in comparison with other European nations, in the general diffusion of knowledge amongst the people. He instanced the evils which were constantly experienced of want of education in the elements of science, in matters of every-day life, and in the general pursuits of industry. The farmers were almost wholly ignorant of agriculture as a science; the greater number of them kept indifferent accounts, and many of them none. They were jealous of their labourers, discouraged the education of their children, and made no attempts to improve their social condition. In the towns the gross ignorance of all sanitary arrangements prevented any desire for the improvement of the condition of the lower classes being made available. The people, whether of town or country, whether in the wynds of Glasgow or the cultivated fields of Norfolk, were equally incapacitated by the want of education from rising above the misery and degradation of their social condition. Calculating that there were three million of children in England to be supplied with instruction, half of whom were left in a state of complete ignorance, he maintained that through the effects of this ignorance there were large masses of the population either actually in the commission of crime, or preparing for it. Most truly did he say that the inattention of the upper classes led to the dislocation of the lower classes from them, and they were thus often induced to adopt Chartism and infidelity. The religious education as given in this country was not sufficient.* As an especial illustration of this remark Mr. Wyse referred to an extraordinary occurrence in 1838, when a band of fanatics near Canterbury manifested an amount of ignorance which appeared rather to belong to the superstitions of barbarous countries than

* Hansard, vol. xlviii. cols. 529 to 538.

to the England of the 19th century. We reserve the relation of this outbreak of the grossest ignorance for our next chapter.

Popular education had been making progress in England since 1818.* Taking the Public and Private Schools, it appears as to Day Schools that while in 1818 there was a scholar for every 17·25 persons, in 1833 there was a scholar for every 11·27 persons. As to Sunday Schools, it appears that while in 1818 there was one Sunday scholar for every 24·40 persons, in 1833 there was one scholar for every 9.28 persons. The Day scholars in 1833 had more than doubled those of 1818; the Sunday scholars were three times as many. Between 1811 and 1841 there had been above thirteen thousand schools established, of which five thousand four hundred were Public Schools, and eight thousand seven hundred Private Schools.† The increase of Public Schools in the period between 1831 and 1841 had been equal to the total increase in the three decennial periods from 1801 to 1831. The increase from 1831 to 1841, in the numbers of schools where the children of the Labouring Classes could be taught in the schools to which the State had begun to lend a grudging assistance, had slowly proceeded, amidst the disputes of the advocates and the opponents of popular education in the abstract, and of Churchmen and Dissenters, who, essentially differing as to the religious elements in the instruction of the poor, resisted the interference of the State at all. The increase of schools eight or ten years before the accession of the Queen had produced very little visible effect upon those growing into young men and women. In 1838, upon a comparison of statistical returns in some agricultural and manufacturing districts, the conclusion was come to that, speaking roughly, it might be safely asserted that less than one-half of the adult population of England could write, and that less than three-fourths could read.‡

If we were to attempt to pass from the condition of the poor and lowly to any minute view of the condition of the rich and powerful, we should necessarily be in the region of vague generalities instead of having our course marked out by trustworthy statistics. We must therefore conclude this imperfect notice of the social condition of the kingdom by a few remarks, having reference to all classes, derived from the observations of others rather than from our own impressions.

An Englishman whom circumstances had compelled to relinquish the fashionable society of the Regency for a residence in Paris, returns to London in 1841. He finds the great capital very

* See *ante*, p. 19. † See Education Report, Census 1851, pp. xix. xx.
‡ "Penny Magazine," vol. vii. p. 324.

much altered, and in some respects, such as the buildings and parks, considerably improved. The change of society, he says, has become very apparent within the last few years. "It was called, and perhaps justly, in my time, dissipated; but the leaders were men of sense and talent, with polished manners, and generally high-minded feelings."* One of the most distinguished of Frenchmen comes as ambassador to England in 1840, and regarding with a philosophical intelligence both the great and the humble, he thus contrasts the past with the present. Looking back to the end of the eighteenth century, he says that there were at that time, even in the elevated classes of English society, many remains of gross and disorderly manners. Precisely because England had been for centuries a country of liberty, the most opposite results of that liberty had been developed in startling contrasts. A puritan severity was maintained side by side with the corruption of the courts of Charles II. and the first Georges; habits almost barbarous kept their hold in the midst of the progress of civilization; the splendour of power and of riches had not banished from the higher social regions the excesses of a vulgar intemperance; even the elevation of ideas and the supremacy of talent did not always carry with them delicacy of taste, for the Sheridan who had been electrifying Parliament by his eloquence might the same night have been picked up drunk in the streets. This picture of M. Guizot is not an overcoloured one. The union of dissipation with sense and talent and high-minded feelings was not absolutely necessary to the existence of the better qualities. M. Guizot goes on to say, "It is in our time that these shocking incongruities in the state of manners in England have vanished, and that English society has become as polished as it is free—where gross habits are constrained to be hidden or to be reformed—and where civilization is day by day showing itself more general and harmonious." Two conditions of progress, he continues, which rarely go together, have been developed and attained during half a century in England: the laws of morality have been strengthened, and manners have at the same time become softer, less inclined to violent excesses, more elegant. "Steam," says Mr. Raikes, "has here dissolved the exclusive system, and seems to have substituted the love of wealth for both the love of amusement and of social distinction." There is some truth in this; but the moralist will have no difficulty in making his choice between a profligate exclusive society, and one less brilliant, perhaps less educated, where wealth and learning and refinement are more diffused. Mr. Raikes

* Raikes's "Diary," vol. iv. p. 181.

tells us of Gaming Clubs, the members of which died early, often by their own hands; and how those who survived often looked back to the life at the fashionable Club as the source of their embarrassments.* He tells us of frequent duels, which formerly ended more fatally than when he returned to England. Duelling was not banished then; it was not ridiculed and despised, as it is now. As long as manners were "gross and disorderly," duelling was inevitable; it was almost necessary. The eminent writer and statesman, whose testimony to the social condition of England we are glad to quote, says that the double progress of a stricter morality and a refinement of manners was not confined to the higher and middle classes, but was very apparent amongst the bulk of the people. "The domestic life, laborious and regular, extends its empire over these classes. They comprehend, they seek, they enjoy more honest and more delicate pleasures than brutal quarrels or drunkenness. The amelioration is certainly very incomplete. Gross passions and disorderly habits are always fermenting in the bosom of obscure and idle misery; and in London, Manchester, or Glasgow there are ample materials for the most hideous descriptions. But take it all in all, civilization and liberty have in England, during the course of the nineteenth century, turned to the profit of good rather than of evil. Religious faith, Christian charity, philanthropic benevolence, the intelligent and indefatigable activity of the higher classes, and good sense spread amongst all classes, have battled, and now battle effectually, against the vices of society and the evil inclinations of human nature. When one has lived some time in England one feels to be in an atmosphere cold but healthy, where the moral and social health is stronger than the moral and social maladies, although these abound there."† Such impressions of English society are written under date of 1840. The sentence, "when one has lived some time in England," seems to carry us to the time when M. Guizot found a home amongst us. But, at any rate, in 1840 that change was beginning, which it is one of the greatest glories of the reign to have seen steadily advancing—a better understanding between rich and poor, high and lowly, of their relative duties,—something far safer and happier than arrogant assumption or haughty indifference,—than envious discontent or grovelling servility—in their habitual intercourse.

* "Diary," vol. iii. p. 85.
† Guizot—"Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de mon temps," tome v. 1862.