

tion, through both Houses. M. Guizot says, "he keenly enjoyed that success; and delighted to speak of his Bank act as one of the most important achievements of his public life. Perhaps because it was one of those in which he most fully succeeded in obtaining the object which was ever present to his mind—the union of scientific truth with practical efficiency."\* Eighteen years have gone by since the passing of this measure; and unquestionably its "practical efficiency" has often been tested in times of improvident speculation. On the other hand, whilst the advocates for unlimited paper currency maintained that the "scientific truth" shackled all the operations of industry, which would have flourished with less risk under a perfectly free system of banking, more sober economists could not suppress their belief that, in a season of commercial collapse, the Bank Act increased the difficulties of the crisis, and made a season of pressure become a season of ruin to a far wider class than that of rash speculators.

In the Session of 1843 the Ministry had brought forward a measure for the Regulation of Labour in Factories, which embraced a comprehensive plan for the education of the children employed in the large and increasing establishments where the cotton, flax, wool, and silk manufactures were carried on. These education clauses produced an outcry throughout the kingdom, equally strong from Churchmen and from Dissenters; so that the Government was compelled by the hostility of sects and parties to make no provision at all for the proper training of a class of children who, with a very few exceptions in the case of some enlightened millowners, were left in their ignorance and evil habits to grow up into brutalized and dangerous men and women. Sir James Graham, who had assiduously laboured in the construction of an efficient plan of factory education, was thus compelled, after his measure had been four months under discussion in Parliament, to announce that he would not in that Session press the education clauses in the Factories Bill. He had made alterations, he said, which had not abated the hostility of the Dissenters; the Church had not given him any very cordial support; and without general concord and co-operation the Bill would be inoperative, and would engender religious strife and animosity. Early in the Session of 1844 Sir James Graham again introduced a Bill for the Regulation of Labour in Factories; but the education clauses of the former Bill were now dropped; and, without any provision whatever for education, the sole object aimed at was a proper limitation of the hours of employment for women and children. The House was in

\* "Memoirs of Sir Robert Peel," i. p. 191.

Committee on this Bill on the 15th of March, when upon the discussion of the interpretation clause which defined the word "Night," and the word "Meal-time," Lord Ashley proposed an amendment, "that the word 'night' shall be taken to mean from six o'clock in the evening to six o'clock in the following morning; and that the word 'meal-time' shall be taken to mean an interval of cessation from work, for the purpose of rest and refreshment, at the rate of two hours a day; with a view to effect a limitation of the hours of labour to ten in the day." Sir James Graham opposed this amendment, which he asserted would seriously affect the commercial prosperity of the country, reducing the returns on capital, and involving a diminution of wages to the amount of twenty-five per cent. The government Bill proposed to retain the existing term of twelve hours of factory labour, extending protection to females and young persons. Sir Robert Peel maintained that the opposite suggestion for the limitation of labour to ten hours for females and young persons, would produce a limitation to ten hours for male adults also. The most urgent argument that Sir Robert Peel used was founded upon statistical facts. The exports of the cotton, linen, silk, and woollen manufactures of the country amounted to thirty-five millions sterling out of forty-four millions of all British manufactures exported; so that five-sixths of the exported manufactures of this country would be subjected to a new law, which was to provide that it would not be legal to labour at them for more than fifty-nine hours instead of sixty-nine hours a week; the Saturday being proposed by Lord Ashley to remain without alteration. There would thus be two hundred and fifty days in a year, of which the working hours being reduced from twelve to ten, there would be five hundred hours less labour during fifty-two weeks, which would be equivalent to a loss of seven weeks' working time. Singular were some of the arguments by which Lord Ashley's proposal was supported. Lord John Russell, for example, would vote for it in the hope that a limitation in the hours of labour would compel us to resort to additional supplies of foreign corn to counteract the effect of falling wages. The government were defeated, Lord Ashley carrying his amendment by one hundred and seventy-nine votes against one hundred and seventy. Sir James Graham said that the proposed alteration, when the eighth clause came to be discussed, could be considered in a more substantive form. The next night Lord Ashley stated that he should so word his clause, that for two years the limitation should be for eleven hours, and that after that period the ten hours' restriction should take effect. On the 22nd, when the gov-

ernment strongly opposed the amendment of their Bill in this modified shape, the debate was terminated by two divisions, one of which was contradictory of the other. Upon the proposal to fill up the blank in the clause with the word "twelve," one hundred and eighty-three voted in favour of the motion, and one hundred and eighty-six against it. The House again dividing on the motion that the blank be filled up with the word "ten," for the motion there were one hundred and eighty-one votes, against it one hundred and eighty-eight. In various and complicated shapes this question continued to be discussed for two months, till on the 13th of May, sir Robert Peel, having declared that, estimating that a ten hours' Bill would strike off thirty-six thousand pounds a week from the wages of those employed, and believing it was the duty of the government to take a comprehensive view of all the great interests, commercial, political, social, and moral, of all classes, he would resist the wishes of the factory operatives in order to promote their welfare. "I protest," he said, "against the doctrine, that we are to concede because it is the popular will. If we are satisfied that it is not for the popular interests, then it is our painful but necessary duty to resist. If this House be of a different opinion—if you are satisfied that you must make this great experiment on labour—or if you think concession is inevitable, and that you must give way to the wishes and feelings of the people—be it so! But if you take that course, and if you resolve (as you cannot but do in consistency) to pursue it, you must—I say it with all respect—you must do so under other auspices, and under guides who can trace a clearer and a better way than can the present administration." This very plain intimation, which the biographer of sir Robert Peel describes as "using his right with a somewhat ungentle haughtiness," produced its natural effect. The House rejected the ten hours' clause by a majority of one hundred and thirty-eight, and the government Bill was passed.

The question of the Sugar Duties, which was formerly debated less on financial grounds than on moral and religious, has now lost, in the equalization of duties between colonial and foreign sugar, the interest which once attached to the strong repugnance of a great party to admit slave-grown sugar. Upon commercial grounds there were also two parties, whose interests and principles were strongly opposed. The West India interest resisted that enlargement of the area of supply which would result from the admission of any other than colonial sugar. With them went the formidable Anti-slavery party. The Free-Traders, constantly protesting against the preference of colonial over foreign sugar, had against them the

great band of enthusiasts who regarded slave-grown sugar as the abomination which every good housewife ought to resist, by supporting that monopoly of the West India proprietors which was quite insufficient to supply the demand in this country, and therefore kept all sugar dear. The government in 1844 still held to the principle of a differential duty; but the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the 3rd of June, proposed an abatement of the duty on foreign sugar provided it was the produce of free labour. Upon a proposition of Mr. Miles, a conservative member, for reducing the duty upon British plantation sugar to 20s. per cwt. instead of 24s., and foreign free-grown sugar to 30s., the government were defeated by a majority of two hundred and forty-one against two hundred and twenty-one. This division was a great crisis for the ministry. The division took place on a Saturday morning. On the Sunday a Cabinet Council was held, and on the Monday sir Robert Peel, amidst intense excitement, called upon the House to reconsider its decision, of which important consequences might be the result. This was to declare, in words that could not be mistaken, that if he were to continue in office he must have the full and untrammelled support of the party he represented. The House did reconsider, reversing its decision by a majority of two hundred and fifty-five against two hundred and thirty-three. It was on the occasion of this debate that Mr. Disraeli, with a more marked hostility towards sir Robert Peel than he had before displayed, adverted to the former opinions of the Prime Minister, when he said that he had never entered into the Anti-slavery cry, and would never enter into the cry of "Cheap Sugar." "Now the right honourable gentleman had adopted certain opinions of a very decided character with respect to slavery; and he told the House cheap sugar was of such importance that the existence of his ministry depended upon it, and that the character of his supporters must be sacrificed to secure his ministry. Twenty-four months had only elapsed, and the right honourable gentleman came forward with a detestation of slavery in every place—except in the benches behind him. If the Anti-slavery repugnance were only a little more prevalent—if the right honourable gentleman did not expect upon every division, and at every crisis, that his gang should appear, and the whip should sound with that alacrity which he understood was now prevalent—it would be a little more consistent with the tone which he assumed with respect to the slave-trade, and with that which was now the principal subject of discussion."

The great questions, financial and social, whose decision was to have a permanent influence upon the progress of improvement,

produced little excitement beyond the walls of parliament compared with one ministerial act, which startled the nation for awhile and then quickly passed into oblivion. The British people are, as they ought to be, excessively jealous of any secret and apparently despotic exercise of power by the executive government. The power of issuing a warrant from the Secretary of State for the opening of letters at the Post Office had been exercised, under the sanction of the law, from the very first formation of that institution. It was the express condition in the preamble to the early Acts of Parliament relating to the Post that the government should have this power. In subsequent statutes the power had been confirmed, with certain modifications, even as recently as at the accession of Queen Victoria. There could be no question about the law of the case, and the power had been exercised by Secretaries of State of all parties, without any apprehension that in a discreet use of this right they had violated the great principles of English liberty; from Mr. Fox to lord John Russell they believed that such a power was necessary to the safety of the State. On the 14th of June Mr. Thomas Duncombe presented a petition to the House of Commons from Serafino Calderara, Joseph Mazzini, W. J. Linton, and Wm. Lovett, complaining that their letters had been opened at the Post Office. Sir James Graham stated that, under the power of the act of 1837, which consolidated previous laws, he had given a warrant, no longer in existence, to open the letters of one of the petitioners, whom he did not wish to name. On the 24th of June Mr. Duncombe moved for a Committee of Inquiry, which was refused by a majority of forty-four. For some weeks the country became agitated with a prevailing belief that no letters were safe; that there was an extensive spy-system conducted within an inner chamber of the Post Office. There were few who did not to some extent adopt the declaration of the four petitioners, "that they considered such a practice, introducing as it did the spy-system of foreign states, as repugnant to every principle of the British constitution, and subversive of the public confidence which was so essential to a commercial country." This was indeed a fertile theme for journalists and caricaturists. Continental nations looked on with astonishment at the ebullition of popular rage at an act which appeared to them the simplest and most natural course of a government to pursue. They were accustomed to much stronger displays of bureaucratic power. Sir James Graham, it soon became understood, had thus endeavoured to trace the intrigues of one distinguished foreign enthusiast, whose designs he was powerless to repress in a country where aliens were subjected to no stringent

supervision. Wisely did the ministers resolve at last, that the disclosures of all the facts in a full inquiry was the best mode of setting themselves right in public opinion. On the 2nd of July sir James Graham expressed his anxiety for inquiry; and when Mr. Duncombe moved again for a Committee, the suspected Secretary of State, whilst proposing that the Committee should be secret, moved that it should consist of nine persons, none of whom should be connected with office, and five of whom should be selected from the Opposition. This fairness went far to disarm the public hostility. In August the Committee made their Report. It is a most interesting and elaborate review of the history of the practice, from the time of the statute of Anne in 1711, to that of its exercise in 1844. The Committee reported that the general average of the warrants during the present century did not much exceed eight a year. A similar Committee was formed in the House of Lords. Their Report showed that since 1822, one hundred and eighty-two warrants had been issued, averaging about eight per annum; two-thirds of which had been for the purpose of tracing persons accused of offences, or of tracing property embezzled by suspected offenders. The warrants for detention of letters, at periods when the circumstances of the country seemed to threaten public tranquillity, had scarcely, upon an average of twenty-one years, exceeded two warrants annually in Great Britain. After the publication of these Reports the people were effectually tranquillized; the advertisers of secure envelopes and anti-Graham wafers ceased to find customers; the law remained unaltered. There was a generous motive for the indignation expressed at the opening of the letters of Señor Mazzini, for it was understood that he was the one petitioner to whom the warrant of sir James Graham applied. It was said that this warrant was issued at the instance of the Sardinian minister. The duke of Wellington, in the House of Lords, declared that he was enabled to state that there was no foundation whatever for such a rumour. The Report of the Committee of the House of Commons related that the warrant to open and detain letters addressed to Mazzini was issued on the 1st of March and was cancelled on the 3rd of June; that representations had been made to the government that plots, of which he was the centre, were carrying on upon British territory to excite an insurrection in Italy; that the information, calculated to frustrate this attempt, which was deduced from the letters so opened, was communicated to a foreign power; but the information so communicated was not of a nature to compromise, and did not compromise, the safety of any individual within the reach of that foreign power,

nor was it made known to that power by what means, or from what source, such information had been obtained.

An Act of this Session for the "Regulation of Suits relating to Meeting-Houses and other Property held for Religious Purposes by persons dissenting from the United Church of England and Ireland," was a measure of justice promoted and carried through by the Government. In the time of Charles the Second there was a bequest of certain manors in York in trust to support "godly preachers of Christ's holy gospel." The lady Hewlet, who made this bequest, was a dissenter, and the terms "godly preachers" was sufficient to indicate that the bequest was not intended for the benefit of the Church of England; neither could the sect of Unitarians which afterwards arose have been held as "godly preachers" in the seventeenth century. But after the lapse of many years the Trinitarian secretaries to which lady Hewlet belonged, gradually became Unitarians. Other dissenters, however, held that those in possession had no legal right to the benefit of the bequest, having forfeited it when they abandoned the doctrine which she considered that of "Christ's holy gospel." After a suit of fourteen years, and an appeal to the House of Lords, the judgment of the Court of Chancery was confirmed, that the Unitarians were excluded from the bequest, and that the Trinitarian Protestant dissenters ought to be the possessors of the property. To put an end to the recurrence of similar disputes, lord Lyndhurst brought in a bill, which, however, was strenuously opposed in and out of parliament. The principal object of the Bill was to confirm in the full possession of their establishments any society of Protestant dissenters which had been in possession of them for twenty years. The bishop of London opposed the Bill, on the ground that it legalized the use of chapels for purposes entirely contrary to that for which they were founded. But there was another object in the Bill which provoked a wider opposition. Previous to a statute of 1813, the exceptions to the Act of Toleration which exclusively affected Unitarians had continued in force; in repealing these exceptions the Legislature had not made the Act retrospective. It was the intention of the present Bill to give Unitarians as firm a possession of their ancient property as of that which they had acquired since the statute of 1813. This measure generally was denounced by certain portions of what is called the Religious World as being solely for the benefit of a sect; which other sects, suspending their own differences to unite against a community, rich and intelligent indeed, but a mere fraction as to its numbers,—denounced as standing outside the pale of Christianity. Never-

theless in both houses the Bill, with an alteration of the term of occupancy from twenty to twenty-five years, was passed by large majorities.

The actual prorogation of parliament was deferred for a month later than was required by the exigencies of public business. On the 9th of August lord John Russell took a survey of the general condition of the country his speech being remarkable for the absence of party spirit. Sir Robert Peel recapitulated the measures of the Session, which he said was distinguished for important and efficient legislation. The House of Commons then adjourned to the 5th of September. The House of Lords was engaged in one of the most important functions of that body, that of being a Court of Law in the last resort. Mr. O'Connell and the other prisoners had appealed for a reversal of their sentence upon a Writ of Error. The judges of the English courts were referred to by the Lords for their opinions. Six of the eleven counts were decided by all of nine judges to be bad or informal; seven of the judges held that the judgment must stand, as the Irish judges alone could know upon how much of the verdict they had grounded their sentence. The peers were now to decide. The people both of Ireland and England were waiting their decision with intense interest; the Irish Repealers anticipating that the servile and despotic peers of England would eagerly embrace the opportunity of condemning their great agitator to a prolonged incarceration, and the people of England for the most part being afraid that, through the high sense of honour and the impartial justice of these peers, he would be let loose for further mischief. It was a question of legal construction which could only be properly settled by the Law Lords. On the 5th of September, when the judgment was to be delivered, some lay peers contended that they had a right to vote. The ministry, speaking with a voice of moderation by lord Wharncliffe, one of their supporters, left the decision of the question with the four Law Lords, although it was pretty well known what their decision would be. It was voted by lord Denman, lord Cottenham, and lord Campbell, that the judgment of the Court below should be reversed; lord Brougham voted that it should be maintained. O'Connell on the 6th of September left his prison in a triumphal car, wearing the green and gold repeal cap; and escorted by thousands of people paraded the streets of Dublin for four hours. He then addressed the multitude from his own house in Merrion-Square. He told them that on the next Monday, at Conciliation Hall, he would put forth his plans for the future. His triumph was celebrated throughout Ireland by the most enthusiastic demon-

strations. But his power was gone. His "plans for the future" were altogether abortive. He again had his Monster Meetings, but they ceased to furnish a subject of apprehension to the government. From his balcony on the 6th of September he had told the people, "this is the great day for Ireland—a day of justice." By the justice he was extinguished.

During the month of August the governments of Great Britain and France had been nearly on the point of a serious rupture. In September, 1843, the queen of Tahiti (Otaheite), named Pomaré, who was a follower of the English missionaries, and had professed her desire that her subjects should be converted to Christianity, was induced—probably under the threats of the admiral of a French squadron off her shores—to place herself under the protectorate of France. The natives were angry at this, and showed marked hostility to the French among them. In November admiral Dupetit Thouars landed troops on the island; set up the French flag, removing queen Pomaré's ensign; and issued a proclamation that Tahiti belonged to France. The French government disavowed this act; but, says M. Guizot, "The French flag had just been planted in the islands of Polynesia, and we could not consent that, at the very moment of its appearance, it should be withdrawn."\* French honour would be wounded, said a party in the Chambers, if the national flag which the admiral had set up should be removed. The office of British consul at Tahiti was filled by a missionary named Pritchard. When queen Pomaré was deposed he hauled down his flag, declaring his functions as consul were at an end, as he was not accredited by the English government to a French colony in that capacity. Four months afterwards the French authorities, believing that he had instigated the hostility of the natives to their rule, seized him, and required as a condition of his release from imprisonment that he should immediately leave the Pacific. Mr. Pritchard arrived in England on the 26th of July, and there was immediately an outburst of national indignation which the government did not attempt to repress. On the contrary, sir Robert Peel said in parliament on the 31st of July. "We have received accounts from Tahiti, and presuming on the accuracy of these accounts, which I have no reason whatever to call in question, I do not hesitate to say, that a gross outrage, accompanied with gross indignity, has been committed upon the British consul in that island." M. Guizot, in his account of this affair, says the words which sir Robert Peel had used were "unseasonable and inaccurate;" but he adds, that sir

\* "Memoirs of Sir R. Peel," p. 168.

Robert Peel, in his communication with the French government, stated that he did not admit the correctness of the newspaper versions of his speech. Nevertheless the parliamentary language of lord Aberdeen might have been equally termed "unseasonable;" for on the 1st of August he said, "the late outrage of the French at Tahiti was of so flagrant a character as to be almost incredible." M. Guizot says in his memoirs of sir R. Peel, that he could not with propriety relate the delicate negotiations to which this affair gave rise between lord Aberdeen and himself, which, "ended in results, just in themselves, honourable to the two cabinets, and salutary to the two countries."\* The French government, whilst maintaining that it had good reason for sending Mr. Pritchard away from the island, acknowledged that useless and vexatious proceedings had been taken respecting him, of which they disapproved, and offered to award him compensation for his losses and sufferings.

Upon the prorogation of parliament it was stated in the Queen's Speech that the danger of an interruption to the good understanding and friendly relations between this country and France had been happily averted by the spirit of justice and moderation which had animated the two governments. The *entente cordiale* was to be confirmed by a visit of the King of the French to her Majesty. On the 7th of October he arrived at Windsor Castle, where he remained for a week, being installed a Knight of the Garter, and entertained with sumptuous banquets. It will perhaps be for the historian at some future day to relate whether Louis Philippe, during this friendly visit, forebore altogether to approach the delicate subject of matrimonial alliances of his own family with Spain. His far-reaching projects presented, a year or two later, a question of far greater danger to the good understanding and friendly relations between the two countries, than the arbitrary acts perpetrated upon a poor missionary at Tahiti.

It was in this year that the Prince de Joinville published his celebrated "Note on the State of the Naval Forces of France." With the general public a document like this passes into oblivion, after the lapse of eighteen or twenty years, unless it be revived for the purpose of maintaining some exclusive opinions either of a war-party or a peace-party. We have alluded to this production in the preceding volume: † and there we should have left the subject, had not a politician of no ordinary mark recently called attention to it as a point of history,—of course with his own gloss. "The principal contribution to the first panic," says Mr.

\* "Memoirs by Sir Robert Peel," p. 178.

† *Ante*, vol. vii. p. 377, note.

Cobden, previous to the publication of the duke of Wellington's letter, was the pamphlet of Prince Joinville. It is difficult now, after a calm perusal of this tract, to understand how it could have been pressed into the service of the alarmists. It is filled throughout with complaints of the inferiority of the French navy, and offers not a few probably unmerited compliments to the superior management of England." Mr. Cobden then quotes the concluding passage of the pamphlet: "I have been obliged to expose the secret of our weakness compared to the greatness of British power; but I should think myself happy if, by the sincere avowal of those sorrowful truths, I were able to dissipate the illusion, in which are so many clever persons, as to the real condition of the navy of France, and to decide them to ask with me those salutary reforms which alone can give our navy a new era of power and glory."\*

The Prince de Joinville quotes a passage from a speech in the House of Commons on the 29th of February, 1844, in which it was said that if steam-vessels had been employed as at present, Napoleon might easily have landed even fifteen or twenty thousand men on our shores; and that although such a debarkation would not have had much success, the effect would have been "to destroy that confidence which our insular situation now inspires." The speaker, says the royal pamphleteer, adjured the legislature to take into consideration the great use that might be made of steam navigation in the event of a new war.† This is the text which the Prince takes for his exhortation. Let us build steam vessels of war as quickly as possible, to maintain some approach to equality with the hundred and twenty-five steam vessels of war of Great Britain, of which number seventy-seven are armed. No suggestion could have been more proper. But what are the definite objects he proposes for a large addition to the French steam navy, beyond the defence of the ports and arsenals of France in the event of a war? "Our successes would not be brilliant, because we should take care at first to avoid compromising all our resources in decisive encounters. But we should carry on war with certainty, because we should attack two things equally vulnerable—the confidence of the English people in the insular position of their country, and its maritime commerce. Who can doubt that, with a steam navy strongly organized, we should have the means of inflicting upon the enemy's coasts losses and sufferings unknown to a nation which has never felt all the miseries which war

\* "The Three Panics," p. 7.

† The speaker was Mr. Spring Rice, on the subject of Harbours of Refuge. See Hansard, vol. lxxiii. col. 400.

brings in its train? As the complement of these sufferings would come the evil, equally new for that nation,—that of confidence lost. The wealth accumulated on its coasts and in its ports would cease to remain in security."

We have given "a calm perusal to this tract," and we do *not* find it "difficult to understand how it could have been pressed into the service of the alarmists." Mr. Cobden quotes a remonstrance by sir William Molesworth to the "Spectator" in January, 1848, in which the philosophical statesman asks "the editor of that staid and philosophical print" whether he considered the French to be ruffians, Pindarees, freebooters, so that "you believe it necessary to keep constant watch and ward against them, as our Saxon forefathers did against the Danes and the Nordmen, lest they should burn our towns, plunder our coasts, and put our queen to ransom." The year 1847—when Louis Philippe and his ministers were full of ambitious projects not very different from those which Louis the Fourteenth had cherished—was not so far removed from 1844, that the people of England had forgotten that a son of the king of the French had published a pamphlet which, to use Mr. Cobden's words "had sounded like a tocsin in our ears;" that a prince of the blood royal had proposed to "burn our towns and plunder our coasts;" had, to repeat the honest language of our great soldier which we have before quoted, issued "an invitation and provocative to war, to be carried on in a manner such as had been disclaimed by the civilized portions of mankind."\*

\* The pamphlet of the Prince de Joinville, with its accompanying tables, is given in full in "Annuaire Historique," 1844, Appendice, p. 372.