

pleasure of his existence. The second cause is the cheap postage, the moral benefits of which cannot be exaggerated. And the third is that unshackled press which has furnished him with endless sources of instruction, information, and amusement.

Gentlemen, if you would permit me, I would now make an observation upon another class of the laboring population. This is not a civic assembly, although we meet in a city. That was for convenience, but the invitation which I received was to meet the county and all the boroughs of Lancashire; and I wish to make a few observations upon the condition of the agricultural laborer. That is a subject which now greatly attracts public attention. And, in the first place, to prevent any misconception, I beg to express my opinion that an agricultural laborer has as much right to combine for the bettering of his condition as a manufacturing laborer or a worker in metals. If the causes of his combination are natural—that is to say, if they arise from his own feelings and from the necessities of his own condition—the combination will end in results mutually beneficial to employers and employed. If, on the other hand, it is factitious and he is acted upon by extraneous influences and extraneous ideas, the combination will produce, I fear, much loss and misery both to employers and employed; and after a time he will find himself in a similar, or in a worse, position.

Gentlemen, in my opinion, the farmers of England cannot, as a body, afford to pay higher wages than they do, and those who will answer me by saying that they must find their ability by the reduction of rents are, I think, involving themselves with economic laws which may prove too difficult for them to cope with. The profits of a farmer

are very moderate. The interest upon capital invested in land is the smallest that any property furnishes. The farmer will have his profits and the investor in land will have his interest, even though they may be obtained at the cost of changing the mode of the cultivation of the country. Gentlemen, I should deeply regret to see the tillage of this country reduced, and a recurrence to pasture take place. I should regret it principally on account of the agricultural laborers themselves. Their new friends call them Hodge, and describe them as a stolid race. I must say that, from my experience of them, they are sufficiently shrewd and open to reason. I would say to them with confidence, as the great Athenian said to the Spartan who rudely assailed him: "Strike, but hear me."

First, a change in the cultivation of the soil of this country would be very injurious to the laboring class; and second, I am of opinion that that class, instead of being stationary, has made, if not as much progress as the manufacturing class, very considerable progress during the last forty years. Many persons write and speak about the agricultural laborer with not so perfect a knowledge of his condition as is desirable. They treat him always as a human being who in every part of the country finds himself in an identical condition. Now, on the contrary, there is no class of laborers in which there is greater variety of condition than that of the agricultural laborers. It changes from north to south, from east to west, and from county to county. It changes even in the same county, where there is an alteration of soil and of configuration. The hind in Northumberland is in a very different condition from the famous Dorsetshire laborer; the tiller of the soil in Lincolnshire is different from his fellow-agriculturalist in Sussex. What the effect

of manufactures is upon the agricultural districts in their neighborhood it would be presumption in me to dwell upon; your own experience must tell you whether the agricultural laborer in North Lancashire, for example, has had no rise in wages and no diminution in toil. Take the case of the Dorsetshire laborer—the whole of the agricultural laborers on the southwestern coast of England for a very long period worked only half the time of the laborers in other parts of England, and received only half the wages. In the experience of many, I dare say, who are here present, even thirty years ago a Dorsetshire laborer never worked after three o'clock in the day; and why? Because the whole of that part of England was demoralized by smuggling. No one worked after three o'clock in the day, for a very good reason—because he had to work at night. No farmer allowed his team to be employed after three o'clock, because he reserved his horses to take his illicit cargo at night and carry it rapidly into the interior. Therefore, as the men were employed and remunerated otherwise, they got into a habit of half work and half pay so far as land was concerned, and when smuggling was abolished—and it has only been abolished for thirty years—these imperfect habits of labor continued, and do even now continue to a great extent. That is the origin of the condition of the agricultural laborer in the southwestern part of England.

But now, gentlemen, I want to test the condition of the agricultural laborer generally; and I will take a part of England with which I am familiar, and can speak as to the accuracy of the facts—I mean the group described as the south-midland counties. The conditions of labor there are the same, or pretty nearly the same throughout. The group may be described as a strictly agricultural com-

munity, and they embrace a population of probably a million and a half. Now, I have no hesitation in saying that the improvement in their lot during the last forty years has been progressive and is remarkable. I attribute it to three causes. In the first place, the rise in their money wages is no less than fifteen per cent. The second great cause of their improvement is the almost total disappearance of excessive and exhausting toil, from the general introduction of machinery. I don't know whether I could get a couple of men who could or, if they could, would thresh a load of wheat in my neighborhood. The third great cause which has improved their condition is the very general, not to say universal, institution of allotment grounds. Now, gentlemen, when I find that this has been the course of affairs in our very considerable and strictly agricultural portion of the country, where there have been no exceptional circumstances, like smuggling, to degrade and demoralize the race, I cannot resist the conviction that the condition of the agricultural laborers, instead of being stationary, as we are constantly told by those not acquainted with them, has been one of progressive improvement, and that in those counties—and they are many—where the stimulating influence of a manufacturing neighborhood acts upon the land, the general conclusion at which I arrive is that the agricultural laborer has had his share in the advance of national prosperity. Gentlemen, I am not here to maintain that there is nothing to be done to increase the well-being of the working classes of this country, generally speaking. There is not a single class in the country which is not susceptible of improvement; and that makes the life and animation of our society. But in all we do we must remember, as my noble friend told them at Liverpool, that

much depends upon the working classes themselves; and what I know of the working classes in Lancashire makes me sure that they will respond to this appeal. Much, also, may be expected from that sympathy between classes which is a distinctive feature of the present day; and, in the last place, no inconsiderable results may be obtained by judicious and prudent legislation. But, gentlemen, in attempting to legislate upon social matters, the great object is to be practical—to have before us some distinct aims and some distinct means by which they can be accomplished.

Gentlemen, I think public attention as regards these matters ought to be concentrated upon sanitary legislation. That is a wide subject, and, if properly treated, comprises almost every consideration which has a just claim upon legislative interference. Pure air, pure water, the inspection of unhealthy habitations, the adulteration of food—these and many kindred matters may be legitimately dealt with by the legislature; and I am bound to say the legislature is not idle upon them; for we have at this time two important measures before Parliament on the subject. One—by a late colleague of mine, Sir Charles Adderley—is a large and comprehensive measure, founded upon a sure basis, for it consolidates all existing public acts, and improves them. A prejudice has been raised against that proposal, by stating that it interferes with the private acts of the great towns. I take this opportunity of contradicting that. The bill of Sir Charles Adderley does not touch the acts of the great towns. It only allows them, if they think fit, to avail themselves of its new provisions.

The other measure by the government is of a partial character. What it comprises is good, so far as it goes, but it shrinks from that bold consolidation of existing

acts which I think **one** of the great merits of Sir Charles Adderley's bill, **which** permits us to become acquainted with how much may **be** done in favor of sanitary improvement by existing **provisions**. Gentlemen, I cannot impress upon you too **strongly** my conviction of the importance of the legislature and **society** uniting together in favor of these important results. **A** great scholar and a great wit, three hundred years ago, **said** that, in his opinion, there was a great mistake in **the** Vulgate, which, as you all know, is the Latin translation of the Holy Scriptures, and that, instead of saying "**V**anity of vanities, all is vanity"—*Vanitas vanitatum, omnia vanitas*—the wise and witty king really said: "*Sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas.*" Gentlemen, it is **impossible** to overrate the importance of the subject. After all, **the** first consideration of a minister should be the health of the people. A land may be covered with historic trophies, with museums of science and galleries of art, with universities and with libraries; the people may be civilized and ingenious; the country may be even famous in the **annals** and action of the world, but, gentlemen, if the **population** every ten years decreases, and the stature of **the** race every ten years diminishes, the history of that country will soon be the history of the past.

Gentlemen, I said I had not come here to make a party speech. I have **addressed** you upon subjects of grave, and I will venture to believe of general, interest; but to be here and altogether silent upon the present state of public affairs would not be respectful to you, and, perhaps, on the whole, would be thought incongruous. Gentlemen, I cannot pretend that our position either at home or abroad is in my opinion satisfactory. At home; at a period of immense prosperity, with a people contented and naturally loyal,

we find to our surprise the most extravagant doctrines professed and the fundamental principles of our most valuable institutions impugned, and that, too, by persons of some authority. Gentlemen, this startling inconsistency is accounted for, in my mind, by the circumstances under which the present administration was formed. It is the first instance in my knowledge of a British administration being avowedly formed on a principle of violence. It is unnecessary for me to remind you of the circumstances which preceded the formation of that government. You were the principal scene and theatre of the development of statesmanship that then occurred. You witnessed the incubation of the portentous birth. You remember when you were informed that the policy to secure the prosperity of Ireland and the content of Irishmen was a policy of sacrilege and confiscation. Gentlemen, when Ireland was placed under the wise and able administration of Lord Abercorn, Ireland was prosperous, and I may say content. But there happened at that time a very peculiar conjuncture in politics. The Civil War in America had just ceased; and a band of military adventurers—Poles, Italians, and many Irishmen—concocted in New York a conspiracy to invade Ireland, with the belief that the whole country would rise to welcome them. How that conspiracy was baffled—how those plots were confounded, I need not now remind you. For that we were mainly indebted to the eminent qualities of a great man who has just left us. You remember how the constituencies were appealed to to vote against the government which had made so unfit an appointment as that of Lord Mayo to the viceroyalty of India. It was by his great qualities when Secretary for Ireland, by his vigilance, his courage,

his patience, and his perseverance that this conspiracy was defeated. Never was a Minister better informed. He knew what was going on at New York just as well as what was going on in the city of Dublin.

When the Fenian conspiracy had been entirely put down, it became necessary to consider the policy which it was expedient to pursue in Ireland; and it seemed to us at that time that what Ireland required after all the excitement which it had experienced was a policy which should largely develop its material resources. There were one or two subjects of a different character, which, for the advantage of the State, it would have been desirable to have settled, if that could have been effected with a general concurrence of both the great parties in that country. Had we remained in office, that would have been done. But we were destined to quit it, and we quitted it without a murmur. The policy of our successors was different. Their specific was to despoil churches and plunder landlords, and what has been the result? Sedition rampant, treason thinly veiled, and whenever a vacancy occurs in the representation a candidate is returned pledged to the disruption of the realm. Her Majesty's new Ministers proceeded in their career like a body of men under the influence of some delirious drug. Not satiated with the spoliation and anarchy of Ireland, they began to attack every institution and every interest, every class and calling in the country.

It is curious to observe their course. They took into hand the army. What have they done? I will not comment on what they have done. I will historically state it, and leave you to draw the inference. So long as constitutional England has existed there has been a jealousy among

all classes against the existence of a standing army. As our empire expanded, and the existence of a large body of disciplined troops became a necessity, every precaution was taken to prevent the danger to our liberties which a standing army involved.

It was a first principle not to concentrate in the island any overwhelming number of troops, and a considerable portion was distributed in the colonies. Care was taken that the troops generally should be officered by a class of men deeply interested in the property and the liberties of England. So extreme was the jealousy that the relations between that once constitutional force, the militia, and the sovereign were rigidly guarded, and it was carefully placed under local influences. All this is changed. We have a standing army of large amount, quartered and brigaded and encamped permanently in England, and fed by a considerable and constantly increasing reserve.

It will in due time be officered by a class of men eminently scientific, but with no relations necessarily with society; while the militia is withdrawn from all local influences, and placed under the immediate command of the Secretary of War. Thus, in the nineteenth century, we have a large standing army established in England, contrary to all the traditions of the land, and that by a Liberal government, and with the warm acclamations of the Liberal party.

Let us look what they have done with the Admiralty. You remember, in this country especially, the denunciations of the profligate expenditure of the Conservative government, and you have since had an opportunity of comparing it with the gentler burden of Liberal estimates. The navy was not merely an instance of profligate expenditure, but of incompetent and inadequate management. A

great revolution was promised in its administration. A gentleman [Mr. Childers] almost unknown to English politics was strangely preferred to one of the highest places in the councils of her Majesty. He set to at his task with ruthless activity. The Consulative Council, under which Nelson had gained all his victories, was dissolved. The secretaryship of the Admiralty, an office which exercised a complete supervision over every division of that great department—an office which was to the Admiralty what the Secretary of State is to the kingdom—which, in the qualities which it required and the duties which it fulfilled, was rightly a stepping-stone to the Cabinet, as in the instances of Lord Halifax, Lord Herbert, and many others—was reduced to absolute insignificance. Even the office of Control, which of all others required a position of independence, and on which the safety of the navy mainly depended, was deprived of all its important attributes. For two years the Opposition called the attention of Parliament to these destructive changes, but Parliament and the nation were alike insensible. Full of other business, they could not give a thought to what they looked upon merely as captious criticism. It requires a great disaster to command the attention of England; and when the "Captain" was lost, and when they had the detail of the perilous voyage of the "Megara," then public indignation demanded a complete change in this renovating administration of the navy.

And what has occurred? It is only a few weeks since that in the House of Commons I heard the naval statement made by a new First Lord [Mr. Goschen], and it consisted only of the rescinding of all the revolutionary changes of his predecessor, the mischief of every one of which during the last two years has been pressed upon the attention of

Parliament and the country by that constitutional and necessary body, the Opposition. Gentlemen, it will not do for me—considering the time I have already occupied, and there are still some subjects of importance that must be touched—to dwell upon any of the other similar topics, of which there is a rich abundance. I doubt not there is in this hall more than one farmer who has been alarmed by the suggestion that his agricultural machinery should be taxed. I doubt not there is in this hall more than one publican who remembers that last year an act of Parliament was introduced to denounce him as a “sinner.” I doubt not there are in this hall a widow and an orphan who remember the profligate proposition to plunder their lonely heritage. But, gentlemen, as time advanced it was not difficult to perceive that extravagance was being substituted for energy by the government. The unnatural stimulus was subsiding. Their paroxysms ended in prostration. Some took refuge in melancholy, and their eminent chief alternated between a menace and a sigh. As I sat opposite the Treasury bench the ministers reminded me of one of those marine landscapes not very unusual on the coast of South America. You behold a range of exhausted volcanoes. Not a flame flickers on a single pallid crest. But the situation is still dangerous. There are occasional earthquakes, and ever and anon the dark rumbling of the sea.

But, gentlemen, there is one other topic on which I must touch. If the management of our domestic affairs has been founded upon a principle of violence, that certainly cannot be alleged against the management of our external relations. I know the difficulty of addressing a body of Englishmen on these topics. The very phrase “Foreign Affairs” makes an Englishman convinced that I am about to treat of sub-

jects with which he has no concern. Unhappily the relations of England to the rest of the world, which are “Foreign Affairs,” are the matters which most influence his lot. Upon them depends the increase or reduction of taxation. Upon them depends the enjoyment or the embarrassment of his industry. And yet, though so momentous are the consequences of the mismanagement of our foreign relations, no one thinks of them till the mischief occurs and then it is found how the most vital consequences have been occasioned by mere inadvertence.

I will illustrate this point by two anecdotes. Since I have been in public life there has been for this country a great calamity and there is a great danger, and both might have been avoided. The calamity was the Crimean War. You know what were the consequences of the Crimean War: A great addition to your debt, an enormous addition to your taxation, a cost more precious than your treasure—the best blood of England. Half a million of men, I believe, perished in that great undertaking. Nor are the evil consequences of that war adequately described by what I have said. All the disorders and disturbances of Europe, those immense armaments that are an incubus on national industry and the great obstacle to progressive civilization, may be traced and justly attributed to the Crimean War. And yet the Crimean War need never have occurred.

When Lord Derby acceded to office, against his own wishes, in 1852, the Liberal party most unconstitutionally forced him to dissolve Parliament at a certain time by stopping the supplies, or at least by limiting the period for which they were voted. There was not a single reason to justify that course, for Lord Derby had only accepted office, having once declined it, on the renewed application