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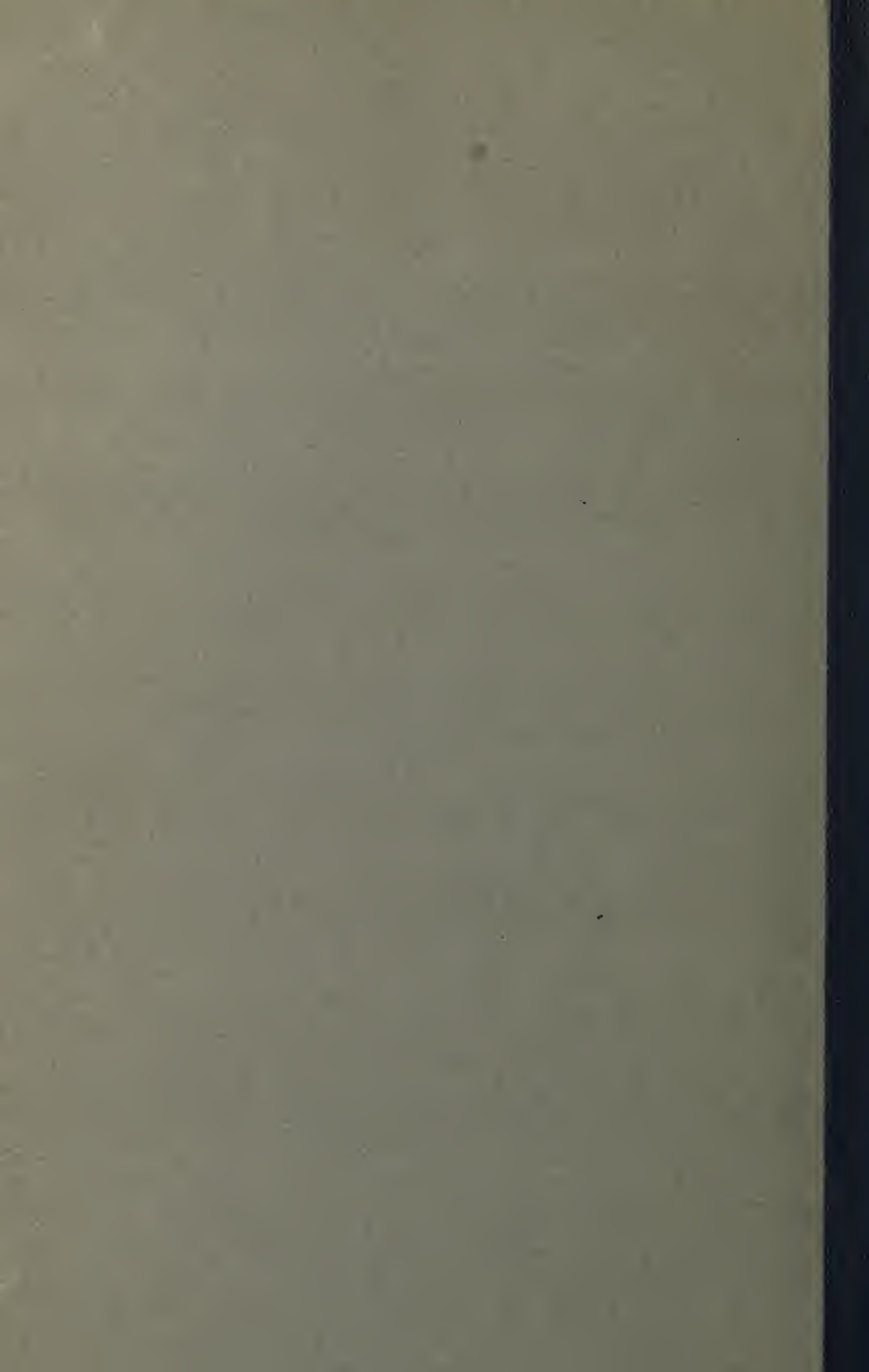
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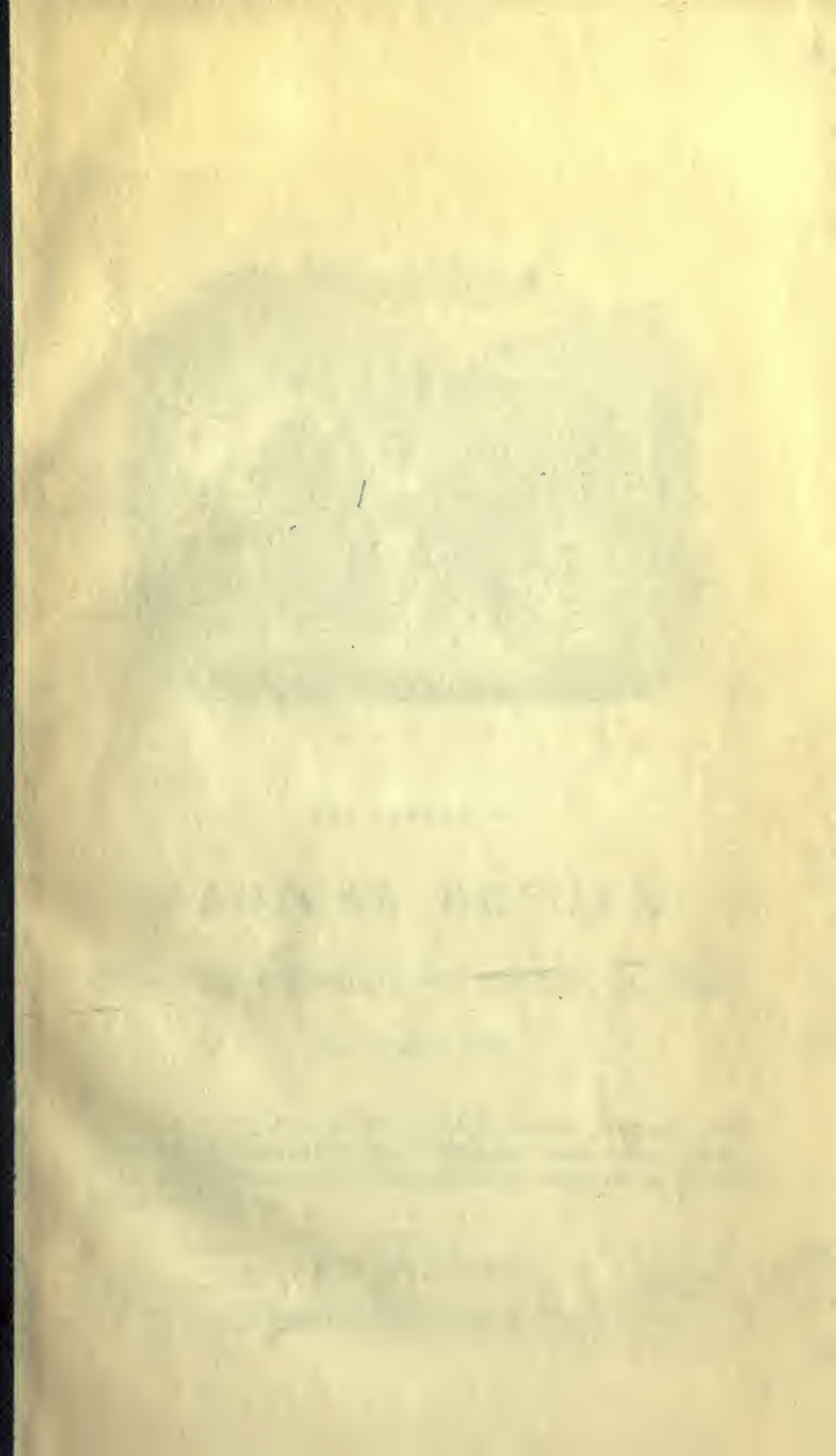
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THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW

RADICAL REFORM.



THE ARTICLE ON

RADICAL REFORM.

FROM THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW, No. XXIII,

For January 1830.

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ART. XII.—*The Address of the London Radical Reform Association to the People of the United Kingdom.* Oct. 19, 1829. London. W. E. Andrews.

THERE are three kinds of men that profess to shoot a woodcock. The first are those who see their game, and fire at it as directly as they can. The second are they who fire without seeing their game at all. These are supposed to be considerably less successful than the others. The third kind are those who see the game, and make a point of firing the other way. And as these last were never known to kill a woodcock yet, the direct inference with many people is, that they never meant to do it from the first; and that if they bring home a list of killed of their neighbours hogs, dogs, or poultry, it is because they really went out to bag this kind of prey, and not the other. In short there is a considerable and increasing sect who conceive, that one way of judging of the object of any man or set of men, is to observe the way they go about to compass it. It would be wrong to conceal, that this philosophy is not without opponents; there are many individuals of good estate who lean the other way. The sect therefore cannot claim authority on the ground of unanimous assent; or demand to have it set down like an axiom in Euclid, that the way to shoot woodcocks is to aim at them. It makes part of the debateable ground of natural science; and, in England at least, must be noted as one of those points, on which a prudent man should confine himself to observing that a great deal may be said on both sides.

Precisely the same kind of obscurity hangs over certain parts of the subject of politics. For example, it is pretty

generally professed to be acknowledged, that the people ought to be represented; but nobody has ever been able to determine, whether this is best done by their having voices in the election of their representatives, or by their having none. Some persons, for instance, think that it would promote the intended object, if large towns like Manchester and Leeds had a chance for chusing at least one representative. Others, on the contrary, believe, that the way to accomplish the end, is to cause two representatives to be elected by nine drunken men in Cornwall.

In this unsettled state of public opinion, the subject is clearly open to debate; and no man can be offended at any course his neighbour's judgment may pursue, seeing that his own must be equally hostile to the conclusions of somebody else. It is demonstrably unjust, that the man who determines on shooting with the butt-end, should put himself into a passion with his friends who prefer another way. It goes beyond the limits of social liberty; and is not to be tolerated even in the squire of the parish. Nobody wants *him* to shoot his birds but as he pleases; they only want to shoot their own.

If the people are to be represented at all, they ought to chuse their representatives. If they do not chuse their representatives, they are not represented at all. If some do and some do not, then some are represented and some not represented at all. And the grand query is, why some are to be not represented at all.

If a number of men were invited to form a joint-stock company for some common purpose, it would be an odd species of invitation which should begin by stating, that nine-tenths of the subscribers were to have no voice either in directing or inquiring into the application of the common stock. It would be tantamount to the advertisement, 'Wanted, a number of gulls, who having no other way of losing their money, may be accommodated here.' It would bear fraud and fallacy upon the face of it; and scarcely any man would be found hardy enough to put forward such a scheme, and assuredly none foolish enough to enter into it. Now if nobody would voluntarily enter into such a scheme, those who habitually live under the operation of such a one must do it involuntarily. It must be because they cannot help themselves; or in other words, because force is put upon them by those who have the luck to play the winning game.

If it was urged that in such an association it was necessary that those who held the larger stakes should have the larger share of direction, and that the way to compass this, *was that those who held the smaller stakes should have no share at all*; it is

clear that such a proposition would be hooted off with general contempt. There may be reasons why there should be a difference; and if there is no naturally-existing cause why the holders of the larger stakes carry with them a proportionate influence over the holders of the smaller, it may be right to produce the effect by artificial means. But whatever might be the necessity for such means, they could never go the length of determining, that the holders of the small stakes should have no influence at all. This is to make the difference infinite; and whatever the difference in the just proportion may be, it is clear it never can be infinite.

Now as no comparison holds good beyond certain limits, so it happens in the present case, that there are two striking points in which the great joint-stock company called a state or political community, differs from the others to which it may have been compared. And these are, First, that the sacrifices demanded of the holders of the smaller stakes, are absolutely greater than those demanded from the larger; and, Secondly, that on the supposition that each individual had a vote alike, there are naturally-existing causes why the influence of the holders of the great stakes over the others,—or in other words, of the rich over the poor,—if not greater than was desirable for any good effect it would have on the common interest, would at all events not be less.

Compare now the sacrifices which a poor man is continually called upon to make to what is stated (and perhaps justly) to be for the welfare of the community. Weigh, for example, the loss and suffering to which every poor man of certain years is liable from being called on to serve in the militia, with the loss and suffering the rich man encounters from seeing the price of a substitute charged against his rental. Take the case of any other tax, and compare the relative effect of what falls on the possessor of the single ewe lamb, with what falls on the owner of the flocks on a thousand hills. Thence collect the evidence and the proof, that the poor have in reality a much more urgent personal stake in the management of the common stock, than the rich;—add to it the testimony of history that the rich, by hook or by crook, have always contrived to take care of themselves;—and see if the resulting conclusion is not, that the goodness of a government is measured by the degree in which the poor, and not the rich, have the power to take care of themselves,—in the same manner as the goodness of a crutch is measured by its fitting the lame side and not the sound.

Next, that the rich ought to be but too happy to allow an equality of suffrage to be as much as they can demand, if other people will only refrain from asking if it is not too much. And



here it is plain, that by possessing the wealth, they possess a power of influencing other men, exactly proportioned to that wealth. The equality of representation is only like the equality of right to go in at the door of a market; it does not imply the power of having equal influence when men are there. The demand therefore of the rich to have not only the influence of their wealth, but to cut off the poor from the right of representation besides, is like the assertion that they cannot enjoy their just privileges in the market, unless they can pass a law to have the poor kept out in addition. It is clear that the poor do as much as can be expected from them, if they see the rich enjoying the benefit of their riches in the market, and put up quietly with the contrast of their own inferiority;—if they content themselves with the tripe and the offal, and lovingly aid in securing to the wealthy the sirloin and the haunch. If they do this at all, it is evidently because they are aware that the same security of property which gives the rich man his sirloin, is what ensures themselves their tripe; but it by no means follows that they should extend the argument, to shutting themselves out of their homely portion besides.

The *whiggisms* that are abroad upon this question of representation, are, that the poor do not know how to take care of themselves and of the state, and that the rich do. To this the answers are, first, that the poor do not ask to direct the state by themselves, but solely as their influence may be distilled and passed through the alembic of the rich. If the poor were to ask that ten day-labourers in St. Giles's should be shut up in a box like a jury, and required to record their opinion upon state affairs before they ate or drank, and that a like process should be followed in every parish and the final result recorded as the fiat of the community,—this would be the state of things to which the objection of their adversaries applies. But this is precisely what they do not ask. They ask no more than what they may be able to secure, after the rich man has had the full benefit of his wealth and of all the power it gives him over the conduct and opinions of others. This is one part of the answer; and the other is, that the rich have had full time and opportunity to prove, that whoever may be fit to direct the conduct of the community, *they by themselves are not*. They have had it all their own way, and a strange pass they have brought things to. The drunken coachman that drives into a ditch, has not given stronger proof of his unfitness to hold the reins, than the "higher classes" as they are denominated, have given of their unfitness to be entrusted with power, except under the check arising from the admixture and combination of the other

portions of the community. If the governors had been unmixed St. Giles's, they could not have brought the numerical mass of the community to greater loss and suffering, than have been the result of the monopoly of legislation which has been allowed to the wealthy. It is not denied that they might have produced a considerable mass of evil, but it is denied that they could have produced more. Human invention could have gone no further, than spending all a nation had, by anticipation for an unjust purpose, and then prohibiting commerce by way of remedying the evil. It is not at all argued, that because the community has had the misfortune of trying one extreme, it therefore ought to try the other; but that it ought to make some endeavour at the attainment of that just medium and combination of the interests of all, which it requires no supernatural wisdom to perceive to be for the security of the whole.

Another of the sophisms of the same school, is that men and classes of men are well enough represented, if they have *some* representatives. This is the fallacy of *virtual representation*. If it is urged, that virtual representation means a representation by means of proportional parts,—as, for instance, might be the case if one man in a hundred or in a thousand were to be taken by lot and endowed with the faculty of electing the House of Commons,—then the answer is, that nothing like any such thing is in existence, and therefore it is of no use to talk about it. But what is really meant by the phrase, is to persuade the manufacturers, for instance, that they are represented, because there are *some* manufacturers in the house. Each class is to have a representative, or it may be two or three; *and those who live upon the public are to have the rest*. Now it is plain that nobody would endure such nonsense in a joint-stock company; and there is no more reason for enduring it any where else. In a joint-stock company all classes would see that it was of importance to them not only to have *some* votes, but to have their fair proportion of votes. No man or set of men would be fooled out of their just claims, by the insinuation that it was enough if they had one vote and their opponents had the other ninety-nine.

A third falsehood of similar origin and tendency is, that there must be a King, and a House of Lords, and a House of Commons by courtesy so called,—but that the House of Commons must be the King and the House of Lords over again. It is not enough that the people be but a third estate in their own land; but they must be cut down into the third of a third, or reduced to that proportion which popular jest assigns of manhood to a tailor. Now if this meant that the king and the lords should

have the just influence in the House of Commons which is inseparable from their state, and which all the law-making in the world cannot deprive them of, it would be defensible and right. But it means no such thing. It means that they shall have that kind of influence which is procurable by nine-tenths of the persons called the commons being put out of connection with the thing called the House of Commons altogether. Not only are the commons in the aggregate to be reduced to a tailor's share; but nine-tenths of the whole are to be cut down to no share at all. What is the use of the House of Commons to those nine-tenths? Is it for their protection? The King or the House of Lords would protect them just as well. Is it for the hearing of their complaints? They have no voice, except by the same luck that they may find one among the bench of bishops. Is it for the promotion of their happiness? It is clear that their happiness will only be attended to when every body has done attending to his own. This is what to nine-tenths of the commons of England is the House of Commons. There is no secret in it; it is not what there is any harm in talking about; it is what is avowed, defended, boasted of. It is the thing as it ought to be,—the venerable *et cetera*, which it is held forth to be a crime and an enormity to think of altering.

If a traveller should ever reach the moon, and should there be introduced to a population with heads beneath their shoulders, of whom nine-tenths were cut off from all influence in the regulation of their affairs, and the other tenth sold their votes at each completion of a certain number of revolutions of their planet,—he could not fail to discover that the real basis of this lunatic constitution was, that influence in the government was set up to sale to the best bidder as at Rome. The only difference would be, that instead of the empire being bought of an imperial guard, it was bought of a tenth of the population dispersed in tap-rooms without being guardsmen. Just as much organization and tendency to the well-governing of the state as there was in the Roman invention, would there be in the other; the simple beauty of each is equal. And if the traveller was destined to be made merry, it would be by hearing the moon-calves that surrounded him talk of their invention as a monument of lunar wisdom, and as something adorned and perfected by the touches of successive generations of their race. The quarto which such a traveller would publish on his return, would be confirmation strong, of the notion which has connected the moon with madness, and assigned it as the resting-place of all things trumpery and false.

In the days of darkness such follies might have been winked

at here on earth; in the days of power, they might have been maintained by force. But the days of both are passed; and the belief that the people have a 'glorious constitution,' is a gone-by tale. They know what they have, and they know that it is not glorious. They see their position; and their object is to make use of what they have, in order to obtain what they have not. In this pursuit, the classes whose personal suffering takes the most substantial form are naturally foremost. The wonder is, that the classes next above, in whom has been truly said to reside the preponderating portion of the momentum of the public, should be so long in joining. They are all busy nursing the existing evils, in hopes that one son will get a commission in the army, and another in the customs. They will perhaps come to their senses at some time, and compare the value of the mess of pottage for which they sell themselves, with the value of what they abandon in return.

Suppose now, the writer of this Article were to break through the etiquette usually observed with the public, and clothe himself with so much of personality as to state, that he was the possessor of the better half of what is popularly understood to be the object of a wealthy citizen's ambition,—that he was what the French call a *millionaire*, and something more,—not through any merit of his own, but by inheritance of the gains of successful commerce, which it is generally understood in England the gainer is permitted to make over to his children. Suppose that he has this;—a small matter compared with what some men have at stake, but still worth having;—and let him ask, in his own name and in the name of all to whom the like argument may apply, what just reason can be given why, on the supposition that he has common sense and a desire to keep his own, he should not join with all and every body that is engaged in seeking what is known under the title of Radical Reform. Let no man be startled at the term radical; does any man but the guilty, desire a reform that is not radical? 'Radical' means that which shall do something effectually; and 'not radical' means not doing it at all. Does any man go to a doctor, and ask for a cure that is not radical? All men have been radicals, who ever did any good since the world began. Adam was a radical, when he cleared the first place from rubbish, for Eve to spin in. Noah was a prodigious radical, when, hearing the world was to be drowned, he went about such a common-sense proceeding as making himself a ship to swim in. A whig would have laid half a dozen sticks together for an ark, and called it a virtual representation.

What then has such a man as has been described, to gain by the

continuance of the present state of things? If he is to be taxed, he has not necessarily the fragment of a share in giving his consent to it, any more than a Polish boor. He was not born a drunken artisan in a rotten borough, nor the son of one. If he looks round upon the way in which what is taken from him by taxation is disposed of, all he sees is an organization for feeding certain people of certain classes at the expense of the remainder. He might go into parliament, and try to obtain a share of the common plunder; but for this he is too proud. He might stand up for the oppression of the poorer orders as the means of benefiting his own; but for this he is too wise. If he has children, where is he to place them? Commerce is prohibited by act of parliament; he can get them into the list of bankrupts by the expenditure of a small capital as well as of a large one. All the professions are overstocked, in consequence of the same prohibition; there are two curates in embryo for every tithe pig, nine lawyers for every possible brief, and seven doctors to each man rich enough to have the gout. If he looks at his rents, he finds nothing but negative quantities; tenants that cannot pay, coming, like impossible roots, by pairs; his income is an evanescent series, and the method of exhaustion is like to solve all problems in his book. If he turns to his connections, he sees nothing but insolvency; the savings of the father lost by the failure of the sons, and mothers lamenting over it as the act of heaven, without finding out that it was so because the ruling powers would have it so. On looking all round the compass, he sees nothing but one great conspiracy to appropriate and gradually draw off the savings of each man's industry, in support of a plan whose scope and object is to maintain the non-industrious. No man in society can by any exertion of economy sustain his present rank and transmit it to a line of successors with the chance of their sustaining it also, except the lucky few who have a patent for keeping themselves and their descendants at the expense of the community. Men who obtain property by industry are indulged with the power of transmitting it through one or two generations; but there is a process going on, by which, like the grains in a coffee-mill, it must all come to the grinder at last. He who has money does not hold it in fee simple; but by a lease of greater or shorter length, at the end of which it must revert to that portion of the aristocracy which quarters its descendants on the public. In this state of things the marvel is, that the well-informed part of the middle classes, and more particularly of the commercial classes, does not arrange itself on the side of the reformers. The commercial classes have a prejudice against what they call politics; derived from the time when commercial

men were for the moment gaining largely by the spendthrift anticipation of the national expenditure, and when any commercial man found opposed to the measures of government was supposed to be so only because he was unable to seize his share. A connection was thus formed between politics and bankruptcy; and the prejudice continues, in spite of the change of circumstances. Nothing can account for the tameness with which commercial men submit to the prohibition of commerce, but this; combined with the operation of the foolish hope, that they shall individually pick something out of the common wreck. As all things have an end, so also must this; and the time cannot be far off, when the middle classes, and those of the highest who are not entered of the plot, will come forward to join their influence to the cause of the starving poor. Commercial misery may be some stimulus, even though it does not amount to the misery of a small loaf. A man may lawfully wish to keep what he has, even though he has not yet an immediate vision of the almshouse. Every body knows what an outcry was made about property, when the object was to establish the supremacy which has led to the present ills. The London Radical Reform Association, is virtually an association for the defence of property. It is an association to prevent all that we have from being taken by our betters. If a manufacturing operative has to preserve himself from maintaining a thousandth part of a scion of the landed aristocracy out of his platter, a man of two thousand a year has to save himself from being saddled with a full-grown imp; and so on in proportion. The time will come when rich and poor will combine to make every man eat out of his own dish; and the actual agent in this cruel operation, will be a radical reform in what is called the commons house of parliament.

The ways in which the middle classes will exert themselves when they come forward, will be the same in which they exert themselves for other objects. They will use the legitimate power they have, to obtain the legitimate power they have not. Instead of fruitless lamentations over the wretched state of the representation, they will use that state, wretched as it is, as a stepping-stone to one that shall be better. If the empire is for sale, they will buy it with a view to repair. They will lay aside all animosities, and combine in their compact all classes where a community of interest can be proved. They will tell the clergy, for example, that whatever may be the opinion of political economists on tithes, it is clear that the working orders of the clergy have nothing to fear from change. To them all change must be for good. In the most unenlightened countries, this truth breaks out. A continental bishop may be an absolutist; but the poor man that was met

galloping up Mont Cenis on his mule at sun-set, to save the soul of a still-born child at the extremity of his parish of thirty miles diameter; was to a certainty a liberal. Even the dignitaries of the English church might find out, that if their revenues are threatened, it is only as a sacrifice to maintain the landlords in the possession of the Corn-laws. Let them look at the question with the advantages their learning and talents give for it; and then let them join with the people in the prosecution of a common interest, or else give up their revenues quietly. Why should not those who fleece the people, fleece a bishop? It is not true that the interests of the church and of the people are divided on the subject. They endure a common danger; and should join for a common deliverance.

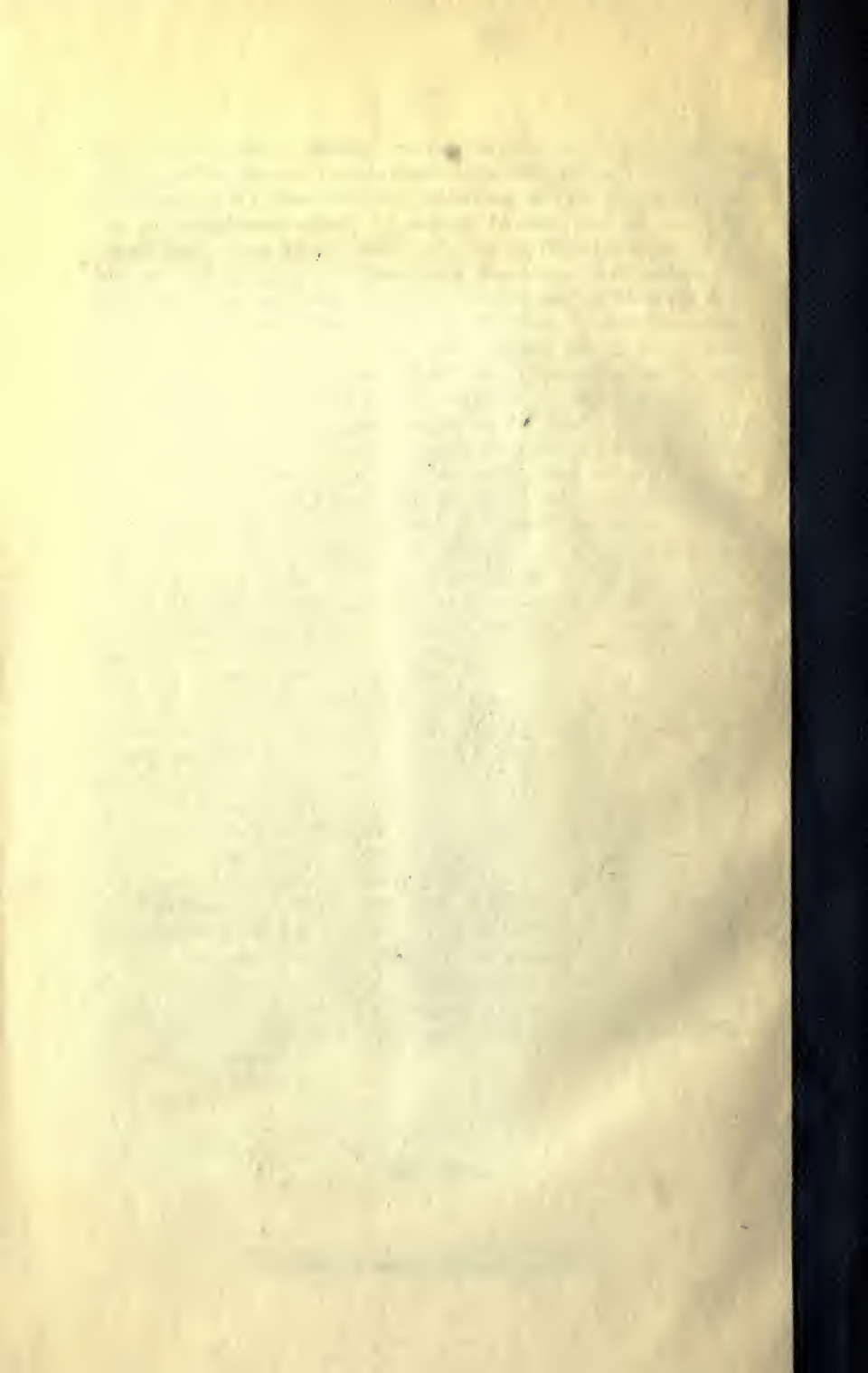
The great object of fear to the middle classes, is the apprehended violence and misdirection of those with whom they think they would have to join. They fear the orators who harp upon the bad passions of the people;—whose idea of the utility of reform is that it would create an ability for carrying on unjust wars, and whose love for liberty displays itself in exciting feelings of hostility against our brethren who have won their battles and our own on the other side of the Atlantic. There is no denying the evil; it is an obstacle the more, but it is an obstacle which, like others, must be got over. Tell them plainly, that we want no more wars for cat-skins;—that if an administration, either royalist or radical, should ever set up a claim to allowing no gun to be fired in Europe without its consent, the middle classes in England would draw off to one side, and leave it to settle the contest by itself. Tell them that if any such administration was to attempt to prescribe what ships should be built in America, the just and natural end would be that England would be put down by a coalition of all civilized states; and that the middle classes will not advance a shilling towards the promotion of such a project. Inform them, that till there is some greater security for good government, the present state of depletion is the happiest of all consummations; and that the man who would voluntarily pay a shilling to remove it, is only comparable to him who having just been bled out of a delirium, should offer a shilling to have his veins re-filled. Give them to understand that their foreign politics are pot-house, and their home ones only make men praise God for Mr. Peel. Tell them that their object is to evade the great question, which is the Corn-laws;—and that their pretence of the necessity for refusing cheap corn in order that men may be able to pay taxes, is as foolish as if a man should refuse an estate lest he should be obliged to pay a property-tax. Say to them that their best

and newest plan for seizing on the savings of other men's industry in the funds, is only spoliation wrapped up,—that it is as unjust as if a crew on short allowance were to propose to eke out an accidental relief, by saying to one part of the crew, 'And you, you know, will only be on short allowance as before.' Supposing the taxes and the army were reduced to their proper extent, what justice is there in saying that the fund-holders shall have no benefit by it, and that it shall be enough for them if they have 30 per cent lopped off to bring them to where they were before? State clearly that the whole argument against the fund-holders, consists in commencing at the year 1812 when restoration began to be made to them, and cutting off all memory of the previous sixteen years that they had been plundered. Say all this boldly and on all opportunities; and the dangerous part of those who call themselves the radicals will soon be reduced to their true value. Set up a sound and honest radicalism, against an unsound and dishonest one. Disown all abuse of existing ministers; and be persuaded, that though it is perfectly necessary that difference of opinion should go all possible lengths, it is true in the main that all ministers do as well as they can. Distrust those who say they see in themselves the signs of heaven-born counsellors, and who believe that the practice of a minister is to be learnt like cutting off a leg. Eschew violence; cultivate education, from A, B, C upwards; hurry nothing,—it will all come in time, like the breaking up of a hard frost. Pull down an abuse where you can; especially where it is one, like that of slavery in the West Indies, whose supporters support all the rest. Go on quietly and perseveringly, and fear nothing. There will be no revolution, no disturbance, no violent changes,—any more than when a child of a span long, turns into a grenadier. Sensible men are not to endure an evil for ever, through a vague fear of its removal being something they have not tried before. Do something; do a little; do more when you can. Keep the stone rolling; and see if you do not end by proving to all ranks and orders, except the downright plunderers, that radical is 'your only wear.'

THE END.







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