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To Mr. R. Carter
your sincere friend
W. Thornhill.

**THE
FLEET PAPERS;**

BEING LETTERS TO

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.,

OF RIDDLESWORTH, IN THE COUNTY OF NORFOLK ;

FROM
RICHARD OASTLER,

HIS PRISONER IN THE FLEET.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

VOL. I.



"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

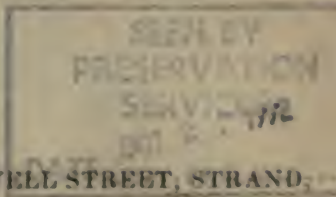
"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the Oppressor."

LONDON :

PUBLISHED BY JOHN PAVEY, 47, HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND,
AND BENJAMIN STEILL, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1841.



THE

FLEET PAPERS

ESTABLISHED IN 1858

THOMAS J. BURNETT, PROP.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY THE PROPRIETOR



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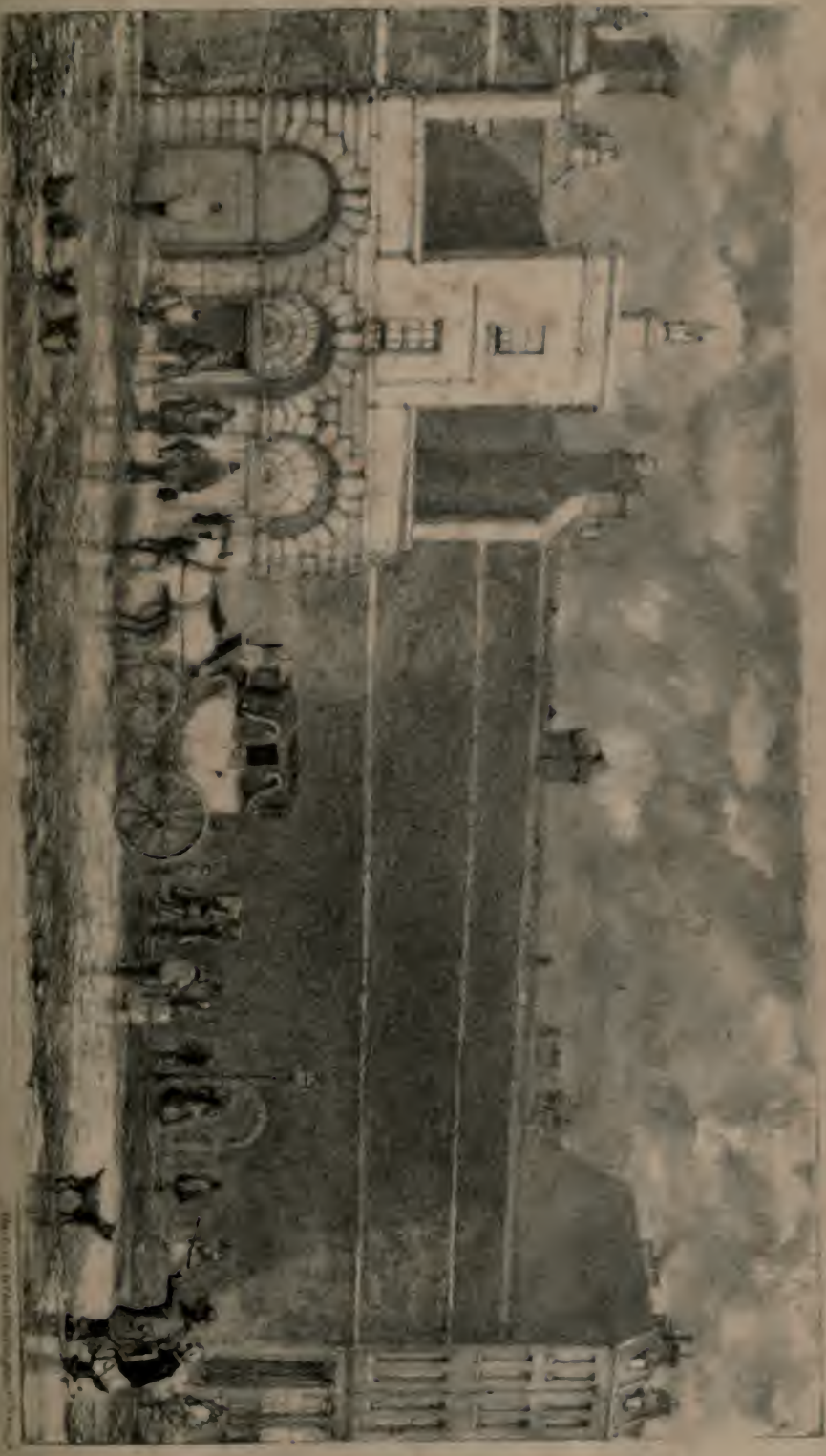
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THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL,

ESQUIRE,

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage,"—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people. He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 1.

LONDON, SATURDAY, JANUARY 2, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—You have made a great mistake.—You have been persuaded to copy, too successfully, the character of Shylock. You thought that you had the power to crush me; your thunderbolt has fallen harmless—it was shivered on the point of Truth, ere it reached my head. Your persecution has rendered me invincible. You hoped to have buried my principles, with "my body," in this Prison;—time will prove to you, that Truth is immortal—it will burst the barriers of this tomb.

The Poor Law Commissioners have succeeded in dishonouring you: from this Cell, with the blessing of Almighty God, I will assist to release you (the aristocracy), as well as the paupers of England, from their unconstitutional grasp. I will, with the help of God, strive to destroy their tyranny. Yes, Sir, this little sheet, guided by the unerring hand of Truth, shall, by His power, aid in bringing down to the dust the proud, blaspheming, modern Goliath, who now so impiously defies the armies of the living God. You fancy that you have ensnared me in your net; the truth is, the Poor Law Commissioners have caught you in their trap. It shall be my business to release you.

These strong walls, arches and groins afford a secure asylum for a body almost worn out by exertion and anxiety in your service; protected by them, I shall renew my strength, for coming struggles, against the "oppressors of the Poor," when God's good pleasure shall unlock the Prison door, and "bid the Captive go free." I am in His hand, Mr. Thornhill,—I am not in yours. For the present, He suffers you to hold me;—He now allows you "to kick against the pricks;" but, not one moment longer can you keep me here, than He wills,—one moment sooner, I would not leave this place.

You have unhappily listened to the misrepresentations of persons whom you suppose to be your friends; they have told you that I was your enemy; when they said so, they well knew that they deceived you. Had you been in the Court of Common Pleas, when our cause was before the Lord Chief Justice, you would not have sentenced me to Gaol,—you would not have awarded my imprisonment

in terms, which were intended to be insulting to me, but which have only degraded the honoured name of Thornhill. Left to yourself, I know that you could not have been so little. Spurred on, by men too mean to excite my anger, you have thus dishonoured your father's name. It was needful, to secure my entrance here, that those creatures should "bear false witness" against me; for you, however, it is a pity, that their malice should have induced you to harass and annoy yourself (as I am sure you must have done) by using words in your Award, intended to be insulting towards your Victim, who has, however, too much self-respect to accept an insult from the slave of his oppressors.

Seclusion from the busy world was necessary, for the strengthening and arranging of my mental powers. I had "done what I could" outside — repose is now required, — through your resentment, I have found it here.

I had for many years been a careful examiner of the workings of the present competitive System out of doors; — I had witnessed its destructive effects on the labouring classes, in their reduced condition, when at home; — I had followed its awful workings, on those victims, to the union workhouses: I had, however, yet to learn its final issue on the upper and the middle classes. You have now sent me to the only school where I could learn that lesson; and, I assure you, Sir, that the experience which I am gaining here, shall be well stored in my memory, that I may be useful to your friends, the "higher orders," and to your neighbours and tenants, the "middle classes," in rescuing them from the inevitable ruin which awaits their "orders," if they madly resolve, still to follow in the wake of "liberal enlightened philosophy."

You had driven me from my native hills, and had forced me to wander, more than two years, from my much-loved friends and home; but I fancied, from what your Counsel said in Court — that your anger was appeased — I was thinking of once more returning into Yorkshire. I thought that my public work was ended, and fancied that a quiet old age awaited me; and that, by my profession, I could supply the wants of my wife, my child, and myself. Whilst I was indulging in such pleasing reveries, I received your Mandate for the Fleet; — and thus, God has made it evident, that He has other work in store for me. I willingly follow His leadings. — I patiently wait His time.

You know that I am no flatterer; when my all depended on your will, you well remember, that I never feared to speak the truth, however unwelcome it might be to you; now that I am deprived of all by you, aye, even of my liberty, I will not flatter you, but justice demands, that I shall speak the truth. The man lives not, who knows you better than I do. You are proud, just, and honourable; — it is not in your nature to be cruel. Some years have been required to turn your heart against me. I am well aware of all the disreputable means which have been used, I know the creatures who have been engaged, to make you hate me. They have succeeded for a while; but, even in your vengeance, the kindly nature of your heart prevailed — you granted the only favor that I asked, for which I thank you. I requested that my Caption should not be made at home, in presence of my wife and child; I wished to spare them the heart-rending pang, of seeing the officer lay hands on "my body," and drag it from them; — you granted that request; that kindness, on your part, is heart-registered by me, and will not

be forgotten, when the day arrives, (as most assuredly it will), when you would rather that you were my friend than my foe.

It was for the 9th ult., that I received an intimation, that Thomas Thornhill demanded "the body" of Robert Oastler's son. On that day I brought that "body," in accordance with your Award, to the office of my kind friend and faithful attorney, Mr. Faithfull, at the hour appointed. Before I proceed one line farther, I have a duty to perform—it is a pleasing one. I fain would express the gratitude which I feel towards my two solicitors, Mr. R. B. B. Cobbett, of Manchester, and Mr. E. C. Faithfull, of King's Road, Bedford Row. They deserve my thanks, for the more than brotherly kindness they have evinced throughout this trying affair, to one "who is become a stranger unto his brethren, and an alien unto his mother's children." On all occasions I have found them ready to assist and advise me;—they have ever proved that they had more than a professional interest engaged; they felt that I was the Victim of Oppression; they saw that I was persecuted by the man in whose service I have ruined myself; they felt towards me the yearnings of friendship, as well as the tie of duty to their client; they will not be offended, that I take this public opportunity to thank them.

Aye, Sir, and there are others who must be remembered here,—gentlemen of the learned profession, who have been my kind advisers, when the proceedings of your solicitor procrastinated the tedious workings of your suit, and caused, that a Yorkshire jury should not try the question. I allude to George Coady, Esq., of Manchester, J. M. Cobbett, Esq., and J. P. Cobbett, Esq., both of London. Those Gentlemen must not blame me,—I owe them thanks,—if I thus publicly tender them.

Having performed this pleasing duty towards my friends, I now return to your friend the Sheriffs' Officer, whom I met by appointment at Mr. Faithfull's office, on Wednesday the 9th of December, 1840. That day will long be remembered by me, Mr. Thornhill;—you ought not forget it hastily. We had a short ride together, to the "Sponging House," in Chancery Lane. I soon found that I was not the first "King," who had been arrested for debt—and that princes and even princesses were sometimes "caught." I began to open my eyes on an entirely new scene. When arrived at the "Sponging House," "my body" remained there, (as I was told) until one of the Judges had transferred its keeping (for you) from the Sheriff of Middlesex, to the Sheriff of London. That operation occupied three or four hours. At the "Sponging House" I found there were persons of higher rank than yourself, so that I perceived, at the very first glance in this new region, that "the System" was not "working well," even for the aristocracy. It was very odd; but it really is true, Sir, I there met with an old and very intimate friend of your late uncle George Thornhill, Esq., of Diddington. This Gentleman is a deputy lieutenant of the County of Huntingdon. He observed my name upon my tin-box, and asked me, "if I was the great Mr. Oastler of Yorkshire?" Now, what could I say, Sir! I should have been unjust to you, had I disparaged the value of your property, (my body); so, I said, "Yes, Sir, I am—I am 'King' there." He knew all about our concerns. He is a most determined enemy of the New Poor Law;—appeared to be an enthusiastic admirer of my "sayings and doings" against that law; and he assured me, that if I were to visit Huntingdonshire, I

should meet with many friends. But he seemed to grieve that I was in quod. I made him a present of one of my Speeches, on "The Right of the Poor to Liberty and Life," in which I inscribed his name and mine, taking special care to date it from the sponging house. We had a good deal of chat about you, your uncle, and your cousin. At length "my body" was transferred; another officer "took it in tow," and we arrived safely here, about five o'clock in the evening. Mr. Faithfull's clerk, was so kind as to accompany me, and directed me how to proceed. But really the officers of this Prison were so kind and obliging, that there was no need that he should have thus troubled himself; I felt his kindness no less on that account.

Well, I was now fairly "housed." I had bid the busy world adieu. The angry law had claimed, seized, and secured "my body." I had for many years maintained a manly upstand fight against the God of this world; he had now taken me Prisoner. He has not yet killed me; he has, at all events, found me a hiding and a resting place.

My first duty was to pay my fees—one pound, eight, and eight pence. I was then "on the foundation," as it is called, entitled to a Cell, *i. e.*, in my turn. When I paid the Turnkey, he asked me to write my name on the five pounds note, which I offered him.—(It was one received anonymously by the post.) I did so, and added, "The Fleet Prison, December 9th, 1840." I am determined to note that day—it is one of my Red Letter days, Sir; I intend also, that "my people" shall remember it. The Turnkey smiled, and after the Deputy Warden had spoken kindly to me, and had, very properly, taken a survey of "my body," I was shewn into this Cell, No. 12, Coffee Gallery.

The first thought that crossed my mind, on entering my new abode, was, "well I am, at last, a Prisoner—and so was once, my Lord and Saviour." It was enough, Sir; I instantly felt assured that I could suffer nothing here, which He had not endured before me. I felt that I was in His hand—not yours; I could not but feel thankful. The Turnkey and my friend remained awhile;—when I was left alone, I did, as you once told me you did, every day of your life,—I offered my prayers to God;—for my *widow*, my *orphan*, the factory children, the poor, my persecutors, and myself. It was a solemn, but it was a refreshing season. For the first time in my life, I felt the difference between *not hating* and *loving* my enemies. From that moment, I cast every care upon Him, who is able to deliver me from this Prison;—yes, Sir, He can soften your heart. My only anxiety is, that the end for which I came (I do not believe in chance) may be fully answered. To do all the good, and get all the good I can, while here, shall be my study and employ.

When I rose from my knees, I calmly surveyed my Cell; it is arched and groined with brick, which is whitewashed, as well as the walls; the floor is stone; it is not quite so comfortable, as the apartment which the first Mrs. Thornhill used to reserve for me at Riddlesworth—but, what of that? It is not damp—it is drop dry, and quite retired from the gaze of man. It is very dark, being close behind the Warden's house. It is really in prison, Sir.

Some poor prisoner, whose work has outlived his name, was formerly the tenant of this Cell; he has left a memorial, at once of his talent and of his mis-

fortune — a beautiful painting on the wall, of a ship at sea, a light-house, castle and the shore ; it reminds me somewhat of your Marine Cottage and the light-house at Winterton, which you will recollect you once particularly desired me to notice, on my voyage to Hull. I have passed it several times since then, and have always thought of your injunction, and remembered you. The artist has copied Nature so perfectly, that I had been four days in this Cell, before I knew that it was painted on the wall, a friend having then pointed out the deception to me ; previously, I had thought that it was on canvass, hanging from a cord. I often gaze upon this picture, and wonder why a man so talented, should have been so unfortunate ? There must be a loose peg in society, somewhere, Mr. Thornhill, else that talent would never have been wasted here : you have sent me to this school, to learn where and what that peg is. I will not be an idle, I hope that I shall be an apt, scholar.

Having minutely surveyed my new home, which my old master had provided for me in prison, instead of a pension—I sat down, and opening the Holy Bible, I read the 36th and 37th Psalms, and then pondered. In a while, I filled my pipe — smoked away, all solitary ;—and, having asked myself, why am I counted unfit for the society of freemen ? why has wealth the power to deprive me of liberty ?—I fell into a reverie. I could not help exclaiming, “ How strange, how mysterious are the plans of God ; truly ‘ His way is in the sea, and His path in the great waters, and His footsteps are not known.’ ”

I remembered well, when I was a little boy, now more than forty years ago ; I was then at Fulneck School (I shall never forget that lovely place, nor can I ever cease to remember the lessons, so carefully taught me, by my kind friends the “ Brethren ” there). As I sat smoking in my Cell, the fine long terrace (we used to call it the “ Gravel Walk ”) which fronts the noble line of buildings, with the well-remembered chapel in the centre ;—the boys and “ Brethren ” were playing or walking, at their end, and the girls and “ Sisters,” on that appropriated to their use (these portions were separated by the space in front of the Warden’s house) ; when, spying my beloved father advancing towards me, I left my play, I ran to meet him, and leaped into his arms. He smiled and caressed me, and I thought, lovely as he had ever seemed to me, that he then looked more charming, than I had ever seen him do before. He took me to the inn, gave me tea and “ spice ;” and then, he told me that he had obtained the appointment of steward to a very great gentleman — that “ very great gentleman,” was yourself, Mr. Thornhill. My little heart jumped for joy—I thought I loved my father better than before. I was, even then, so doatingly enamoured of the aristocracy, that I would have thought it a much greater honour to have been your little waiting boy, than the companion or equal of the wealthiest merchant ;—so unlike the rest of the family was I ; they were vexed, and thought that my father had degraded himself and them, by entering your service, I honoured him the more on that account. Little did I then think, Sir, when romping in extacies around my “ steward ” father, that I was only pacing the first bend in my path towards this Cell.

And when, during the well nigh twenty years of my honoured father’s stewardship, I often visited the loveliest spot in Yorkshire—Fixby—it was not likely

that I should fancy, as its beauties entwined themselves around my heart, that they were only weaving a net, which should afterwards ensnare me here. One reason why I am a Prisoner at your suit, Sir, is, because I loved Fixby, its tenants, and its owner, more than I loved myself. Think not, however, that I regret those attachments and those sacrifices. Keenly as I feel this imprisonment, the thought that I have not merited such cruel treatment from you, is a balmy recollection, of which your resentment cannot deprive me.

Then, when my venerable father died — now twenty years ago — died beloved and honoured by all who knew him, and, saving his kindred, by none more than yourself. I say, Sir, when I closed his eyes, and received his last breath, “all’s well, all’s just as it should be,” I never dreamed, that another winding in my journey hitherward was made.

It was my painful duty to inform you of that sad event; in reply, you wrote a touching eulogium on my father’s worth, and, all unasked, you desired me “to step into my father’s shoes,” (those were your very words). Was it likely, Sir, that I could suspect, you were then only providing sandals for my tedious journey to the Fleet?

When I was defending your property from the claims for tithes, at many hundreds of pounds expence (of which you never refunded one farthing), and the loss of health besides, when I was thus adding many thousands of pounds to the value of your estates, I could not anticipate that I was only purchasing your hatred, and was thus paving my way to this dismal place.

Neither could I imagine, when I was successfully fighting your battles, for and against turnpike trustees, in town and country, aye, even in the Committee of the House of Commons (which never cost you one farthing, though to me the costs were very great). I say, Sir, I could not then imagine, that by such sacrifices which I made on your behalf, I was only hurrying myself onwards to this Prison.

Or, when I was spending whole nights as well as days, poring over your ancient and musty deeds, to find your title to property which had, by neglect, been long separated from your estate (and in some cases, to a very considerable amount, succeeded) how could I divine, that I was only then wasting my strength for you, that it might, at your suit, be regained in this place of confinement?

Being solemnly convinced that “property has its duties as well as its rights,” and that, if private property is to be maintained, those duties must be regarded by its owners; and, knowing, that unhappy circumstances had prevented you from performing those duties on your Yorkshire estates, I hoped that the time would come, when you would reward me, for the great sacrifices which I made, to cause the names of Thornhill and of Fixby, to be as honoured in the neighbourhood, in your days, as they had been in the days of your father and his ancestors; I could not have supposed that my reward would be, a “mastership” in the Fleet.

Then, when the Rev. Samuel Redhead, a poor village curate and schoolmaster, implored, by his friends, my aid; who introduced his name to me, as that of a friend to that honored and revered servant of God, the Rev. John Graham, of York, to whom I owe more than to any other mortal — the knowledge of the

Truth ; and when, in consequence, I applied to you, for your influence with the late Earl of Eldon, in behalf of Mr. Redhead, (and by that means obtained for him the vicarage of Calverley, which the noble earl, at the instance of the late excellent Bishop of Durham, was on the point, that very day, of giving to another) why, Sir, I should have been gifted with prophecy, if I could have foreseen, that by that act of kindness to a poor clergyman, I was only giving momentum to a power, that should afterwards hurry my footsteps towards this Goal.

When you so attentively listened to my voice whilst I was pleading the cause of the much-injured and helpless Factory slaves, and denouncing the cruelties and tyranny of the Factory Demon (that monster who is not satisfied with thousands of infant victims annually, but pants and craves for more) ; when you attentively heard my arguments, which proved to you, " that the same power which had already ruined the hopes of the working classes, was now directing its aim and energies against the aristocracy, and that, if not restrained by law, it would, as surely, destroy 'your order,' as it had already banished the independence of the operatives ;"—when you kindly subscribed twenty pounds to aid me in my crusade against the oppressors of the Factory children, and, being fully impressed with the truth and force of my remarks upon the state of society, wished and offered, to provide me with the means of stating my views to the great Duke himself, and actually ordered a coach to your door, to take you to your friend the Duke of Rutland, to ask his Grace, the favour of a note of introduction for your steward (now your prisoner) to his Grace the Duke of Wellington ; I say, Sir, I could hardly then guess, whilst proudly pacing from your residence, No. 49, Berkeley Square, to Apsley House, that I was merely shortening my passage hitherwards.

— But, Sir, my pages are well nigh filled. My reverie was long — I must suspend the recital. All the mysterious windings by which Providence had led me to the Fleet, passed in review before me. In my next I will continue the narrative.

I had intended, in this number, to have explained somewhat of the history of this little work, and of my views and sentiments on public matters ; and to have rubbed off that dust, and blown away the mist of prejudice which, in consequence of misrepresentation, now, in many circles, surrounds my name. Through ignorance of my motives, views and hopes, I am, by many, quite mistaken. I shall, in these pages, speak for myself.

In this Number it will be enough that I tell you (what indeed you have long known, though for the moment you seem to have forgotten it), that I am, in heart and soul, an Englishman — devotedly attached to the time-honoured institutions, nay, even prejudices, of my native country, — and hating, with an intensity which words can never express, that new-fangled system of innovation, which, for the purpose of deluding Englishmen, who are so fond of liberty, assumes the name of " Liberal Philosophy ;" whose aim is tyranny, of the most revolting nature, under the mask of philanthropy, whose work is the destruction of our Constitution — the pulling it to pieces by degrees, under the name of renovation, and then putting up the fragments to sale, in lots, for jobs to tyrant

purchasers. Already it has succeeded in dividing the aristocracy from the people — it has engendered hatred where respect, esteem and reverence had for ages been established, under the principles of Christianity — it has ever prated about peace, whilst it has implanted war in every heart ! — It is, Sir, the monster Infidelity. Against that monster I have warred to this Gaol ; — but, Sir, I must be numbered with the dead, ere I cease the conflict with that foe to your peace and security — that enemy of God and man.

In a little while, myself and my readers will be better acquainted. They will not find me complaining here : — no, Sir, my consolations are abundant. It has long been my delight to visit the abodes of wretchedness, and to soothe those in distress ; — the same medicine which I have so often administered to others, is now richly awarded to myself. They will not hear me railing against you, Sir ; — I know that you have been deceived. I err in my judgment of your character, if you do not, even now, regret the cruelty of your own act ; though pride will long prevent your saying so. —

— What is this I hear ? — The groans of the dying in your mansion ! — Poor “ Mitty ! ” and is she gone to meet her God, and one whom, next to God, she loved. — Sir, I need not tell you who that one is.

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P. S.—These Papers will be enlarged to Sixteen Pages, as soon as the circulation will warrant the increased expense. The price will be the same, Two-pence ; excepting to Subscribers who are furnished by the Post ; to those, (after their present term of subscription is expired,) the additional weight will add one penny to the price.

It is my intention that the first volume of “ The Fleet Papers,” shall contain a well-executed view of Fixby Hall, my residence for about nineteen years, when I was your Steward ; also, a view of the Fleet Prison, my residence while your Captive ; as well as a likeness of yourself and your Prisoner. Whether I can afford those plates without any extra charge, will depend upon the circulation of these Papers. — R. O.

All communications must be post-paid.

Anonymous writers may be saved much trouble, by being informed, that without reading them, their papers will be burned.

If it should so happen, that these Papers should be noticed *pro.* or *con.*, by any organ of public opinion, R. O. will be grateful to any friend, who will send him a copy thereof, to the Fleet, London.

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Contents.

- Letter 1. How came there to be an Established Church?
 2. How came there to be people called Dissenters?
 3. What is the foundation of the distinction of the Infants over the Infers?
 4. Does the Establishment conduce to religious instruction?
 5. What is the state of the Establishment? and is it possible to reform it?
 6. What is that respected thing, called Church and State? and what would be the effect of a separation of them.

THE LEGACY TO LABOURERS. In Six Letters, addressed to the Working People of England. With a Dedication to Sir R. Peel, Bart. By W. CHAMBERLAIN, M.P.

Contents.

Dedication to Sir Robert Peel, stating the reasons for writing the book, and also the reasons for dedicating it to him.

- Letter 1. How came some men to have a greater right to parcels of land than other men have to the same land?
 2. What right have English landlords to the lands? How came they in possession of them? Of what nature is their title?
 3. Is their right in the land absolute? Is the land now their own? or are they still holden under a superior?
 4. Have they dominion in their lands? Or, do they lawfully possess only the use of them? Can they do what they like with their lands?
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THE

FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY JOHN PAVRY,

NO. 47, HOLBORN-STREET, STRAND.

NOTICE OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

"We are extremely sorry to perceive that Mr. Richard Dastley, the well-known opponent of the New Poor Law, is a candidate in the Fleet. We have had the opportunity of seeing Mr. Gaskell, an acute observer of great political acumen, and we can see of him with perfect assurance, that we believe a more honest man, or a more able man than any other man in the country. We do not entirely concur with Mr. Gaskell in his opinions, and we differ altogether from him in politics. We do not see any prospect of the success which he has pursued in many instances; but feeling and believing that he has always acted constitutionally, we are compelled to say, that there is every reason to expect that he will succeed in the support of the public. If he is not a success, it is because he has amongst others, and never of himself—but he is the victim of his own philanthropy, and therefore entitled to the aid which every honest man is entitled to have. There is no man less deserving than Mr. Gaskell to mitigate the operation of the New Poor Law. His opposition to it, has been attended with a thousand advantages, and he has been publicly tested since in whatever circumstances he has been in the working out of its details. He has aided others—we hope that he is destined to discover that humanity in England can feel, not only thousands of almshouses, but millions of almshouses."

"If the Tories will neglect what is their duty as a party, we do not see that the people of England will not be forgetful of what they ought to do, to show their respect for a true and unassuming philanthropist."—*Times*, Dec. 27, 1840.

"Mr. Gaskell is of Tory politics, and views his resistance to the extension of the law in behalf of the Factory Children, and his opposition to the New Poor Law. Mr. Gaskell was introduced to us through a friend, in whom he became interested early, as it is proved, by doing what he considered to be the duty of the representative of the absent landlord. Mr. Gaskell receives a weekly publication, to be called 'The Fleet Papers.'—*Hartford City and County Chronicle*, Dec. 30, 1840.

"Therefore we have drawn attention to the proposed Fleet Papers, by which Mr. Gaskell proposes to register the square hours of employment, and to each the maintenance, in his industry, to show how the wages were expended, and his farm occupied, when the man were stronger, and the other weaker." Since our last we have learned that, without a vigorous effort by the people, the extension forced and changing of the poor man must have in his progress, which he must receive with great share to pay, as he depends upon the usual, and perhaps, ordinary charity of his friends. This must be. The first number of his Fleet Papers will be ready on the 2nd day of January. The prospectus tells us that the price will be but twopenny, and at least 10,000 copies should be sold this date. That might be the lowest point of circulation, even with the first number, for the complete paper which is to save Gaskell and his family from want.

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situation, at least that they will undergo to render it more supportable."—[From a Correspondent to the Leeds Intelligencer.]

"The first number of 'The Fleet Papers' has been handed in us, and we have glanced cursorily through it. The style is Oastler's own—respectful even to excess, though addressed to his bitterest enemy—honest and kindly, even to his enemies—but yet keen in words can be."
 "There is a P. S., so usual, containing the following announcement:—"It is my intention that the first volume of 'The Fleet Papers,' shall contain a well-merited view of Fisk's Hall, my residence for several previous years; when I was, your steward; also a view of the Fleet Prison, my residence while your Captain; as well as a likeness of yourself and your Prisoner. Whether I can afford these plates without any extra charge, will depend upon the circulation of these Papers."—R. O.'s—*North's Star*, Jan. 2, 1841.

"We have received the first of Mr. Oastler's addresses to Mr. Thorsdill, from the Fleet. The venerable 'King' of the Factory Children seems comparatively comfortable in his imprisonment, saying the agitation of soul necessarily consequent on confinement and separation from his family. He addresses Mr. Thorsdill, personally, from blame, but signifies that he has been acted upon by bad advisers, and that his own imprisonment has been brought about by those who disliked his opposition to immemorial establishments, false pretences, and wlog demagogues of all descriptions; but concludes himself in the inference in reflecting that it could not have been produced but by the will of God, that his Saviour suffered for more for his sake and the sake of our common humanity, and in his hope and confident belief that great general good may be produced by this evil to an individual. He gives an amusing account of his arrest, recites his acknowledged faults to parties who betrayed him in adversity, and thus concludes:—"In this matter it will be enough that I shall quit what nature has long known, though for the moment you seem to have forgotten; that I am, in heart and soul, an Englishman—tenderly attached to the time-honoured institutions, nay, even prejudices, of my native country—and hating, with an intensity which words can scarce express, that one-fingered system of innovation, which, for the purpose of debasing Englishmen, who are so fond of liberty, assumes the name of liberal philosophy; whose aim is tyranny; of the most revolting nature, under the mask of philanthropy, whose work is the destruction of our constitution—the political system by degrees, under the name of innovation, and then putting up the fragments to sell, in lots, for jobs to corrupt politicians. Already it has succeeded in dividing the necessary love the people—I have succeeded in betraying where respect, esteem, and reverence had long ago been established, under the principles of Christianity—it has ever printed almost pains, while it has planned ever a woe to heart. It is, Sir, the monster infidelity. Against that monster I have sworn to do my best; but, Sir, I must be numbered with the dead, ere I cease the conflict with that foe in your years and society—that enemy of God and man."—*Leeds and Mill*, Jan. 2, 1841.

"Mr. Oastler has published the first number of his 'Fleet Papers,' in the form of a letter to Thomas Thorsdill, Esq. It is conceived and executed in the best taste, as interesting and affecting. We shall be glad to see this suspicious course prosecuted in, and if so we can predict that his imprisonment will not be of long duration. We are persuaded that Mr. Thorsdill has been deceived by some busy meddling. Oastler worked hard in his service; saved thousands upon thousands; rendered his name respected everywhere; and ended poorer than he began, not in argument of any personal extravagance or other vice, but because his heart and soul were in the service, and he prized Mr. Thorsdill's interest above his own; having spent in the execution of the duties of his office a much larger sum than that which Mr. Thorsdill now claims upon a promissory note. We know of no parallel to this. We can only say that we would rather, a hundred times over, be the prisoner in this case than the hard master at whose suit he is cramped up in his lonely Cell."—*Leeds Intelligencer*, Dec. 2, 1841.

"FLEET PAPERS.—Under this title, Mr. Oastler has commenced a series of letters to his late master, Mr. Thorsdill, at whose suit he now lies a prisoner in the Fleet. Judging from the tone before us, this series will prove highly interesting; it is written in Mr. Oastler's best style—powerful in descriptions, kindly in temper, and devout and resigned under unmerited suffering."
 "In this first paper is merely an introduction to the series, we only and attention to it at the present. Independently of its own merits, we claim for it the support of every friend of justice and philanthropy—of every one who hates oppression, and loves his species. Had Mr. Oastler been content to remain a quiet spectator when tyranny was striking through the land, and its fierce encroachments decimating the poor, he might have been the honoured resident of Fisk's, the very best spot in Yorkshire—the trusted and courted steward of Mr. Thorsdill—But his heart and conscience said no; and the result is—a cell in the Fleet prison. Be it so. But now let his friends, and those for whose sake he has been forced 'from his native hills,' do their duty also. Let the 'Fleet Papers' be in every cottage, in every house in the kingdom; and thus given by their circulation, that gratitude for favours and services, which have cost so much, in a dying, scarce principle in every honest breast unkindled by the leprosy of 'expulsion.'"—*Manchester and Salford Advertiser*.

"Mr. Oastler's Address.—I love the first number of your 'Fleet Papers' very—very much more than I can express. The earnest simplicity of its language, its freedom from any attempt at fine writing, or overwrought expression, and the chastened feeling of an unmerited, and much mercifulness in number, which pervades its pages, its loving care, and inspiring tone, as the summer sun awakes, are extremely grateful to me, and must be highly prepossessing and pleasing to all those whose hearts are still hearts, and not iron-plated, and whose memories are labouring with the recollection of better times than we see now, and of better men than we see in the souls and liberties of England's great, and good, and noble! Oh! how sincerely do I reverse the picture, Christian resignation and fervour, unbounded reliance on the *helping of the Master*, and *retreat from above*, to rescue from the wrong below, which characterize the despised claims of our little history flower—a resignation, and a reliance, which it would be well for the suffering and persecuted in this harsh, rough, world, to imitate; and then look with that calm smile (Socrates and our Saviour smiled so) at their oppressors and wrongers, as you do at yours; and not have

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesburgh, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cartage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people. He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 2.

LONDON, SATURDAY, JANUARY 9, 1841.

Price 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—Yes, it is true. You have succeeded in confining "the body" of your old steward within the walls of this Prison. You have not, however, banished him from his friends. No, Sir, your persecution has only sifted them, and added many new ones. You will, perhaps, be surprised, when I tell you that which is the truth—in the sifting, only *one* passed through as chaff; and the sound corn has been increased, beyond any calculation that I could have made. It is an old adage, "Prosperity gains friends—adversity tries them." In my case, your persecution has brought an accession of friends to me, from all ranks, all parties, and all creeds. Sir, if I were to publish the list of my visitors and correspondents, your aristocratic lips would water. I will (because it would not be prudent to tell all the secrets of this Prison House) save you that waste. It was only yesterday, that I had in this Cell—aye, under those arches, and on this stone floor—an assemblage of talent (and of wealth, too) to dinner, (not at my expense,) which would not have disgraced your own table. I wish I could, with propriety, tell you their names; but that, I may not do. The other day, Sir, a poor man called with his, and his wife's offering to their imprisoned "King:"—two ounces of tobacco, and a smart pipe: and this morning, I had, amongst many other letters, one containing a shilling, from a poor man "who lives in the neighbourhood of my persecutor." Last evening, while my friends were with me, a boy, with a basket, entered my Cell. He only said, "Mr. Oastler?" To which I answered "Yes." Without another word, he took out of his basket a beautiful patent lamp, and a large stock of metallic-wick candles. He had not a word to say, as to where, or who, they came from. But, he did shew me how to trim the lamp, and then he left me. By the light of that lamp, I am now writing, Sir. A few minutes before the boy brought the lamp, a friend called, who has more influence in society than most men—much more than you have, Mr. Thornhill—and, when he shook hands with me, he left a ten pounds note; and, with many good wishes for my prosperity, assured me that he would become a subscriber to these papers. This afternoon I was waited upon by a highly respectable gentleman, who resides in the vicinity of the metropolis; though a stranger to me, he was a friend of yours, when you were young: a near

relation of his, is your friend and neighbour now. He told me he had read my letters and speeches respecting the Factory System, and the atrocious New Poor Law; and having heard of my imprisonment, he said, "he felt himself bound to call upon me, and cheer me in my seclusion." He urged me not to relax in my efforts for the poor and the helpless, and begged that I would keep up my spirits. Sir, the visits and the approval of such men, are balsams to a Prisoner's mind. He reminded me that it was only "my body" which was confined — that nothing could fetter the mind of the upright. When he left me, he presented me with a fine large cock pheasant (which forcibly reminded me of Riddlesworth, of yourself, and of the present, which, at Christmas, you were accustomed to send me). He assured me he should call again — that he should be a regular subscriber to these Papers, and begged that I would not fail to write to him whenever I wished. This very moment, whilst I am writing, a poor but very kind friend, has called and requested my acceptance of a little parcel, containing confectionary, which he thought would be a change for me, in this Prison. I had not been a week in gaol, before a friend enquired about my stock of clothes, with a wish to replenish it; — nor did my kind host and hostess, at 106, Sloane Street, forget me on Christmas day — they supplied your lack of kindness to your Prisoner. Few "kings," Mr. Thornhill, have so many friends in adversity. Oh, Sir, I shall never be out of your debt; you have given me the opportunity of proving my old friends, you have found me many new ones. But, I must not forget to tell you, because "my people" will rejoice to hear it, — my parson, Parson Bull, has been to see me. — Bless the man, I could not make him smile — he could not fancy his old "King" in a Prison. We had, however, a sweet season together — such a refreshment, as none, but my very own "people," can even guess about. He left me, to go and comfort my *widow* and my *orphan*; — and it was even so, — they had to comfort him. He forced me to accept ten shillings for a Christmas box from my own dear Parson. This little bit about Parson Bull, is for my Yorkshire "subjects," who know their "King," and who love his persecuted Parson.

But, although you have not been able to deprive me of my friends, you have certainly banished me from the endeared and long-cherished pleasures of home, and have succeeded in planting a thorn in the hearts of my wife and daughter: — Sir, that God whom they have not now to seek, knows all they feel. He registers all their prayers — He bottles every tear. He knows how to temper the blast to them. He has "delivered them in six troubles, yea, in seven there shall no evil touch them." He does sustain them — "He will keep them in perfect peace, because their minds are stayed on Him, because they trust on Him."

True enough, but still, it is very odd, the God of this world has captured me, by agents selected from the two "orders," which I have ever been most anxious to save from destruction — the Clergy and the Aristocracy; — both of them too, as I conceived, my dearest, kindest, and best friends. He has imprisoned me — but he has not been able to force me to lay down my arms; — he has not, nor shall he, compel me to strike my Standard — to change my Principles. From this, his own Cell, in which he confines me; yes, from this gloomy place, I will level my well-directed missile against him; — I will, if I can, still prove that I sincerely love both you and the instruments which have

beguiled you, by striving to save you and "your orders" from that destruction to which Philosophy is driving you, and from which nothing but the practice of Christian Principles can preserve you. I will, if I have the power, deliver you from the hands of the destroyer.

I shall not, however, enter at length upon that subject just now. I must, for the sake of regularity and method, begin where I left off—else I shall bewilder my readers. Before "I take up the thread of my discourse," allow me, just to request your serious and constant attention to the most awful assertion, that "the working classes are now, in fact, at war with all the superior classes. They are alienated and hostile, heart and soul." These are not my words—they are those of the Editor of the *Globe* newspaper. Now, Sir, that is not a desirable state of society;—for persons of your property, it is a very serious affair. Think well about it. Had my voice been listened to some years ago, the *Globe* would now have had no cause to sound such an alarm. My object, in these papers, will be to remove that evil, by opening the eyes of the people of England to the trickery by which it has been produced. Before I enter at large upon these matters, it is needful that my readers should know more about me, than they do at present. You are aware how grossly I have been misrepresented: you have unhappily aided in that work yourself, so, you will not be surprised at my anxiety to be better and truly known by the different ranks of society, now that you have afforded me the opportunity—nay have forced me to become a public teacher. Well then, Sir, to continue the description of my reverie, on the night of my Caption—the 9th of December, 1840.

I was, I told you, pacing, at your bidding, through the special favour of the Duke of Rutland, to Apsley House, little dreaming, that that was my nearest pathway to the Fleet.

Oh! I was a proud man that day! I had pleased my master, and had obtained, as my reward, from his hands, an honour which I valued more, and do so at this hour, than if he had given me the one half of his very large estates—an introduction to the Duke of Wellington! I shall never forget that day. I hurried away to the Duke's—knocked at the door—delivered my credential—and, in a trice, received for answer:—"The Duke of Wellington desires his compliments to you, and will be happy to see you to-morrow at eleven o'clock."

The morrow seemed a long time in coming. I slept little that night,—I sleep much sounder here. I revered the character of the Duke. I believed that he was at the head of "the order," which I had, all my life-time, honoured, and for which I had suffered so much. I thought that he was the most powerful man in the country: and I hoped (it was that hope which most excited my reverence—I beg you always to remember that, Sir)—I hoped, that through him, I could obtain amelioration for my poor wretched factory Children and their miserable parents:—and, that when I had told him the true state of the working classes of the North—he would stretch out his powerful arm to save them, from a state of wretchedness to which Philosophy alone, could have reduced them.

Full of these fondly cherished hopes, I arrived, five minutes before eleven, on the morrow, at Apsley House. I had often pleaded before the people for the emancipation of my poor infant slaves. Now I was about to tell the Great Duke himself, how they were tormented.

I was shewn into a waiting room, which looked into the Park. The splendid China service, emblematical of the Duke's military achievements, adorns that room. I amused myself by looking at the pictures; but my mind was fully engaged in framing a sort of introductory address. I fancied that there would be much form in the approach to so great a man; for, although I had previously companied with nobles, he seemed, in my estimation, to cast a dimness on all their coronets. I was very wishful not to disgrace you or myself, and thus mar my object on the threshold of our acquaintance. I might have saved myself all that trouble; I found that Wellington was as easy of access, as a Fixby neighbour. The clock had not finished striking, before a door opened behind me, and a very pleasant, but rather faint and shrillish voice, said, "Good morning, Mr. Oastler, will you walk this way." I did not know who it was that spoke. I turned and looked. The sound came from behind a door, which was open. I moved onward,—I needed no introduction; the Duke stood before me in his dressing coat;—I knew the well defined features. What could I do or say? I was in his presence, ere I was aware—no introduction—no speech—no any thing, was needful. He smiled, and said, "Walk forward, Sir." I did ask him, "to allow me to shut the doors." "Oh no, Sir; walk forward, I will close the doors," was his reply.

I did just as he bade me—and then stood in the middle of that three-windowed room, where the Duke transacts business, still facing the Park;—feeling, for all the world, "as queer as Dick's hat-band," not knowing either what to say or do. I was in the Duke of Wellington's presence, however, about to render service to the aristocracy and the poor, as I thought, and that was enough for me. There was, in the middle of the room, a long table, loaded with books and papers, piled and arranged with scrupulous order and neatness. The sofa, too, excepting at the end, next an easy chair, by the fire-place, was carefully filled with what seemed to be parliamentary papers. When Wellington had closed both doors, (little did I think of Prison doors then, though his Grace was as careful to secure those doors, as our well behaved and gentlemanly turnkeys are, to fasten these,) he walked towards me and said, pointing to the vacant space on the sofa, "Be seated, Sir," Again I was obedient; but how can I describe my feelings, when I found myself squatted on the sofa—and England's Duke, standing before me, and in Apsley House too? I really felt ashamed, Sir,—I felt out of my place, and quite uncomfortable, but could not, at first, tell the Duke so. He asked me, "Well, Mr. Oastler, what is it you wish to say to me?" And then I told him, that "I could not sit in his presence and in Apsley House, whilst he was standing."—"Oh," said he, "if it will please you better, I will sit." No sooner said than done. He was seated on my left hand, in the arm chair, in a second,—and then he said, "Well, Mr. Oastler, proceed" I still felt very so-so-ish—under restraint, and all that sort of thing. I told the Duke so;—he smiled and answered,—"You must fancy you are talking with one of your neighbours, at Fixby, and then we shall get on." The name of Fixby, spoken so pleasantly by Wellington, acted like a charm upon me. All uneasiness, reserve, and hesitation was instantly removed, I felt as much at home *tête-à-tête* with his Grace of Wellington, as if I had been in my own arm-chair, chattering with your under steward, Chadwick.

I told him, "that I sought for neither place nor pension; that my only wish was to serve my country, by explaining to him, what I knew, was the real condition

of the inhabitants of my own neighbourhood. "That," said the Duke, "is a very good hearing—go on." "Well, my Lord Duke," I continued, "there are two very great mistakes, which I wish, if possible to rectify." "What are they?" asked his Grace. "Your Lordship and your Lordship's order, the aristocracy, think, that the working classes wish for the plunder of your estates, and to deprive you of your honours."—"Aye," said Wellington, "it looks very like it."—"My Lord Duke, it is only their enemies who say so, the great manufacturing millionaires, who have an interest in keeping the working classes and the aristocracy at variance, that they may the more easily fleece both, it is they who thus traduce the operatives." His Grace seemed struck with this remark, and listened with great attention for my proofs and arguments. I told the Duke of the cruelties endured by the poor Factory Children in the north—of the weight of their oppressions, and of the parties who were deriving profits, and making immense fortunes by the hateful Factory System—and how they were pushing the old country gentlemen out of their estates, making the people believe that the aristocracy and clergy were their only tyrants; and that these mercenary men, were endeavouring to constitute themselves an aristocracy, and to plunder the Church.

I assured him that the only way the aristocracy and clergy could regain the affections of the people, and save themselves from ruin, was, that they should use their powerful influence, to rescue the working classes from the thralldom and delusion in which the money and steam powers held them, in a word, to exemplify Christianity in their conduct towards them. I urged him to support Mr. Sadler's Ten Hours Factory Bill. He promised to give the subject his most serious attention.

When we had closed that part of the subject, I said, "There is another error, my Lord, which is producing much mischief, and which the enemies of the people—who, unhappily for England, are now supposed to be their friends, (this was in the summer of 1832,) are perpetually ringing in their ears, namely, 'that the Duke of Wellington is a tyrant—the enemy of the working classes, and that he wishes to govern them and feed them by swords, bullets, and bayonets.' Now, my Lord Duke, I have come to head quarters to ask,—is it so?—in order that, if such be not the case, I may be able to remove that false impression from the minds of the people." The Duke smiled, but spoke earnestly, when he replied—"Those who say so of me, cannot know me. What can I gain more than I have gained, by the sword?" We had a good deal of conversation on this and other subjects. I explained my views fully to him. He seemed impressed by my observations,—said I had opened a new field of contemplation to him—wished me to call upon him when I came again to London, and to write freely to him, on any subject which I wished to communicate. He particularly wished that I would call the next day, before I left London.—When my hand and the Duke's hand were joined, at parting, I did feel proud, Sir! A few minutes before twelve the Duke rose, and very kindly told me that he was engaged with other persons, and before I left the room, they were announced by his valet.

Next day I called with my dear friend, my most faithful friend, the Rev. G. S. Bull, at Apsley House, when we had a very nice bit of talk with the Duke; and before we left, I assured his Grace—"That I would strive to remove the prejudices which his enemies were implanting in the minds of the working classes."

You remember, Sir, when I returned to Berkeley Square, how pleased you were,

when I told you all this and much more. Now, tell me, Mr. Thornhill, was it likely that I should then predict, that you were only alluring me towards this net?

When I returned to Huddersfield, as I did on the 12th of July, 1832, and was met by 10,000 of my neighbours (though only four or five hours' notice of my coming could be given); and when I told them all that I have now told you,—and many other things as well—and then asked for a good old-fashioned English cheer for the Duke of Wellington; how could I suppose that that cheer was only accelerating my progress towards the Fleet? And yet, Sir, it does so happen, that I never did one act, which so enraged my political foes and yours, as the obtaining that cheer. That sin of mine has never been forgiven—it never can be. From that moment they have pursued me with a malice as implacable as that of Satan, until, by your aid, they have lodged me here.

But, never mind, Mr. Thornhill, all is well that ends well. We have neither of us seen the end of this strife. I know that “God maketh the wrath of man to praise Him.” I know also, that I have diligently sought and have carefully searched the Scriptures;—I can doubt no longer, but heartily believe, and “know, that all things work together for good to them that love God.” Feeling that I do love Him, and having a desire to prove that love, by “obeying Him rather than man.” I thankfully embrace this cross, and in this Prison, I desire to magnify His truth and love; toiling in patience for the poor and the needy, knowing, that “the needy shall not alway be forgotten; that the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.”

It is, however, time, that you should know something of the history of “The Fleet Papers,” and that my readers learnt somewhat of the principles of your Prisoner, the author.

Before I retired to my prison-bed on the 9th of December, 1840, (we will have that day inscribed on our Yorkshire flags, some time, Sir,) I seriously enquired, “What can I do for my country here?” I was quite sure that my God could not require that I should be idle. I had not asked long, before my mind was powerfully impressed with, “Thou hast had much experience; thy energy, talent and influence are unimpaired—use them.” “How?” was my next enquiry. I was instantly directed to “The Press.”

The title of these Papers next suggested itself, and I went to bed quite happy. When my head touched the pillow, this thought cheered, animated and soothed me. “Thank God, although ‘my body’ is now trafficked for money, and I am doomed to Prison, and am by man counted unworthy of society. Thousands of poor Factory Children are now in bed, who, had I held my voice during the days of my liberty, would have been sold to the factory monster, imprisoned, and panting and sweating and wasting away their little frames, in the noisome Factory Dens.” I then turned round, and as I was dropping asleep, I thought—“Although myself a Captive, I have assisted in keeping hundreds of my fellow-creatures out of the Prison Union Houses, by staying the torrent of oppression and cruelty which takes its rise in Somerset House; and, by the help of God, my little ‘Fleet Papers’ shall assist in drying up its very source.” I thought, too, of many merchants and others, whom, in their difficulties and perplexities, I had formerly assisted (at much trouble, vexation and loss to myself); I saw them now rolling in affluence, but would not have changed pillows with them. I

thought on my mother —, and “ my mother’s children,” and of another, who shall be nameless—one who once loved me as a brother—I then dropped a tear upon my Prison-pillow, and, committing my ALL to His care, “ who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth,” I went to sleep, and slept more soundly than “ kings” are wont to sleep.

On the following morning my thoughts were busily engaged upon the best mode of prosecuting this work. I foresaw great difficulty. I consulted with my dear wife and child. We weighed the matter most seriously. We examined all the paths and intricacies by which we had been led. Having done so, and believing that it was the will of God that we should risk the little money we had intended for our support, we at once resolved to incur the certain expenses attendant on establishing these Papers.

I determined to throw them into the form of letters to yourself, for two reasons ; First, because you are an aristocrat, and I thought that your name would be an introduction to “ your order,” whom I wished especially to address. Secondly, because I had been so much in the habit of communicating my thoughts to you, during the time of my liberty and in my prime, that it seemed as though the regularly keeping up a custom, which had been so long indulged in, would deprive imprisonment and advancing years of many bitters, and make this Cell feel more like “ my home,” — more like Fixby, Sir.

Such is the history of my little project. I had been waiting fourteen months at Brompton and Chelsea, in the hope of finding some useful employment on the press, but, I could find none. I fancied that I had waited long enough ; and, believing, as I heard nothing from you for so many months after our trial (which was on the 10th of last July), that your anger was appeased, and that your Counsel in Court had faithfully described your feelings towards me ; I was thinking and talking of visiting Yorkshire, intending to take a snug cottage somewhere, in the centre of the manufacturing districts, and settling down quietly for life. It is true, I wondered at the end of the path to which I had apparently been led ; I knew that I had, all through life, entirely relied upon the guidance of Providence, and I could not explain the enigma. Thought I, “ how singular, after all this bustle,— after having been made so conspicuous ; it does seem odd, that I must leave my work unfinished—my principles surrounded by a thick cloud of prejudice, and retire.” I then saw no other plan — no door, to further usefulness, seemed open ; so I was resigned to, what appeared to be, the will of God.

How mysterious, Sir, that when you barred the Prison gates upon me, God should have opened a door to further usefulness ! This “ smooth stone ” taken from the brook, by your own hand, will—I know that it will—make a breach in the ramparts of the citadel of Oppression, if it does not strike the Giant in his forehead. I shall be read, Sir ; this work will prosper. I am sure of all the patronage which God approves, I do not ask or wish for any more. I rejoice to know, that, already, this little tract has found its way to the libraries of many clergymen and nobles. I am also gratified by being assured, “ that some of my subscribers occupy seats in the Government Offices,” and that Somerset House has not barred its gates against “ The Fleet Papers.”

I shall now speak for myself. I have, heretofore, been grossly misrepresented by those who did not know me. Lord Melbourne thought that I was an incendiary, and told their Lordships so, in their own house. He will now understand me :

so will those other Ministers of Her Majesty, who, from ignorance of my character and principles, have abused me in the House of Commons. That portion of the press too, which only knew me from the misrepresentations of my foes, will now read for themselves, my principles in my writings.

I now adore the Wisdom and Goodness of God, in driving me out of Fixby, and leading me a wandering life for more than two years; thus separating me from the turmoil of agitation and the contaminating atmosphere of the Factory districts,—in taking me away from the busy scene of agitation,—introducing me into an entire new range of society and of thought; and thus, at once, supplying much useful and necessary information, and sobering down the habit of my thoughts. I am no longer in darkness, Sir; your persecution has untied the mysterious knot; it has unravelled the intricate maze.

This work will speak my whole soul. I have no cause, no party, no individual to serve; my thoughts, gathered from experience, will drop uncontaminated by any interested motives, on these pages.

I shall have little to do with Party names in this work. It is against bad Principles that I war, if you ask, against what Principles? Without a moment's hesitation, I answer: "Those of the school miscalling itself—'Liberal, enlightened Philosophy;' which faints at the thought of hanging a murderer, and laughs at the slow murder of millions by its own more cruel processes."

When I have traced a little farther, my progress to this place, I shall not hesitate clearly to state my principles, and to detail the results of my experience of the state and condition of every class of Society, of which, from the Beggar to the Prince, I have had opportunities of observation.

I think I know the reason for all the sufferings, heartburnings, jealousies, and uneasiness which afflict our countrymen, if I mistake not, they arise from the fact, that our Governors have mistaken Ignorance for Philosophy—and Gold for Christianity.

I remain, Sir,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—It is very odd if my friend Mr. Stausfeld should have invited your enemy, Mr. O'Connell, the enemy of your Church, "your order" and your nation, to dine with him in my native town, Leeds—just when I am your Prisoner in the Fleet, and when he, the said Mr. O'Connell, has been establishing a club in Ireland, for the purpose of shutting out of the Irish market, the manufactures of Leeds, I must say a word or two on this foolish report is in my next.—R. O.

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ERRATA. No. I.—Page 3, line 8, for *not forget*, read *not to forget*.—Page 5, line 25, for *the fine long terrace*, read *I recollected the fine long terrace*.

In Baxter's Advertisement.—For *Bowen*, read *Bourn*.

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THESE Papers are principally intended for the (press) of the friends of Christianity, and the Constitution; particularly the Clergy and the Aristocracy, and of all persons who are possessed of Property. The object of the writer will be to explain the reasons for the present alarming state of English society, and the consequent insecurity of life and property; also, to offer some remarks upon the folly and wisdom of attempting to uphold our institutions, particularly that of Private Property, by the unconstitutional means of Centralisation, Commissioning, Espionage, and Force; finally, to state his own views on the best mode of restoring Peace, Contentment, Security, and Prosperity, in every rank of the people of England.

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NOTICE OF THE “FLEET PAPERS.”

“THE FLEET PAPERS, No. 1. London: Pavey, Holywell-street, Strand. — And it is mine to find! — In the wide-hearted, generous, unflinching Richard Dwyer, the inmate of a prison; and that in the path of his old master, — one whom he has faithfully served, and whose property he has repaired, at his own expense, in an attempt, far beyond that of the poetry now for which he is imprisoned? — Alas, for human nature it is too true; and Richard Dwyer is another victim is inevitable — he is another proof of the title evidence which is to be placed on him; — of the absolute necessity of raising all our dependencies on another being; — of the who ‘baptize the world in sin above death’; and who ‘will never leave me forsake’ Deo — who front in him, . . . The first number of the ‘Fleet Papers’ contains many interesting passages. The following is one of them; who has read it without a tear? — It is

ADDRESS TO MR. DWYER.

“You know that I am in distress; when we all depend on our own will, you will remember, that I never failed to speak the truth, however disagreeable it might be to you: now that I am the prey of all to you — give me my liberty, I will not thank you, but (unless you think that I shall speak the truth. The man does not who knows you better than I do. You are proud, just, and benevolent; — it is but in your nature to be so. Some years have been troubled by men and their heart against me. I am well aware of all the ungrateful wrong which have been done. I know the criminals who have been engaged to make you hate me. They have succeeded for a while; you were in your company, the kindly nature of your heart prevailed — you granted the only favour that I asked, by which I thank you. I supposed that my captives should not be made at home, or possessors of my work and child: I wanted to spare them the heart-rending pang of seeing the officers lay hands on ‘the lady,’ and drag it from them — you granted that request, that kindness on your part, beloved — requested by me, and will not be forgotten, when the day arrives (as mine necessarily it will) when you would rather that you were my friend than my foe.”

“In these papers, Mr. Dwyer intends to combat the present system of our social polity, which is destroying all classes of society. He says:—

“I am, in heart and soul, an Englishman — devoutly attached to the time-honoured institutions, and your prejudices, of my native country, and being, with an anxiety which words can never express, that new-fangled system of innovation, which, for the purpose of watching Englishmen, who are in fond of liberty, assume the name of ‘Liberal Philosophy,’ whose aim is the ruin of the most valuable system, under the mask of philosophy, whose work is the destruction

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddleburgh, in the County of Norfolk;

AND

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage,"—*"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."*

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people. He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 3.

LONDON, SATURDAY, JANUARY 16, 1841.

Price 2s.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—Now, that you have shut me up in the Fleet, you may, perhaps, suppose that I ought to take no interest in what passes out of doors. If such be the doom of imprisonment, why then, those who govern the busy world, should take care to keep out of our precincts, those objects of misery, which, from some mismanagement in society, are now, occasionally, to be found within these walls. Do not misunderstand me, Sir; I blame not the unhappy individuals who are driven by want, to seek for help, by way of Charity, even from us, whom the laws have seized, deprived of liberty and home, and have put up in this Prison: but, surely, if we are to keep silence, and lose all sympathy for our fellow-countrymen without, some plan should be adopted, by Society, to keep its own misfortunes to itself. Else, although a Prisoner, I ought not to be censured for attempting, even here, to improve the condition of those outside our walls. I will explain what I mean, Sir.

On the Evening of the 21st of last month, (on which day my boy would have been of age, if death had spared him,) I was sitting alone in this Cell—I was ruminating on things past, present, and to come. I remembered my little infant—my joy when that child was born—the alternate breathings of hope and sighings of despair respecting him. The sad scene—the solemn moment of his death was present to me; my weeping wife, stifling her sobs, to ease my heart—the lovely corpse—for he was lovely even in death—the funeral—the sorrowing friends, (many of whom, since then, I have followed to their graves—my father and my mother amongst the rest)—my home, stripped of that charm—my garden deprived of its sweetest bud—all these things were then passing in review before me. I indulged myself, in this solitude, by fancying what a day of rejoicing that would have been to me (yes, Sir, this Prison could not have shut out that joy,) if my Robert had survived. I thought I saw him, hale and strong, stand straight before me; but, when I remembered his coffin and his vault, I felt that he was dead; and should have grieved most sorrowfully, if I could have thought that the grave had been his end. I was secured from grief by Faith. I knew that his happy spirit was basking in the presence of his God and Saviour, in bliss ineffable—as far from sorrow as from fear. I pierced through these thick arches,

and anticipated the joy of meeting him above. I wondered, "can he see his father here?"—Hope whispered, "Yes, he can, for, 'are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.'" I was not in the humour to cavil, and split hairs upon that doctrine. I needed comfort, and I was comforted, when I thought my emancipated child was sent to "minister" to his imprisoned father.

Sir, you have never buried a child;—may you ever be spared that pang. I have twice felt it;—twice have I wept at the grave of all the little ones I had. But there is one in Heaven, whose birth-day is still dear to you. On that day, you will ruminare, as I did, and will then be able to sympathise with me.

I was interrupted, that evening, by a knocking at the door. And now I come to the point I started with. I do not think, however, that the digression is unimportant. I was in a softened mood, and, may be, felt the more on that account. It cannot be uninteresting to you, to know how prisoners ruminare, and how they strive to while away their lonely hours, and seek for comfort, sometimes, even in phantoms. I was in that humour, Mr. Thornhill, when the person who disturbed me, entered. He was from "outside." I had known him thirty years ago. He was then a clerk in a most respectable office in Leeds. Afterwards, he became a merchant; that day he was a beggar in the Fleet! Now, Sir, mark well;—this was not one of Lord Brougham's "rebel labourers," "debased and degraded poor," "idle and profligate people," "degraded peasants," "worthless members of society," "listless, restless, pampered, irritable, nervous, indolent, grumbling and violent paupers," "sturdy beggars," "idle and knavish peasantry," nor was he a "Westmoreland pauper." This man, I repeat, was none of these; he was an industrious individual, who had, by industry, care, and prudence, advanced his condition, from that of a servant to a master—from a clerk to a merchant. Still, Sir, by that atrocious system of competition and gambling, which Philosophy has now established, under the name of Trade, he has, in his old age, been reduced to absolute want. He was a beggar—driven from Society, "outside," to solicit alms in a Gaol! And we are to keep silence, are we? to shut our ears against the evil workings of that system, which has not only driven us here, but has sent its more miserable victims after us—to beg? If so, keep your victims "outside." This, then, is an answer to all who fancy, that the misery of Society "is no business of ours." After all, Sir, we are Englishmen, although we are Prisoners.

Hear the poor man's tale;—it is a short one—it is very pitiful. "Excuse me, Sir," said the famished stranger, "I heard this morning that you were in the Fleet;—I knew your father, and you, when you were young." (I had not seen the man, or heard of him, for more than twenty years.) "I am in want, and amongst strangers; but I felt sure that you would pity me, and, if you had the power, would relieve me. I have not tasted food this day, and I am very hungry. I have no means to pay for the poorest lodging." What followed, I need not relate; but I remember the late Rev. John Wesley used to say, "that a Christian's necessity, must always yield to his neighbour's extremity."

Sir, there must be something wrong in the arrangements of Society, else that man could not have been so destitute. Always remember, that he had not been an "idle labourer," but an industrious clerk, and then a respectable merchant.

This paper will be read by many merchants, and by many clerks. They see, in that wretched man, the picture of what they, themselves, will soon be, if they madly resolve to hurry down that precipice, towards which the new-fangled system of Philomophy is driving them. Depend upon it, Sir, the same operation which has ruined the labourers, is now fast bringing down the shopkeepers and respectable merchants; and, although you, Aristocrats, foolishly imagine that you have fenced yourselves in security behind the strong barrier of the *New Poor Law*, the same ruin will assuredly overtake you, (if you sternly reject all caution,) notwithstanding you are about to garrison the "city of oppression" with Pollux.

Will you hear one word about the *New Poor Law*, Sir, from me? You have heard many in former years. I would save you from destruction, if I could. Listen to me this once—*The New Poor Law is a failure—the bubble has burst!* How do I prove it? Not by disgusting you with the recital of those accumulating instances of death, in every shape, which that forerunner of woe engenders, and which has made England one great charnel house for the poor! It is true, Sir, that while we boast that we have been spared from the ravages and rampages of the foreign war-horse, we are cursed with a law more diabolical and deadly in its operation, than confounding armies are in the battle-field. For the present, however, I waive all those heart-rending facts, (I shall, in my forthcoming numbers, not fear to grapple with the monster, and trace his blood-marks inch by inch). Now, it is enough, that I demonstrate, that *the New Poor Law is a failure*. Lord Brougham said, if that law were passed—

"It would effect a great, and a most desirable improvement in the morals and the happiness of the poor. That it would restore to industry its proper reward—restate property in security, and lift up once more—God be praised!—the character of that noble English peasantry to the proud eminence, where, but for the old poor laws, it would still have shone unobscured,—the admiration of mankind, and the glory of the country which boasts it as its brightest ornament!"

Such were the promises of Lord Brougham to their lordships, when he proposed that fatal measure, July 21, 1834. Now, Sir, what is the result? Read over once more the noble Dreamer's anticipations—the wise Philosopher's deductions—and then, turn to the avowed organ of Her Majesty's Government, the *Globe* newspaper, in the seventh year of trial of that very measure, and solemnly peruse these awful words, you cannot read them too often, Sir;—"The working classes are now, in fact, at war with all the superior classes. They are alienated and hostile, heart and soul." Remember also the fact, that, in consequence of this alarming state of things, a Rural Police (which Lord John Russell has himself declared would destroy the freedom of England,) is now demanded, in aid of the tyrannical and unconstitutional power of the Poor Law Commissioners! and then, Sir, turn to that file of letters, which, when I was your steward, some years ago, I wrote to you, endeavouring to convince you, that such would be the awful and ruinous results of the operation of that accursed act, and say—Have Lord Brougham's or Richard Oastler's opinions been stamped by time, experience and fact—with truth? Sir, *it is a failure*—and if there be either honesty or truth in its proposers and promoters, they will seize the very first opportunity, to tear that "atrocious and execrable act" (these are the venerable Eldon's

words respecting it,) from the statute book. But if not—if they resolve to ruin themselves rather than acknowledge their error, and retrace their steps, I need not now inform you of the farther consequences; you will find them fully explained in those letters, to which I have referred you;—if stupidity resolves to maintain that law, those consequences are inevitable, in spite of Commissioners and Police! Mr. Thornhill, it is high time that you, Landlords, should awake out of sleep. Nothing is more sure, than that the millions of pounds which the Landlords fancy they have gained, by the horrible operation of the New Poor Law, will, if restitution to the poor and rightful owners be not made, act as a millstone to their whole “order,” and destroy that, which it was intended to preserve. You know, Sir, that upon this question I admit of no compromise. You know that I have aforetime warned you, and you have turned a deaf ear; I can now appeal to facts and admissions; with the authority of those facts and those admissions, I am now emboldened—even at this, the eleventh hour—to conjure you, and through you the whole of your “order,” as you value your property and the peace of society, to sever yourselves from those men and those delusions which have now, (even on their own shewing,) disappointed your hopes, and falsified all their predictions. Haply, it may not be too late.—Certainly, there is no time to spare. Do not despise this appeal, it proceeds not from your enemy—your Prisoner has no evil in his heart towards you. No, Sir, he will rejoice if his incarceration shall be one means of restoring you and “your order,” to the heart-place of the people.

By the New Poor Law, the landlords have, under the pretence of charity, robbed the poor: with the promise of protecting industry, they have stolen its reward;—pretending to improve the morality of the poor, they have forced modesty to blush and weep, because of their horribly-indecent “rites.”—In the name of philanthropy, they have murdered the sons and daughters of adversity! This, they have done—if in ignorance, facts cannot now fail to instruct them;—if, being convinced, they still resolve to continue in their sinful course, as sure as God is truth, they will very soon have cause to repent. If you still despise my warnings, then listen to the voice of God. I am well aware that, when I appeal to Scripture against their tyranny, the philosophers call it blasphemy. The Sacred Book exposes their ignorance and cruelty, and is the safeguard of the rights of the poor; hence, the “wise men” hate it, and say that I, who believe it to be true, am a blasphemers. Hear, Sir, what that Book says:—

“Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment? Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds; yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung: they which have seen him shall say, Where is he? His children shall seek to please the poor, and his hands shall restore their goods. That which he laboureth for shall he restore, and shall not swallow it down: according to his substance shall the restitution be, and he shall not rejoice therein. Because he hath oppressed, and hath forsaken the poor; because he hath violently taken away a house, which he builded not; surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly, he shall not save of that which he desired. In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits; every hand of the wicked shall come upon him. When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and shall rain it upon him while he is eating. He shall flee from the iron weapon, and the bow of steel shall strike him through. It is drawn, and cometh out of the body; yea, the glittering sword cometh out

of his gull; terrors are upon him. All darkness shall be hid in his secret places; a fire not blown shall consume him; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle. The heaven shall reveal his iniquity; and the earth shall rise up against him. The increase of his house shall depart, and his goods shall flow away in the day of wrath. This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed to him by God."—*JOB*, ch. 20, v. 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29, 27, 28, 29.

Oh! that the "ancients of the people," would listen to the unerring word of truth, and remember that their noble blood and great possessions will not shield them against the "judgment of the Lord God of Hosts," who says,

"The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people, and the princes thereof; for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye that ye have hated my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord God of Hosts."—*ISAIAH*, ch. 3, v. 14, 15.

The entrance of the merchant-beggar to the prisoner's Cell, has led me, where, in this letter, I had not intended to wander;—perhaps, however; my observations will prove to some, "as a nail fastened in a sure place."

In the postscript of my last letter, I alluded to a strange report which had reached me here; *i. e.* that Mr. Stansfeld had invited Mr. Daniel O'Connell, the Irish "Patriot," to dine with many thousands of "Reformers," in my native town, Leeds; I have also heard, that Mr. O'Connell has accepted the invitation. Now, Sir, I cannot believe these foolish reports, because I am disposed to give both those persons credit, for more tact than is displayed in such an arrangement; it appears to me, (knowing the parties and the place so well as I do), that it is impossible any good, to either of those individuals, or their parties, can ensue from such an event.

I am perfectly aware that the Leeds "Reformers" are in a very divided and shattered condition; and, I can easily suppose, that Mr. Stansfeld may wish to strengthen and unite his party. But how he can expect to do so, by the presence of an individual, who has carried division into every party which he has hitherto joined, and who has "blown hot and cold" on all men and all principles, I am unable to guess. Mr. Stansfeld does, no doubt, wish to unite the Whigs, Radicals, and Chartists of Leeds (for they are all "Reformers"), and, if the report be true, it would seem that he is so foolish as to seek the aid of one who has styled the Whigs, "base, bloody, and brutal,"—and whom the Whigs have branded with Treason, even from the mouth of William the "Reformer." If, however, the Whigs are to be so easily gulled, how can Mr. Stansfeld expect Mr. O'Connell to obtain for them, the support of that portion of the "Reformers" called Radicals, whom the "Patriot" has denounced as "dishonest, ignorant and blood-thirsty!" Does my friend also suppose that O'Connell will be able to win over to the Whigs, the "Reformers" called Chartists, when every man of them knows, that O'Connell was the founder of Chartism; that he was afterwards the first man to urge the Government to proceed against their leaders, and, that when the English Chartists sent a missionary to Dublin, "O'Connell's boys" refused to hear him, and almost drove him, by violence, from Dublin? Does Mr. Stansfeld think that the Chartists have forgotten, that O'Connell gloried in the fact, that the blood of their deluded and betrayed comrades, (I can never conceal my belief, that those poor Welch

Chartists were the victims of (Government espionage), but, can the Leeds Chartists forget that their founder, Daniel O'Connell, boasted that those his disciples were all killed by "his own Irish boys?" Oh! how he has gloried in that fact! They cannot have forgotten that he threatened to send over 500,000 Irishmen to crush his own offspring, Chartism! nor, that he is the man who is now filling England with Irish Police! Can any man fancy, that those who admire Universal Suffrage, will listen with patience to the person who declares, that Universal Suffrage has lost its charms, and that, now, there is "no magic in those words?" Or, will the more moderate "Reformers" suffer themselves to be beguiled by him, who proved his insincerity for "the greatest practical extension of the suffrage," by actually disfranchising many hundreds of thousands of Irish forty-shillings freeholders? The answer to all his growlings about the inequality between English and Irish representation, is—"Sir, you disfranchised the Irish yourself!" Does Mr. Stansfeld suppose that the "Trades" of Leeds will attend to the advice of one, who, in 1834, recommended Combination, and, in 1838, denounced his own Dublin Combinators, as murderers? Will the Leeds Bankers cheer O'Connell, who first recommended a run upon the Banks, and, afterwards, became a Banker himself? Will the Dissenters be cajoled by him, who, but the other day, denounced their chosen Champion, (and in him, themselves,) as one, whose "charity, the honey of heaven, sours into fanatical vinegar in his spiritual digestion?" Nay, can even the Leeds "Reformers," who are Roman Catholics, be expected to hear a man prate about "extension of the suffrage," who, with a stroke of his pen, excluded hundreds of thousands of their Irish brethren from the registry? One, who absolutely advised the Government to enslave their Priests, by a "Golden link?" I must here quote his very words, else he will deny that he ever said so. I copy from "The First Report on the State of Ireland," at pages 81 and 82, he (Daniel O'Connell, Esq.) says:—

"I think a wise Government would preserve the fidelity and attachment of the Catholic Clergy, by what I call the *golden link*, by pecuniary provision." "The consequence, I take it, would be this, that the Catholic Clergy would become in the nature of officers belonging to the Crown!!"

Is it possible to conceive, that any honest "Reformers" will place confidence in a man, who tried to obtain a government appointment, of 1,000*l.* a year, for Mr. Edward Ruthven, whom he described "as guilty of nothing short of swindling and false swearing," and, of whom, he said, "the labourers of Kildare would be ashamed to keep such company?" Is there one man in Leeds who can trust, either the loyalty or the word of that man, who, when George IV. visited Ireland, waved a branch of laurel over his head, to do him homage, and then slavered him with fulsome flattery;—and who now says, "that our present Queen is the only sovereign who has not been an enemy to Ireland?"—Out upon such mock loyalty.

Is it possible that Mr. Stansfeld will so far forget his manhood, as to shake hands with the creature who told his countrymen, that "out of every twenty Englishwomen who were married, nineteen of them were mothers before the marriage knot was tied!" I know, Sir, that he has denied having said so, that, in my opinion, is a proof that the foul calumniator did utter the atrocious libel! The unmanly charge was registered, too faithfully for Mr. O'Connell, by

his own reporters. The blast which he intended for the *women* of England, will surely drive him out of the company of the *men* of Leeds.

Is that man likely to make peace amongst English "Reformers," whose chief business, in Ireland, is, to convince his confiding dupes, that Englishmen hate them, and are their bitterest foes:—and who is everlastingly telling them, "that the Irish are the slaves of the 'Saxons?'" Can Mr. Stausfeld walk arm in arm with O'Connell, amongst the Leeds "Reformers," without expecting some day to be his cast-off, when he thinks of Whittle Harvey, Raphael, O'Gorman Mahon, Jack Lawless, and Sharman Crawford? If he can, he is less wise than when I knew him.

I say not one word about the "Repealers." O'Connell has just finished his "one hundredth performance of that Piece," and he is now, as usual, pocketting the proceeds.

I must, however, Mr. Thornhill, ask my old friend Stausfeld one more question through you. I cannot be at Leeds to do so—you have taken care to hinder me. I was there in 1836, when O'Connell hoped to ruin your "order," by reforming the House of Lords; and intended also "to sup with the Leeds Reformers;" but, somehow, on that occasion, he was disappointed, both of his "song and supper," and I lost the labour and expense of my journey from Fixby. Now, Sir, I must be content, to use you, as the medium of my communication, on the talked of visit of this reviler of our countrymen—this traducer of our wives—this deceiver of his own confiding "pisintry." This Judas to his own Church and Priesthood,—this betrayer of my poor Factory Children,—this enemy of your "order,"—this Irish Wizard, who is, it would seem, hired to convince the "Leeds Reformers," that the Whigs have not cheated them! Yes, Sir, one more question I must, through you, ask my old friend Stausfeld—and it is this.

How happens it Mr. Stausfeld, (if it be so,) that you, an apostle of the Free Trade School, should have asked the great Irish Exclusionist, O'Connell, to dine with the Leeds "reforming" Clothiers, in the hope of benefiting them; when you know that he has, for the last three months, been using every exertion to induce the Irish, to exclude all Leeds manufactured goods from their markets?

I have now, Sir, only one remark to make on the Leeds intended "reform meeting." If O'Connell is really to be a guest, the place of meeting is well chosen. It is fitting, that he who sold and betrayed the poor Factory Slaves; he, whose crest is, Death's Head and Cross Bones—should dine in one of the great Infant Slaughter Houses—in a Leeds Flax Mill!—Yes, Sir, the dining-room is well chosen for the Guest.

I should not have said one word about this intended meeting to you, Sir, if I could, from this Cell, have found a better method of doing my duty to your "order" and my country. I hope, therefore, that you will excuse this digression.

My space is too far gone, to allow me now to continue my narrative. I will therefore occupy the remaining page, with one or two observations, drawn from me, in consequence of communications which I have received.

Some persons object to these papers, because, as they say, "they are too religious—there is too much about Providence in them," and so forth. My only answer is, I grieve on their account—not on my own. I would not change that Religion—that undeviating reliance upon the superintendence of all my affairs, by

Almighty God—for all the wealth of this world. Possessed of that Faith, I am happy in poverty and in Prison—deprived of it, I should be wretched, in possession of wealth and dwelling in a palace! “The Fleet Papers” will continue to contain the sentiments of my heart; if they are pleasing or profitable to my readers, I shall rejoice; if they are despised and rejected, I shall ever be comforted by reflecting, that to please others, I have not degraded myself. I have been ambitious of an opportunity of conveying the thoughts of my heart, to the public, unrestricted and unfettered. The overruling Hand of God, has caused your harsh proceedings against me, to open this medium; and shall I reject, or deny, or be ashamed to acknowledge God, who has thus graciously interfered in my behalf!—NEVER!

Another observation, and I have done. I find that some persons, “out of doors,” wish that I would occasionally communicate information of our proceedings “within.” Such persons entirely mistake the object of “The Fleet Papers.” I will now tell you, all, that I intend to communicate, of our “Family affairs.” I can assure you, Sir, that, from the Warden to the lowest officer and servant—and from every “Master,” or, if you will have it so, from every Prisoner; I have, since “my body” was lodged here at your suit, experienced the greatest civility, attention, and kindness.

The fact which seemed most strange to me on my entrance, was, the number of persons, in this Prison, who are acquainted with you. That circumstance detracts from the prison-like sensations, which might otherwise be very uncomfortable. Our conversation is often about yourself—(you are never named, but with respect). You may guess at my surprise when I came here, to find your portrait hanging over the chimney piece of No. 21, Hall Gallery, where I always dine. Thus far, but no farther, I am a prison-tale-bearer.

I often wonder how it is, that so many persons, who were perfect strangers to me,—for whom I never did one kind office, should be so very kind to me;—and that my old master, for whom I sacrificed my health, my fortune, and almost my fame, should be so cruel.

I am, Sir,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—Trifles are sometimes important. You will smile, and so will thousands of “my people,” when I inform you, that, because I am styled, and adopt the title of “King,” very many of my new readers (and the number of persons who now read my writings for the first time, is very great;) fancy that I am either the most vain person in Christendom, or, that I am insane. In my next number I will explain all about it; I shall then remove one stumbling-block, which, at present, impedes my approach to the hearts of a very large number of readers.—R. O.

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ERRATA.—No. 2, page 11, line 18, in part of impression, for *represented*, read *misrepresented*.

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E. P. DOUBNEY AND SON,

49, LOMBARD-STREET, 1784.

THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY JOHN PAVEY,

NO. 47, BOSTON STREET, ROYAL EXCHANGE.

THESE Papers are printed and sold for the benefit of the Friends of *Christianity*, and the *Transatlantic* press, *the Cause* and the *Abolitionary*, and of all persons who are possessed of *Conscience*. The whole of the matter will have reference to the *rights* to be possessed absolutely, *not* of *private* property, and the *rights* to be possessed of by the *individual* citizen, as also some *remarks* upon the *Bill* and *abolition* of *slavery*, as proposed by the *abolitionary*, published by the *British* Friends, by the *representative* means of *Parliament*. *Constitution*, *Empire*, *Government*, *Sweden*, and *Prussia* to 1837, and of the *people* of *England*.

The author is perfectly aware of the fact, that every *Parliamentary* body is now only attempting to legislate for the present moment—putting off till to-morrow what it ought to do to-day, and that some *abolitionary*, *free-trade*, and *other* *principles* necessary to be legislated for *immediately*. He is well convinced that there is a *mode* of *legislation* fully *practical* and *effective* upon *our* *principles* and *foundations*—*Christianity*—and that there is the *only* way to *preserve* *ourselves* from the *consequences* of *political* *perdition*, who are not well versed in the way to *interest* *Body*, *Assembly*, and *Honourable*.

NOTICES OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

The Fleet Papers.—We have so accustomed the reader of the second number of these papers, by the *conclusion* *therein* made promise to be exceedingly interesting and instructive. The contents *long* of the *second* *number*, though *superficial*.

'Dressed, dressed, dressed, dressed!'

As *Shakespeare* would say, appears to have *produced* *influence*.

'Twas He that did give the *spirit* *body*,
Was, *personally* *orders* for the *quantity*,
Will *remain* for the *old* *age*.'

And he may add,

'Though I look old, yet I feel strong and *young*
For, in my *years*, I never did *forget*;
Was and *industrious* *orders* to my *land*,
Nor did *me* with *unhealthy* *orders* *mean*,
The means of *enrichment* and *wealth*,
Therefore, my age is as a *late* *winter*,
Tends, but *kindly*.'

He salutes himself in his retirement,

'That in the *west* *latter* *days*,
And has with *only* *been* *applied* to *shrink*,
And not at *great* *pace* a *hurry*.'

And even now that he lies

'That which *should* *entirely* *old* *age*,
As *honest*, *free*, *charitable* a *group* of *friends*.'

We give a very *graphic* account of his interview with the Duke of Wellington the evening which preceded that in which the success of the abolition of *slavery* papers, and the success which was obtained by the *abolitionary* and *other* *committees*. It is very well and *perceptive* that I was: it was not *without* *some* *difficulty*. I mention a *number*'s *invitation*, I answer, 'I was of the *which* *committee*,' my *friend* *then* *replied* *philosophically*, 'with *diffidence* on the thought of *being* a *particular*, and *works* to the *best* *advantage* of *all* *men* by *the* *most* *honest*, *most* *frank*, *most* *open* *means*.' I think I have the *best* *of* *the* *offerings*, *benefits*, *advantages*, *possibilities*, and *possibilities* *which* *will* *be* *the* *best*, *most* *advantageous*—I *imagine* *you* *then* *will* *be* *the* *best*, *most* *advantageous* *have* *advantages* *which* *will* *be* *the* *best*, *most* *advantageous*, and *will* *be* *the* *best*, *most* *advantageous*.—*Extract* *from* *the* *Journal*, *Dec.* *18.* *1841.*

—The FLEET PAPERS.—In the third number of these papers, now before us, Mr. Oastler expresses his opinions of the new poor law with a freedom which shows that though the hulk may be restrained, the mind cannot be shackled. He states that "the new poor law is a failure—the hulk has burst," and presents his reasons by contrasting the proceedings and promises of Lord Brougham with the institutions of the *Globe* newspaper, and pointing to the conjoint establishment of a rural police. We think, however, that he shows the impossibility of the wrong changing. The great manufacturers and anti-reform law men are chiefly favourable to the enactment of what Mr. Oastler reminds his readers the respectable Editor termed an "astonishing and execrable act." He expresses a strong conviction that the New-poor law will be the means of adding starvation and exposure, and misery to a distress in G. Russell which forms the material in the very bone. The religious tone of these papers, of which some people complain, is, in our opinion, their chief recommendation. We chiefly purpose, in the next number, to explain how it was that he became styled and adopted the title of the King of the Factory Children; which he says has been a stumbling-block that has retarded his approach to the hearts of many readers, who had been led to believe that he was either the poet and man in Christendom, or that he was a Jew. —*Liverpool Mail*, Jan. 16, 1844.

—Mr. Oastler.—Mr. Oastler has published the first number of the "Fleet Papers," in the form of a letter to Thomas Thorskill, Esq. It is condensed and expanded in the best taste, it is interesting and affecting. We shall be glad to see this anonymous volume inscribed to, and if we may presume that the inscription will not be of long duration. We are persuaded that Mr. Thorskill has been deceived by some busy scribbler. Oastler worked hard in his writing; saved his thoughts upon themselves, rendered his style unobscured, and ended poorer than he began; not on account of any personal extravagance or other vice; but because his heart and soul were in the service, and he proved Mr. Thorskill's maxim almost his own: having spun to the extremity of the dross of his style a much larger web than that which Mr. Thorskill now claims upon a promissory note. We know of no party led in this. We can only say that we would rather, in kindred language, be the prisoner in this case than the lord master at whose suit he is engaged upon his hourly toil. —*The Yorkshire Chronicle and General Advertiser*, Jan. 9, 1844.

—THE FLEET PAPERS.—We review the first number of Mr. Oastler's new work, and we do so in the hope of inducing many of our readers to peruse the surprising parts (for we will not say the whole) by the re-publication of a second, believing that they will reap much valuable information themselves, and at the same time contribute to the support of a worthy, although perhaps an unfortunated, individual. We are told that Mr. Oastler, his wife, and child, have now nothing to depend upon for subsistence but their Papers, and even feared that a want of his talent and energy, and, we would hope, honesty of purpose, should not be supported under the system that he is called upon to struggle. At the same time let us confess that we are not sufficiently acquainted with the merits of the case to dispute between himself and his late employer, to condemn the one and to exonerate the other, but we feel that much is due to Mr. Oastler on public grounds, and we cannot but respect him for his moral courage, his fearless independence, and his avowed and invincible attachment to the religious establishments and ancient institutions of his country. —*The Oxford University, Clap and Daily Herald*, Jan. 9, 1844.

—The second number of the "Fleet Papers" gives an interesting account of the kindness Mr. Oastler is daily experiencing in Prison. His papers ought to be read by every heart of oppression. —*The Mail*, Jan. 12, 1844.

THE FLEET PAPERS, No. 2.—London: Parry, Holywell-street, Strand.—In the second number of these papers, there is a most interesting account of an interview the writer had with the Duke of Wellington; and Mr. Oastler also details the object he has in writing. "I shall have little to do," he says, "with party names in this work: It is against old principles that I war. I can not, against what principles? Will not a man's hesitation answer—those of the school mis-calling itself 'Liberal, enlightened philanthropy,' which found at the threshold of progress a murderer, and taught us the slow murder of millions by its own more exact processes. When I have traced a little further my progress in this path, I shall not hesitate clearly to state my principles, and to detail the results of my experience of the state and condition of every class of society, of which, from the beggar in the prison, I have had opportunities of observation. I think I know the reasons for all the suffering, hoveling, and impurities, which afflict my countrymen; if I mistake not, they arise from the fact, that my government have mistaken ignorance for philosophy—and sold the Christianity. We are very much of Mr. Oastler's opinion, and we anticipate much good from the 'Fleet Papers,' which, we doubt not, will be very extensively read. They are written in a style at once simple and forcible; and the correctness of the language proves the sincerity of the author,—who, cheered by his imprisonment by the strict sympathy of his friends, must be happier in that confinement than Mr. Thorskill in his splendid mansion. . . . We trust he will be soon restored to that liberty of which he ought never to have been deprived." —*Hull Packet*, Jan. 13, 1844.

—THE FLEET PAPERS, No. 3.—The second of Mr. Oastler's numbers has been launched at the end of his imprisonment. We need say nothing of the style or matter, it is Oastler's own readers will know it, and of course, will buy it. We perceive his wrapper to be filled with extracts gathered together from various publications, giving favourable notices of the former number. We trust that notices of the pleasure of giving the relation of his success with the Duke of Wellington. —*Northern Star*, Jan. 16, 1844.

—THE FLEET PAPERS.—The third number opens with some very interesting reflections upon the death of a child of Mr. Oastler's, some years ago. There does not seem to be a half lot of notices upon

* The Luddites were provoked by the system which, still, in the New Poor Law, they would increase their ranks, and get rid of their surplus population by immigration to the Colonies. More on this head in the next nos. R. O.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."
"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of its fruits."
"He shall judge the poor of the people. He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 4.

LONDON, SATURDAY, JANUARY 23, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—I find myself in an entirely different atmosphere.

My readers are, in general, unacquainted with my real objects and principles. Very many persons have purchased "The Fleet Papers," expressly to read the "Prison thoughts" of a lunatic; others, supposed that they would find in them the ravings of a disappointed incendiary. Some are pleased, that their anticipations are not realized; but a larger number, express "their surprise, that a man, who appears to write with so much judgment and good feeling," (I quote their own words) "should allow himself to be styled, and should adopt, the title of 'King.'"

Now, Sir, you know me so well, that you will not be surprised at my anxiety, that every person who does me the honour to read these papers, should know their author's heart; and I am so well acquainted with yourself, that I am sure you will not be offended, if I detain you a while, to explain to those new friends of mine, how it is possible that a man may "be styled, and adopt, the title of 'King,'" and still remain in his "right mind?" I cannot meet all the questions of my numerous correspondents in one letter; but I promise them, that my object, in these papers, shall be—first, to obtain their confidence and esteem, by removing all false impressions about myself, (and you know, Sir, that they are many,) and then, to engraft in their hearts, the secrets of my own.

They will scarcely believe that I am "an incendiary," when they know that my influence has ever been used to protect property; and that, on two occasions, I have risked my life to extinguish fires. Once, at a mill, too, a factory in Elland; and, again, in your own buildings, at Fixby Hall. I little thought, Sir, when, at the risk of my life, I was (having been called out of bed) creeping on the false roof, filled with smoke, of the stables there, with a bucket of water, (by my example leading the way for others,) that my reward would be imprisonment at your suit; but, so it is, and I am thankful—for, truly, I am daily learning here, what no other school can teach me—the true knowledge of man in misfortune—and the workings of that system, which has ruined us, the inmates of the Fleet, and which will soon (if madly persisted in) bring our "Plaintiffs" to this Prison, after us.—What a wanderer I am!—I was about to rub off the supposed insanity of "Kingship," and I have been wiping away the fouler charge of "Incendiaryism."

It is very strange, that, in a Christian country, an individual who has devoted his best energies for the aristocracy and the poor and needy, should have such up-hill work—but so it is.

You will remember that it was on the 29th of Sept., 1830, that I began, single-handed, to wage war with that horrible scheme of cruelty and murder—the Factory system, which then prevailed, without any restraint either from the law or from conscience, in the district which surrounds my late residence, Fixby Hall.

It was, indeed, a daring venture. No man was more intimately connected with the factory-masters than myself;—had I consulted my own interest and comfort, I should have held my peace. But, having been, for the first time, made acquainted with the dreadful havoc, which the factory system was making, on the bodies and minds of its infant victims, on the 28th of Sept., I could not allow a day to pass, without endeavouring, at all risks, (and they were many,) to stop the progress of such a plague. I therefore, immediately, made an attack upon the monster, in his own lair, and through the medium of his favourite portion of the press.

I expected opposition from the sordid money-loving masters. But I supposed that the “liberal and enlightened” mill-owners, (who were then making so much noise about “educating the poor,”) would at once see with me, that *time* was necessary for that “education,” and would join me, heart and hand, in my efforts to reduce the hours of labour of the factory children, so as to give them *time* for “education.” I anticipated, that those masters who were striving, by strenuous efforts, “to emancipate the Black Slaves,” would unite with me, most heartily, to obtain for their little Infant Slaves in the factories, the same limitation of labour, which the law had already granted to the objects of their sympathy, the *adult* black slaves. I was, however, woefully deceived. Self-interest had blinded their eyes—the love of money had hardened their hearts! Those very men, whom I had anticipated would be my supporters, were my most violent opponents! Yes, Sir, melancholy as is the fact, it is true, that it was a rule, almost without exception, that those factory masters, who had figured most energetically at “educational and black slave emancipation meetings,” were the most violent in their ravings against me, and in supporting the monstrous system of factory slavery! They held, with the sternest grasp, fast to their own most horribly cruel rites. They would, if they could, have banished me from society. I soon found that I had entered into a warfare at very uneven odds. With a few honourable exceptions, the wealth of the district (and, truly, there is power in wealth,) was against me. The fear of the men of gold, silenced many who would gladly have supported me. The influence of money, gave nerve to my opponents. I felt the difficulty of my position—I counted the cost—I broke caste—I appealed to God, and I resolved, He being my helper, never to desist—never to abandon my little, interesting, industrious, but poor and oppressed clients, until I had conquered, or, the grave had found me a resting place. I rejoice that I can appeal to my friends and my foes—I know that I have hitherto kept that vow. I foresaw great painful exertion—much vexation—the loss of many friends in that conflict—I have experienced all. Thanks to your persecution; many who then forsook me, have forgotten their prejudices, and, in this Cell, I have received the assurance of their returning friendship. Still, even in this Prison, I am as resolved as ever; that I will never

desert that cause—never desist from my exertions, until Sadler's Ten Hours' Bill is passed, or, I sink into the grave. One comfort I had in that warfare. My master was pleased with my exertions.—Yes, Sir, you smiled, when I denounced the tyranny of the factory masters,—you aided me with 20*l.*, and applauded my efforts. Since then, the tyranny of the landlords has aroused my attention. That act of robbery—the New Poor Law—has demanded my opposition; and, because I loved you and your “order,” and would fain have saved you from that snare—“that pit, which you have digged for the poor, but into which you have fallen yourself:”—I say, because I could not hold my peace at that act of tyranny—I am fastened in this Prison, by you, who formerly rejoiced when I denounced the tyranny of others! May God give me power, while I am here, to loosen the fetters of the poor, although, in the effort, I may rivet my own.

To return to my opposition to the system of tyranny in the factories. Instead of receiving help from the flaming “Patriots” of the day, I met with their most unmanly opposition, with insults and abuse. First, my motives were impugned. I was charged with “being hired, at 500*l.* a-year, by the Earl of Hereford, to turn the attention of the people from Black Slavery!” This charge was made against me, by those whom I had successfully opposed, in 1807, when they moved earth and hell, to prevent the return of the great black slave emancipator, the late William Wilberforce, to Parliament! When Wilberforce was unpopular with them, I was defending him against their attacks;—on one occasion, I received a stone on my temple, from their hands, which was intended for Wilberforce! I thought that it was “too bad,” that those persons, should charge one, who had faced the fury of their malice against Wilberforce, with a desire to ruin his great cause. Next, they said, “that the Duke of Wellington had hired me to draw off the attention of the people from ‘Reform;’” as they called it. But, finding that no one would believe their falsehoods, they asserted that you had hired me “to agitate the minds of the people against the Factory system, in order to divert the attention of the masses from the tyranny of the landlords and aristocracy,” which, they said, “was manifested in the Corn Laws.” Somehow, the good people did not believe them. My present berth will convince, even my slanderers, that they were mistaken. Perceiving that I had shaken the foundation of their unholy and unmanly system, and that slander could neither stay my onward course, nor undermine my influence, they determined, rather than yield, to strive, by sophistry, to bolster up their cause;—an attempt at discussion followed. They were defeated in every debate. Then they broadly and unblushingly denied the facts, as they existed. Proof upon proof—“proof strong as Holy Writ”—could not make them blush; but it did strike them dumb for a season. I was not to be silenced. I knew the poor Factory children were tortured, oppressed, cheated—aye, murdered by the atrocious system; I resolved to continue my attacks upon their tyrants, until I had made a lodgment in the Citadel of Oppression, (just as I am now determined to scale the walls of the New Union Poor-Houses, and reduce them to constitutional subjection). Alone, for a while, I continued the fight. We had the battle, then, all to ourselves, in Yorkshire and Lancashire. It was long before the London press noticed our efforts. Never shall I forget, when I first saw

about three lines on the subject, in the *Times*; since then, it has become a national, ay, an universal question. Finding that slander could not harm me, and that all my astounding facts and irrefragable arguments were established upon truth and could not be shaken, what did my discomfitted foes next resort to? Why, Sir, you know how little school-boys do, when the big ones have grieved them,—they call names. It was just so with my rich and powerful enemies:—nick-name after nick-name was given to me;—and now I come to my title of “King.” As these opprobrious terms were attached to my name by my antagonists, it was my habit to adopt them, and thus deprive them of their sting. So, whatever epithet they added to “Oastler,” I claimed it as my own. If they said “Fool;” I rejoined—“so be it,—but your tyranny shall cease.” When they denounced me as a “madman,” my answer was—“be it is; but the monster shall fall.” Thus they attacked, and thus I repelled their intended insults, through a long list of terms of contempt and derision, which, to recount, would only weary you. At length, I was tired of change, when—in an unlucky moment for themselves—in burlesque, they called me “King.” For why or for wherefore, is best known to them. I, at once, adopted the nick-name of “King,” as I had done the others; but, I added, “I will change no more.” There was an end of their insulting vocabulary:—there was the beginning of my style and title of “King.” My efforts in the Factory question, as you know, obtained me some notoriety; and, in proportion to the *hate* of the tyrants, was the *love* of the slaves. The people, everywhere, clung to the last nick-name given to me by my foes, and, when I appeared amongst them, I was greeted by no other name. The habit of calling me “King,” in a while, grieved none but those who gave me that title. I soon found that there was power even in the name of “King.” On some occasions, when I have had to stem the angry torrent of revenge, the authority of that title, has had its use. My opponents would gladly have recalled that nick-name, but, in a while, they used it also, until the habit became universal (and is so now) in Yorkshire and in Lancashire;—when speaking to me, or speaking of me, both friends and foes, say “King.” The late ever-to-be-admired-and-lamented Sadler, used to call himself my “Prime-Minister:” and after his removal from Parliament, when Lord Ashley became the parliamentary leader of the Ten Hours’ Factory Bill, his Lordship did not scruple to acknowledge himself, my “Ambassador at the Court of Mammon.” I then had a regular “Cabinet,” and we had all our titles. Sir, this is a true history of my “Royalty,” and as I have maintained it, under the most adverse circumstances; when, to be a friend of the Factory Children, was counted, by the ruling Faction of Yorkshire, to be little less than an Incendiary and a Traitor. Surely, my real friends would not wish me to resign my *nom-de-guerre*, when victory has well nigh crowned my efforts with success. It will be soon enough to drop the war-name, when the victory is won.

The Factory question is now in a very different position—no disgrace attends the supporters of the Factory Children at this time—it is popular in high places—nay, our foreign rivals are striving to imitate our example. The flame of benevolence is enkindled in France, Switzerland, Austria, Prussia, Russia, and America; all of whom are now inquiring—“what can we do for our Factory slaves?”

At such a moment, I should indeed be "mad," were I to abandon the name, under which I warred against the monster, when I warred alone! Oh! Sir, though your Prisoner, I have set many free. Their prayers (and I know that the poor Factory Children do pray for me,) are my buckler against your tyranny.

I hope, Sir, that this explanation will satisfy all my readers—that it is neither vanity nor insanity which induces me to adopt the title of "King."

When the war is over,—when the monster is humbled—conquered, (and he shall bend—he shall yield!)—when the 'Ten Hours' Factory Bill (Sadler's Bill) is the law of the land, I shall need the title of "King" no longer—I will then give it to the winds. I would have made this explanation in fewer words, had I been able. It was, I thought, needful in justice to myself and the cause I have espoused, to explain the circumstances under which my nick-name was given, as well as to state the fact. I shall, in future numbers, have much to say about the Factory system, and the great Champion of the Factory slaves, Michael Thomas Sadler.

Although in Prison, Sir, I am still in the battle-field against the oppressors of those of my infant "subjects," who are still slaves. When they are all free, the conquered tyrants are welcome to the nick-name which they gave me. They shall not have to say, when I return it—that it has been an useless empty title.

So much, Sir, for my nick-name;—so much, at present, for factory agitation. Now to other matters.

Parliament is about to meet—I may not be permitted to canvass their proceedings in the "Fleet Papers;" because that would range under the head of "news;" but I can, legally, converse with you, in anticipation of their assembling, and so I will.

The meeting of Parliament is always an important epoch. Many English hearts are now heaving with anxiety, hoping for good—but, judging from the past, dreading evil. It is true, that every session of the "reformed" Parliament has hitherto ended in disappointing the hopes of the people, who are now almost driven to despair. Still, the minds of Englishmen are buoyant, and, in defiance of repeated disappointment, "hope springs eternal in their breasts." Just now, they are disposed to forget old grievances, and, if Parliament is wise, and will abandon its bickerings,—its mere party-strifes,—its battles between O'Connell, the ministry and their antagonists; if our Legislators will remember that they are the trustees of the *constitutional* rights of all,—that they are in trust for the nation, and not the mere representatives of factions; then, Sir, it will not be too late to hope for national good from their next meeting. May that Almighty Power, by whom kings reign and princes decree judgment,—may He who holds the universe in His hand, and who numbers the hairs on our heads,—He who overrules the destiny of nations, and notices the sparrows as they fall,—may He breathe His Holy Spirit into the hearts of our legislators, and teach them that wisdom, which can alone enable them to legislate for His glory and the true prosperity of the empire.

Never was there need for so much patriotism, for such entire abandonment of party and of self, for earnest seeking of the mind and will of God, as there is now. For see, Sir, "what a state we are in."

The youth and sex of our Sovereign, almost preclude the possibility of her

acquaintance with the real condition of her people. She must accept for truth, all that her ministers report. That they have hitherto not dared to be faithful to Her Majesty (I write this in sorrow, not in anger), is apparent, from the fact, that for many years they have forgotten the dignity of their office—they have been the mere puppets of one individual, whom every section of Her subjects distrust—excepting his confiding, generous Irish dupes. This is a hard saying, Sir; I appeal to Lord Melbourne himself, and ask,—“Is it not true, my lord?”

The game which has been so long played with the Sovereign, cannot be continued, with safety, either to her ministers or Her Majesty, during another session. We have thereby been driven to the very brink of a precipice. Her Majesty has been made to believe that O’Connell was the empire; when, in truth, he was only the make-weight for those ruinous principles, which are undermining the rights of “the altar, the throne, and the cottage;” he was simply the feather which kept the present ministers in power; and he has now lost that little weight.

Nothing is more certain, than that, if Lord Melbourne retains office, some other spell must bind him to his Sovereign. He has “worked shifts” with O’Connell, until he has actually worn him out.

But, Sir, “what a state the nation is in!” Unpleasant as the truth may be, this is no time for flattery; I would convince you of your danger, by faithfully describing the cause of it. Your own “order”—the Aristocracy—no longer, as their fathers did, pride themselves in the love and veneration of their dependents. They are conscious that they have courted their hate—they now dread their revenge. They have, by the New Poor Law, robbed them of their birth-right; and they seek protection, from their natural defenders, in an un-English, unconstitutional police! Yes, Sir, even your secluded domain, at Riddlesworth, is now, for your safety, prowled about by the constabulary-force! And, soon, if the present system be continued, even Fixby—where, but three years ago, every tenant, every labourer, aye, and every neighbour too, was a guard and a watchman, will be delivered up to the prowlings of the Police! How unlike the Fixby of olden times! How fallen are the aristocrats of this day, from their sires of Old England! Soon, if they resolve to proceed in their mad career, the heart-exhilarating song of “the Old English Gentleman,” must be hung in crape in all their baronial halls!

There is no man living who has more sincerely and disinterestedly defended the rights of the aristocracy, than myself. During the Reform mania of Earl Grey, when it was the fashion to burn them in effigy; and, afterwards, when O’Connell tried his hand, at depriving them of their rights, I spared neither expense nor exertion; I braved obloquy and contempt from the “Reformers” in defending the rights of the Nobles. Sir, although I am your Prisoner, I am also your friend, and the friend of your “order.” I have now a right to be heard by the Nobles, when I know that they are undermining their own rights, by trampling upon the rights of the poor. As fearlessly and as strenuously as I defended them, will I now defend the poor and the needy. I will remind the Aristocrats, that only while they respect the rights of others, can they expect their own to be maintained. If they persist in robbing the poor, they must expect retaliation and revenge. If the poor are too weak to contend with their oppressors—why, Sir, God will avenge them.

Oh! that I could convince the Aristocrats of England, that whatever may be

the increase in their rent-rolls, whatever the strength of the Police,—they are poor, without the love of their dependents—they are weak, without the blessing of God!

We may well say, Sir, “what a state we are in!” Cast your eyes upon the brokers, manufacturers, merchants, and shopkeepers; count up their ledgers; listen to their heart-heavings, the forerunners of despair, and say—is it wise, or safe, to continue a system, which, with all its bustle and traffic, its turmoil, anxiety and care, has ended in disappointment, loss, and ruin, excepting to a few immensely rich slaughter-house merchants? Sir, I am not romancing; the parties know that I speak the truth. You have sent me here for demonstration, and I have found it, even so. I know that thousands who will read this, and are yet at large, will sorrowfully feel,—but, perhaps, reluctantly acknowledge, its truth. The fact is, Sir, (and, oh! how thankful I am to Almighty God, that I can now tell these truths, where they must take effect,)—the truth is, that our great trade, of which we have so long and so foolishly boasted, has impoverished us. Its result is, truly, great uneasiness, increasing misery, immense losses, constant lowering of wages and unparalleled difficulties. That, Sir, is the sum and substance of our great commercial prosperity!

“But,” say you, “the farmers are doing well!”—Are they? “They have gained by the New Poor Law,”—have they? Wait a while, Sir; the landlords intend to pocket their gains, as soon as the Police is fully organised. “They, the farmers, have gained by the lowering of wages,”—have they? They may think so for the moment; but, in the end, they will discover that honesty, on their parts, would have been the best policy. The uneasiness, insecurity, and necessary expenses of their injustice, will soon outweigh their seeming gains.

Then, as to the labourers,—what say you of them, Mr. Thornhill? I dare not trust myself to describe their state. The *Globe* tells you, that “they are at war with all the superior classes. They are alienated and hostile, heart and soul.” Well, may I again ejaculate—“What a state we are in!” Always remember, when you hear of the dissatisfied labourers, that a more patient, skilful, industrious, and grateful people, than the working classes of England, does not exist. It is want, that drives them to madness,—it is hunger, that impels them to revenge! They ask for bread, and they are given a stone. The New Poor Law has bound the cords of oppression too tight. Always remember, that the labourers are Britons—brave and generous; bound by natural ties to the aristocracy, who, being bewildered by Philosophy, have treated them worse than slaves. They would rather be your friends than your foes; but they will not, they cannot, they ought not to perish in quietude.

Perhaps your hope of safety and prosperity is in the police. If they are English, they are dissatisfied,—if they are Irish, most likely they are “O’Connell’s boys.” It may be thought wise, by those who trust in O’Connell, to garrison England with Irish, and Ireland with English, police;—it will, if persisted in, prove the ruin of the empire.

I will not venture an opinion about the army, I am sure that Lord Hill knows full well, “what a state the soldiers are in;” and that his Lordship is aware of their disposition with reference to the New Poor Law. I will just whisper, that I know there are official documents at the Home Office, and at the Horse Guards, which prove, that the army is weary of upholding the throne of the three Poor Law Commissioners.

What, then, will the Government do, Sir? Since Lord Ashley, at the close of the last Session, moved for a committee, “to inquire into the condition of the infant labourers, in all our different trades and manufactures,” I have hoped that a change in the plans of the Government was contemplated. I was very much astonished with the reception given by ministers to that motion. Hitherto, it had been their policy, to thwart the late Mr. Sadler and his Lordship in their benevolent attempts to emancipate the Factory Children. No man knows better than myself, their hatred of such enquiries and measures; I have been behind the scenes, Mr. Thornhill, I know all about it. But, on the occasion I allude to, they surprised and delighted me, by eulogizing his Lordship and adopting his motion;—a motion of much more importance than any which has before been made in

the "reformed" Parliament, — one, which, if faithfully worked out, will demonstrate, that our boasted manufacturing wealth, greatness and prosperity, is based upon injustice, cruelty, and oppression, towards infancy. If that committee be appointed, and do their duty, they will find and report that infants' bones, blood and sinews are the groundwork of that system, which has been England's idol, and is now her bane. They will discover that our manufacturing *millionnaires*, have enriched themselves, by driving the adult male operatives out of the market of labour, in order to force the women and children to work for lower wages; and that our fears about a surplus population, arise from the fact, that the labour of man is superseded by that of infants, because it is cheaper; and that our redundant population, as it is called, is neither more nor less, than hundreds of thousands of unemployed fathers, living on the killing labours of their children, who have been made to push their fathers out of the market of labour.

I was never so surprised, never so delighted, as when Ministers supported that motion. I believed that their faith in the new system of philosophy was shaken — that they were about to abandon the theory of Malthus, and return to Bible truth.

That motion, if honestly followed up and worked out, will, I know, force them back to our good old-fashioned principle, that the father must be allowed to work for his wife and children, and no longer be driven into the streets and lanes an unwilling idler, and then be told, that "he ought to be thankful that his infants may kill themselves by earning his bread."

I marked well all that was said, that night, in the House of Commons; and I whispered to myself, and have often, since then, repeated it to others, "Lord Ashley will soon join the Ministry — the 'Ten Hours' Factory Bill is safe — measures founded upon christian and constitutional principles, will be adopted."

No one knows better than Lord Ashley what the country requires. He is well aware of the cause of all our evils, — he is not ignorant of what will cure them.

But, Sir, there must be no half measures. A death-blow must be given to the tyrannical, expensive and unconstitutional system of governing and legislating by Commissioners. Centralization must be entirely uprooted, (a constitutional monarchy cannot long exist with it,) and the local authorities must be restored to their original vigour. The insane idea of coercing a nation of freemen, must be instantly abandoned. Foreign trade must no longer be the nation's idol, but home labour and home produce must be protected. Our modern wise-acres must be content to take lessons from our ancient sages, and, above all and before all, the national Church must be restored to its pristine purity, and consequent utility. That Church and the New Poor Law are at open war; the latter must be repealed, or, it is worse than idle to pretend that we are Christians.

These, Sir, are the opinions which you have often heard from me aforesaid. They are now strengthened by experience and reflection; but if ever there was a time when "a committee on the state of the nation" was absolutely necessary, now is that time. I am well aware how much the Government will dislike that measure, but I am disposed to think, if not now adopted, that something much worse will soon be forced upon them.

Sir, these are strange times — they have not, as you know, taken me by surprise. England may be ruined by trickery and coercion — she can be saved by truth and justice.

I am, Sir,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P. S.—Space forbids me to proceed with my narrative in this letter.—R. O.

Published by John Pavey, No. 47, Holywell-street, Strand, London; and may be had of all Booksellers and News-venders in town and country.

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ably-written notice of the passed inefficiency of the Non-Import Law; and some interesting observations upon 'his old friend' Mr. Hunsford, of London, for his invitation to Dr. Comstock to dine with the Leeds reformers."—*Manchester and Halifax Advertiser*, Jan. 16, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS.—London, *Paragon*.—We have hitherto referred from not having time space, from a conviction that no commendation from us was necessary to induce the readers of the *Gazette* to peruse the 'pious fragments' of Richard Dutton for themselves. We now give it to them, simply for the purpose of exhibiting one high exponent of the public morality which the 'good old king' has made during the one-and-a-half century, taught by his example the most benighted system that ever disgraced the world. The Fleet Papers' series will be read by every gentleman with following humanity. Will any person take care that all who take against 'John Bull's' are invited to become possessors of the 'Fleet Papers' as they appear."—*Gleaner's Penny Gazette*, Jan. 29, 1841.

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THE

FLEET PAPERS.

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THESE Papers are principally intended for the perusal of the friends of Christianity, and the Constitution, particularly the Clergy and the Laity, and of all persons who are possessed of Property. The object of the writer will be to discuss the means for the preservation of our Kingdom's unity, and the consequent security of life and property; also, to offer some remarks upon the folly and wickedness of attempting to uphold our institutions, particularly that of Political Property, by the mechanical support of Centralism, Communism, Bismarckism, and Every body's right, to name his own views on the best mode of restoring Peace, Contentment, security, and Possession, to every rank of the people of England.

The author is perfectly aware of the fact, that every Parliamentary leader is ever self-attempting to legislate for the present moment—putting all the self-deny—making laws "from head to foot," in the hope that some unforeseen, fortunate event may enable succeeding Statesmen to legislate for posterity. He is also convinced that there is a mode of successfully re-establishing our institutions upon their original foundation—Christianity,—and that that is the only way to preserve them from the encroachments of political pretensions, who are now ever pressing forward to universal Ruin, Anarchy, and Despotism.

NOTICE OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

"We have noticed the third number of the 'Fleet Papers,' written, as most of our readers are already aware, by Richard Oswald, who has acquired considerable celebrity by his business talents and his active and persevering hostility to the non-resistance. The paper is addressed from Her Majesty's Prison of the Fleet to Thomas Thresholt, Esq., of Huddersfield, in the county of North-Lancashire, and who is also an extensive landowner in Yorkshire. It appears that Mr. Oswald is a prisoner at the instigation of Mr. Thresholt, but under what circumstances is not explained. Believing, as we have every reason for so doing, Mr. Oswald to be a worthy, temperate and conscientious man, of a powerful mind, of an independent spirit, and of pure talents, we thought it no less in the present situation, and cannot imagine what slight Mr. Thresholt has had to give rise to his prolonged imprisonment. If Mr. Oswald was his enemy, which he is still less inclined to say, Mr. Oswald is guilty of dishonesty, and deserves punishment; but if the prisoner be really so far the date—yes, though a just and indisputable debt—Mr. Thresholt is guilty of cruelty and oppression, in detaining him in one of the most unhealthy and most wretched prisons of the Metropolis.

"We should like, indeed, to hear some explanation of the reasons for this imprisonment, and we think that Mr. Oswald, by appealing to the public, is bound to furnish them." If he can show that he is treated harshly and unmercifully, he will not only make out a strong case in favour of public sympathy, but would also give a force to his political opinions which would add to his influence as the honest advocate of the working classes. As far as we understand Mr. Oswald's sentiments, and we have had considerable opportunities of doing so from his writings, and by means of his private communications, which we esteem, we consider that Oswald is innocent with our own. He loves his country, his Church, and his Sovereign; he admires the national virtues of England, and he deeply sympathizes with the working classes of his countrymen. The last, we fear, in the eyes of the short-sighted workshoppers of Mammon, is considered a crime. The present race of philosophers, speculators, quacks, and schemers, have the power. They dress like princes and think like fools; and they imagine that nothing can give so much security to their heads, houses, factories, premises, gardens, and other property, as rigorous enactments against the labouring classes, whose persons, spare diet, thin green's never had, and they give to their teachers and parents, and a complicated system of machinery, which will deprive them from their wives, and mothers from their children, or driving the aged poor to despair, and the able-

* In fact, where these explanations will be given, all the circumstances which brought me here, will be detailed in my "memoirs"—G. D.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Aliar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

Vol. I.—No. 5.

LONDON, SATURDAY, JANUARY 20, 1841.

Price 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—You must feel an interest in my situation, else you would not have sent me here.

By the time this meets the eye of the public, I shall have removed from this Cell, to No. 5, in the same (Coffee) Gallery. It is larger than this, lighter, and more airy. In fact, although arched and flagged, it is a very comfortable room. I am now fitting it up with shelves and other conveniences for books and papers. Anticipating a long residence there, I am furnishing it very comfortably, though, at the same time, very plainly; I shall then save seven shillings a week, which I now pay for the rent of furniture. I shall also, by this change, save seven shillings and ninepence weekly, in rent for the room; my whole weekly rent will then be only one shilling and three pence, with an occasional payment of four and sixpence for "chummage." When No. 5, is white-washed, cleaned, &c., it will, I do assure you, be as convenient and comfortable as your dressing-room at Riddlesworth, or my office at Fixby; always barring the look-out. My view will be the high, dingy prison walls, topped with very formidable iron spikes, which might safely be sold—the former for old bricks, and the latter for old iron—as far as I care about them. They are there, however, at somebody's expense, so, look at them I must. Having passed through my noviciate, I shall then be "a Master in the Fleet;" regularly on the foundation. I have now been more than six weeks your Prisoner here, and so far, the desire to comply with your wishes, (which I inherit from my father), has prevented me ever having the least desire to go "outside." I have been well in health, happy in mind, cheerfully engaged in the conversation of friendly visitors, of both sexes and all ranks, mingling with pleasure in the company of the "household;" or otherwise, in exercise, reading, writing, &c.; never idle, Sir. I sometimes wish that I could, with propriety, recount some of the cases of direful oppression which we have here. I am sure, that were I to tell what I know—if the Judges had the power, they would release the prisoners, and commit the prosecutors; but, Sir, I must be silent, merely observing, that there are British subjects in this Prison, (amongst other things, for what is called "contempt,") who do not know against whom they have sinned, but who well know, who have sinned against them. You may, perhaps, reply, "that

it is now easy to purge from contempt." It may be, Sir, very easy for a rich man to do so, but the sentence for "contempt" on a poor man, is imprisonment for life! It is really awful to contemplate! It is a truth which I have learnt here, that a free-born Englishman or Englishwoman may be, and too often is, by the villany of a scoundrel, imprisoned under the authority of an English Judge, for life! the only crime of which the party has been guilty, being ignorance! Other people's affairs I must not, however, interfere with. My own, I will.

Well, then, Sir, I have had many persons to visit me since I last wrote; amongst the rest, a very singular gentleman. One friend, before a stranger, left me a sovereign;—another kind, good creature, left a parcel, without saying a word: I found, after he was gone, that it consisted of half a pound of tobacco. Somebody, but who, I know not, put a shilling into my tobacco-box. A friend from Yorkshire, brought me a nice plum-cake and a breakfast-cake. There was something so touching about that latter cake—the breakfast-cake—that I will tell it to you. It made me weep. Said the young lady who sent it to me, (addressing her uncle, who was coming to town):—"Uncle, you are going to London, you will be sure to see the 'old King,' take him this cake;" (the large one) and then she added, "and do give him this breakfast-cake,—you will see him to-morrow (Tuesday), and tell him to be sure to eat it on Wednesday, to breakfast; then we shall know, at our breakfast, that we are eating off the same 'baking' as the 'King.'" There was, to me, something very moving in this unsophisticated proof of love. I did eat that cake, Sir, to my "Wednesday's breakfast," and I wept for joy, whilst I ate it. I remembered with affection, those who were in Yorkshire, "eating off the same baking." It really is worth being in Prison to prove such love. Take another case; the former was a friend of many years' growth, this latter is a new one. An elderly, respectable gentleman, with his son, called upon me. I did not know him; he had read my speeches and my letters,—he knew that I was "in Prison," and "he visited me." He was from Mary-le-bone. His good wife sent me a large plum-cake of her own baking; and, he delivered it so feelingly, that I was moved to tears. Although I am a Prisoner, Mr. Thornhill, my heart is not yet hardened. It was but the other day, that an old friend, who is of very different politics to myself, sent me half a ream of letter-paper, a quantity of pens, and other stationery. This morning, an entire stranger, of Scotch accent (who would not inform me what is his name), brought me another half ream of post; so, you see, Mr. Thornhill, I have a good store of the munitions of war, to pelt against the City of Oppression. My aim shall be unerring,—the commissioned Garrison must yield, or—very soon—the Monarchy will fall. Yesterday, one of your own neighbours sent me half-a-crown; and last night, a friend told me, that a young man in London, who was once a poor Huddersfield factory-boy, had left a sovereign with him for me!" Before I take that sovereign, I will know more about it, and about the donor also.

I had a very curious visitor a few days ago. He would not tell me his name. He was polite, very genteelly dressed, tall and handsome withal. Who, or what he is, I know not; I will tell you, as nearly as I can, what passed between us.

STRANGER.—Do I address Mr. Oastler?

OASTLER.—You do, Sir; be seated.

S.—Excuse the liberty I have taken. I am unknown to you;—having heard that you were here, I wished to see you.

O.—Please to favour me with your name, Sir!

S.—Pardon me, that is of no consequence.

O.—I wish to know your name because I enter all my visitors' names in a memorandum-book.

S.—You will excuse me, Sir; I merely called to pay my respects.

Now, Mr. Thornhill, you may be sure I was puzzled. There was no way, but either to request him to withdraw, or to hear him out, and be civil. I resolved upon the latter.

O.—I am obliged, Sir.

S.—You have been here some time?

O.—About five weeks, Sir.

S.—I hope your health is not injured!

O.—Thank you; quite the contrary, I never enjoyed better health.

S.—I am glad to hear that. You must sometimes feel lonely!

O.—Oh no; I have employment, and friends, who occupy all my time.

S.—But the regulations of the Prison must annoy you!

O.—Not in the least; there are no harassing regulations here. Every person in the Prison is as kind and civil, as if we were old friends. We have liberty to do as we wish "inside"—only taking care to be peaceable—of course, we may not "go out;" and since I came here, I have made up my mind not even to think of passing the outer door.

S.—But you are a domestic man, and must feel the absence of your wife and child!

O.—Of course I do;—but they often come to see me; and, thank God, they are in good health and spirits. If I wished, they might live here; I will not, however, make prisoners of them. So long as they are in health, I am contented and happy. If they should be very ill, I would ask Mr. Thornhill to allow me to go and see them, and I do not believe that he would be so cruel as to refuse me that liberty.

S.—You seem to have confidence in your old master's generosity!

O.—I am quite sure that he is not a cruel man. I know that he is proud. I am sure he has been deceived; I know that is the case. Had he been in Court, when our cause came before the Lord Chief Justice, I should never have been here.

S.—Have you any idea who has deceived him?

O.—Excuse me, Sir; that is not a fair question.

S.—I have heard Mr. Thornhill speak about you, in the highest terms.

O.—Oh! then you know Mr. Thornhill!

S.—I have met him several times at dinner.

O.—You will excuse my conversing any more upon that subject.

S.—I assure you that I have no improper motive in calling. Being in London, and knowing something of your case, I felt an interest in your situation. I assure you, that Mr. Thornhill does not know of my visit here. I have certainly heard him speak of you; and that in very high terms, he says—"Your only fault was, that you might have saved money, and have been rich; that stewards could always make money, if they chose, but you would not. And that he wished you to leave the New Poor Law question alone, and you were stupid, and would take your own course. Otherwise," I have heard him say, "a better steward and a cleverer man does not exist."

O.—On that subject I will be silent, excepting that I can assure you, I am much more happy in this Prison, in poverty, under his displeasure, enjoying the love of his tenants and the sweets of pleasing recollections, for the sacrifices I have made for them, than if I were at liberty, rich and deserving their hate, as I certainly should have done, if I had become rich out of them. Sir, Mr. Thornhill will some day learn, "that property has its duties as well as its rights." He will then remember, that I am poor, and at his suit, in Prison, because I performed the "duties" which were his. No man knows better than Mr. Thornhill the reason why he removed himself entirely from his Yorkshire estates, for about thirty years, and the motives which, consequently, induced me to sacri-

see my own interest for his. Mr. Thornhill knows that his absence forced me into many expenses, which he ought to have paid. As to the New Poor Law—come what may—I will oppose it, till death; and I know that the time is not far distant, when Mr. Thornhill, and many other persons of property, will rue the day that they first supported that “ execrable and atrocious act.”

S.—I cannot but grieve that such a man should be in your situation.

O.—Sir, do not grieve for me, there is not a happier man in the Queen’s dominions, if there be one so happy.

After a few more observations upon the darkness of this Cell, the Prison, my health, &c., during which I told him, “ that if I could only be allowed to go with my wife and daughter to our own Church (Knightsbridge), on Sundays, I would not care, if the poor could be benefitted by my incarceration, though I were confined here all my life ;” (but I must tell you, Sir, that money is valued too highly, when it is the means of shutting a human being from his own Altar. More on this head anon ;) the stranger left me, without telling me his name ;—who he is, or what he is, I know not.

I have many comforts, here in Prison, such as an old man like myself, may well be proud of. I am not forgotten, Mr. Thornhill, by those who knew me when I was at Fixby. Letters reach me daily from old friends, and from others who have now become my friends. Many lovely children—boys and girls, send me sweet tokens of their affectionate remembrance ;—one of them says, “ that you are a very naughty man, for imprisoning her ‘ King.’” I had three of these “ love letters ” yesterday, Sir, and all from within a mile of Fixby. They make me smile ; but, I am no Stoic, sometimes a tear, in spite of my exertion to restrain it, forces itself from under my eye-lid.

The other day, my oldest friend—the friend of my childhood, an arrant Huddersfield Whig, who is opposed to all my political views—sent me a five pounds note ; and, whilst I am writing, the postman has brought me a load of letters and newspapers. I will copy one of the letters, Sir, that you may see that the Operatives are grateful ; I never served them, or sacrificed for them, as I have done for you. How different the return. Please to read the following :—

“ At a meeting of the friends of Mr. Oastler, held at the New Inn, Bradford, Jan. 14th, 1841, it was unanimously resolved :—

“ That Mr. Edward Robertshaw be requested to forward 7*l.* 4*s.* 8*d.* as a sum raised by a few operatives, in Bradford, in heartfelt respect for the person and principles of their old ‘ King.’

“ Bradford, Jan. 18th, 1841.

“ Dear Sir,

“ In compliance with the above resolution, I beg to inclose Messrs. Harris’s order on Messrs. Barnett, Hoares, & Co. for 7*l.* 5*s.*, the receipt of which please to acknowledge.

“ I remain, Dear Sir,

“ Yours very respectfully,

“ To Mr. Richard Oastler.

“ EDWARD ROBERTSHAW,

“ The Fleet Prison, London.”

“ 6, Clarence St., Manchester Road.”

I did “ acknowledge the receipt,” Mr. Thornhill ; but words could not tell those good “ lads,” what I felt. Oh ! Sir, I know, that, whilst ravens have wings, I shall not want. You have your rent-roll—I rely on the promise of God.

Having detained you so long with my visitors and other matters, I must apologize, and resume the narration of that long reverie, into which I fell on the night of my Caption, December 9th, 1840. You will remember that I left off at

the meeting, at Huddersfield, on the 12th of July, 1832, when I purchased the hatred of your enemies and mine, by obtaining a true old-fashioned English cheer for the Duke of Wellington from ten thousand people, who met me, on my return from the first visit I ever paid to the Hero.

I could not, whilst ruminating in this chair, that night, forget other visits which I made to Apsley House, nor the long correspondence which I had the honour to hold with his Grace, in the hope of persuading the Duke of Wellington to seek the safety of the Church, the Crown, and the Coronets, by doing Justice to the Poor. Never did any person listen with more attention to my observations, than did Wellington; none could behave with greater courtesy and kindness; his punctual replies to my letters, his prompt repartees, and quick perception in argument, have often, since then, been the subjects of my conversation. If I did not convince him that I was right, I am sure that events, which have since transpired, must have forcibly reminded him of my remarks.

There is one circumstance connected with my correspondence with the Duke, which I remembered, whilst, in memory, I was tracing my journey to this Prison, and marvelling how odd it seemed, that I, who had so strenuously opposed the banishment of others, should myself, at last, become your Captive.

The late Michael Thomas Sadler, who was my friend from boyhood, (and that, Sir, is no trifling honour,) once told me the following anecdote:—"During my stay in London," said Sadler, "I called upon the Duke of Wellington, to explain to his Grace the object and principle of the Ten Hours Factories Bill, and to urge him to support that measure. After conversing upon that subject, the Duke said to me, 'You know Oastler, of course?'—I told him 'that I knew you well.' 'He is a most extraordinary man;'—said the Duke of Wellington, 'he has called here several times, and he often writes to me,—he has very singular notions. I have received a letter from him this morning; I do not know how to answer it. I will read it to you, and hear what you can say about it.' The Duke then rose, and having found your letter, put on his spectacles, and read it. It was about a ship leaving Liverpool, and emigration. Having finished, he asked, 'Now, Sadler, how can I reply to such a letter?'—'Only by acknowledging its truth,' I answered.—'Do you think with Oastler?'—'Most certainly, he is right,' was my reply.—'If so, we are all wrong,' rejoined Wellington.—I said, 'there can be no doubt of that, my Lord Duke, and the sooner we turn over a new leaf, the better.'"

Now, Sir, I felt proud, that any letter of mine, should have attracted so much attention from the Duke of Wellington. Yes, Sir, I am at this moment more elevated by that recollection, than I should be, if I were sure of being Lord of Fixby to-morrow morning. I did not then dream that the same friend, who introduced me to so much honour, would afterwards provide me a berth in the Fleet. On my arrival here, I thought all this over, and much more, of which I will tell you in other letters. As I have told you what Sadler informed me, and, as the letter alluded to is not very long, (I had written to his Grace more at length a few days before, stating my general opinions of the state of the country, and proposing certain remedial measures,) I will insert it for your perusal. It is as follows:—

"To His Grace the Duke of Wellington, K.G., &c.

"My Lord Duke,

"May it please your Grace. — It is impossible that I can express my gratitude for your Grace's letter to me of the 31st ultimo.

"I would not willingly intrude on your time; but there is one fact, which I think is worth a hundred theories, and which I omitted to state in my last—it proves the great-absurdity of the present system of misgovernment.

"I have stood on the Dock side at Liverpool;—I have seen a vessel leaving England, with a cargo of emigrants; some of them with large sums of money; some with small fortunes; and the rest with ten or twenty pounds each, which had been paid to them by the overseers of their different parishes, to 'get rid of them.' I have seen her sail, and I have wept at the sight.

"These were sent off, because there was no room—no food for them, in England,—no work, no employment.

"The returning tide has brought in an Irish steamer, laden with Irish labourers; who come here and lower the prices of labour, in the very country which is exporting her inhabitants, and bribing them to go, 'because she cannot maintain them!'

"I have seen these things,—I have wondered—why so much turmoil? The same result might be produced, as far as England is concerned, if the steamer stopped at home; and, if the first vessel, instead of sailing many thousands of miles with her cargo, were just to pop beyond the Black Rock, at the Mouth of the Mersey, and there drop every farthing of money she had on board into the sea; then return to Liverpool, and land her cargo penniless, to seek for work, in the country which they had just left with plenty of money in their pockets.

"The effect would be precisely the same on this Country, although we now employ two sets of hands, one to go out, the other to come in;—and this we call political economy!

"I feel assured that your Grace will excuse me for giving you the trouble of this letter; and I beg to subscribe myself in sincerity,

"My Lord Duke, your Grace's

"Most obliged and obedient servant,

"Fixby Hall, near Huddersfield, August 4th, 1832."

"RICHARD OASTLER."

It is time that my readers should become acquainted with my political opinions. You, Sir, have known them many years, and have done me the honour, both in words spoken and written, to testify your admiration of them. You were formerly a Whig; you changed your political opinions, when the Luddites, (I think it was in 1811), caused a commotion in the districts surrounding your Yorkshire estates. You ordered your Deeds to be removed from Fixby to Riddlesworth, expecting that the Luddites would take possession of Fixby Hall. I was not then your steward—my revered father was. He resided at Leeds, (sixteen miles off,) but, knowing that I feared no danger, he sent me to the Hall of your fathers, which you had forsaken, to assist in its defence. I was there, on the very night, when the "great rising" was expected. I was on the top of Cawcliffe—it was a Luddite station, half a mile from Fixby Hall (you know the spot well, Sir)—I went there when the Luddites were gathering. I was in their midst—I risked my life for the protection of your property, and remained on the alert, till all the danger was over. I am now reaping the reward of my early devotion to your interest.

I was a Tory then—I have never seen cause to change my principles—and, if we must have party names, I am a Tory now; not through fear, but from conviction and from principle. I pitied the poor deluded, famished Luddites, but I was not afraid of them. I now pity, and, having become better acquainted with them, I

love the masses of *justly* discontented working men of England, who are doomed, by an accursed, unchristian and unconstitutional act of Parliament, to hunger, separation from their wives and children, and to death! I pity and love them, but I am not afraid of them. I have yet, thank God, to learn what any kind of fear is, but the fear of sinning against Him.

Let there be no mistake, however, I will define my view of Toryism:—A Tory is one, who, believing that the institutions of this country are calculated, as they were intended, to secure the prosperity and happiness of every class of society, wishes to maintain them in their original beauty, simplicity and integrity. He is tenacious of the rights of all, but most of the poor and needy, because they require the shelter of the constitution and the laws more than the other classes. A Tory is a staunch friend of Order, for the sake of Liberty; and, knowing that all our institutions are founded upon Christianity, he is of course a Christian; believing with St. Paul, that each order of society is mutually dependent on the others, for peace and prosperity, and that, although there “are many members, yet there is but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay much more, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.” Sir, I am just such a Tory; or, if you prefer it in my own words, as I once defined it to the Duke of Wellington, when he asked me, “What do you mean by Toryism?” You shall have it:—I replied, “My Lord Duke, I mean ‘a place for every thing, and every thing in its place.’ ‘A good day’s wages for a fair day’s work.’ The king, happy, secure, and venerated in his palace,—the nobles, happy, secure and honoured in their castles,—the bankers, merchants, and manufacturers, happy, secure, and beloved in their mansions,—the small tradesmen and shopkeepers happy, secure, and respected in their houses; and the labourers happy, secure, and as much respected as the best of them, in their cottages. And I mean also, that they should all be enabled, humbly, reverently and nationally to worship the God of their fathers. This is what I mean by Toryism, my Lord Duke.” The Duke smiled, and expressed himself as being much pleased with my definition of Toryism. If I am mistaken in the name, I know that I am not in my creed. I fear that the noble Duke has forgotten the Tory creed, when he supports the “execrable and atrocious” New Poor Law, which was passed for the purpose “of forcing the people of England to live on a coarser sort of food.” Thus, at once, destroying the happiness, security and respectability of the cottages, and the stability of the houses, mansions, castles, and palace. Hence the reason why “the working classes are now at war with all the superior classes.” Hence the necessity for an increase in the army, and the establishment of a rural police, in open defiance of the warning given by Lord John Russell, that that force “would destroy the freedom of England.”

If you prefer a more concise definition of my Toryism, you have it in the toast, which I first gave at the dinner-table of my friend, the friend of his country and her institutions, the late Michael Thomas Sadler, (and which I have often seen on banners since)—“The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage.” I shall never forget the pleasure which poor Sadler evinced, when I first gave that toast; he rose from his chair, seized my hand in an extacy, and said, “Oastler, your toast and speech, reduced to practice, would save our country.” Sir, amongst other

trifles, I now remember, with pride, that circumstance. Incarceration cannot, although it be at the suit of a Conservative aristocrat, deprive me of the proud recollection, that I was the author of a sentiment, which has since become "common as household words," in the Conservative camp. Oh! that the Conservatives would act upon the principles which they so often exhibit on their banners, and "toast" at their party gatherings. They have now the power, by doing so, to put a stop to the loud and just complainings, which we hear in our fields and our streets.

I never changed my name—I never saw any charm in the word "Conservative." I am still an old-fashioned Ultra-Tory, who firmly believes, that the farther we wander from our sound constitutional and Christian institutions into the labyrinth of expediency, the nearer we approach to anarchy or despotism.

Do not facts, which I have, as you know, foreseen (not because I am a prophet, but because I use my reason, and am never afraid) prove the truth of this assertion? My old fashioned party is, they say, extinct. Philosophy and Expediency have driven it from the palace, the castles, the mansions, and the houses; it now hides itself, with Christian principles, in the cottages. There, Sir, it is, I believe, taking deep root.

I, however, have no objection, that all political party names should be forgotten; and that we should prevent all future mistakes, by adopting the only real distinction. Let *Christian* be the name of one, and *Malthusian* that of the other. We shall then all be understood. It is the heresy of *Malthus*, which is now embraced by so many persons of every party, that is, (after having destroyed the happiness, peace, and comfort of the Cottage,) shaking the Church, the Throne, and the institution of Private Property, to their very foundations. The unchristian, unnatural, and, thank God, unconstitutional dogma, "that nature has only provided a table for the rich,—that the poor have no right to sit down and eat at her banquet,—and that the land is unable to support the people," has, of late years, infused itself into the heads of our heartless statesmen of every party, and (with shame I confess it,) some of our bishops are believers in that "doctrine of devils," which has produced a code of "execrable and atrocious" laws, at total variance with every precept of our Holy Religion—every principle of our Constitution—and, consequently, every security to Rank and Property. It is in vain to attempt to restore peace and stability, until that most fatal heresy is entirely eradicated from the minds of our law-makers. I wish, Sir, that we could obliterate the party names, which serve only to bewilder, and hereafter be known as the followers of *Christ* or of *Malthus*. Then should we know who were the friends, and who the foes of the poor and needy, and of those institutions which were established, to defend their rights, against the gripe of the covetous worshippers of Mammon.

I am, Sir,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—Did I not tell you, that O'Connell was not the Empire—that he was worn out—that he was a feather which had lost its little weight? Say, Mr. Thornhill, is it not even so?—R. O.

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The Fleet Papers, Vol. I. 1841.

NOTICES OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

"THE FLEET PAPERS.—In No. 3, of the 'Fleet Papers,' Mr. Oastler, in reply to some correspondents who inquired in those papers, 'that they wish too religious a man should speak English in their own way.' We only answer in, I quote in their answers—'not in our own.' I would not change that reply for any other, applying relative upon the superintendence of all our affairs by Almighty God—for all the wealth of this world. Permeated of that FACTS I not begin to ponder, and in reply—deprived of it. I cannot be accused in possession of wealth and dwelling in a palace. 'The Fleet Papers' will continue to publish the sentiments of my heart; if they are pleasing to particular or no readers, I shall rejoice if they are despised and rejected, I shall not be concerned by either; that is plain where I have not degraded myself. I have been contented at an opportunity of receiving the thoughts of my heart in the public interest and well-being. The prevailing kind of God has raised your latter proceedings against me in your own words, and shall I report my story, or be ashamed to acknowledge that, who has thus graciously satisfied in my heart—'Narrow?' This firm asserts, worthy of THE CHRISTIAN, needs no comment in these days, and we hope Mr. Oastler will receive due support."—*Lancashire Chronicle and General Advertiser, Jan. 18 1841.*

"RICHARD OASTLER.—We have read with mingled feelings of pain and pleasure, the above first numbers of this gentleman's weekly publication, entitled 'The Fleet Papers.' It is really wonderful that a man so conversant should be persecuted for defending the rights of the poor labourer and the rash prosecutor against the wily insensations of mercenary usury and growing monopoly. We do not protest, however, that Mr. Oastler's 'Fury principles' of reform would be really efficient any more than the intricate systems of the Chartists; but there is one great difference between him and them;—he feels instinctively that all the useful classes of real labourers and real capitalists should be satisfied by a proper system of their respective interests; but the Chartists would only play the game of their real enemies, the money-sharks, by arresting

ing the ruin of the old nobility. It is nevertheless best all parties should discover the delusion of mere political agitation and reform, and seeking would give us greater pleasure than to see the truly liberal and religious heart of Richard Daxler pointing forth its substance in support of those continuous principles which can alone unite all interests and annihilate all parties. We sympathize deeply with this matter in the name of humanity, and hoping that his mind may soon be enlightened by the wisdom of Fourier, and his vigorous action that influence it merits we cordially associate our voice with his in the religious aspirations of faith in Providence, and hope for the pending destiny of man."—*Morning Star*, Jan. 25, 1844.

—The FLEET PAPERS, No. 1, published on the 2nd of January, by Richard Daxler. This great and good man is now in goal. His doom for the hour has led him into dungeons. Whom, indeed, is there a man living, who dares to speak against the grand old rule and plead on behalf of the suffering poor, that has not been made to feel that he has by so doing stained a sin which is not to be forgiven? Mr. Daxler's life has been spent in doing good. His name is endeared to thousands, and is cherished in their thankful hearts. Of the young, especially worthy hearts, as they rise up into life, will call him blessed. His tongue has been a sharp sword, and he has wielded a powerful pen. He will make himself heard from the house of bondage. The fetters he wears will be the means of making many free. His *Fleet Papers* will, by far and wide, and wherever they fall—throughout, injustice, and oppression will quail before the truths they teach: within the hearts of the poor, and of the faithful of the more truth have well sowing and growing might to struggle on until God has pleased to give them victory."—*People's Magazine*, Feb. 1844.

—The FLEET PAPERS, No. 4.—Daxler, Pall-mall-street, Street.—In this number Mr. Daxler explains how he came to announce the *Bill of Rights*. It was given him in America, by the opponents of the Ten-hours bill; and he adopted it, as he did other workmen they gave him, and the people need, as we know, to have to call him by it. The writer also draws a startling, but we fear too true, picture of the state of slavery. The state of the labourers is, indeed, one of the most alarming features in our present social state, and the legislators turn an wary attention to it, with a view to apply a remedy."—*Hull Packet*, Jan. 29, 1844.

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THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 6.

LONDON, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 1841.

PRICE 2d

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—In my last letter, I told you in very plain, but I think intelligible words, what were my political principles. On that point, I would not be misunderstood. If persons, assuming the name of Tory, have acted upon different principles, or, if, abandoning principle altogether, they have been driven by what they call Expediency, to destroy one essential principle of the British Constitution after another; if they have made the Protestant Faith a plaything, at the bidding of O'Connell; and the right of the Poor to relief and liberty their sport, to gratify Brougham;—if they have forgotten that they are Englishmen, and "have altered the Institutions of this country, and assimilated them to those of foreign countries, and have thus destroyed the individuality of the national character, by substituting for the responsibility of local governments, the irresponsible controul of centralized authority"—I say, Sir, if any persons calling themselves Tories, (I care not how high their rank, or how great their talents), have thus warred against the fundamental principles of the British Constitution, have undermined the title to Private Property, and shaken the National Church to its very foundation—they are not Tories—they are traitors to the Church, the Throne, and the People. They may well hide themselves under a mask, and invent for themselves a new name, in the hope of deluding their confiding countrymen. When England shall be herself again, they must repent and retrace their steps, or, be impeached. That too many of our great men are in this plight, no one can deny. I confess this truth with shame and sorrow.

I have already reminded you, that you changed your politics during the Luddite disturbances. Since then, many stout hearts from the Tory party, have been alarmed at the wide spreading discontent, which has been growing and taking deep root, ever since the dawn of Luddism. That discontent was not occasioned by the absence of Catholic Emancipation, or of Reform, or of the "execrable and atrocious" New Poor Law, or of the Centralized Police; it was the want of Bread, Sir, which caused the people to be surly; and the leaders of the parties who wished to enrich themselves by Emancipation, Reform, &c., did for their own aggrandisement, avail themselves of that discontent, and, by exciting the *fears* of their aristocratic, and the *hopes* of their plebeian, drives, in-

duced many Tories and Whigs to become, what are now called, Conservatives. It was not *principle* that caused the change—it was *fear*. Hence we now find, that principle is deemed folly, and that expediency is, too often, the Conservative maxim.

It is impossible, in the very nature of things, that such a system of uncertainty can be long maintained. On this point, again, Sir, I claim a right to be heard. Although I am a Prisoner, I have been true to the Tory faith. Had I been a coward, and embarked against the Constitution, in the crazy cock-boat of Expediency, (which is only another name for Infidelity,) I should now have been your acknowledged friend, in affluence and at liberty. If, from this prison, I shall be instrumental in converting one stray Tory from the error of his ways, or, of encouraging any, who has been faithful, but who is now ready to despond—I shall count all my sufferings to be joyous.

I have ever stated, in direct opposition to many great Conservative names, that Emancipation would not give peace to Ireland, but, that it would strengthen the hands of O'Connell, who is the bitterest enemy of England. (Thank God, his treachery has now destroyed the power he thus obtained.) I asserted that Reform would never produce quiet in England, but that it would engraft tyranny in our Legislature. I said that the “ execrable and atrocious ” New Poor Law, would, of necessity, shake the title to Private Property (and oh, what pains and expense and labour I encountered, to save the Conservatives from running into that *Malthusian* trap!) — that a rural police would be required for its enforcement, and that the two measures would destroy the peace of England, and drive the people to madness.

I declared that the labourers of England were grossly misrepresented by Lord Brougham, when he said that they were “ rebel labourers — idle and profligate people — worthless members of society — listless, restless, pampered, irritable, nervous, indolent, grumbling and violent paupers—idle and knavish peasantry, and sturdy beggars.” — I knew them to be the most patient, moral, skilful, industrious and generous race of labourers in the world; and I was aware that they could not endure to be legislated for, as idle vagabonds. I appeal to you, Sir, and ask, have not recent facts proved the truth of my former statements?

The working people never did, neither do they wish to, destroy the Protestant institutions of the country, or that any constitutional principle should be abandoned. They never intended that their destinies should be placed in the hands of a gold and steam-ocracy. They cannot, however, comprehend how skill and industry should be wedded to want and wretchedness! Nor will the undeserved, abusive slang and nick-names of Lord Brougham, reconcile them to that cruel fate.

What they want is—Bread, “ a fair day's wages for a fair day's work.” Nor can any true English-hearted Tory, deny their right to enjoy food and plenty, in return for their skill and labour. I say, it is impossible that a Tory can deny that right, though many Conservatives, despising every landmark of the Constitution, supported the New Poor Law, and thus, not only proved that they had abandoned all their Tory constitutional principles, but they also, by an Act of Parliament, taught the labourers to despise the rights of others!

There is no denying the fact — the poor and needy have been deprived of

their rights, not by the operation of any constitutional principle, but by the gradual introduction of *Malthusianism* into every parliamentary enactment, until the Infidels have waxed bolder and bolder, and at length have, unblushingly, by act of Parliament, severed the poor from the Constitution, and placed them under the controul of three traitors, who deny that they have any right to eat, and to be at large! — traitors who have the audacity to unite the marriage knot, to deprive the poor of every domestic enjoyment, and to bar the National Church against “the poor of Christ’s flock!” To the eternal disgrace of the parliamentary Conservatives, it cannot be denied, that it was by their aid, that the government was enabled to pass that “execrable and atrocious act” which removed the landmark of the Constitution, and thus — as far as, by an act of Parliament they could do—they assisted in banishing Christianity from the state. They despised the warnings of the venerable Eldon and his friends the Tories, and united with the Infidels in that act of treason.

I know that the landlords were deluded by their bitterest enemies, under the threat of “the confiscation of their property;” and that the working classes were lulled into quietude by their destroyers, under the sweet-sounding delusions of “Free Trade,—Cheap Bread,—Emancipation,—Reform,—and Retrenchment.” I know that that was the case. Sir, I loudly expostulated with both, but, excepting in a few instances, they would not hear! That disinclination to listen to the claims of Reason and the Constitution, is no excuse for the professed supporters of both, to unite with their enemies, and thus enable the disciples of *Malthus* to triumph over those of *Christ*, by tampering with the personal liberty of the working classes, — scheming and contriving to lower their wages, — excluding them entirely from every portion of the representation, (aye, even the very small share which they did possess before the Reform Act entirely deprived them,) breaking their promises of retrenchment, by extravagancies such as no Tory government ever dreamt of! — until, at length, they filled up the measure of their iniquities, by passing an Act of Parliament, with the intention (which cannot be denied), “of forcing the people of England to live on a coarser sort of food,” and then another, to force them to be content with it. Yes, to enforce that “execrable and atrocious act,” another unconstitutional act has been passed, with the sanction of the Conservatives, to employ one portion of the working classes, to force the other to submit to the arbitrary, cruel and tyrannical orders of the three anti-English Poor Law Commissioners! And still, the Conservatives hope that the people of England will revere their religious and constitutional rights and privileges, although these same Conservatives have assisted, by act of Parliament, to deprive them of any share in those Institutions! Were ever men so much deluded? Did ever Statesmen err so widely?

Such is the conduct of the *Malthusians*, who have proved by their acts, that they do not believe the religion which they profess: — and that they are aiming at the destruction of the Constitution, which they are professing to uphold! The last effort of these Philosophers, preparatory to their destruction of your “order,” is, an attempt to force a nation of freemen to be content with slavery!

In fact, Sir, call it by what party-name you may, it is all *Malthusianism*,

which impiously denies the right of the poor to live!—which impudently affirms, that they have no right to eat!!

The game has, however, now been played too long. The Church heaves, the Throne totters, and, to use the words of Lord Brougham,—

“All Property is shaken to pieces, and the times are fast approaching when it shall be no more!”

It is of no use to cry Peace!—Peace! “There is no peace in England—there can be no peace in England—there ought to be no peace in England,” until the constitutional rights of the poor are restored. What folly!—what madness it is, for the ancient aristocracy, to become the dupes of their natural enemies, and, at their bidding, to destroy their natural friends and protectors, the labourers of England! If you will continue thus to be led blindfold to your ruin, you shall not have to say, that I did not strive to remove your bandage.

What will you do without the aid of the labourers, in that day, when your deluders shall take off their mask, and declare an open war against all *your* rights and privileges? Believe me, Sir, that day is not far distant. You will then, when it may be too late, court the aid of “the strength of the nation,” which is, and always has been, the bold, brave and generous Peasantry!

You know that I have never feared boldly to warn you;—you cannot deny that I am the friend of the Aristocracy. I add this warning to many other proofs of true allegiance to your “order.” I urge you—as you love yourselves, to break off from the Infidel *Malthusians*, who only tamper with you, to secure your ruin, as they have done with the labourers before you. Believe me, Sir, the labourer’s rights are as sacred as your own. The labourers are as nearly allied to God as yourselves! If they cannot help themselves, He will be their Helper,

I rejoice that in many of my views, I do not stand alone. I have been delighted to find the talented Tory and Christian Editor of the *Liverpool Mail*, express some of my thoughts, in language much more forcible and eloquent than any of which I am master.

No one can dispute his attachment to your “order” and to the institutions of our native land. Hear then, Sir, what he says, on some of the subjects to which I have been referring.

“Deeply to sympathise with the working classes of our countrymen, is, we fear, in the eyes of the short-sighted worshippers of Mammon, considered a crime. The present race of philosophers, speculators, quacks, and reformers hate the poor. They dream like madmen and think like fools; and they imagine that nothing can give so much security to their lands, houses, factories, preserves, gardens, and other property, as rigorous enactments against the labouring classes, union prisons, spare diet, thin gruel, worse food than they give to their race-horses and hounds, and a complicated system of tyranny, which, with separating men from their wives, and mothers from their children, is driving the aged poor to despair, and the able-bodied pauper, and occasional pauper, to deeds of revenge and every description of crime. This is very mistaken policy. To live at enmity with the masses is downright infatuation. To think of extorting obedience, and causing the laws to be respected, by keeping the labourer perpetually at the starting point, even when he is in the ripeness of his strength, and pinching and grinding him when he is too old to work, is criminal infatuation. The poorest person that lives within or without the walls of a workhouse has feelings like other men—often-times more Christian and charitable feelings than the haughty and purse-proud *millionnaire*. He is bound by the ties of blood and kindred like other men—he is easily soothed and gratified—a trifle less or more can make him happy or discontented—a smile may win him when a frown would not daunt him—and it is

much less expensive to gain his affections, than to restrain his exertions or change his opinions. It is strange that all these natural qualities have of late years been totally overlooked by our reforming and speculating statesmen. They have forgot, or rather they seemed not to know, that the poor are made of the same materials as themselves, and that they are quite as valuable in the estimation of their Maker as the noblest peer in the realm. It is a curious fact, that since the House of Commons has been rendered more accessible to the mercantile classes, or in other words, since the reform bill expelled the nominees of the aristocracy from their seats, and admitted traders, pedlars, attorneys, apothecaries, and the writers of trashy novels and filthy plays in their room, the character of the house has been grievously deteriorated, and the laws founded in charity and beneficence have been superseded by harsh and unchristian enactments, all bearing most oppressively against the labourers of England, and are disgraceful to the statute-books. Session after session one quack succeeds another in introducing some new measure of coercion. Men who, within the present generation, have sprung from the lowest of the working classes, seem invariably the foremost in proposing some highly artificial measure for grinding the faces of their cousins, kinsmen, and other poor relations—in propounding some scheme by which a cheaper kind of food may be manufactured for the union prisons—some cheaper substitute for beer, and *mirre schlesensme*, of course—some compound better than beef or mutton soup—some coarse vegetable compost in lieu of wheaten bread, to protect the pauper from the speculative visits and experiments of the doctor—and some ingenious plan of making one blanket cover six adults and ten children. The labourers of England have cause for bitterly lamenting the day when the reform bill became the law of the land, and when the millowners and the political economists, the unitarians, quakers, and other dissenters, became the legislators of this once happy kingdom. We always thought it would come to this.”—*Liverpool Mail*, Jan. 16, 1841.

Yes, Sir, and so did I.—But I did not think that the proud Aristocrats of England would so far degrade themselves, as to become the lackeys of these same “millowners and political economists” I did not dream that our nobles would humble themselves, to weigh and measure and stretch, the “cheaper kind of food,” “the compound, and coarse vegetable compost,” and the solitary “blanket,” for the pining, shivering and trembling sons and daughters of the conquerors of Waterloo!! No, therein I was mistaken. I believed that the Aristocracy of England were too proud to become the apprentices of the Poor Law Commissioners!—I thought them too noble to obey the tyrannical orders of such upstarts!—Only think, Sir, of that insect, Chadwick, becoming, as he is, under the New Poor Law, the lawgiver to all our Nobles! Think of this, ye aristocrats of England, and blush at your Sires’ remembrance.—Sir, if their ancestors could rise from their graves, they would scowl upon their degenerate sons, with a frown that would scare every soul of them from the Chairmanship of Boards of Guardians!! They would unbar the doors of the accursed separating Bastiles—throw wide open the portals of the National Church—entwine still tighter the marriage knot—tell them that the labourers had an equal right to life and liberty with themselves, and, pointing to their *increased* rent-rolls and the relatively *diminished* wages of their labourers, they would force them to a repentant blush—or they would pronounce them to be “bastards and not sons!”

I am well aware, Mr. Thornhill, that there are those who still strive to convince themselves, that “the New Poor Law has worked well;” some are so very foolish as to assert such nonsense, in the teeth of the most opposing facts.

It was promised, that the New Poor Law would increase the wages of the labourers, whereas, even with the God-send of the railroads, it is notorious, that wages have fallen. The New Poor Law was to have elevated the moral character of the labourers;—the calendars of crime testify the reverse.

Property was to have been secured by the enforcement of the New Poor Law ; but the establishment of a rural police, “ to sweep the county ”—“ to clear the county more rapidly ”—“ to visit those parts of the county that are most infested, for the purpose of breaking up the dens of thieves which infest certain parts of the county,” demonstrates, that property is much less secure now, than it was before the introduction of the New Poor Law. I beg, Sir, that you will bear in mind, that the expressions inserted above, (in inverted commas,) are not inventions of my own — they were publicly used by a clerical magistrate of your own county (Norfolk) when he was giving his reasons for the *augmentation* of the Norfolk Rural Police. You are aware, that about a year ago, *i. e.*, as soon as you had fairly established the New Poor Law, in Norfolk, the result was just what I told you it would be. The labourers could not, because they are Englishmen, submit to its cruelties and tyranny. They grumbled — became surly and revengeful. Finding that their rights were *stolen* from them, (for it is *theft* to deprive them of their relief, and they know it); they began to imagine that there could be no harm in their invading the rights of others. This state of things caused the owners of property to be very uneasy; they had to “ watch and ward ” for a while ;—at length they tired of guarding themselves, and resolved to hire a strong body of rural Police, at many thousands of pounds expense, to prowl about day and night, and *catch* thieves ; but it now seems that they only *hatched* them—“ the more Police, the more thieves,”—is now, as you know, a common saying in your county. Still, so blind is injustice, that you have agreed to tax yourselves more heavily, and have resolved to hire a larger body of Police !—Will you hear me, Sir ?—It will still be—“ the more Police, the more thieves.” So that, you perceive, the more you enforce the New Poor Law, and increase your Police—just so much more insecure does your property become ! But, instead of restoring the labourers their rights, you madly hope for security in a stronger body of Police. Thus are you whipping yourselves with your own cords.

Again, domestic peace and loyalty were promised, as the sure consequences of the enforcement of the New Poor Law. Now, Sir, what is the fact ? In the seventh year of trial, it is acknowledged, even by the organ of the Government, that “ the working classes are now, in fact, at war with all the superior classes. They are alienated and hostile—heart and soul.” Still, I know that there are those in very high places, who have made up their minds to re-enact “ the execrable and atrocious New Poor Law.” And who still, in defiance of every fact, declare, that “ the New Poor Law has worked well.” I know all this, Sir, and that they expect their rank and office will screen them from the shame which most certainly awaits all liars ! But, Sir, knowing as I do, and having demonstrated, by undeniable facts, *that the New Poor Law is a failure*—if I wished those men harm — I should desire that they might succeed in thus deluding Parliament. They know that facts are all against them ; but they stupidly cling to error, and resolve to build up injustice by fraud and force, rather than acknowledge, that they have made a mistake ! They seem resolved to jeopardize all, rather than bend to truth ! I know all this, Sir ; and if I were as rich as you are, I should be very, very uneasy !

I have much to say on this subject ;—my heart is full. For the present I must

ture to private matters. I shall soon resume this most interesting—this most important national question.

Sir, the visitors to this Cell, are, by no means, an unimportant feature in my Captivity. If any of my readers should imagine that it is personal vanity, which impels me to record the tokens of friendship, which I have here received, and am hourly receiving—I can only pity them. To pass my friends unnoticed would be to dishonour my principles. I am not here, because I owe you money;—that is the mere pretence. I am a Prisoner, because I have warred against the *Malthusian* Monster, and because, in defiance of his impious doctrines, I assert and have maintained in practice, that “property has its duties, as well as its rights.” I am *your* prisoner, because *you* asserted *your* rights, whilst I performed *your* duties. I am not honoured by the visits of the noble, talented, and virtuous, because I am your cast-off Steward and your Prisoner. It is, Sir, my stern, uncompromising, heart-of-oak, and right-true-English principles, that can smile at death, but know no surrender; it is admiration of those principles, which throngs this Cell, with Britain’s choicest sons.

You have, indeed, failed to crush or harm me. My principles live in me,—they are still free and unfettered,—although you have caged “my body;”—my mind defies the power of man. It is extending its influence into spheres which have been hitherto closed against its development. I shall be grateful, if my bondage should prove one means of releasing you and your “order,” from the accursed slavery of your direful foes, the *Malthusian millionnaires*. Oh, Sir, that will be a proud day for Richard Oastler! The day when Britain’s Labourers and her Aristocrats can meet and smile, and once more hail each other as true friends—no intervening Commissioners or Police, will then have power to interrupt their harmony. In thought, from this Cell, I now hail that day! But to my visitors.

Sir, do you happen to know the name which most cheers, and animates the breast of every sound, unflinching, uncompromising Tory in the county of York? Had you resided there, as I have done, and mixed in all our County conflicts, as your Steward did, you could not fail to know that spell. There is one man, noble by nature as well as rank, who, in the worst of times, was true and faithful to his God and Country. When he is named amongst the Yorkshire Tories, cheers loud and long, fail not to welcome him. That man, than whom a better does not live, when he arrived in London, the other day, immediately bent his steps towards this Cell. You cannot guess my feelings, when the Honourable William Duncombe, M.P. for Yorkshire, thus honoured me. Thousands, in Yorkshire, will rejoice to know, that Duncombe was not ashamed of Oastler, in his Cell. What busy scenes flitted before me, while he was here! That memorable day, at York, when Duncombe and Wilson unfurled the True-blue Standard of Constitutional Integrity!—When they conquered, I was with them! That day, and many others, were recalled to memory. Sir, I was not so proud on that occasion (and you know how proud I was that day,) as when Duncombe sat beside me in this Cell. Oh! he was kind.

I will tell you, in this letter, only of one more visitor. The Scottish Tragic Bard, *Kirkland*, has been here. Oh! that you had seen his dark lowering brow—

when he frowned upon the tyranny, which lodged me here,—and the vivid lighting of his glance—when he spoke of my labours for the poor.

He is a wondrous man, whose name will be honoured, when yours and mine would have been forgotten; save, that he has immortalized the latter, and, may be, will, the former.

“Give me a pen and paper!” said the Poet, “I will transcribe a passing thought. Your name is Richard Oastler?”—“Wrestler, was originally our family name,” was my reply.

I furnished *Kirkland* with what he asked for. In a few minutes, he returned the paper, inscribed with his own hand.

“*Sonnet and Acrostic on a celebrated Advocate for the Rights of the Poor.*”

“R evere the man, whose august Jove-like brow,
I mpress'd with soul-spurr'd mind, supremely blends
C are's triumph full, with early locks of snow:
H erculean *Wrestler*!—quake ye when he bends
A fresh to strike a Hydra head's death-blow!
R esistless, might profound, from reason's eye,
D etermines him to conquer—or to die!

“O ppression's chain, *Humanity*, to break,
A ssigns to few—but have the breast to dare;
S tar-like they shine above the wat'ry wreck,
T ransmuting *Night to Day*, with sapience rare;
L ife without *Light*, to *Death* they most compare:—
E spous'd to *Freedom*—*Sun of Yorkshire*! shine—
R edoubling ev'ry ray from *Reason's* shrine!

“By his admiring and devoted servant,

“JAMES KIRKLAND.”

I will keep *that* paper, Mr. Thornhill, in memory of the visit, paid by Scotland's Bard, to your Prisoner. I shall, Sir, after all, have *heir-looms* of more value than your title-deeds, amongst the rest—“the Fixby piece of Plate” and the “Factory Child's Pin,” about both of these and many other tokens of affection to myself, you shall hear more in future numbers of the “Fleet Papers.”

The Poet had left me, ere I thought of your name. Should he revisit your Prisoner, I will demand an Acrostic on my old master. May be, he will call in time for its insertion in my next.

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—Sir, I do not wonder, that the *Malthusians* should be anxious to keep the Bible out of our schools. I shall have a word or two to say on that subject in my next letter.—R. O.

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an old concern who had literally grown grey in the restless discharge of his stewardship. We hope Mr. Thornhill will be enabled to wipe away the imputation. The above-mentioned papers are written to provide the means of subsistence for the prisoner's wife and family; and we hope that their successive sale will amply accomplish that object. They contain outlines of the principal events of Mr. Oastler's life, his correspondence with the Duke of Wellington on the state of the nation, his acquaintance with Saillier, Wilberforce, and other great philanthropists and benefactors of mankind. He also appeals pathetically to his persecutors; and in our opinion, if Mr. Thornhill do not relent, there must be something more than duty which has enabled him to long against his prisoner. The papers also are the medium of expounding Mr. Oastler's views on political matters. He asserts that the Poor Law, as passed from the committee of the House respecting the present dreadful condition of the poor classes, has utterly failed in working that amelioration which the great doctor (Brougham) held out in the proposition of that measure. The following picture which he gives of the condition of the country is graphic, and true in the main.

"The FLEET PAPERS.—Mr. Oastler proceeds in due grandeur in vindicating the cause of the poor, the rights of Englishmen, and the merits of the British constitution, with his characteristic vigour, determination, and earnestness of feeling. The well-to-do-mongers (and many) feel the punishment which he inflicts upon them."—*Liverpool Mail*, Feb. 6, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS.—We have frequently had to notice the productions of Mr. Oastler, but can we do so at present. The forcible yet temperate language now made use of by this gentleman, in his little weekly periodical is winning its way even to the hearts of some of his hitherto bitterest opponents, cynical of whom to our knowledge not only take the papers, but have freely subscribed from £1 to £5 to assist him in printing, besides others who have signified their intention of subscribing £1 per week for so long while he remains in 'durance vile.' The circulation of the 'Fleet Papers' is still on the increase, and in this town has nearly doubled its first circulation. We received similar notices from other towns."—*Hull Free Guardian*, Feb. 6, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS.—We are also so used these papers progressing in public estimation, and so that the vigour and health of their reader continue unimpaired. We learn that U. M. Oastler's intention to give a portrait of himself in March, and during the course of the year number of Mr. Thornhill, and a year of Fagley.—Dear Fagley, how many happy associations does that word recall!"—*Manchester and Salford Advertiser*, Feb. 6, 1841.

"Mr. OASTLER, who is now confined in the Fleet Prison, is issuing a small pamphlet weekly, under the title of 'The Fleet Papers.' That Mr. Oastler in his zeal to ameliorate the condition of the poor Factory Children, of whose misery and wretchedness he was a constant witness, and in spite of attention to the numerous instances of venality and oppression pursued by the strict administration of the New Poor Law, overstepped the bounds of discretion, no one will deny; but we are equally certain that he was at all times actuated by the noblest and best motives; and that his honest exertions were as sincere and honest as they were ardent and long-continued. This man, who is now languishing in prison, and whose wife and family are wholly destitute, has sufficient real benevolence, energy, and talent, had his fortune been different, to have effected the same of HOWARD in philanthropy, and like him, to have taken the gangs and dimensions of misery, with the hope of relieving it. His papers, though written in a very circumcise style, are worthy public attention, as containing the honest sentiments of one who has a more extended knowledge of the feelings and condition of the labouring poor than any other man now living. There are many passages in these 'papers' of which we strongly disapprove, and which we regret Mr. Oastler should ever have written; but we cannot remind men to our own wishes; we must take them as we find them; and his earnest charity and good intentions will excuse, in the eyes of the benevolent, the infractions into which a too enthusiastic devotion to the cause he has undertaken has betrayed him."—*The Britanna*, Feb. 6, 1841.

"11, Hope Street, Cambridge Street, Chalfont, upon Moatlock, Manchester, Jan. 31st 1841.

"Dear Sir,

"We find that the poor men exist—that we truly sympathize from an such the requirements of a man his friend. But your enemy far rather assumes him to take special care to do for us the pleasure of seeing your commiseration, which has so often lighted up our minds, and which has made us in regard under every species of warty tyranny which it is possible for human ingenuity to perpetrate. But, Sir, though shut up in a cell, and so feel your spirit is abundant, in the earth, powerfully advocating the rights of labour, and denouncing the oppressors.—Oh! how that passage might be impressed upon the minds of the Factory Masters of this town:—First then set the oppressor, and chosen aim of his woe? Could I describe to you the feeling manifested by your 'enemies,' the Factory Masters, towards you, most gladly would I do so; but my pen fails to describe you about like it. Saddest it to say, that, if possible, that are more attached to you than ever, and hope that you will meet with a speedy release.—My fellow slaves are most anxious for your welfare, and the welfare of your family; and were it possible that they or I, could resolve you, my acquaintance, farther than the purchase of your interesting 'Fleet Papers,' most gladly would we do so. On that and my behalf I subscribe myself,

"Your most affectionate and loving subject,

"Mr. Oastler.

"L. SWALLOW."

* Well we found, Swallow, believe me, what I say, in "connection" can be more useful than by spending any "Fleet Papers?" It is so, and I know that so will I have I "all my people" all over the glorious State, in following me "Fleet Papers," in order, in those numerous prisons, and in dressing white they come; I can give that would enjoy the reading so far, because the "Fleet" was before you.—H. G.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Aliar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 7.

LONDON, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

Sir,—“Take this letter to the man *without a heart*. If he had had a heart, he never could have carried out the New Poor Law. No other man could have done it. Although I assisted in concocting and drawing it up, I could not have carried it out, nor could any man, who had a heart.”—Thus spake one, (who is sometimes supposed to be the author of the New Poor Law and of “*Marcus*,”) as he delivered a letter into the hands of a friend of mine, which letter was, for “the man without a heart.”

And who is that being, Sir?—Who is that *man-without-a-heart*? I will not soil this letter with his name.—A father was once in need, when his son was in great prosperity; the father applied to his son for aid, and received for answer, “Sir, I owe you nothing, you begat me, but you could not help it!”—What shame for Christian England, that her barbarous legislative enactments should require such a one to enforce them! What scandal on our race, that one so hardened has been found!—Shame on our Nobles, that they should become *his* willing tools, for cruelty to the poor!

Sir, the New Poor Law is from beneath;—the main-spring of its motion, lives, and breathes like other men, but, on his own showing, and on the testimony of his friend who knows him well, he is a heartless monster!

To the honour of our country, her inhabitants abhor the cruel system, and revolt at its enforcement. They are Christian, and before the Sun of Christianity, the icy bands of a barbarous horde of *Malthusians* must melt.

The accursed and unnatural theory, upon which the New Poor Law is founded, has roused the finest, noblest, and strongest feelings of our nature and our religion. The delusion has burst—the hellish scheme has been tried, and has been found wanting, for, as I have before proved, the state of English society loudly proclaims, *that it is a failure*.

Do you still answer, “the legislature is determined to re-enact and perpetuate that law?” Sir, you have a large stake in the country. I would speak through you to your “order,” who have been frightened, like yourself, out of your principles—and I would solemnly ask,—Will you still be the dupes of a set of mad, hare-brained dunces, who style themselves Philosophers? Will you

risk your all, by striving to force a nation of Christian freemen, to submit to laws which are at variance with every Christian principle, and with Constitutional liberty? Will you forget that you are the natural Fathers of the People, and join hands with their oppressors? What! will you, whose Sires lived in the hearts of the people, and received their willing homage — will you forget your fathers, and join hands with traitors, to force the sons of your Sires' defenders, to yield to a base clan of *Malthusian* Infidels? Will you consent to receive the just wages of your labourers, as your increased rents? Will you do this, and call yourselves noble? It cannot be that human nature is so far sunken! But, if I mistake, if England's hierarchy and her nobility, have drunk so deeply at the poisoned chalice of Infidelity, as to prefer robbery to justice; then, I know that God will deliver the poor from their greedy oppressors. In His good time, He will make a way for their escape. Hear His own words, Mr. Thornhill, and remember, that

“God is not a man that He should lie, nor the son of man that He should repent.”

Let me urge you, no longer to trust in your wisdom, might, or riches, but, to ponder on His solemn caution to “your order:”

“Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.”

With these solemn words, from God Himself, deeply and seriously impressed upon your mind — with a due sense of your own utter insignificance and weakness, and the fading power of your wealth, I would now request you to read a few extracts from that Book, which the *Malthusian* Heretics would fain banish from our national system of Education—the Book, Sir, to which the poor of England are increasingly attached, notwithstanding the disregard and contempt which is shewn towards it, by our modern legislators. The people are now reading it for themselves, they are not to be laughed out of their Faith in its promises. They know that its Almighty and Allwise Author, changeth not; and that He cannot be awed by the proud, mighty, wealthy, and worldly-wise, pampered sons of vice and impiety. They know that He has made the land large and wide and fruitful enough for the sons of Industry and Labour, aye, and for “His own poor,” as well. In His word the people confide. They know that it is not a broken reed. They know also, why their enemies would fain deprive them of its knowledge. With this short preface, I beg, respectfully, before the Bible is taken from our schools, to urge the following upon your attention, and that of the whole of your “order.” Let not the length of these quotations offend you. It is God who speaks. Man's duty is to listen and obey.

“The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.—Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.—Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery.—Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress the afflicted in the gate; for the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.—If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen into decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger, or sojourner; that he may live with thee.—Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren or of thy strangers that are in thy land

within the gates.—They shall not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take the widow's raiment to pledge.—Thou shalt neither rent a stranger nor oppress him; ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all mine ear, I will surely hear their cry.—Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying: Execute true judgment, and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother; and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor.—Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.—The Lord will preserve and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him into the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.—The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.—The needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.—But Thou wilt save the afflicted people; Thou wilt bring down high looks.—A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows, is God in His habitation.—He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. For He shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also and him that had no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their souls from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in His sight.—I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor.—He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and despise not their prayer.—For as much therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat; ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. For I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate from their right.—Therefore, thus saith the Lord God: Because ye are all become dross, behold therefore I will gather you, as they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, in the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it: so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there and melt you. Yea, I will gather you and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you."

Having read the *words* of God, Sir; read now the *works* of man — of man, under the influence of the spirit of enlightened philosophy!—under the "orders" of the "man without a heart!" I take these records of man's brutality, from letters but lately received. The one fact happened very near to your Yorkshire estates; the other not many miles from your estates, in Suffolk.

"A little weakly boy, seven years old, measuring forty-one and a quarter inches high, weighing only forty-one lbs., who had lost his father, was an inmate of the union workhouse. The mistress of the workhouse actually took upon herself to engage that poor little infant, to work in a coal pit, eight miles off!—and sent him away without the knowledge of the overseers, churchwardens, or the Board of Guardians. A guardian complained to the Board of this unwarrantable proceeding; but he was cried down by the *Malthusians*, who are the majority on that Board, and who are great favourites with the Commissioners. The guardian was refused permission to produce the poor little victim, who had been sent back to his mother after a few days' trial; it having been found, that he had not strength enough for his master's purposes. The overseers agreed, 'that it was most shameful and unwarrantable, thus to dispose of such a poor creature;' but asserted 'that it was done without their knowledge.' The majority of the guardians were resolved to protect the workhouse mistress. The guardian to whom I allude, at a subsequent meeting, was determined, that this 'independent labourer' should be exhibited to the *Malthusians*. He took him, without leave, into the Board-room, and placing the little unfortunate creature on a chair, bowed to you, then in the blush, saying: 'Behold an independent British labourer!' At which they howled, roared, abused, adjourned, and departed!"

That poor little boy, Mr. Tharabill, is as precious in the sight of God, as the sweet, little "Heiress of Fixby." So much for "the fatherless,"—now for the "widow."—The tale is short, but it is very affecting.

"She had seen better days. She cried and said: 'The Board had always allowed her 7 lbs. of flour and 1s. a week; but they had lately taken away the shilling, and left her only the one pound of flour per day. She durst not complain, for fear they should send her into the Bastile; which,' she said, 'would kill her.' Two or three weeks after she had said so to my friend, she had been forced into the Bastile—she was dead, and she was buried!"

That is all, Sir;—by that murder, the county poor-rates were reduced the amount of her relief!—that is, in plain language, the landed proprietors of that county, added to their rents, by "killing" that "widow," just 7 lbs. of flour and 1s. per week!—They also secured to themselves, in answer to her "cry," the "fury" of the living God!! Depend upon it, Mr. Thornhill, the Word of God is true!

It is to force Englishmen, quietly to stand by, while her "widows and fatherless children" are thus "afflicted" by their heartless tormentors, that it has been resolved "to destroy the freedom of England," and to put the nation to an enormous expense, by the establishment of a rural police;* forgetting all the while, that "the fatherless children and widows," although they "seem to yourselves to be very feeble," are, in the economy of Almighty God, "necessary;" that they are encouraged "to cry unto Him," and that He has graciously promised,— "I will surely hear their cry, if they cry at all unto me," declaring at the same time, that "He is a Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows," and moreover, that "precious shall their blood be in His sight."

It is in vain, Mr. Thornhill, that your "order" attempts to increase their rent-rolls, by unjustly adding thereto, the parish relief of "the fatherless children and the widows!" They may fence themselves round, by scores of acts of Parliament, and tens of thousands of police; but believe me, Sir, while they are thus attempting, in defiance of God's laws, to "build their houses by unrighteousness, and their chambers by wrong;" while "their eyes and their hearts are not, but for their covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence," God's eyes are upon them; and, although their victims may "seem feeble," and unnecessary, or their bones may whiten the fields which their fathers cultivated for your ancestors;† although there may seem to be none to help or to deliver, while your "order" has fenced itself round, with all that man can devise to give security to unrighteousness; still, Sir, the "Father of the fatherless, and the Judge of the widows, is God in His holy habitation." He has heard their "cry;" He has witnessed the oppressions of your "order," and will assuredly, unless you repent, "gather you into His furnace,—He will leave you there and melt you." Then, "shall you know that it is the Lord who hath poured out His fury upon you." Then "He will laugh at your calamity, and will mock when your fear cometh." The feeble "cry of the fatherless children and widows," which is now by your "order" so much despised, and set at naught, will be the blast in God's furnace;—their tears, which now, unheeded by their oppressors, trickle down their palid cheeks, will be scalding drops of molten iron in that day!—Your parchments,

* Since I have been here, I have learned, from sources whose authority I cannot doubt, that the reason why the Rural Police is so much pressed for, is, that the army, being Christian, cannot be depended upon any longer to enforce the New Poor Law. This accords with certain official documents, of which I have seen copies. "What a state we are in!"—R. O.

† It is stated to me as a fact, that the putrid remains of dead Paupers have been sold for manure! I can believe any thing, however horrifying, when I know that the "man without a heart" presides.—R. O.

your rent-rolls, your "cedared and painted houses" will be but fuel for that "furnace, which God has, in His "fury," prepared for "the oppressors of His poor!"

You are old enough to remember the state of France before the Revolution. The French hierarchy and nobility were fenced round by a large army,—a numerous police—by *gens-d'armes*, and I know not what, stronger and much more efficient than any "physical force," which you either have, or can ever expect to have, here, in England. Still, Sir, you know, that, all that array of strength, was only like so much cobweb, when oppression had aroused her people, and driven them to madness; the army, police, *gens-d'armes*, and all the rest, so far as I remember, did not stop the work of revenge one single day! Would that your "order" were wise, and that they would take to heart that awful warning!

Oh that I could prevail upon the oppressors of the poor, seriously to consider these awful truths, and speedily "to repent, and turn themselves from all their transgressions; so that iniquity shall not be their ruin." God Himself assures them, that He has "no pleasure in the death of him that dieth;" adding, "wherefore turn yourselves and live ye." But if God spared not His own peculiar people when they transgressed against Him, and set at naught His warnings and reproofs,—if, for the iniquity of their covetousness, He was wroth, and because of their abominations and repeated provocations, He cast them out of the land, which He had given unto them for an inheritance; if He visited them with sore, continued and grievous judgments, because they repented not, can the legislators of England, who are guilty of the same things, expect to escape! Verily not!! Has not God set England, (like Jerusalem of old) "in the midst of the nations and countries that are round about her?" and, like Jerusalem, has she not "changed His judgments into wickedness more than the nations, and His statutes more than the countries that are round about her?" Have not our governors "used oppression, and exercised robbery, and vexed the poor and needy? yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully!" "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold I, even I, am against thee, and will execute judgments in the midst of thee, in the sight of the nations."

Sir, if you feel disposed to blame me for gathering my arguments from the Records of the Living God,—hear my reasons.

I have remarked, that, in proportion to the march of oppression in our legislature, is the desire to exclude the Word of Truth from the minds of the people. I believe that there is no book so hateful to tyranny, as the Bible—and that there is no bulwark so secure for the liberty of the people. I will not, therefore, apologize for quoting largely from it. No, Sir, in that Book I can securely hide myself from all tyranny; I would lead you, Sir, and your "order" to that unfailing Fountain of Wisdom, that you may therein learn the folly of human wisdom, the weakness of human might, and the poverty of human wealth!

I would also lead the oppressed poor to seek for comfort and help in the time of their adversity, from that Fountain which so richly comforts and sustains me, in my own. These, Sir, are my reasons, for so largely quoting from the Book of God.

Space warns me, that, full as my heart is respecting the cruelties of the New Poor Law, and the danger, to themselves, of persons of property, who support it: for the present, I must turn to other matters. I know that "there are many poor factory workers and their parents, who club their halfpennies, 'to buy the Fleet

Papers; adding, with many a tear, 'our good old king has often befriended us, and, now, it is our turn to befriend him, if it is ever so little.' "

Yes, Sir, I must never forget those "subscribers;" they are my most valued friends, I know that they would not be content, when "Oastler's paper" was read, if there was not a little "bit" about himself. The union of our souls is so strong, Mr. Thornhill, that it laughs at distance and prison walls;—every Saturday evening and Sunday morning, my spirit is as *fleet* as my papers, and, I am present with thousands of those village, lane-side, and moor-edge readers, marking their smiles, tracing their tears, and hearing their blessings, as the best scholar in the little circle, reads, to his listening audience, what I pen in this Prison. Thousands of them will, to-morrow, be seeking for the passages which I have been quoting from the Bible,—that is the reason why I have not given them the places. The best Bible scholars, will thus display their Bible knowledge to their admiring friends. How I, at this moment, enjoy that thought!

Well, then, Sir, I must, for their sakes, tell you somewhat more of my reverie, in No. 12, on the evening when you dubbed "my body" amongst your "goods and chattels." I remembered, that on the very day on which I had obtained that cheer for the Duke of Wellington, the Huddersfield Whigs set about in earnest, to obtain my discharge from your service; using Sir John Ramsden as their tool. His son intended to represent his father's new *reform-made-borough* of Huddersfield. Upon its being ascertained, that he was an opponent of Sadler's Ten Hours' Factory Bill, and a regular Malthusian, I determined to oppose him, not by any influence obtained as your steward, but, in my public capacity, as "King of the Factory Children." You know, Sir, that I never canvassed your tenants: I was always too proud, and too tenacious of their rights, for that—that they can testify. Well, young Ramsden was told, that "Oastler was opposed to him, and that he had very great influence." His reply was, "Oh! I know how to silence him." The foolish man thought, that if his father wrote a letter of complaint to you, you would order me to be silent—that I should obey you, and thus betray the Factory Children into the hands of their oppressors! You will remember, that you fell into that Whig trap, by writing to Sir John a civil letter, in reply to his impertinent interference; but, that I afterwards saved you and myself, from the public odium, which your enemies had intended for both of us; and that Ramsden, receiving the proper reward of his meanness, was forced to run away from his father's *reform-made-pocket-borough*,—to scamper off, out of the back door of his father's inn; and, at last, to take refuge, in the *reform-preserved-for-Earl-Fitzwilliam-rotten-borough* of Malton, after suffering a woeful defeat, from the independent electors of the North-Riding of Yorkshire. In my Cell, that night, I lived over again all those by-gone days. I also ruminated on the letters which I wrote to you on that occasion, and on your replies as well. A few extracts from one of mine, may be useful, even now. Please to turn to that which is dated "Fixby Hall, July 14th, 1832." There you will read as follows. I am delighted, even in prison, to copy these extracts. I am the self same Tory now.

"Surely, Sir John Ramsden has influence enough over this neighbourhood, without striding over Fixby also! These are the men (the Whigs) who have been crying down the Duke of Newcastle for saying—'he had a right to do what he would with his own;'—and now they would usurp the right of their neighbours also, and they require you, to help them, to crush me!

"Sir John Ramsden has told you the truth, when he says—'Oastler is producing great excitement in our part of the County of York.' If he had added—'in many other parts of the County and the Empire,' he would have been correct. The fact is, I have exposed a system of cruelty and oppression, which was before unknown, and when the people hear of it, they naturally feel excited, and are determined to assist me in getting the nuisance abated; but why Sir John should 'complain' to you about it, I do not know. There is surely much more sense in this 'excitement,' than there was in the 'excitement' produced by Sir John and his party, on the *Reform Bill* and on *Catholic Emancipation*, or even on the question of *Black Slavery*.

"Sir John is not correct in saying, that 'Oastler opposes him in Huddersfield.' That is impossible. It is positively declared by his own party, that he has no hand in the matter. Even his own son says, that 'he (Sir John) will punish no one who conscientiously opposes him (Mr. R.), and I am sure that I do so, most sincerely and most conscientiously. Yes, I oppose Mr. Ramsden's return heart and soul, and cannot help it, because he is a decided Whig—an enemy to the *Ten Hours' Factory Bill*, a party to the humbug, nonsense, and mischief of the *Reform Bill*, a political economist, a free-trader, and an out-and-out supporter of that ministry, which is fast bringing ruin on this country.

"Sir John's letter to you, proves that he would crush me if he could. These are times that try men's souls; surely, Sir John has room enough on his own estate to crush and tyrannise, without extending over the domains of his Tory neighbour.

"I hate Whig politics with a most perfect hatred, because I believe the Whigs to be the enemies of my country, and, if not stopped, that they will be the ruin of the nation. They are the great enemies of the *Factory Bill*—the great supporters of the *Factory system*—which is fast destroying the *Landed interest* and the *Labouring classes*. If such men as Mr. Ramsden are to be returned to Parliament, there is an end to all my hopes for the benefit of my Country. The *Working classes* must sink, the *Landed interest* must follow, and the *Fundholder*, with the *Owner of machinery* will rise,—and afterwards confusion and anarchy will ensue. The time is come, when all must join against the political economists (*Malthusians*), or this Country cannot be saved.

"I am indeed a poor man; but I love my Country, and I love my Master, who is my best friend,—nay, I say truly, as far as pecuniary matters are concerned, you, Sir, are the only friend I have in the world. But, if you will determine, that Sir John Ramsden is to interfere between us, then, of course, I must hereafter consult his views; and I would rather die in a poor house, than be under his controul. Were I a rich man, I should esteem it an honour to serve you gratuitously; but I would rather rot on the highway, than accept a living from him. Permit me to advise you—if it be the last advise I may ever be allowed to give you—never give Sir John Ramsden the power, again, to interfere between you and any other Steward. If the principles which I have declared in this letter, and in many former ones, and frequently also in conversations, are such as prevent you any longer confiding in me, all I can say, is, although I have learnt to be grateful to you as my best friend, I have not learned to abandon my principles, and I hope I never shall. No! though an ill-natured world lies before me, I will trust in that God, who sent a raven with bread to His Servant, rather than suffer him to perish. I have only one wish in life, and that is to be useful; but I am too proud to live under the dread of Sir John Ramsden."

Little could I have expected, Mr. Thornhill, after your reply to that letter, assuring me of your continued confidence and friendship, that my enemies, the Whigs, had made a successful attack upon my livelihood, and had established their outposts in your breast; so as to be able, at intervals, to return to the attack, and tease and annoy you, about "the interference of your Steward being very perplexing to the Poor Law Commissioners," &c., until, at last, they forced you to drive me from Fixby—to pursue me through all the tedious ramifications of "the law,"—and, in the pitched battle before the Lord Chief Justice in the Common Pleas, to assume the tone of friendship, only to be able, afterwards, to add, if possible, to the pang intended to be inflicted on your old Steward in this Cell.—

No, Sir, I do not believe this last of you;—I know, that, had you been in the Court that day, I should not have been here.

When ruminating in my Cell, I remembered sending a copy of our correspondence on the subject of Sir John Ramsden's interference, between you and your Steward, to that best of men—my valued friend—the late Michael Thomas Sadler. I am sure that his opinion, on that matter, will be respected by all good men. He wrote thus touchingly to me:—

“ My dear Friend ;

“ London, July 16th, 1832.

“ The Lord reigneth!—Any slight or insult offered to the ‘ King ’ of our Cause will be taken up by thousands. It would destroy your enemies, secure the success of the Bill, and exalt you beyond what it would be almost possible to bear. Nothing can possibly exceed your letter to Mr. Thornhill. I admire the kind temperate manner of it—never forsake that for one moment, whatever be the result. Thousands will rally round you, and I will hold it the post of honour to be at your side—a better man, JOSH WOOD will be there: a greater than all—God!

“ Pray go on with the correspondence with Mr. Thornhill as you have begun! If he has a heart and a conscience, all is safe; but oh! what a fellow is Ramsden!

“ I could not refrain, though killed, writing this much.

“ In very deed, my dear friend, yours ever,

“ MICHAEL THOMAS SADLER.

“ Love to Mrs. Oastler. I need not say—be strong!—You never were so great.”

Yes, Sir, had Sadler lived to witness the triumph of Whiggery over you, he would have been a frequent visitor to your Captive. Methinks his happy spirit often comforts me! Read another of his letters, Sir;—

“ London, July 17th, 1832.

“ My dear Friend

“ Do let me hear from you as soon and as often as you can. The last intelligence you gave me afflicts me much. I fear you see too plainly what it is, that those must do and suffer, who serve God; and fear not what flesh can do! I have never been myself since I received your letter. But it has enhanced my certainty regarding the Cause, for I begin to see it is to have its martyrs. Keep up Mrs. Oastler's spirits and your own—but both will be sustained from above. You know I have long been called ‘ Radical ’—and am slighted by many on that account;—but I have not yet suffered. May this be as a passing cloud!

“ Yours ever affectionately,

“ M. T. SADLER.”

Poor Sadler! *His* “ sufferings ” came afterwards. The self-same spirit which has imprisoned me—killed him! His body rests in peace not in his native land!

When all was over—when you were satisfied, and Ramsden had absconded, Sadler wrote thus to me:—

“ Oh! how I rejoice at the baffling of Ramsdens—if anything could have more exalted you, it was that;—be humble, and give God the praise.”

How odd, that, after all, you should have sent me here!

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—I have many pleasing notices of Friendship's tokens for my next;—space forbids them now. *Kirkland* has just called. I have asked him for your Acrostic;—he is this moment writing it.—R.O.

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Gentlemen, by paying in advance, may have it sent to any part of the country, post-free, at 3d.

London, Feb. 10th, 1841.

"My dear, very dear Mr. Quaker.

It has pleased the Wise Dispenser of all events, that our Friend should be visited where he now is; that he may be freed from sickness, and the anxiety of circumstances which are perpetually haunting in his mind; that his mind may be freed from impressions and calculating intricacies, which might interfere with the great work assigned him. With warm prayers to the Great and all Good, "for the manifest advantage He hath blessed you, and the faithful perseverance in the Dispensation you are under, to continue the great work of re-organizing upon the dispensation of our Statements from that high regard which they ought necessarily to award, in the true Faithfulness of political conscience,"—the righteous Arm of the Most High"—and to witness them in a dispensation from those outward and transient concerns,—that our God may prosper of his work with which He thought worth His Name—to prosper it!"

—My very kind love.—The high and honorable station which you are placed in, and the importance of the work with which you are intrusted (which you have undertaken in truth and faithfulness), have inspired me with the confidence of our God, taking a blessing in answer for the ministrants of Old England! In the name of the Lord.—*His peace and prosper!*

During your absence, I have rarely experienced such delightful moments, as the perusal of your "Fleet Papers" have inspired! The true reliance you hold upon the Almighty, which He, in His tender mercy and loving kindness, hath given you! The numerous kind Dreams He has caused you; the calm serenity He hath bestowed you with—all, all (except in one most reviving and precious token of good to you, my dear Sir, and to all)—Agree I say, in the name of the Lord,—*His peace and prosper!*

My dear Sir.—Peace be to you, —*equanimity, peace, and prosperity* are sought with divided prayers, and the rest I beseech you, be assured by your temple, but serious friends, retaining true love from respect and good-will—in sleep upon your guard.

I have ever since, since I had the pleasure of seeing you, with warm solicitude for your comfort and happiness, thought of you, which has enhanced the joy I feel in the view I have of your present prospects.

They be so good as make me best respectful compliments and best wishes to Mrs. Quaker and your children. I saw Mr. P, yesterday; he desired me, to make his warm regards, and say, that you will love from him.

I am, very truly, my dear Sir,

Your, with best wishes,

W. A."

"W. A." is a dear and old friend of mine. He is of the gentle, unassuming Character they praise—loved by many—beloved by me, which I had authority to publish his name.—R.L.

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PORTRAIT of Mr. THORNHILL'S PRISONER,
IN HIS CELL, FLEET PRISON.

Will be Added to Number 12,

OF

THE FLEET PAPERS,

To be Published March 20, 1841.

Price 2d.

Persons who are desirous of having No. 12, and the Portrait, will please to return their Orders; who are requested, not to be made before Saturday, the 6th day of March, 1841, to send their orders for the same to the Publisher, Mr. John Pavey, No. 47, Holywell Street, Strand, London.

N. B.—The number of impressions of the Portrait will be limited to the number of orders.

Portrait of Mr. THORNHILL, VIEW of FIXBY HALL, and of the FLEET PRISON, will follow in the course of the year.

In consequence of the increased circulation of the Fleet Papers, Mr. Denton is happy to inform his friends, that no extra charge will be made for the Portrait. The Price Press, Feb. 6 1841.

REMARKS ON THE "FLEET PAPERS."

—THE FLEET PAPERS.—We have reviewed the number of the Fleet Papers, and have perused them with singular feelings of regret and delight. Regret that so good a man as Mr. Denton should, at his time of life, be suffering imprisonment at the hands of so bad a nation, so when he has been so old and faithful a servant; and delight in that they, in his hours of confinement, he was not occupied in penitence, and even his mind and heart in distress, at the thought of what he has done, in his own country; how could the King? Mr. Denton writes with much simple purity—there is no exaggeration in saying for effect; it is the impulse of a good natured man; there is no, and he must feel, eyes at the present time; that he is sitting in a dark dungeon of his for his future country. The Fleet Papers ought to be circulated in every town and village throughout the United Kingdom. With a great deal of working matter and miscellaneous information against the infamously, etc, following Poor Laws, he should have rich materials, and depicts many interesting scenes in real life, which help to substantiate the advice, that "Truth is strength—stronger than brass." Mr. Thornhill, in whom the Fleet Papers are published, says, if he could, they have a heart of stone, to permit a continuance of Mr. Denton's imprisonment. Some fanatical "Conservative" papers think Mr. Denton too virtuous. Can the vulgar but proud intellect, or the more liberal and high, in one nation of humane interests, promoting "good" and "evil," then, or that of the poor, when it is arranged to send poverty to a prison? We think you, however, in Mr. Denton's Fleet Papers, and God bless him!—The Manchester Guardian, Feb. 13 1841.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddleworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."
"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."
"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break
in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 8.

LONDON, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1841.

PRICE 2d

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—I grieve to hear, from one who cannot mistake, that, in your own circle, the solemn passages which I have quoted in my former letters from the Word of God, should have been made the subject of jest. Sir, I do believe that Word is true. Neither are your friends wise, in seeking your favour by foolish remarks about myself. But, I shall not retort;—I am not in a railing humour. I can only pity, and pray for them. Persons of large property, who love their *rights*, as they call them,—and who wish to retain them, ought never to jest at the Word of God. Should the day ever arrive, when the Bible is universally supposed to be a fable, then, they will be separated from their Rent-Rolls; be it ever remembered, that, when Christianity shall cease to be "part and parcel of the law of England," they will have no title to their estates. I am induced to remind you of this truth, in consequence of what a gentleman, who sometimes sits at your table, told me a few hours ago.

Sir, I have been reading the "leading article" in the *Shropshire Conservative*, of the 30th ult., which some kind friend has sent me. That "article" has made me weep for the Poor, and tremble for the Rich! I have no space to quote it. The horrible recital of man's brutality, is elluxed, by the following fact:—An infant of two years old, was whipped, goaded, flogged, cut, by one of the bloodhounds belonging to the pack, which is kept by the public, for "the man without a heart." And for what was that infant thus brutally punished? Because the babe cried, when his mother left him!! That was his only crime!!—Hear that, Mr. Thornhill! and all ye men of property! Hear that infant "cry" to man, in his distress, and by your officer (the brute was a workhouse master), see him thus lashed and lacerated!!—Hark! again, ye men of power and wealth, who support the accursed New Poor Law!—hear *your* infant victim "cry" to his God! hear him, and tremble!!—Will you thus punish nature, and then hope for security by the Rural Police! Dare you thus outrage the Deity, laugh at His threatened "fury," and hope to protect yourselves behind an act of Parliament?—The editor of the paper, after relating this horrible fact, naturally exclaims—"Is there such a thing as retributive justice?"—

Yes, Mr. Thornhill, there is; and if the accursed law under which such fiends hold office, is not repealed — although it may be supported by tens of thousands of Rural Police — be sure, that the “cry” of that victim is fast loosening the knot which binds society together. Your parliamentary majorities will cut a sorry figure, when God arises to avenge!

Ere long, you shall have more on this subject from me; I will fearlessly dive to the very bottom, and search, at all hazards, till I find whether the foundation of Christian, of English society, is mercy and justice, or cruelty and extortion. You have furnished me with time and leisure for that inquiry; I will endeavour to be a faithful steward of those talents. Our legislature is very foolish to force one to such researches. Hear what Captain Wood says, in a recent letter to Hamer Stansfeld, Esq., of Leeds: “Had the upper classes of society been uniformly or generally patriotic, no reform in Parliament would have been required.” So, it may be now said, “Had the possessors of property been content with their own, there would have been no need to have enquired into their titles, or into the nature of their tenures.” But, Sir, the madness of our Legislature is now forcing an enquiry into the nature and origin of “property;” and seeing that they dispute the right to *rates*, they force an enquiry into their right to *rents*, which, if they persist in their cruelty and injustice, must shake society to its very foundations; no fear shall deter me,—bold as they are in depriving the poor, I will be as bold in defending them. “Physical force” is their only argument—*Truth* alone shall be my weapon. I have opposed the New Poor Law from the very beginning, foreseeing that great danger to persons of property was involved in its principle. Nothing can be more absurd than the notion, that owners of estates, after having deprived the poor of their relief, (excepting on the degrading condition of slavery,) have no duty to perform to society, but may safely resolve to enforce the payment of their rents, indulge in all the pleasures of the chase, the turf, or the West-end — and trust the rest to the Rural Police. For the present, I leave that important subject, having just received a letter, which I wish you carefully to read. It is from a clergyman of the Church of England, who is well acquainted with the present state of English society. He forbids that I shall publish his name.

“To Mr. Oastler, a Prisoner in the Fleet.

“Honoured Sir,—May the God of England (if he has not yet cast us off) make strong the hands of your hands, and fill you with a good courage, and arm you with a sound discretion, for I believe that a great work lies before you; and that, by the blessing of the Highest, you will be a blessing to us all.

“I read your ‘Fleet Papers’ with intense interest, and melancholy pleasure, mingled with hope. Had we a few more pens and hearts like yours, Sir, I should still hope well for Old England; but I almost despair. Your great point, I see, is, the meing out to the active agent in producing all wealth, his due reward. You interpret St. Paul, as assigning to the Labourer the first cut at the loaf, and a good slice. This is Christianity practised;—God help you to establish it. Drive the nail in here, and we shall have a hold-fast, whereon to hang our National Security and Prosperity; and if this be not done, if the due reward of labour be neglected, and not secured—nailed fast;—all the philosophic schemes, falsely so called, of political quacks and dolts, will fail. The Rich cannot live, when the Poor are dead—cannot eventually swim, when the humbler producer sinks. What fools are they to think otherwise! That they do so, the New Poor Law, and their support of it, clearly proves. Poor madlings! they are killing the goose, to get at the golden eggs.

"You, Sir, have done much to dispel the Foreign Trade and Competition bewitching. You have done more than some hundreds of our cloth—and, I blush to own it—in retracing the erring steps of the masses towards Christianity; and I hope our 'order' are, even now, profiting by your lessons. 'The voice from the Cell' seems even to reach the leather ears of Mr. Granby Berkley, and to make him suspect, that his favourite 'Panacea' is doomed after all. But I must not intrude upon your patience; I will therefore call attention to two facts which have occurred within the present year. The first—that in a Poor Law Union, in Kent, a Clergyman, favourable in general to the New Poor Law, but horrified at its 'well-working' effects, made a communication to the Magistrates of the District, as to some horrible cruelty committed in the Workhouse—the condoning of a poor female for seventy-two hours. He was summoned to give his evidence to the Bench. When he presented himself, he was badgered, brow-beaten, and insulted by a portion of the Bench, who were great New Poor Law amateurs (and most accomplished and finished Gentlemen to boot) He was forced to exclaim, as he demanded protection from the Chairman: 'Have I been brought here to be insulted?' And, at last, with the greatest difficulty, he got his deposition made.

"Now, Sir, meekness is a virtue of high price; but there are cases where the energy and emphasis of Paul before a Festus or a Felix are imperatively demanded, and, if I mistake not, this is one.

"If the Clergy of the Church of England succumb to such a tyrant power as this, when directed against the poor and oppressed *through them*, let them know assuredly, that they themselves will be, and will deserve to be the next victims.—Horrible! I repeat—horrible! Will the people of England allow, that when their Clergy come forward (duly summoned, observe,) to detail the oppression of the poor before the Bench of Justice (*!*), that they are to be treated as an Old Bailey lawyer would treat a felon's accomplice?

"Now, Sir, let us have your comment on this fact. But, *again*, as we Parsons say, 'it works well,'—does it? Now, facts are strong arguments. Let me tell you a *secret*, Sir. I happen to know that the Manchester Pawnbrokers and the Birmingham Pawnbrokers, have lately declared in their Union meeting assembled, 'that their trade is now, not among the operatives, they having now little or nothing left worth pledging, but that their principal business is now among the middle class men—the Ten-pounders!'

"Now, Sir, how say you? It is a fact, that in those great towns, on Fridays and Saturdays, valuable pledges pour in from masters and tradesmen, to 'raise the wind' for weekly wages. You see the flood is rising; but, pardon me—I forbear.

"I am your sincere well-wisher,

"CLERICUS."

It is, Sir, a source of gratitude to me, that what I write in this Cell, is of "intense interest" to those who have solemnly sworn, at their ordination to the office of Deacon, "to search for the sick, poor, and impotent people of the parish, that they may be relieved." This fact convinces me, that I am not labouring in vain. There is no class of my fellow-men whom I honour, as I do the clergy. Few men have had a better opportunity of judging who are the best friends of the poor, than myself. I rejoice in bearing my testimony to the kindness and active benevolence of the clergy. I would never cease to urge them to be constantly in communication with their people, then soon, the wide gap which the enemies of both have dug between them, will be filled up, by the returning confidence and esteem of each. I do rejoice that some of the clergy are listening to "the voice from the Cell." Will my Reverend friends excuse me? I do love their "order." I would that they were universally enthroned in the hearts of their people. No true friend, however, would deceive them. *They are themselves to blame.* They have sometimes slept whilst the enemy has devoured the flock and sown tares. Had the Clergy always occupied the station assigned to them,—had they used the influence of their holy office, in staying the march of oppression, the murderous Monster of the Factories could not have obtained his power in our manufacturing districts: neither could "the man-without-a-heart" have

successfully unfurled the black banner of Death in all our agricultural provinces. I rejoice, however, that the Clergy are now manning the watch-towers. I pray that their energetic efforts to restore the rights of the Poor may be successful.

I will, at the bidding of my clerical friend, endeavour to drive the "nail" in, fast to the apostolic maxim; and, if the rich are resolved to loosen that of "the labourer," with God's help, I will see to it, that they shall loosen their own, as well; but much rather would I see the "ancients of the people" restoring the landmark of the poor, and thus establishing their own rights, on the secure foundation of justice.

No man rejoices more at Mr. Grantley Berkley's sneer (if he has sneered at me), than myself; it tells me, that my "nail" has pricked him in a very tender place.

The clergyman who was insulted by that Bench, which was disposed to uphold the cruelties of the horrible New Poor Law system, now knows "what manner of men" its patrons are. Having plundered his flock, how could the shepherd expect favour in their sight? The New Poor Law is not more certainly levelled at the humiliation of the poor, than at the destruction of the Church. It is intended, and eminently calculated to level every distinction, save Rich and Poor. Religion, morality, virtue, learning, science, skill, industry, and patriotism, are things, of which the "man-without-a-heart," makes mockery. By his code, wealth, however vile, ignorant, and idle its owner may be, is alone to be honoured and protected. Poverty must be punished and degraded by him, though it be crowned with every religious, moral, and skilful acquirement. Let not the Clergy expect any quarter in the war with the New Poor Law monster! May they come out and separate themselves from that "unclean thing;" and, remembering their solemn ordination oath, stand forward, *en masse*, in their proper character, of defenders of the Poor! Oh! that they would make their voices heard in all their parishes, in defence of the Christian rights of the poor; and then, arranging themselves in solemn order, as the ambassadors of Jesus, let them remonstrate with, and warn the Legislature of their danger and their doom, if they fail to tear *that* brand of Infidelity from the British statute book! Let them now imitate St. Paul, or expect a harvest of insult to precede the downfall of their "order." I shall not fail, Sir, to prove, when I arrive at that point of the argument, that it is utterly impossible, that the Church of England can survive the establishment of the "execrable and atrocious" New Poor Law.

A word to the Magistrates who dared to insult a Clergyman, who was seeking justice for a poor woman:—Sirs, *your* "order" is doomed, as well as *his*! Bethink you,—side no longer with the avaricious oppressor; insult, no more, the ambassador of the Highest; trample not upon the defenceless poor. But, if you would preserve your own "order," respect the rights of the poor, and reverence the holy character of the Priesthood.

As to the new customers for the pawnbrokers in Manchester and Birmingham—I have so long foreseen that it must come to that, that I am no way surprised. Why do not the "middle class" make known their poverty to their representatives? Simply because they are too prejudiced and too proud! They must "champ the bit" a little longer, before they will perceive, that it is the "enlightened and liberal Philosophy" which they worship, that is driving them to the Pawn-

brokers' shops. How can they expect to prosper, when, by the fiat of their own representatives, their best customers are "forced to live on a coarser sort of food." You will, perhaps, reply—"The New Poor Law has only just been introduced into those towns." True, Sir; but for five years you have been driving, what you call your "surplus population," into the manufacturing towns, and have thus been reducing the wages of the operatives—that was one professed object of the friends of the New Poor Law, it was suggested by Mr. Ashworth, the great cotton-spinner, of Bolton. The plan has succeeded, and thus it has ruined the class who depended on the "custom" of the operatives—the shopkeepers. The middle classes have had warning upon warning from myself and others; but they either turned a deaf ear, or railed against us, as though we were their foes. Now, it would seem, that the flood of trouble is rising, and is already overflowing their banks—would that, before they are overwhelmed, they might unite with the labourers, to tame the monster, which, else, will assuredly destroy them.

So much, Sir, for the letter of my first clerical friend. Now for one from another of the same "order," who has been beloved by me, for more than twenty years, but who has long been separated from me by distance; he informs me,—

"Your last paper (No. 4.) was a great feast to me, and devoured with avidity. It is all true *Saxon*, and will speak to every *British* heart. But," he adds, "I do not like what you say about the *Army*. It is a terrific question. * * * It may appear like *advice* to the *Army* under a veil. It may be construed into an innendo. The thought, may be looked upon, as father to the wish. * * * We do not seek the ruin, but the recovery and prosperity of our country."

The opinion of my friend, has received from me the most serious consideration. Like him, I "do not seek the ruin, but the recovery and prosperity of our Country." My friend will excuse me, if I believe, that I have more deeply considered this question, than he has done. I have watched the progress and effects of innovation on our constitutional principles, with a constant and serious attention; and I have marked, that while liberty has been the professed object, tyranny has invariably been the consequence. I have protested against the deceiver, at every step, and, although I have been derided and mocked by those whose good opinion I have esteemed, and who have been counted wiser than myself, facts and experience have invariably satisfied me, that I was right in anticipating evil to the people, from every departure from the fundamental principles of the British Constitution. My opposition to those innovations, has, I am sure, been sincere,—it has, at length, brought me to this place, where I have carefully reviewed the whole scheme, and have thereby been more strengthened in my conviction—that if our legislature will not return to the Arc of the Constitution, then, the Church, the Monarchy, the Aristocracy, and the present arrangement of private property, must, and will be entirely removed. Whether Tyranny or Anarchy will take their places, will depend upon circumstances which cannot be foreseen. It is impossible that the principles of the Constitution can long exist, with the system of Commissions, which are in their very nature unconstitutional. The plan of thus tampering with the Constitution, has already been tried, and has cost one Sovereign his Crown. The subject is of much more serious import, than it is imagined to be by our short-sighted statesmen. Being solemnly impressed with the extreme danger of yielding the rights of British subjects to Commissioners; and of imparting to those Commissioners, a power, which Parliament has no right to delegate—

the power of making Laws ; I have deemed it to be my duty, at all hazards, to raise my voice against such innovations, and boldly to utter what I believe and know.

Since I have been here, and Providence has opened to me this mode of communication with the public, I have resolved to state my opinions, and the facts of which I am cognisant, holding nothing back, but calmly, yet forcibly, in these letters to you, Sir, to try, if it be possible to stay that plague, which appears to be the inevitable consequence of proceeding in the course of expediency and innovation, which is resolved upon by the Government. If I am suspected, and am deemed to be an enemy of my Country, I must patiently bear the undeserved odium—the fear of which, shall not prevent the full development of my views. No man values the good opinion of his friends more than myself ; but, if my Country demands, even that sacrifice, I am prepared to make it.

An act of Parliament which is unconstitutional, cannot be valid. The New Poor Law is allowed to be unconstitutional, even by its supporters. The late Earl of Eldon, when that bill was before the Lords, assured me, “ that the legislature was not vested by the Constitution, with power to pass such a law.” When it was passed, and was called “ the Law of the Land,” the Bishop of Exeter declared, in the House of Lords, “ that, as *Christians*, Englishmen *dare* not submit to it.” I was in the House of Lords that night, and observed, that his Lordship was not called to order, which he certainly would have been, by the Lord Chancellor, if the New Poor Law Act had been a Constitutional, or a valid, measure.

But my reverend friend thinks, that “ it is terrific ” to say, “ that the army is tired of upholding the throne of the three Poor Law Commissioners.” Now, Sir, I think that there is much more danger in withholding, than in telling the truth. It is a fact, known to the Government—nay, dispatches from commanding officers are in possession of the Commander-in-Chief and the Secretary of State for the Home Department, affirming the dislike which the soldiers have to be employed in the enforcement of the New Poor Law. I state this fact boldly. I know that it is true. If I err, I am open to correction. Do I regret these circumstances ? No, Sir ; I am proud that the Army is so constitutional. I rejoice also, that the Bishop is a Christian ; and still more do I exult in the knowledge, that they are all backed by the opinion of the late venerable and learned ex-Chancellor, the Earl of Eldon.

No man has been more amongst the troops, when they were employed in enforcing the New Poor Law, than myself. I have conversed freely with field officers, officers of the line, non-commissioned officers, and privates, when they were “ on duty,” under the command of “ the man without a heart.” I never found any reserve amongst them. They universally deprecated that service. A wise Government would have paused, before it had resolved upon another, and an unconstitutional force, to aid the Commissioners in their triumph over “ the Freedom of England.” These facts cannot be construed into a “ wish ” or “ innuendo,” they are matters of history, which ought to be known by all, that all may learn who it is, that is endangering the safety of the commonwealth. “ Terrific ” as these remarks may seem to my kind friend.—I am not frightened thereby.—No ; the “ cry ” of the “ widow and the fatherless,” and the consequent “ fury ” of the living God, is

more "terrific" to me, than "an army with banners." Believe me, Sir; the man who carries the torch, which enkindles the widow's and the orphan's hearts, and forces them to "cry unto God" in anguish, is the incendiary, whose work is the ruin and destruction of Society.

Sir, it is because "I do not seek the ruin, but the prosperity of our Country," that I have resolved to keep nothing back. Dreadful will the collision be, when the two forces—Army and Police—shall become jealous of each other; which, sure I am, no human foresight can prevent! Then, will Lord John Russell's awful prophecy be in the course of fulfilment!

My reverend friend's observations have forced from me these remarks. I wish, Sir, that you should be aware, that, in these letters, I shall fearlessly, but respectfully communicate my own thoughts and the facts with which my experience has furnished me. In this way only can I serve my country—for which, and not for party, I have made some sacrifices, and I am ready to make still greater, rather than witness "the downfall of Freedom in England." I am not permitted in these letters to discuss any proceedings in Parliament; if I were, I should have much to say on what is now passing there. I know that many members, of both houses, read these letters. Perhaps the "Fleet Papers" may not be entirely useless, although they do proceed from "a Prisoner in his Cell." If I have wearied you on this point, I beg pardon, and at once call your attention to a more pleasing subject.

The kindnesses which are shewn to me by persons of all ranks, demand more notice than I am able to give to them in these papers. Were my heart to have its own way, every page would teem with grateful expressions towards my kind, benevolent friends.

I cannot withhold the following instance of delicate sensibility, and Christian kindness, from one who is a perfect stranger to me. I received the following letter from the Hon. Col.———. I may not publish his name. I am, however, permitted to print his kind and affectionate epistle.

“———, Jan. 31st 1841.

“Dear Sir,

“Formerly it was not unusual for the Governor of the Fleet to allow persons under his charge to be out occasionally, on parole, at given times. If such continues to be the custom at the present day—what is there to prevent Mr. Brown extending to you such indulgence on the Sunday, to permit your attending, your Wife, and Daughter to their Church, on Sundays, at Knightsbridge, on the next and every succeeding Sabbath, that it may be your lot to be kept so unfeelingly incarcerated where you now are? On Mr. Brown's obtaining sufficient security for you not abusing the trust which it is proposed to have extended to you? Take the trouble of informing me to what amount such security would be required, to enable you to gratify your wishes in the way proposed. As, should it come within my means, (without compromising the interests of a large family too much,) it would give me great pleasure to unshackle an honest man from the trammels of the Creditor, to whom you address your letters from the Fleet. Yet, hoping the Almighty may avert from him, and those who think and act with him, those miseries which they are so remorselessly and unfeelingly inflicting on that poor, whom they dare to apostrophize as 'Brother Christians,'—but whom they are, contrary to the Divine Commands, separating from their wives and children, by incarcerating them, for their poverty, in Prisons, of which a triple-headed Cerberus keeps the keys. That the trumpet-tongued voice of the public may soon demand of our Legislators, (in a language not to be misunderstood) a repeal of that unchristian, oppressive, and unjust act, is most ardently prayed for by your well-wishing new acquaintance—who, hoping to hear from you soon—is,

“Dear Sir, with esteem, yours

“———.”

On the receipt of that letter, I waited upon the Warden, and learnt from him—that there was no possibility of "hailing" in my case. My obligation to

my new and very kind friend was none the less. I felt grateful, and I told him so. I thanked God for giving me such favour in his eyes; and I prayed, that he might never know the want of any thing that is good. I then thought upon you and Mrs. Thornhill, in the large, comfortable pew, together, at Riddlesworth Church,—and then of my Wife and Daughter, in their pew, at Knightsbridge Church—and of myself in a Prison pew. I thought all these things over, Sir, and blessed the Hon. Col. ———.

After all, Mr. Thornhill, I could not avoid the question—How is it, that, in a Christian country, money should have the power to deprive me of the liberty of worshipping God, at my own altar, with the wife of my youth, and the child of my choice? I thought a good deal about *that*, Sir.—(I have not room in this letter for those thoughts. At some future opportunity, you shall have them all),—and then, I magnified the power and love of God, who can, notwithstanding *your* unkindness, fulfil His promise, and be with His servants, to bless them, even at a Prison Altar! But, oh! how the *service* mocks the *punishment*.

I had intended, in this letter, to have told you of many tokens of friendship. I must reserve that pleasing duty to my next. When I look at my list of “offerings,” and then at your “rent-roll,” I am induced to believe that my reward is *safer* than your own; although, the jeers of your foolish friends, would induce you to believe, that ravens are about to lose their wings.

Kirkland's acrostic is too long for this letter; so I will give you some sweet lines, which my dear friend, the Rev. John Duff Schomberg, sent to Mrs. Oastler, when he heard that “my body” was likely to become your property. Read them, and think how soothing they must have been to her, who had witnessed my nineteen years anxious toil in your service, and was then *feeling* its reward. How sweet, Mr. Thornhill, to know and to feel, the difference between the service and the reward of God and man! Thus did Schomberg, who well knew where Mrs. Oastler would look for help and comfort, address his friend, whom you, under the advice of your enemies, had hoped to torture.

“ TO MRS. OASTLER.

“ Three princely gifts, the Eastern Sages bring
And humbly offer to the new-born King,
The ‘Gold,’ as tribute to their Sov’reign LORD:
The ‘Frankincense,’ to Christ the LIVING WORD.
The ‘Myrrh’—prophetic of his Earthly doom—
Balm of the Grave and Perfume of the Tomb!
By *thee*, let three pure gifts be also giv’n
Of costlier worth, and richly priz’d in Heav’n!
For ‘Myrrh,’ *thy tears*; for ‘Gold,’ a *heart sincere*
For ‘Frankincense,’ the meek ascending Prayer.
Such gifts as these shall choicest Blessing bring
From Him who ever lives, thy SAVIOUR and thy KING!

“SCHOMBERG.”

When Mrs. Oastler read those lines, she said:—“Oh! they are very sweet.”

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—Will my friends excuse me?—My *health* requires, and my *duty* demands, that I should have three days in the week, free from company. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, as the Aristocracy say—“I shall not be at home,”—in homely phrase,—I shall be so much engaged, that I cannot, even, receive the visits of friendship.—R. O.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. OANTLER'S "at home" on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

JOSHUA A. FAYSON, Bradford, with an Address on Thomas Thornhill, is received, and he is thanked.

ALEXANDER WOOD, London.—His issue is interesting; many thanks for it.

ABRAHAM WILDMAN, Kewlidge.—His issue scouted the "King's" issue!

CHARLES LAWYER, London.—"Peel's Curfew Bill" has, no doubt, put out his Tens of Thousands, and will, probably, have notice in due time. "The facts of the dispute between myself and Mr. Thornhill, and the why and the wherefore of my imprisonment," will follow in due course, as I pressed with the reviser. The latter part of his note is unintelligible.

All communications must be post-paid.

Anonymous writers may be saved much trouble, by being informed, that without reading them, their papers will be burned.

If it should so happen, that these Papers should be misused *pro- or con-* by any organ of public opinion, B. G. will be grateful to any friend, who will send him a copy thereof to the Fleet, London.

NOTICES OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

"THE FLEET PAPERS, No. 7, just arrived, the one last published, is written in a spirit of boldness energy such as the subject—the New Poor Law—unrequitedly demands. It is as if a live coal from the altar had scorched the lips of the author, and given a fire to the prophetic spirit. To us it appears impossible even for the 'Committeemen' themselves to show their eyes to the impending ruin that this law will inevitably entail upon our devoted country; and yet such is the power of Mammon, that, rather than forego the immense revenues, they will risk a civil war. Let all who doubt the fact read these papers, and they will readily give the reason of our valued friend's intervention—his opposition to that fearful enactment."—*Manchester and Halifax Advertiser*, Feb. 13, 1841.

"THE FLEET PAPERS, Nos. 5 and 6.—Mr. Oantler, the hunter of its some respects mistaken, advocate of the rights of the poor, still continues to improve upon former and more minute acquaintance. His feelings and opinions upon who has right views of constitutional policy and progress; and though he has not yet striped off what is near to us, some blindness on his character, we certainly can better understand, as we have known the man, some of his extravagance in the cause of right and justice."—*Birmingham Advertiser*, Feb. 11, 1841.

"THE FLEET PAPERS, No. 6.—London: John Patey.—Our readers are already aware that these interesting papers are addressed by Mr. Oantler, from the Fleet Prison, to his late Master, Thomas Thornhill, Esq. On the results of the New Poor Laws, he speaks boldly and sparingly; Whigs nor Tories. Assuming the advantages held out by the advocates of the measure, when it was first brought before Parliament, he says.—
—*The Glasgow Iris*, Feb. 9, 1841.

"THE FLEET PAPERS.—These interesting Papers, published by Mr. Oantler from the Fleet Prison, increase as they go on both in spirit and argument. They are cheap and early, and should be widely circulated. No. 12, which will be published on the 20th of March, will contain a portrait of Mr. Oantler in his Cell; on the poor man's friend in a shagreen."—*Oxford University, City, and County Herald*, Feb. 20, 1841.

"THE FLEET PAPERS, No. 8.—We have great pleasure in presenting our readers with an extract from these papers, as the intention of their author is one that ought to draw love and respect from every Christian soul. It is gratifying to us to know that what we have written concerning the "New Poor Law" has won the approval of Mr. Oantler. If we are not as eloquent, we are as sincere, as himself in our wish to annihilate this pestiferous net.

"No man values the good opinion of his friends more than myself; but if my country demands, even that sacrifice, I am prepared to make it."

"The sentences we have adopted above is taken from the 5th number of Mr. Richard Oantler's Papers, and we must say, that we approve, in the first, of the independent and patriotic feeling expressed therein. There is a man to be persecuted to the country, as well as the various qualities and prejudices of our political friends, some of whom may consider themselves satisfied with remarks upon the "New Poor Law," and every man, we think say, who has the benefit of his country at heart, will devote his energies to the support of good measures, calculated to operate beyond the present time, instead of pouncing in the weak fanaticism of those who cannot look beyond the next, and would leave the future to provide for itself."—*The Northampton Conservative*, Feb. 29, 1840.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage,"—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 9.

LONDON, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—I should, indeed, be ungrateful, were I longer to delay the acknowledgment of many sweet tokens of affectionate remembrance, which I have received since I last mentioned such matters to you. I am well aware, that gentlemen of your rank, are too often tempted to believe, that gratitude has long ago departed hence. Not so, Sir;—my imprisonment has furnished you with some proofs to the contrary, of which you are already cognizant. This letter will add many others. My retirement from the busy walk of liberty, affords full play to the force of gratitude, in those who believe that I have attempted to do them good, and who are persuaded that I am suffering wrongfully, at the hands of my mistaken patron, friend and master. Let me beg of you, Sir, to excuse me, if I again detain you in friendship's store-house—the Cell of your Prisoner. A *true friend* is the best earthly gift which Heaven has in store for fallen man! See how many God has given to me. Turn a deaf ear to those who would persuade you, "it will not last for ever,"—"there will soon be an end of their sympathy for Oastler;" remember, Sir, that God hath said, "a friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." The promise of God and the faithfulness of my friends, are, in my estimation, better "security" than "property," built upon oppression and injustice. God's care for me is great as my need—doubt Him, I cannot.

Many are the visitors who kindly favour me with their company here, from all ranks, and what is more singular, from all parties, I am thus daily honoured. Believe me, Sir, my residence in Prison, is likely to be the means of removing every prejudice from my mind:—so kind are all, that, as I once heard the late venerable, estimable and Reverend Rowland Hill, say, "I must try to love them all best."

Another of your poor neighbours has sent me a shilling, and a third, has forwarded me half-a-crown. How very strange, that the rural police should be required, "to protect life and property," from the ravages of men who are so benevolent! A large hamper of game, &c., was the offering of an old south country friend;—another, to which was added pigeons and bacon, soon after arrived

from a Reverend Divine in Rutlandshire, to whom I am personally unknown, but who admires my writings, and believes that my imprisonment is undeserved. Three of my own Huddersfield friends forwarded me two hams and a cheek, assuring me, "that, although my old master has 'caged' me, I am not to be put 'on a coarser sort of food,' just yet."—A very kind, poor, London friend, would make me accept of two fine large Portugal onions. An operative, (originally from Sheffield), now residing in town, called one day—presented me with a pen-knife, and was about, suddenly, to retire, saying, "I am quite satisfied, Sir; I have seen you, that is enough." I compelled him, however, to stay a while, and discovered, that he was one who had, although unknown, some years ago, presented me with an excellent pair of razors, in an elegant case. The other day, two kind strangers called—they were London operatives, Mr. Thornhill;—they forced me to accept a quire of paper and some sealing-wax. So, you see, Sir, my ammunition is like the widow's cruise. Such marks of kind and considerate attention, make me feel thankful to God, and to His messengers. In Prison, they encourage me to war against the oppressors of the poor. Poor thing, as I am! I have only thanks and prayers, and renewed exertions, to offer in return—and they all tell me, that such payment is better than gold. A short time since, I received the following kind letter from Huddersfield:—

"Dear Sir.—The sum of £1 12s. 6d. was collected at the Annual Festival (by request of Mrs. Joseph Smith) of the first Huddersfield Co-operative Trading Friendly Society, and by her and other females' request, is now transmitted, with their and our good wishes to you.

"I am, dear Sir, your humble servant,

ABRAHAM TURNER, Secretary.

Then, again, my Huddersfield friends have had a grand ball, and tea-drinking, &c., in the Philosophical Hall; 650 of them met together, to remember their captive "King," (I wish I could get a report of the speeches, arrangements, songs, &c., to insert on the cover of the "Fleet Papers," No. 12, the same number with which the Portrait will be given. I do hope that some who were present, will furnish me with the whole account,—with every interesting particular.) Well, Sir, these good liege "subjects" of mine, after enjoying themselves, as they tell me, "as they never did before," actually sent us £23 18s., being the proceeds of the "Oastler Festival." Really such tokens of love—although they fill one's pockets—drain one's eyes!—A young lady, who resides in Ireland, sent me 20s., which I returned, because I knew that she could not afford to give me so large a sum. I told her, I would accept sixpence, and no more. A Yorkshire friend, who called upon me, would leave me a sovereign; and yesterday, a Leeds artist, who visited me, an entire stranger, forced me to accept five shillings. A day or two ago, a Lancashire friend was here, and there was no parting on other terms—he forced me to accept a sovereign. Nay, Sir, a Manchester *Whig*, forgetting all party differences, has called, and given me a beautiful silk scarf; and, to gratify me the more, he was particular, (banishing all prejudice,) that it should be the right colour for your Prisoner—true-blue. Whilst I am writing, I have received a very kind letter from a venerable and aged Huddersfield Matron, whose affectionate, affable and endearing manners, have often

reminded me of my dear departed mother. This good Lady has sent me a pair of comfortable warm mittens, saying—"The trifles that accompany this, though somewhat late in season, may yet be comfortable to you, who write so much." They are "comfortable," Sir, I am now wearing them. My kind friend adds—"Be assured I am grieved at the persecution you so nobly sustain." Thicker and faster, Mr. Thorahill, while I am correcting the press, I have received a letter from a Baronet, who represents a Northern County, including three sovereigns, and assuring me—"I am much concerned, that one, who is so strenuous an advocate for the working classes, should be placed in a position, which is so much the reverse of what he deserves." I told you, in a preceding letter, I had heard, that a young man, who was formerly a Huddersfield factory-boy, had left twenty shillings for me, with a friend. I will now tell you somewhat more about it. Believe me, Mr. Thorahill, it was the poor, broken-down, worn-out, turned-off, kicked-out orphan factory cripple, Joseph Habergam! The first time I saw that poor lad, was in my drawing-room, at Fixby Hall. John Wood was there, that morning. Joseph had heard from some of his comrades, that I loved poor little Factory-slaves.—He was "done up"—served with crooked legs and spine, swelled knees and ankles, and a broken constitution, at fourteen years, as the reward, from the factory monster, for his industry! He had crawled on his hands and knees, and, in some hours, had managed to creep two miles! The poor slave, having heard of my exertions for the Factory Children, hoped that I could help him to "an iron frame," to put his deformed and crippled body in! This will only be understood in the factory districts, where it is common, (when the children are so weakened and distorted as not to be able to stand or walk), to make iron frames, like gibbets, to fix around their limbs and bodies, so as to enable the poor wretches to support themselves by that artificial aid. With the help of John Wood, I was enabled to procure an iron frame for Joseph; and afterwards, William Osburn, Jun., and Robert Hall, Esqrs., befriended him, got him into the Leeds Infirmary, educated him, and ——— but I am running on too fast—I am not about, in this letter, to write a memoir of poor Joseph.—I have told you of the first time that I saw him—the last time was in this Prison—in No. 12, Coffee Gallery;—I have not seen him in this Cell, but I have seen his kind master, Hall, and his benefactor, Osburn, here. When he entered, (very neatly dressed, he was; but still, Joseph was crooked, deformed and crippled,) he said, "Oh, Sir, I am sorry to see you here!"—"Do not grieve, Joseph. I am rejoiced to see you."—And then I asked him about his health, and about his poor mother, and his kind master and mistress;—all his answers were satisfactory, but his look was melancholy. Then—he seemed to be weeping,—and said, "Oh, Sir, I should have been in my grave, but for your kindness;—you have saved many others, as well as myself. I am sorry to see you here!" Bless the lad! I could have clasped him in my arms! Would not you have been moved, under such circumstances!—I saw that he was in some difficulty or embarrassment—he did not know how to perform the task which he had set himself. I said, "Joseph, was it you who gave Mr. ——— a sovereign for me?"—"I never intended you to know that, Sir.—I have brought you ten shillings, and ——— has sent you a nice home-baked loaf: she thought it would be a treat for you in Prison."—

Talk of rents, Mr. Thornhill, of dividends, or of winning bets!—Why, Sir, the receipt of thousands, in such ways, is abject poverty, compared with the real wealth which Joseph Habergam thus poured into the lap of his imprisoned benefactor! “Joseph,” said I, “I do not despise your offering—it is too large—your mother needs it. I will take sixpence from each of your donations.”—“I can well spare it all,” replied Joseph, with a smile that seemed reflected from some celestial being; “and you know, I owe you every thing;—but for you, I should now have been in my grave.” He saw that I was resolute, and then he said, “I will send it to my mother, Sir; and tell her that *you* have given it to her.”—Do you not admire the delicate sensibility of that youth, Sir? I do.—Joseph was a noble victim—too noble for the waste and cruelty of the fell Factory monster!—I never enjoyed any thing so much as that interview,—and afterwards, that loaf.—Oh, it was good!—But that expression—with the celestial countenance, and sweet, yielding, conquering tone—“I will send it to my mother, Sir; and tell her *that you have given it to her:*” was an angel’s treat!—a treat, worth coming many times to prison, to enjoy! He thus, with his own gift, re-purchased for me, the prayers and blessings of his widowed mother!

I wish I could convey to you, and to all who read this, the feelings of my enraptured mind at that moment! Its very memory is sweet! and will be, to my dying day!

How mysterious, Mr. Thornhill, that Joseph Habergam should feed Richard Oastler, in a London Prison! It is thus that God unravels the mysterious scheme of His Providence, to short-sighted man!—That little interesting tale about Joseph’s visit to his “King,” (for Joseph is really one of my “subjects,”) will be read with interest, by many rich and many poor, round about Huddersfield; and, methinks, Mr. Thornhill, that you must be gratified that you have been the instrument of imparting so much real pleasure to your old steward. If you had not imprisoned me, I could never have contrasted the gratitude of a factory child with that of an aristocrat. Oh! Sir, these Prison treats, are treats, indeed!

Factory children, Sir, *have* hearts and souls! I shall introduce Habergam to you, more particularly, some day. Another proof of friendship from his “order,” presses itself, at this moment, into my service. This very day, I received the following letter, by post. Before I copy it, allow me to tell my little “subject,” in future to write his name at foot. I had read this letter before I found that it was anonymous, otherwise, I should have burnt it, without reading.

“Ashton-under-line, Feb. 15, 1841.

“To my dear Friend and King, Mr. Oastler, of the Fleet Prison London.

“Sir,—You must excuse me for being so bold as to trouble you with my love and respects, which I bear towards you. But, when I think on your visits to my native town, and the very able manner in which you advocated our cause, as Factory Prisoners; and denounced the cruelty of the Factory monster, I shall ever feel it my duty to love you, as well as to pray for you. I really, Sir, am proud to hear of you, when I cannot see you; and your little publication gives me great delight, comfort, and satisfaction, when, every Saturday night, after a very long week’s work, I can sit me down, and read it with pleasure—at the same time, that pleasure is mixed with pain. May God ever bless you and yours, and make you holy as He is holy. And I shall, as one of your little subjects keep praying for you, and giving to your little book all the support I can possibly give. I am looking forward this week with joy, expecting on Saturday, another sweet treat from your friend the Scottish bard. May God direct his pen, and soften the heart of the uncharit-

able, and bring over Mr. Thornhill, so as the prison bars of the Fleet, may shortly fly open, that our venerable Oastler may be restored to us, and to the bosom of his family. Having, my dear Sir, to rise early and work late through that monster Judas O'Connell, I must conclude by sending you a shilling for a little tobacco, and a few lines for your dear daughter;—and subscribe myself,

Dear Sir,

“ONE OF YOUR LITTLE PIECERS, 14 YEARS OF AGE.”

Do you know, Mr. Thornhill, that there is something in that Factory Child's touching and eloquent epistle, which rewards me for all the inconvenience of incarceration? It satisfies me, that those for whom I have so long been toiling, are worthy of the labour which I have bestowed for them. Bless them;—they *have* hearts! And it is infamous that they should any longer be the victims of a slavery—so cruel—so torturing—so killing! Sir, *it is* infamous!

The *prayers* of that Factory child are more valued by me, than all that rank or wealth could give, they will, in God's good time, break the rod, and dissolve the power of their tormenting oppressors. The poor little slave, naturally wishes for the release of his benefactor; but he will be satisfied and rejoiced, when he knows, that I believe, I am, in prison, more powerful against the oppressors of infancy, than I was when at liberty. These papers are creeping into the very highest and most influential circles—circles in which I was before, only known, to be hated. They are fast breaking down the walls of prejudice; and, in them, the cause of that dear child and his comrades, shall be pleaded, until their cowardly, covetous, and tyrannical oppressors, shall be forced to yield to reason, humanity, and religion, and place the Factory workers in the station and attitude of rational beings.

I told you, Mr. Thornhill, that the little ones were reading the “Fleet Papers.” You see, also, that they have been reading the Holy book, and have learnt to pray—to pray for me! *Therein is my strength*. How often have I been elevated and refreshed, (when I had before been almost ready to despond) at the thought, (as I have travelled homeward to Fixby Hall, on many a dark and dreary night,) the thought, that every cottage light, which sparkled and illumined the scene, on the hills or in the dales, was a token, that from that spot was ascending a prayer to Heaven for me—often have those glittering gems served as brilliants to my soul, when her joys have been obstructed by the malice of my foes. It is, even so, Sir; they still pray for me, and being so, I am calm, confident, and happy. What a hit that child gives O'CONNELL! he reminds me of little David, the smooth stone, and the great big Goliath! *He* knows who it was, that sealed *his* doom—“*that monster Judas, O'Connell!*” who had been the sworn friend of the Factory Children,—and who afterwards joined hands with their rich oppressors!

How kind it was of the little Factory Slave to send the Prisoner of the Aristocrat—“a shilling for a little tobacco,” and “verses for his dear daughter!” I must find out who that child is, that I may register his name amongst my friends.

The train of thought, which I have pursued in this letter, has completely turned my mind to the contemplation of the Factory question. My duty to my little “subjects” requires a few more remarks at this particular period;—I will, therefore, omit your acrostic and other matters, in this letter, and devote all its pages to Factory subjects. It is very opportune, that it should be so—because,

just now, the Select Committee of the House of Commons, on the operation of Althorpe's Factory Act, is sitting; and, although I may not discuss their proceedings, I may write something which will be useful to them. There is, I believe, no law to bar me from that.

You are aware, Sir, that the present Factories' Regulation Act, was passed by the Government, in 1833, in opposition to the TEN HOURS' Bill of Lord Ashley. Lord Ashley had no hand whatever in the passing of that bill. His Lordship had solemnly and publicly pledged himself to the TEN HOURS principle, at a meeting, held in the City of London Tavern, the 23rd of February, 1833. Sir Peter Laurie, on that occasion, (Lord Mayor of this City,) was the Chairman.—Lord Ashley then said:—

"Before he sat down, he begged to assure them, that he should not give way a single moment on the question of TEN HOURS. He assured the meeting, that he should persevere in the course he had commenced. *He had taken up the question as a matter of conscience, and as such he was determined to carry it through.* If the House would not adopt the bill, they must drive him from it (the Ten Hours Bill), *as he would not concede a single step.* He most positively declared, that as long as he had a seat in that house, and God gave him health and a sound mind, no efforts, no exertions should be wanting on his part to establish the success of the measure. *If defeated in the present session, he would bring it forward in the next, and so on in every succeeding session till his success was complete.*"

It was at that very meeting, Sir, where "the monster Judas O'Connell" said:—

"Good God! that such a system should exist in a Christian country—that poor infants should be condemned to the deprivation of sleep, the inhalation of poison, and the endurance of the extremes of human anguish, to obtain a miserable pittance to save themselves and their parents, perhaps, from starvation! *The question was a question of blood, and those who should stand by, and acquiesce in the continuance of such a system after the facts which had been stated, would be guilty of murder.* Every manufactory was open to be viewed, and was proved, by concurrent testimony, to be a hive of swarming misery. The miserable creatures themselves, too, were brought before the Committee; and their sunken eyes, hectic cheeks, emaciated limbs, on which was stamped the decrepitude of premature old age, spoke for them, and gave a fearful corroboration to their testimony. He trusted that he should not be mistaken in supporting this cause—the cause of those who had no protector, no voice but the voice of humanity; and that it should have the support of all his energies, humble as they were, he pledged himself. It was said, that the number of hours it was proposed to reduce the labour of these children, was too small; but he was surprised that human nature could bear, under such circumstances, to work even that number of hours. He, for himself, considered that TEN HOURS were too many; but as medical men and men of experience had decided, that labour during that period could be borne, he should go along with them to that extent, but he would not consent to the addition of one half-hour—nay, one minute, beyond the time so decided to be capable of being endured."

It is true, that O'Connell, afterwards, voted against these, his solemn protestations—nay, he even gave the *casting* vote against himself! He also received *One Thousand Pounds* from the Manchester millowners and their friends.

The late Michael Thomas Sadler had previously opened the Factory Question in Parliament, but the Reform Bill had deprived the Factory Children of their unrivalled champion, it was hoped, by a metropolitan meeting, to give the question so much weight, as to atone for the loss of Sadler's talents and exertions in Parliament; and thus "to give a fair start" to Ashley.

Those solemn declarations of Lord Ashley, were made in presence of Sadler; that fact stamps them with double weight. Myself, and others, were imme-

diately dispatched to public meetings in Yorkshire and Lancashire, to inspire the hopes, and restore the confidence of the Factory slaves, who were downcast at the loss of the parliamentary services of their champion—Sadler. The solemn declarations of Lord Ashley, at the London meeting, were quoted and requoted by us—until, at length, the hopes and confidence of the 'Ten Hours' Bill men, were entirely centred in his Lordship.

When the bill was in committee, and Lord Ashley was defeated by the Government, on the TEN HOURS' clause, he entirely withdrew from the discussions, and left Lord Althorpe, to pass his own measure.

The Government Bill was *avowedly* passed for the purpose of delusion, (my authority for this statement is one of their own Commissioners, Mr. Stuart,) it was not intended to be enforced; but it was hoped, that it would allay the popular clamour, and that "afterwards it might be repealed bit-by-bit."

Lord Ashley, however, wished his friends, although they were sorely disappointed at his defeat, to aid in the enforcement of the rival measure. We did so. The consequence was, that the Government were obliged to abide by their own act; and they were defeated, (even with the purchased aid of "the monster Judas O'Connell,") when they attempted to repeal a most important clause of their own measure, the very clause of which they and their admirers had made the loudest boast. At the price of a thousand pounds, a majority of two was obtained for Government; of which they afterwards, being ashamed, declared, that "they could not avail themselves."

The Government agreed, last session, to a Committee (now sitting) to inquire into the operation of their own law. From the evidence which has already been published, it is proved, upon the testimony of the Government inspectors and their agents, as well as upon the concurrent evidence of millowners and millworkers, that the working of the act has been unsatisfactory to all parties. It has had a fair trial, and it has been found wanting.

Now, Sir, it is impossible that Lord Ashley could have given the measure of his opponents a fairer chance, than he has done; for, even in the face of his solemn avowal before the London meeting, he deemed himself bound by honour to wait, and try if the Government measure would succeed. So determined was his Lordship to give his opponents' scheme fair play, that, when he was urged by the 'Ten Hours' Bill-men, to redeem his pledge, he answered:—"I cannot interfere, until Lord Althorpe's Act has had a fair trial." Nay, even when his Lordship joined Sir Robert Peel's ministry, in 1834, and when many enthusiastic friends expected that he would avail himself of his official situation, and introduce his own 'Ten Hours' Bill as a Government measure, so strong, did he conceive the requirements of honour to be, that, *even then, he was silent*, waiting for the proof of the efficacy, or inefficacy of the existing law!

The time, however, has now arrived, when the same feeling of honour, which has so long restrained his Lordship, will impel him strenuously to exert himself for the fulfilment of his solemn pledge.

The interval has been well employed. The press has done its duty. It has boldly asserted the right of the Factory Children to protection,—it has exalted Ashley, their champion, in the estimation of all. The mind of the public is on

the side of justice. His Lordship has stored up a fund of knowledge and of facts, and will be able to meet his antagonists, inch to inch—if, indeed, they dare now to break lances with him. It is evident also, by the manner in which his Lordship's proposal for "an inquiry into the Infant labour of all our manufactories," was adopted by the Government, that his principles have taken deep root in the Cabinet—nay, from the fact, that his Lordship is almost the only Tory, who is to be found at dinner with the Queen, it is evident, that Her Majesty approves of his principles. The royal hostess must know—*why* her guest, Lord Ashley, is so great a favourite with her people.

Lord Ashley cannot now fail to be fully satisfied that he has waited till honour can wait no longer. He must now be persuaded, that the law of his opponents has had every chance which time, the power of Government, and the aid of his friends can give it; and that, after all, *it is a failure!* He will now, in the House of Commons, redeem his solemn pledge, and "take up the TEN HOURS' BILL as a matter of conscience, and, as such, be determined to carry it through." And, if foiled by the power of wealth, (which I know is, at this moment, subscribing its blood-stained* thousands, for the purpose of causing procrastination and delay), he will, "as long as he has a seat in the House of Commons, and God gives him health and a sound mind, take care that no efforts, no exertions will be wanting, on his part, to establish the success of the measure; and if defeated in the present session," he will keep his vow, and "bring it forward in the next, and so on in every succeeding session, till his success is complete." Never shall I forget the honest indignation of Lord Ashley at the perfidy of O'Connell, when the "monster Judas" betrayed the cause! No!—no!—Sir; the Factory children will not be "sold again."—Lord Ashley is not Daniel O'Connell! The legend of St. George and the Dragon, is forcibly illustrative of Ashley, O'Connell, and the Factory monster. The Factory monster is the Dragon, with a head of O'Connell and his long-tail—St. George, is Ashley—the spear, is Truth, with which Ashley will pierce the Monster!

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—I have been honoured by a call from a poor Factory Cripple, who is now striving against want, by selling tracts in London. He is "done-up;" he has attempted several modes of obtaining a living, and now, the workhouse gapes for him. I have been much interested in his narrative. I wish some plan could be devised to build and endow an asylum or hospital for Factory Cripples. More on this subject, and about William Dodd, the worn-out Factory slave, in my next.—R. O.

* A stronger proof of the insolence and impertinence of the Factory monster was never exhibited than now. He is sending his anti-corn law league to every election, to bribe the voters, and to "blackguard" the landed aristocracy; and he is, at the same moment, subscribing his thousands, to procrastinate the proceedings on the Factories' Regulation Act, in the House of Lords. Thus, is he making his money available to thwart and degrade the landlords, and then using his influence in their own house, for the purpose of making them his tools for upholding his tyranny. He first strains every effort, out of Parliament, to render the landlords odious in the eyes of the people, and then strives to seduce them to use their power in Parliament to continue his own tyranny, and thus to convince the people that the Lords are, what his paid minions represent them to be—the enemies of the working classes. His impudence is only equalled by his cruelty. But surely the Lords will be too wise to be caught in his trap.—R. O.

The FLEET PAPERS, Nos. 8 and 9.—Laming's Parrot, Holywell-street, Strand.—Times are now at the most surprising junctures, we think, of the series; and the bold, sunny, healthy tone of those papers gives us ground. They are the offspring of a vigorous and an honest mind;—while the cautions, and opinions, and predictions, they contain, are those by which alone we firmly believe the happiness of the English people can be secured. That teaching which professedly privileges, and commends, and sanctifies, that "honest and good" altimative which is too prevalent among the thinking classes, arises from the error of ignorance, which they received first when they contrasted the notions of the old system with those which is called "liberal" philosophy. Happily would it be for the country, if the members of our universities had continued all contact with such systems as unaccommodated as it is represented by our rivals at least in their feelings;—and the change would of itself have led us to that if they had, in this respect, imitated the conduct of the enlightened and benevolent in the following century, who have uniformly opposed, not commended, the granting the liberality of our own, and the making the supplies of England equalled with a vigorous heart of mind. It appears to me to appear in the second reading of the bill, for commencing the present year that and to be intended as his beneficial measure.

Do you happen to know," says Mr. Gaskell, addressing his constituents, "the value which would be put, and amount the amount of forty pound, including, commencing the 1st of the month of York? Had you remitted there, as I have done, you would be getting some benefit, as youreward did, you would not fail to know that well. There is one man, who he has not as well as that, who, in the course of time, was then not invited to sit next and the very. While he is seated amongst the Yorkshire Tories, whose hand and leg, and will of course be. That man, then, whose a better does not live, when he is seated in London, the other was immediately sent by some persons this year. You cannot guess my feelings, when the House was to elect Drummond, M.P. for Yorkshire, that honoured me. Though in Yorkshire a full year is a day, that Drummond had not advanced at Gaskell, to sit with. What kind course should you not, when he was here? That somebody-day at York, when Drummond and W. Gaskell occupied the Yorkshire boundary of Constitutional Integrity.—When they proceeded, I went with them. That day, and some others were recalled to memory. Sir, I was not so proud as the country (and you know how proud I was that day,) as when Drummond sat beside me in the seat, he would be in a day.

The day to which the "Fleet Printer's Alliance" will long be memorable in the annals of Yorkshire. We had an unaccountably large in the representations which we now look back with very pleasant memories than those in which we were engaged—in the undivided reason of York, and were in our former history—the subject of the Democratical Western Democrat.—Edinburgh, Feb. 22, 1841.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

HOW TO GET A GOOD DRESSING!!

SHOULD it be better, with your hair, at Parthian's comb,

Shine for the 20, R. down the Church, Robinson (the Lion) throughout;

Take your hair, your dress, your shoes, your whiskers and your life;

Bring down all things, ere you **LEAVE YOUR DICKY COOK'S BILLS!!**

Refuse to take it, ere you say:—**HOW TO GET THE BEST?**

Others, in **PROV. and SOV.**, with **DICKY and SOV.**

It should be said, in **PROV. and SOV.**, the answer is in the day:—

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40, EDWARD STREET,



BEST DRESS FOR
CLERKS.

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NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS,

My OFFICE is "at home" on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

All communications must be post-paid.

Anonymous writers may be saved much trouble, by being informed, that without reading them, their papers will be burned.

If it should so happen, that these Papers should be noticed *any*, of you, by any organ of public opinion, R.O. will be grateful to any friend, who will send him a copy thereof, to the Fleet, London.

NOTICES OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

"THE FLEET PAPERS, No. 7.—The present number is wholly occupied with a condemnation of the New Poor Law and its heartless exponents. After some sentences of powerful commendation to the old king's popular title, he contrasts the derelictions of the sacred scriptures with the works of the Methodist philosophers. He then comes to his remonstrance, and reproduces a letter which he wrote to Mr. Thompson in 1832, and some parts from the late lamented leader. We omitted to state that, in a former number, he explained that the title of 'King' was given to him against his wishes, by his opponents; that he always made it a practice to adopt the name of those whom he opposed by some other; and that, as the 'King' was the man who borrowed upon him, he has stuck to it ever since, and means never to part with it. —*Liverpool Mail*, Feb. 16, 1841.

"THE FLEET PAPERS.—We have received No. 8 of the series, and are much gratified with its contents. It is the best number that has appeared. In our next we shall notice it more at length. —*The Northern Star*, Feb. 25, 1841.

"THE FLEET PAPERS, being Letters to Thomas Thompson, Esq., from Richard Oastler, the Prisoner in the Fleet.—Mr. Oastler is employing his leisure afforded by his incarceration in the Fleet, at the suit of Mr. Thackeray, to put forth a series of papers, embodying the opinions which he has so effectively maintained on various occasions. The number before us treats of the New Poor Law, his hatred and persecuting hostility to which are well-known. This is a paper on which many will do not agree with Mr. Oastler on other subjects will be disposed to go with him; and the earnest tone of his denunciations, together with the assertion he derives from Scripture and Religion for the arguments he adopts, are well calculated to effect the end he has in view. — To keep alive the strong feeling which prevails far and wide against this enactment. No man has done more to excite and maintain in the present time this feeling; and the reading as well as the most valuable feature in his writings, is intense sympathy with the sufferers and cause of the poor. All his aspirations seem to have for their object the amelioration of their condition, and the discharge and punishment of those by whom they are oppressed—a noble purpose if I shall be allowed. Mr. Oastler avows he is a Tory; he may be so, but he is a very different kind of Tory to most of the animals who pass under that name—a fact of which he cannot but be fully conscious himself, supposing that he knows what Tories he opposed. —*Standard*, Feb. 25, 1841.

"THE FLEET PAPERS, No. 9.—The earlier part of this number is devoted to an acknowledgment of the grateful contributions of persons who have been served by Mr. Oastler in the course of his life, and of the testimony of appreciation shown on him in *articles*, by the delivery of his character and writings. Should the liberality of the public continue the 'old King' will soon be rich in the world's goods, as he is in matters, benevolence, and the blessings of the poor. In the remaining part of the number (which is also devoted to the help of writing the testimonies of the Public-spirited Committee on the question of TORY'S THINGS FOR THE Aged and Sick). A quotation is given from a speech of O'Connell at a meeting held at the City of London Tavern on the 21st of February, 1841, and is a glowing evidence of the immensity of the late's contributions, and afterwards gave the meeting into against his own noble philanthropy, and received one thousand pounds from the Manchester milliners, and their friends. —*Liverpool Mail*, Feb. 27, 1841.

To Mr. Richard Oastler.

WILK, Feb. 16, 1841.

My dear Sir,

You may possibly remember my calling upon you some weeks ago with the Rev. ———, when you gave me some of your works, with many expressions of your "Fleet Papers."

Now that I have returned home, I thought it right to make an acknowledgment of your ready and generous kindness, with which I seemed to converse as if I were at home, and delightful prospects of your work in many places in Yorkshire, and I was not doing a little in the same way in Wilk. I was delighted to witness your charity; and I trust that, in dependence on God, you will be enabled to make your enterprise see. We wish that our Government, our institutions, and underlying our privileges, I am confident you have sought your improvement, and doubt not but that it will tend to the furtherance of sound religious principles in Ghent, and Staff. You take good high vintage grounds—the word of truth,—and I defy man, or devil, to drive you from it. In my opinion the effects of our Conservatives are cowardly, and inefficient in the want of making the word of God their rule and guide in all occasions, and it is not exclusively appealing to the sacred oracles. A petition against the New Poor Law is being got up here.

I am, my dear Sir,

Your much obliged

E. S.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddleworth, in the County of Norfolk.

1844

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break
in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 10.

LONDON, SATURDAY, MARCH 6, 1844.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR, — There is something awfully affecting in the contemplation of a Factory Cripple! A Factory Cripple, the son of a strong, robust, athletic, free-born Englishman!—He is one of many thousands of my countrymen, who have been sacrificed to the Moloch of our day—the Factory Monster! I am about to introduce one to your especial notice. I cannot apologise for detaining you on this subject, at the present moment. It is needful that the Factory Question should now be rightly understood. It has been tampered with already, sadly, too long. The Factory Cripple who now stands before me, crooked, emaciated, and ruined, has done his best to provide for himself; he has been industrious, sober, and aspiring. Nature intended, (as is evident by his original formation,) that, now, he should have been a strong, hale, powerful man; that is demonstrated by his expanded breast and stretching shoulders. His sobriety, skill and industry, should, in twenty-five years, have secured his independence, but, he is in *object poverty*.

Factory labour, unattended by excessively protracted hours of work, (which have too often disgraced the Factory system,) has worn him down to a weak, infirm cripple even in Nature's prime—his years are thirty-seven. Nay, he was crippled by over labour in the very bud of life! The hours of labour in the mill where this cripple worked, were only from six o'clock in the morning to seven o'clock in the evening, with an hour and a half off, for meals, per day. This fact proves, that eleven and a half hours' factory labour per day, cannot be endured with impunity; it speaks volumes in favour of the limitation to TEN HOURS per day.

The reward which the Factory system has awarded to the sobriety, industry, skill and intelligence of this Factory labourer, is a miserably-deformed body, full of aches and pains, in consequence of his joints and bones, having, by unnatural labour, been removed from the statures and positions in which Nature had formed and placed them. He has been stunted in his growth seven inches and a half, as is evident, when you measure his height and his span; the former is barely five feet, the latter being five feet seven inches and a half. Nature always designs, that they should be equal. He is also destitute!

I wish you could hear from his own lips, as I have done, the description of his bodily and mental sufferings, caused entirely by having worked too long, when his bones were not yet fully formed:—if you could, you would know why I am so happy here. When I see and converse with Factory cripples, I rejoice, that, for so many years, I have endeavoured to prevent Nature being thus outraged;—and, although a Prison in a civilized, christian country, is my reward, I am very thankful that my exertions have been unremitting and untiring.

William Dodd, (that is the name of the cripple before me), has not been “a rebel, idle, profligate, worthless, listless, pampered, indolent, violent person;” he has laboured sedulously for his living, ever since he was five years old! His Factory labour has bent his legs, swelled his knees and ancles, ruined his strength, and left him a being *uncared* in this civilized country—one of the “worn-out,” or, in modern terms, a member of that tribe, impiously called, “surplus population.” He has done his best: he has helped to make others rich, but, he is “a cast-off,” “a hurden on society,”—a being for whom a workhouse, wherein liberty is denied him, and where poison is administered for food to hasten his dissolution, is the only reward which “liberal and enlightened Philosophy” has prepared for him! I speak in sober seriousness, Sir, when I say that the Commissioners’ dietary *is* *poison*;—facts, Mr. Thornhill, by hundreds, have proved it, and the blood of the murdered, now cries aloud for vengeance to Him who will not refuse to hear that cry. Yes, it is true, that the Factory Monster, after having thus used-up his victims, instead of devoting a small portion of his surplus wealth in providing asylums for his worn-out cripples, has induced the aristocracy of England, to adopt a horribly-revolting system of oppression and of death for his worked-up slaves! Upon this subject, Sir, I shall soon have very much to say. I am now anxious that you should hear what William Dodd advances. He has written me a letter, in which he describes his experience, his thoughts, his feelings, and his prospects. It is, to me, very interesting. If you knew, as well as I do, the exact position in which your “order” just now stands, with reference to the Factory Monster, you would make much of William Dodd’s letter. Mark his sympathy for me—his early commencement of labour—the kind terms in which he speaks of his master—his original strength—his low wages—the disgusting immoralities to which he was so early exposed—his being forced to hide himself from the gaze of others, because of his deformity—his anxiety to “better himself”—his diligent attention to the improvement of his mind—the disappointment of his hopes—his rubbing his joints, when he should have been resting—his wish “that God would take him to himself before morning”—his painful, cranky joints—his Sunday ramblings and melancholy musings, his exercising with crutch and stick, on Monday mornings, to prepare his joints for Factory labour—his inability to eat, and then, his melancholy forebodings—now that no prospect offers itself, as a reward for all his labours and sufferings, but death, or the dreaded, hated Union-Work-house! Next, when you have pondered well the history and the fate of that poor slave, think on the millions of wealth which have been accumulated in a few hands, by the killing Factory system;—then of the awfully disgusting fact, that the owners of that wealth, instead of providing asylums for all their cripples, have induced you, the aristocracy, to pass a “Poor Law

Amendment Bill," for the purpose of depriving them of liberty, and then, poisoning them in prison! Yes, Sir, I will never be afraid of using the proper term—the Commissioners' pauper diet *is*,—say what you may—*it is, prison*; and the parliamentary returns prove, that it is not very slow in its effects;—their work-houses are prisons, and they know it.

After thus destroying the strength of his slaves, the Factory Monster has contrived to destroy the popularity of the aristocracy by the New Poor Law, and by the same enactment, he has contrived to lay hands on your agricultural "surplus" (impious word) "surplus population," in order that he may make money by crippling them; and instead of maintaining them, afterwards, he will turn them adrift, at your expence, to the tender mercies of the Poor Law Commissioners! Having thus succeeded in alienating the aristocracy from the people, the same Factory Monster is using every effort to destroy every vestige of respect which the people of England might still entertain for "your order."—He is hiring men to visit all your agricultural towns and villages, in order to enrage the farmers and labourers against the landlords, by inventing the most diabolical anecdotes—by misstating facts, and romancing about the amount of wealth, which, he says, "your order" is plundering from the other classes! Sir, I have heard one of these emissaries of Tyranny, thus deluding the people; and I know, that at this very moment, the Factory Monster is raising a subscription to defeat Lord Ashley, and hopes to make the Lords his tools, in perpetuating his horrible tyranny. See, also, how busily he works to undermine and destroy your influence at elections. These matters, Sir, may, in your estimation, seem to be trifles—I know that they are big with important consequences to the aristocracy of England. Think on all these points, Mr. Thornhill, and, for the love you bear to your "order," read attentively the following letter, which I have received from William Dodd, the Factory Cripple:—

"23, Little Gray's Inn Lane, Gray's Inn Lane, London.

"To Mr. RICHARD OASTLER.

"Dear Sir.—It is with a degree of sorrow unfeigned, that I have heard of your incarceration in the Fleet Prison; and, although I have nothing but my gratitude to offer you, yet, the knowledge of your manly conduct, in behalf of a race of unhappy beings, who, like myself, have been rendered miserable by a cruel system of slavery, has induced me to send for your perusal a few incidents in my chequered life, in the hope that you may be amused thereby in your leisure hours.

"It is not my intention to trespass too much on your time, by entering into every minute particular of my unhappy lot; to you, who know so much of the Factory system, it will not be necessary; but, as my experience has been somewhat different to the generality of Factory cripples, (I have not been subject to the excessively long hours of labour, which many of my brethren in affliction have endured. My work was from six to seven daily, being allowed one hour and a half for meals; my masters were kind—but the system was cruel—and, in its most ameliorated form, it crippled me.) I flatter myself, nevertheless, that there are points in my history, that may afford matter for contemplation even to you.

"It will be necessary for me to inform you, that, out of a family of four children, I was the only boy; and that we were all, at different periods, as we could meet with employers, sent to the factories. My eldest sister was ten years old before our parents were compelled, through existing circumstances, to send her to the factories; consequently she was, in a measure, 'out of harm's way.' Her bones having become firmer, and stronger than ours, and capable of withstanding the hardships to which she was exposed—better than we could; but her services soon became more valuable in another line of industry.

"My second sister was sent to the Factory at the age of seven years, and, like myself, has been made a cripple! yet she is doomed to end her days in the factories, or the workhouse! I shall have to mention her again.

"My youngest sister was also sent early, but was obliged to be taken away, like many more, the work being too hard for her! although she afterwards stood a very hard service. I mention these things, to shew the necessity of children being of the proper age previous to being put to work in the Factories, as I am convinced, that if they are sent at the early age of five or six years, as they formerly have been, they must inevitably, in a great proportion, become cripples.

"And, as for myself, I was sent, at five years old, to make 'Cards,' and at six years of age I went into the Factory. At this time, I was a fine, strong, healthy, hardy boy, straight in every limb, and remarkably stout and active. It was predicted by many of our acquaintance, that I should be the very model of my father, who was the picture of robust health, and strength, and, in his time, had been the *don* of the village and had carried off the prize at almost every manly sport. Oh! sir, when I look back upon the time when I was in full possession of my physical power, and contrast it with what the Factories have reduced me to, it is almost too much for the powers of my mind to sustain.

"At my first starting in the works, I was paid with one shilling per week, and got gradually advanced from one to three shillings and sixpence per week. I mention this circumstance, because I know that there are mis-statements, of late, with respect to the wages of Factory children. In the district in which I was brought up, their pay would not average more than two and sixpence per week; and thus, for a sum of money varying from a farthing to a halfpenny per hour, a sum not more than half sufficient to find me in necessaries, I was compelled, under fear of the strap and the billy roller, (the smart of which I had often been made to feel—with the force of the latter I have been struck almost motionless on the Factory floor!) to keep in active employ, although frequently my hands were swollen, and the blood was dropping from my fingers' ends. I was also forced to listen to, and be witness of almost every species of immorality, debauchery, and wickedness; and, finally, to be deprived of the power of those faculties which nature had so bountifully supplied me with!

"When we see those little ragged children sweeping crossings in the streets of London, we are apt to pity them—and justly so; yet, from the observations I have made (and I have had the opportunity of making many), I would venture to assert, without fear of contradiction, that one of those children would receive more in a couple hours, than a child of the same age in the Factories would do in a day.

"From six to fourteen years of age, I went through a series of uninterrupted, unmitigated suffering, such as very rarely falls to the lot of mortals so early in life, except to those situated as I was! and I am satisfied, that so far from being weak and delicate, (as some of the Manufacturers have represented all who have had the misfortune to be made cripples,) I never could have withstood the hardships I endured, if I had not been strong, and of a good constitution.

"I was frequently stopped by people in the streets, who noticed me shuffling along (I cannot call it walking), and advised me to go home, and work no more in the Factories. But what could I do? I was not my own master! Thus passed year after year, and still my afflictions increased. I could not associate with anybody; on the contrary, I sought every opportunity to rest myself, and to shrink into any corner, to screen myself from the prying eye of the curious and scornful! During the day, I counted every clock, and calculated how many hours I had still to remain at work; my evenings were spent in preparing for the following day—in rubbing my knees, ankles, elbows, and wrists with oil, &c., and wrapping them in warm flannel! (for believe me, sir, everything was tried to benefit me, except the right one—that of taking me from the work;) after which, with a look at, rather than eating my supper, (the bad smells of the Factory having generally taken my appetite away,) I went to bed, to cry myself asleep, and pray that the Lord would take me to himself before morning.

"Even Sunday—that day of rest to the weary and oppressed—shone no Sabbath day for me; for, although I was no longer urged on and kept in motion by the fear of the overlooker's strap and the billy roller, yet the leisure thus afforded to think and reflect upon my situation, only made me the more miserable! If Sunday was bad, Monday morning was still worse—it was horrible! Even now, it makes me tremble, to think upon the sufferings of those mornings! My joints were then

like so many rusty hinges, that had laid by for years. I had to get up an hour earlier, and, with the broom under one arm as a crutch, and a stick in my hand, walk over the house till I had got my joints into working order! and then, this day of the week was generally the most painful of the seven.

"I frequently pressed my parent to get me something else to do, as I was anxious to leave the Factories, and to get some work more tolerable. I got two engagements. At one place, they kept me a week, and the other only about a quarter of an hour. This latter circumstance is still fresh in my memory. I was engaged to be an errand boy to an Ironmonger. This engagement was made without his seeing me; and, when he did see me, on account of my deformity, he expressed his fears I should not be able to do his work, but said I might try. On this morning, I had been drilling myself longer than usual on my crutch, and the hopes of getting from the Factories had made me tolerably active!" (Does not this recital affect you, Mr. Thornhill?) "So, I set to work, to take down the shop-shutters, as he directed me. There was one step up, from the street into the shop; and, having got one of the shutters down, and on to my shoulder, I was about to make this step—but it proved too much for me, and I fell beneath the load! My master, seeing this, told me, 'I was of no service to him,' gave me three-pence, and dismissed me!

"Judge, sir, what my feelings must have been at this time; after fancying myself on the point of leaving for ever a place, wherein I had suffered so much, and then to see all my hopes dashed to the ground, and I sent back to what appeared to me the most hateful place on earth—the Factory! This was the last experiment tried by my parent to save me from utter ruin.

"Soon after this circumstance, on going home to breakfast one morning, I was much surprised at seeing several of the neighbours and two doctors in our house. On inquiring the cause, I found that my second sister had nearly lost her hand in the machinery. She had been working all night, and fatigued and sleepy, had not been so watchful as she otherwise would have been; and consequently, her right hand became entangled in the machine which she was attending. Four iron teeth of a wheel, three-quarters of an inch broad, and one-quarter of an inch thick, had been forced through her hand, from the back part, among the leaders, &c; and the fifth iron tooth fell upon the thumb, and crushed it to atoms. It was thought, for some time, that she would lose her hand. But it was saved; and, as you may be sure, it is stiff and contracted, and is but a very feeble apology for a hand. This accident might have been prevented, if the wheels above referred to had been boxed off, which they might have been for a couple of shillings; and the very next week after this accident, a man had two fingers taken off his hand, by the very same wheels—and still they are not boxed off to this day!

"The Gentlemen she was working for at the time, had immense wealth, most of which, I have reason to believe, was got by the Factories; and I dare say you will suppose that they behaved very kindly to her while she was off work. Yes, they paid the doctor, and gave her, what?—ten shillings!—which was about three farthings per day! To this sum was added seven shillings more, subscribed by the workpeople! I need not tell you, that she has been a cripple ever since, and can do very little towards getting a living.

"On finding myself settled for life in the Factories, as it was then pretty evident I should not be able to do anything else, I began to think of getting a step higher in the works. It will be necessary to observe, that hitherto I had only been a piecer, or in the lowest situation; so I put myself forward as well as I was able, and master soon noticed me, and gave me a higher place, where the labour was not so very distressing, but the care and responsibility was greater. I now began to feel a little more comfortable—besides, I now had 3s. 6d. per week!

"On the subject of wages in the Factories, there is a variety of opinions, and some of those opinions are very erroneous; and when we take into consideration the "articles" that occasionally issue from the press on this subject, we need not wonder at it. For instance—in, I believe, the 318th number of Chamber's Edinburgh Journal, (a work in other respects of a very superior order,) there is an assertion respecting the wages of men employed in the manufacturing of cotton goods, which any one at all acquainted with the matter, must know to be utterly without foundation. It is there stated, that the average wages is 41s. per week; and I am sure, from my own observation, that nine out of every ten, would be glad, to get less than half of that sum. I have been set to take the average of the wages of men employed in the work, where I have had most of my experience, and I have sometimes taken the average to please my own fancy, and for three years (1833, 4,

and 5) the net wages of all the men employed in our works, was a fraction below 15s. This, be it observed, was the woollen manufacture; but our men had as comfortable homes, and appeared as decently clothed, and fed as well, as any that I ever saw in the cotton manufacture;* and I have several relations that have worked all their time in the cotton line, but they could never make the money stated by Chambers. Again, in the same work, the Editors assert, that a Dundee lass will earn 9s. per week.† Now, I find, on taking the average of about 100 women, and making every allowance for materials found, &c., that 4s. 6d. per week is about the mark. What would those Editors (who boast of a circulation of 70,000 copies weekly, and thus possess a great power of doing mischief) say, if they were told, that 9s. a week was the average wages of a man and his wife for a number of years after marriage, as it had been for both, for years before marriage? Yet such is the fact. They are both of them my near relations, and therefore I know it to be so. And for this they had to work full time, like the rest, and had been brought up in the Factories. Such then, sir, is the life led in the Factories; and which the Editor above alluded to, has represented as agreeable and pleasant in the highest degree!!

“ If the Editor of that journal could only exchange situations for one single day with me—and if it were possible for him to feel and experience what I am compelled daily and hourly to feel—then I am quite sure he would instantly resolve and set to work, to buy up and commit to the flames every line he had written in favour of a system, which is alike at variance with every feeling of humanity and justice.

“ When about fifteen years of age, a circumstance occurred to me which does not often fall to the lot of Factory children, and which had a great influence on my future life. I happened one day to find an old board laying useless in a corner of the Factory. On this board, with a piece of chalk, I was scrawling out, as well as I was able, the initials of my name, instead of attending to my work, as I ought to have been doing. Having formed the letters W. D., I was laying down the board, and turning to my work, when, judge of my surprise, at perceiving one of my masters looking over my shoulder. Of course, I expected a scolding; but the half smile upon his countenance suddenly dispelled my fears. He kindly asked me several questions about my writing and reading, and, after gently chiding me for taking improper opportunities, he gave me two-pence to purchase paper, pens, and ink—which sum he continued weekly for several years. Always inspecting my humble endeavours, and suggesting any improvements which he thought necessary. He also (with the approbation of his brother, the other partner in the firm,) allowed me to leave work an hour earlier than the other workpeople, every evening for a whole winter, in order that I might improve myself; and thus an opportunity was afforded me, which, with a few presents of books, &c. from both masters were the means, under Providence, of laying the foundation of what I now consider a tolerable education.

“ This kindness on the part of my masters will never be erased from my memory. It is as fresh to me now, as if it had occurred but yesterday.

“ With this encouragement, and impelled by the activity of my own mind, and an irresistible thirst after knowledge, I set myself earnestly to the acquisition of such branches of education as I thought might better my condition in after-life; and, although I had still my work to attend, I soon had the happiness to find myself in possession of a tolerable share of Mathematics, Geography, History, and several branches of Natural and Experimental Philosophy.

“ So long as I was pursuing these studies, the thoughts of my unhappy condition were in some measure assuaged. But, in proportion as the truths of science were unfolded to my wondering sight, and the mists of ignorance chased from my mind, so, the horrors of my situation became daily more and more apparent, and made me, if possible, still more fretful and unhappy! It was evident to me, that I was intended for a nobler purpose than to be a Factory slave! and I longed for an opportunity to burst the trammels by which I was kept in bondage!

“ Being desirous of turning my newly-acquired learning to some account, I engaged with a Tailor, a neighbour of ours, to keep his books, draw out his bills, &c., in the evenings; by which means, I earned part of my clothing, and also got an insight into the trade, which was of service to me afterwards.

* Mr. Marshall, the great flax-spinner of Leeds, late M.P. for Yorkshire, states his average wages of 1,220 factory labourers, 520 of whom are above seventeen years of age, at only 6s. 11d. per week (= 18. 0).

† If any persons who feel interested in the matter will make inquiry at Dundee, they will find the real wages to be something less than two-thirds of what is here stated.—W.D.

"I had a very narrow escape from a horrible Factory death, when, about sixteen years of age, I was attending a machine for weaving wool. After finishing one sort, it is usual to clean all the loose wool from the sides and top of the machine, previous to beginning another sort. This I was doing in the usual way, so that a henson, and, as our boys have habits of carelessness in boys, I had not used that degree of care requisite in such places. The consequence was, that the cylinder of the machine caught hold of the henson, and, if I had not had the presence of mind to let go my hold, I must have been dragged in with it. The henson was torn in a thousand places—a great number of the iron teeth were broke out and scattered in all directions—and, by the care of a kind Providence, I came off with a few slight wounds, from these teeth having stuck into me in several places. Numerous instances of people having their arms torn off, in our district, by the 'teaser,' have occurred in my time; but, as they did not come immediately under my notice, I forbear to mention them more particularly.

"About this time, I became acquainted with a young man, who was very kind in lending me books, and explaining any difficulty I might be labouring under in my studies. I shall never forget his kindness—he was to me like a brother. And now that I began to derive pleasure from the perusal of books, (and, in fact, it was the only source of pleasure I had) I did not omit any opportunity of gratifying it, particularly on the Sabbath day. It was customary for me, in the summer months, to take a book, and a crust of bread in my pocket, on a Sunday morning, and go to a very retired and secluded wood, about two miles from the town of Keedle, in which I lived, and there I spent the day alone, on the banks of a rivulet that ran through the wood. I have sat for hours together absorbed in study, unperceived by mortal eye, with nothing to disturb me, but the numerous little songsters that kept up a continual concert, as if to make the place still more enchanting to my imagination. These were seasons of real pleasure to me; they were also attended with some advantages in other respects.

"I had for many years enjoyed but a delicate state of health, owing to constant confinement,—the work of the factory, &c.; but these Sunday excursions got me a better appetite for my victuals,—and I became more healthy and strong. I also derived considerable pleasure and improvement from the study of nature, in watching the habits of birds, bees, ants, butterflies, and, in short, any natural curiosity that came in my way; and when the evening began to close in around me, and compelled me to return to the habitations of men, I felt a reluctance to leave my quiet and solitary retreat."

I wish, Sir, that you could see the left hand writing of William Dodd. The Factory Monster has robbed the poor fellow of his right hand. I wish you could hear him converse, and see his crippled frame! I do wish to interest you in his case, for the sake of your own "order." Depend upon it, that the lords of the system which has crippled him, and who have persuaded "your order" to provide a prison and poison for such like, and also to transfer your labourers' children, to be crippled in their wills—will never rest until they have entirely alienated the affections of the people from "your order;" and then, Sir, you will become an easy prey to that fell Monster. Depend upon it, Mr. Thoruhill, I told you the truth some years ago, when I said, "the Factory Children and the Aristocracy are in the same boat." I did not then suppose that the Landlords would become the silly dupes and ready tools of the Factory Monster. William Dodd's letter shall be concluded in my next — then will follow, some remarks, which will, I hope, convince you and "your order," that the free-trading Malthusians must be repelled, or "your order" must sink. They are fast sowing enmity between you and the people; and hitherto "your order" has wickedly and foolishly, sided with them! That, Sir, is the great national mistake. I know not a more important subject. Perhaps, what I shall advance will produce conviction on the minds of the aristocracy. I pray God that it may.

I must not forget, that my little "Ashton Piecer" is anxious for "Kirkland's Aerostic." It has been lying by me since he wrote it, that day when I told you he had called upon me. Here it is; — I hope that it will not offend you.

" *Tantæ ne Iræ Cœlestibus Animis.* (1)

- " *T ruth*, with *Time's* sickle whet the swan-white pen (2)
O f him, the fate would note of mighty men!
- " *T ame* is *his* spirit, who can lend an ear,
H alf-willing to the Calumnies of fear;
O dious, the *Dupe*, in his *Deceiver's* night,
M oves an Automaton of heartless blight;
A trocious malice whisp'ring, mutters low:—
S hould Mind be stung, stag-like, by *skin-deep flies?* (3)
- " *T hus* Potiphar, misled by feigned tears, (4)
H ad Joseph 'prison'd for a term of years.
O bserve again—if solely *self-deceiv'd*,
R ound Haman's neck, the boon his spleen receiv'd!—(5)
N urther'd in *Truth*, your *Victim's* earliest age;—
H umanity re-opes for him a *Martyr's* page!—
I ll-nature dwells not with the *Great*—the *Free*:—
L oud-tongued, the *Charities* attest, how he
L aments what breach is made 'twixt *Him* and *Thee!*
- " *E ach* *passion's* shade, deep lodg'd within *Man's* breast,
S like a *Cormorant* upon her nest;
Q uiet and demure, her lurching hatches weight,
U ntil she snaps her heart-core's self-laid bait:— (6)
I njurious madness! thrice *self-worried*, he
R evengeful strikes without just *Brutus'* plea:— (7)
E nlarge your *Pris'ner*—if *Yourself* you'd free!
- " *O n* this *Grand Principle*—*Napoleon's* prop—
F irst, he *imprison'd*—then, *enlarg'd* the *Pope!*
- " *R e*cordng *Angels* hold these truths in view,
I n humble verse I would transmit to you;
D escending from their *Iris* star-stepp'd way—
D are not—(thou'rt *Man!*—) their *Mission* to gainsay;
L ean not to flatter'y;—turn to thy right side,
E re thy good *Genius* spurn thee, or deride;
S lave to no *Faction*, God-like then thou'lt stand,
W ithin begirt—a *Magnate* of the land!—
O racular *my* spirit groans:—it would
R estore thy spirit to his *Master-mood*;—
T hrice independent stands thy *Father's* name—
H ow!—would'st thou shake the blossoms of his *Fame?*
- " *I n* joy how breaks the grateful soul of him,
N octurnal wak'd from a foul *night-mare* dream!
- " *T heme* of ten thousand tongues!—*Time* cannot blot
H is name—(make't *thine*—) writ on *Fame's* polyglot—
 ' *E re* *Evening* fell, his *Rancour* was forgot!
- " *C æsar* and *Chesterfield?*—lo! in like strife, (8)
O ne soil'd his brilliant *fame*—one lost his *life!*—
U lyses ty'd not bleeding *Hector's* feet; (9)
N or, could *Your Majesty* of soul lock in the *Fleet*,
T his mental *Hector*, in a *cause* more pure,—
Y our *protège*—decreed to shield the *Poor!*
- " *O ft*, those who in *Pride's* *minion'd* bulwark stand,
F ind plumb and basement gravel'd in the sand.
- " *N e'er* hence let *Man*—worm, spright—fiend, angel, try
*O r*dain'd decrees of *Nature* to defy:—
R egard to these, whatever be his state
F orms that one paragon—the *truly Great!*
O astler forbids a *Minstrel's* plaintive strains:—
 ' *L et's* cheer our *Poor'*—he cries—for *Them* he *reigns!*—
K ings best can break each other's captive chains.
- " *A s*, for their hive, bees toil for nectar'd food,
M an unto *Man* should labour to do good;
E ndear that *wilness*—comes without our call,
N am'd *Conscience*—*ARBITER* *ETERNETWIXT* *ALL!* (10)

" The Fleet Prison."

" KIRKLAND."

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P. S.—A very strange visitor has called to-day; one, who for many years I have wished to know. How odd—that this Cell should become the portal, to the fulfilment of my hopes.—R. O.

(1) Can, in celestial minds, such rancours dwell?—(2) "Time's sickle," To stand the test of Time or History—(3) "Stag-like," &c. The Breeze or Gad fly hatches, to their great annoyance, in the Rein-deer's skin.—(4) "Potiphar" was not convinced until after the tragical death of his wife, of her perfidiousness and perjury. (5) "Haman" was hanged in the noose, and on the very gibbet his malice had contrived for Montecut.—(6) The *Cormorant* is said to devour its own heart.—(7) "Brutus" overthrew the tyrannical family of the Tarquinia.—(8) "Cæsar" and *Chesterfield*. The stream of *Lord Chesterfield's* fame flows ever gloriously as the water of *Doon*, nigh its rise, over the ridgy marshes of *Dalmeilaton*, since the execution of the *Rev. Dr. Dodd*, whom one stroke of his *Lordship's* pen might have saved. *Cæsar* afforded a pretext to the *Conspirators*, who stabbed him in the *Forum*; while one stroke of *Hector's* sword dragged the bleeding corpse of *Hector* round the walls of *Troy*. *Ulysses* was a wise man, and therefore above such fensivity.—(9) "Ulysses," &c. *Archilles* was the redoubtable hero who dragged the language of *Shakespeare*, is the "chief nourisher in life's feast"—if evil, sleeping or awake, haunts its possessor as an unannounced ghost.

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THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY JOHN PAVEY,

NO. 47, HOLYWELL-STREET, STRAND.

THESE Papers are principally intended for the perusal of the friends of Christianity, and the Constitution; particularly the Clergy and the Aristocracy, and of all persons who are possessed of Property. The object of the writer will be to explain the reason for the present alarming state of English society, and the consequent insecurity of life and property; also, to offer some remarks upon the folly and wickedness of attempting to uphold our institutions, particularly that of Private Property, by the unconstitutional means of Centralization, Commissioning, Espionage, and Force; finally, to state his own views on the best mode of restoring Peace, Contentment, Security, and Prosperity, to every rank of the people of England.

The author is perfectly aware of the fact, that every Parliamentary leader is now only attempting to legislate for the present moment—putting off the evil day—making laws “from hand to mouth,” in the hope that some unforeseen, fortunate event may enable succeeding Statesmen to legislate for permanency. He is also convinced that there is a mode of successfully re-establishing our institutions upon their original foundation—Christianity;—and that that is the only way to preserve them from the encroachments of political partisans, who are now only paving the way to universal Ruin, Anarchy, and Despotism.

PORTRAIT of Mr. THORNHILL'S PRISONER,
IN HIS CELL, FLEET PRISON,

Will be Added to Number 12.

OF

THE FLEET PAPERS,

To be Published March 20, 1841,

PRICE 2d.

Portrait of Mr. THORNHILL, VIEW of FIXBY HALL, and of the FLEET PRISON, will follow in the course of the year.

In consequence of the increased circulation of the Fleet Papers, Mr. Oastler is happy to inform his friends, that no extra charge will be made for the Portrait.

A second edition of the back numbers of the Fleet Papers, is now in the course of printing; persons wishing to have them, will please to give their orders immediately. The number printed, will be regulated by the orders received.

The Fleet Prison, Feb. 8, 1841.

NOTICES OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

"The FLEET PAPERS, No. 9, by Richard Oastler, London: Pavey, Holywell-street, Strand.—This number of the 'Fleet Papers' is almost entirely occupied with instances of attentive kindnesses received by Mr. Oastler, in his confinement,—a confinement which, we repeat, confers no honour upon his former employer: and from which, if Mr. Thornhill consulted his own honour, his own character, and, we should think, his own happiness, he would speedily release him. . . . The conclusion of the number is occupied with observations on the factory bill; and the following note, which we find at the close of the letter, is well worth the consideration of the landlords of the United Kingdom." * * * *Hull Packet*, March 5, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS.—A portrait of Mr. Oastler 'in his cell in the Fleet Prison' is promised as a gratuitous accompaniment to No. 12 of the 'Fleet Papers.' The portrait, we understand is a good one, and we hope the public will avail themselves of this opportunity of possessing themselves at so cheap a rate of a portrait of 'the good old King.'—*Halifax Guardian*, March 6, 1841.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

All communications must be post-paid.

Anonymous writers may be saved much trouble, by being informed, that without reading them, their papers will be burned.

If it should so happen, that these Papers should be noticed *pro.* or *con.* by any organ of public opinion, R. O. will be grateful to any friend, who will send him a copy thereof, to the Fleet, London.

In consequence of many complaints that the blue cover interfered with the distinctness of the type, and annoyed the readers, a change is made this week, which it is hoped will be satisfactory to those friends who have been thus inconvenienced.

An ADDRESS, written by W. Hulke, Huddersfield, and recited by Mr. L. Pitkethly, at a Ball given for the assistance of Richard Oastler, a prisoner in the Fleet, on Wednesday, Feb. 3rd, 1841, at the White Hart Inn, Huddersfield.

"The Sun has spots upon his Disc, we know,

At least, Astronomers informs us so;

But what those spots are, these Star-gazing fellows

Have never condescended yet to tell us,

E'en to discover them, these sapient asses

Must have resource to magnifying glasses.

What need see care in this our temperate zone,

Whether bright Phœbus has such spots or none.

To us his beams are warm, his splendour bright,

His spots invisible to naked sight.

How dark these keen philosophers may find 'em,

'The wisest plan for us, is, not to mind 'em.

"Within the limits of our hemisphere

A Brilliant Sun was destin'd to appear

In one bright splendour threw abroad his rays,

Filling our hearts with pleasure and amaze,

While we beheld his glorious blaze illumine,

And bared to sight the horrid Bastile's gloom

To feel his genial warmth, each heart made glad,

Tho' some philosophers declar'd him 'mad,'

Deem'd his bright beams 'Incendiary' fires—

Call'd 'Rogue' and 'Villain' by the 'Northern Liars,'

Who found where'er his radiance was disclos'd,

Their foul hypocrisy stood full expos'd;

Unfit to bear the brilliance of his light,

Dazzled they cower'd in the shades of night,

(Like Moles, who shun of light each glorious spark,

But do their dirty work within the dark),

From each dark lair their venom'd slander cast,

And what they hated, foully tried to blast;

But vain the efforts of those puny elves,

Their shafts recoiling turn'd upon themselves,

While our bright luminary shines boldly forth

In all his native majesty of worth,

To right the injur'd and repress each wrong,

Employ'd his energies of mind and tongue

In Virtues' cause, essay'd his skill and might,

Convinc'd that cause was holy, just, and right.

"But some philosophers with liberal eye,

Some faults unseen pretended to desery,

And with their usual hut falacious tact,

First fram'd their falsehoods, then pronounc'd them fact.

Their filmy cobwebs threw athwart our Sun,

And fondly deem'd his brilliant course was run.

—'T was hut eclips'd—surpriz'd they view his rays,

Shoot boldly forth with undiminish'd blaze,

Nor can their envious cobweb clouds, combin'd,

Obscure the brilliant radiance of his mind,

Nor check that Pen which from his earliest youth

Has been devoted to the cause of Truth.

"'T were needless here, his noble acts to scan;

All know those actions, for all know THE MAN.

Some spots or failings he may have, no doubt;

Yet, where's the man, who ever lived, without?

But e'en those failings he may boast with pride,

Have still been found, to 'lean to Virtue's side.'

"Let us to-night our aid united lend

To yield assistance to 'the poor man's friend.'

Supremely blest if by that aid we gain

One balm for sorrow, one relief from pain.

Befriend him now, who still has been your friend,

And ever will till life itself shall end;

And when it ends, enroll'd in deathless fame

Shall live for ever OASTLER'S honour'd name."

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage,"—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that labourerth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

Vol. I.—No. 11.

LONDON, SATURDAY, MARCH 13, 1841.

PRICE 2*d.*

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—“Look there, Captain, examine that poor emaciated cripple,” said I, the other day, when William Dodd entered my Cell; (I was addressing a military officer who had honoured me by a call)—“handle that poor creature’s knees, leg-bones and ancles, and tell me, what sort of a figure would he cut in the army?” The Captain did as I bade him; and then, I directed him to examine the broad shoulders and expanded breast of the Factory victim, which betokened the intention of his Creator, to have been health and strength! The Captain had heard of these things, but the evidence thereof visibly affected him. Thus does England permit thousands of her sons and intended defenders, to be destroyed by the fell Factory Monster!

The ravages of war are awful, but his victims are men—his stroke is sudden; “the service” is associated with heroic incidents—it is rewarded with honour and, at the close, with Greenwich, Chelsea, or a pension, and with fame. Not so with the Factory Monster. He seizes on lisping infancy; he drags his victims into his noisome mills, and there, by wearisome, constant and excessive toil, he slowly wastes their health and strength, destroys their symmetry, and, if Death lingers in his approach, he casts them upon society, as useless and worse than worthless cumberers of the social system, to be kicked about in an ill-natured world, and finally to die by the way side, or to expire as slaves, or criminals in the Union Workhouses! He pockets all the proceeds of such cruelty, and, because his sordid votaries are rich, they aspire to associate with nobles!

How is it, Sir, that a nation of freemen should thus waste her best strength to enrich a few? How is it, that in “a wise and prudent calculating age,” man should be so improvident of his energies, and so wasteful of his resources? How can a Christian society be thus cruel and uncharitable? The answer is ready—it is Covetousness, which will assuredly bring down the wrath of God upon this nation. It is the greedy love of filthy lucre, which, when eagerly “panted after,” leads into temptation and a snare, and plunges men into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown them in perdition and misery!”

This thirst for the accumulation of wealth, when yielded unto, pierceth its

unhappy victims through with many sorrows; and will, if unrepented of, forsaken and unatoned, bite as a serpent! even a tormenting conscience, unceasing in its accusations;—"as a worm that dieth not, and as the fire which never can be quenched." Who is wise—let him duly consider these things, and remember, ere it be too late, the reward due to covetousness, in the error of Balaam, and that no covetous person, which is an idolator, can be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Covetousness is woeful in its results, and in this country it has destroyed the fire of patriotism, blinded the eyes and hardened the hearts of Englishmen, until the owners of mere wealth have become the arbiters of our fate, they have deluded "the ancients of the people," whom they have persuaded to legislate, as though the poor, were created to be mere instruments in the hands of the wealthy,—unthinking tools to be used-up in the creation of more wealth, and then to be cast off as useless utensils, without regard to their temporal or their eternal interests! The emissaries of the Factory Monster—the self-styled Philosophers, have persuaded our rulers, that their worn-out labourers are "idle vagabonds," undeserving of life and liberty, and, at the bidding of the "man-without-a-heart," a law has been passed, by "the ancients of the people," to deprive those poor Factory cripples of their right to relief, unless they will consent to the brand and condition of slavery!

We hear of the immense, the princely fortunes which have been acquired by the Factory masters; we know of the thousands and tens of thousands of human victims who have been sacrificed in their mills (the records of Parliament have furnished unerring testimony of the blood-guiltiness of that system). We have witnessed the holders of the wealth thus acquired, sitting, unblushing, amongst our legislators,—nay, even daring to dictate to every government; treading upon the heels of our nobility, and leading them blindfold in a crusade against the rights and liberties of the people, until the rich and the poor mutually distrust and hate each other, and, if the ministerial organ is to be believed, are "alienated and hostile, heart and soul!" Had the accumulators of the enormous wealth derived from the labours of the Factory children, established and endowed asylums for their cripples, one redeeming quality would have been traceable in the system. But, so sure is it, that "the love of money, which is the root of all evil," so stifles, and in the end destroys every feeling of humanity, that we find an universal abandonment of these poor, miserable creatures! Not one single instance can be traced of the most trivial attempt to provide shelter and provision for that race of victims, who have (even upon the showing of the Philosophers themselves) been the means of creating the wealth of the nation! I am not aware that we have a Factory Peer. I pray God that we never may. But, we have many Factory Magistrates—sadly, too much Factory intrigue and Factory influence; we have mills as large as towns were formerly, and Factory-mansions rivalling the palaces of royalty! We have manors and lordships, and townships and parishes, which have been purchased from our ancient nobility, with the sweat and blood of the Factory victims! We have Factory owners of millions in the Funds! But England has not yet seen the foundation laid of a single cottage, as an asylum for a Factory cripple! or, the appropriation of one acre of her soil, or, of one pound in her funds, for their support!! Thousands of these poor cripples, like William Dold, are now destitute,—waiting, unheeded, for Death's release.

How strange, that in these our days of "boasted liberality, enlightened philosophy and religious toleration,"—when knowledge is said to be increased, and the inventions of men are arrived at a pitch unknown to former generations,—when the profession of Christianity abounds, and the public sympathy is so feelingly alive to the miseries of the poor Blacks, and the degraded state and spiritual wants of Heathen nations—how strange, I say, it is, that we should outstrip other nations in gross acts of tyranny, cruelty and oppression, using our various improvements in machinery only to distress and to destroy, by hard and excessive toil, the infantile population of this country, and shutting-out, through the extension of its unrestricted power, the poor of this land from any opportunity, by their own labour and industry, of providing for themselves and their offspring; thus rendering those very inventions a curse and a woe, which ought to be, might be, and were intended to be, an universal blessing to mankind!

But God will ere long make manifest the folly and wickedness of such conduct, in the natural results of those operations. Man's unjust dealings must fall with pain on his own head, and the pit which he hath digged for the poor, he shall fall into himself; therefore, "Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fall; who falsify the balance by deceit! that ye may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes. Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth. Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought,—which say, 'Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength.' Ye that put far away the evil day; and cause the seat of violence to come near. Hear, I pray you, ye heads and ye princes of the people, that abhor judgment and pervert all equity. Is it not for you to know judgment, who hate the good and love the evil." "For they know not to do right, saith the Lord, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces; which oppress the poor, and crush the needy." "That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the stall. That chant to the sound of the viol and invent to themselves instruments of music. That drink wine in bowls, but are not grieved for the affliction of their brethren the poor. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God; an adversary there shall be even round about the land, and shall bring down thy strength from thee; and thy palaces shall be spoiled. Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but He will not hear them; He will even hide His face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in all their doings." "Verily, there is a God that judgeth in the earth; shall He not visit for these things, and will He not be avenged on such a nation as this?"

Do you ask me why I mention all these facts? Sir, they naturally force themselves upon my mind, when I see a Factory cripple; knowing, as I do, what years of anguish he has suffered, and that he is only one of many thousands whose wrongs are ever calling upon God for vengeance! I record them, in order that, if possible, I may arouse the spirit of piety and patriotism in "your order," and, by convincing them of the sordid character of the party which insults and degrades them, and which has succeeded in estranging them from the people, I may induce the aristocracy, at all hazards, to break from the net in which they have been entangled, and resolve, once more, to legislate for the real benefit and lasting happiness of themselves and the industrious classes. You know, Sir, that I have

often told you, that the enemies of the working classes, are also the foes of "your order." Every step which they take, proves that I am not mistaken.

With these observations, I conclude my present remarks, and now request you, seriously to peruse the conclusion of William Dodd's most interesting communication. His letter will afford a ground for many useful suggestions. It forms an excellent text for the observations which are needful at this eventful period. It cannot weary you, and so, I give it you entire. He thus proceeds,—

"On some occasions, when I have been returning from my retreat in the wood on a Sunday evening, I have stood upon an eminence at a distance, and watched the gaily attired inhabitants taking their evening walk in the fields and meadows around the town, and could not help contrasting their situation with mine. They were happy in themselves, anxious to see and be seen, and deriving pleasure from mutual friendship and intercourse: I, with the seeds of misery implanted in my nature, surrounded by circumstances calculated to make me truly unhappy,—shrinking from the face of men to a lonely wood, to brood over my sorrows in secret and in silence. They were enjoying the fruits of their industry, but the reward for mine was—misery, wretchedness, and disease.

"When I came to that period of life when men generally think of taking a partner, and settling in some way in the world, I was again beset by insurmountable obstacles. I saw my more fortunate fellow workmen getting married, and settling around me—I saw them comfortable and happy in their families, and I almost envied them their happiness; but no remedy was at hand—I could not think of making other people as unhappy as myself; and it is now almost the only comfort I have, that I have remained single—that I have not induced others to share a life of misery and wretchedness with me. On some occasions, when things have gone well with me for a short time, I have caught myself forming schemes of happiness, and endeavouring to persuade myself that it was still within my reach; but a little over-exertion, a few crosses, or extra pains, would dispel those pleasing illusions from my mind, and leave me, if possible, still more melancholy than before.

"Although I was not, at this time, constantly employed within the mills, but had to attend to the packing department in the warehouse, and any other place about the works where I might be required, yet still the effects of former years of Factory toil were on me—still my life was one of suffering, although not to so great a degree; and having it now in my power to procure comforts which before were unknown to me, I lived something more like a Christian than I had formerly been enabled to do.

"An easy clerk's situation being now vacant, I was advised by some friends to avail myself of the opportunity, and thus free myself totally from the Factories, especially as I had several influential friends to forward my views. I mentioned the subject to my masters, and, after considering it, they made such advantageous offers, as induced me to remain with them. This step I shall have reason to regret as long as I live.

"In 1834, the present law for the regulation of Factories was about being put in force. I being appointed time-keeper for the works, had to take the children before the doctor to be examined, as certificates were required from him, that they were of proper age to be admitted into the Factory. I cannot describe my feelings as I went on those occasions, accompanied by about a score of little stunted figures, some of whom had been working in the Factories for years, and whose parents had been in vain trying to get them something else to do; but I well remember, that I had great difficulty in convincing the doctor of their being of the age required, although I had no doubt of it myself, as I was well acquainted with their parents at the time of the children's birth; but their appearance was so much against them, that I fancied on some occasions, from certain expressions that the doctor made use of, that he thought I was deceiving him. Had he known my inmost thoughts, he would not for a moment have suspected me.

"One of the most trying circumstances that occurred to me in all my factory experience, happened in the winter of 1834-5. I had then a youth of about seventeen years of age, placed under me for the purpose of learning some of the higher branches of the business. I had been giving him directions what to do one day, immediately after dinner, and had gone up into the room above for the purpose of superintending some other part of the works, when suddenly one branch of the machinery stopped, and on turning round to inquire the cause, I was met by

several persons nearly out of breath, who told me "that Tom, (as he was called), had got into the gearing of the gig, and was killed." I ran down in haste, but it was too true: he was strangled. A great many bones were broken, and several ghastly wounds were inflicted on different parts of his person! To describe the manner of his death, and his horrible appearance, would only harrow up your feelings, Sir, and my own.

"This boy's death occurred partly through his own carelessness, as he had no business at the place; but the same thing might have happened to people who had business there, and consequently it shews the necessity of boxing up all parts of machines, and the gearing by which such machines are propelled, where there is the least appearance of danger. Had this precaution been adopted in every mill, such calamities could not have happened; and, in many thousands of cases, limbs and lives which have been lost, would have been preserved.

"If any thing was wanted to make me disgusted with the system, this and other circumstances would have supplied the deficiency; for while I and hundreds of workpeople, still more wretched than myself, were toiling and sweating day after day, and year after year, for the bare necessaries of life, struggling as it were against wind and tide, and still hoping that some favourable turn would afford a resting place for our wearied and emaciated frames; the manufacturers were amassing immense wealth, 'adding field to field, and house to house,' and rolling about in their carriages, surrounded by every luxury that this world can give, and looking upon us poor factory slaves, as if we had been a different race of beings, created only to be worked to death for their gain.

"With respect to cripples who, like myself, have been made so by over-exertion. It is usual for manufacturers to throw the blame entirely upon the parents of such children. How they can divest themselves of all blame, appears to me rather paradoxical. I cannot look upon them, in any other light than as accessories to the mischief, especially when it is considered that the several cases of distortion of the spine, contraction and other deformities of the limbs, &c., did not take place all in a minute, but that they were coming gradually on for years, and immediately under the eye of the manufacturers, who, by a single word, might have dismissed them from the place, and thus have saved them from utter ruin. Looking over, in my mind's eye, those boys and girls who were employed in the factories when I commenced, and who, like me, have been kept close to it from their youth upwards, I find that among those whom death has spared, there are very few who have escaped without some injury; they are generally weak, stunted, and in many cases deformed in person, childish, and ignorant in mind, not having been accustomed to some of the most important duties of life, (their whole faculties have been absorbed in the daily routine of factory labour,) they make, as is very natural to suppose, but 'worry' heads of families; and their children, as a matter of course, are compelled by dire necessity to pass through the same dull, tedious, miserable state of existence.

But to resume my narrative:—Being weary of the factory, and having, as I have before informed you, obtained some little learning, and thus prepared myself as well as I was able, I opened a school in the early part of the year 1837, for the instruction of youth, in reading writing, and arithmetic; in hopes by this means to avert the impending danger that had so long threatened me. But I had not been in it long before the school-room was wasted by the proprietor, and, not meeting with another to suit me, I came up to London on business for the Odd Fellows' Society, with which I was connected.

"While in London I thought I would try to procure a situation as clerk, and was encouraged in this idea by a distant relation, a licensed victualler, who kindly offered to take me into his bar till I succeeded in my wish. A few months after, an opportunity presented itself. It being necessary to write to my old masters for a character, I did so, and received the following answer:—

"Kendal 10 mo., 6th, 1837.

"William Dodd, to whom we direct this, was in our employ for many years, and during that time was a trust-worthy servant. We can give him a good character for sobriety and industry. He was in our employ as warehouse-man and packer, with some attention to the books.

"ISAAC AND WILLIAM WILSON.

"P.S.—W. D. left our situation about nine months ago."

"Having procured this letter, I set myself about getting the situation in question. But the relation with whom I was then living, having found the value of my services, made me offers

which I deemed it advisable to take. With this gentleman I lived till the spring of 1839, but could not feel myself justified in what I was doing, seeing so much drunkenness, with its usual attendants, misery and crime, resulting from my labours; besides, Sir, it was a business, as you may suppose, for which I was not very well adapted, on account of being a cripple. About this time, there was a gentleman wanting a man to improve himself as a tailor and draper, and thinking from the little knowledge I had acquired in the business at Kendal, and the lameness of my knees, that it would be a suitable situation for me, I applied, and was engaged for three years. For the first twelve months I got on very well; and being desirous to gather a connection of my own against the time I should begin for myself, I took in little jobs on my own account, which privilege my master allowed me. This brought me in a little money, and was paving the way to a business in future; but I did not then consider that I was over exerting myself, as I had my own work to do, after my days' work for my master was over, and when I ought to have been in bed.

"In the spring of 1840, I began to feel some painful symptoms in my right wrist, arising, as it appears to me, from the general weakness of my joints, brought on in the factories. At first I was not alarmed at it, as I had occasionally felt the similar painful sensations in all my joints for years previous to leaving the factories, and which had always gone off, by taking rest for a day or two, rubbing them with liniment, and wrapping them in warm flannel. But, this time, it resisted all my endeavours to restore strength, the swelling and pain increased; and although I had the advice of some of the most eminent medical practitioners, it was all to no purpose; and, having been off work for a length of time, and my recourses failing, I was under the necessity of entering St. Thomas's Hospital, where I remained for upwards of six months; and where every care and attention was paid me, and every expedient tried, that skill and experience could suggest, but with no better success than before,—the wrist at this time measured twelve inches round,—and I was worn down to a mere skeleton, not being able to sleep night or day, except for very short periods, and generally starting up from pain.

"It now became pretty evident to all who saw me, that I must, very soon, lose either my hand or my life. A consultation was held by the surgeons of the hospital, who came to the conclusion, that amputation was absolutely necessary; and the result proved their decision to be correct. They gave me a reasonable time to think the matter over,—and I decided upon taking their advice.

"On the 18th of July, I underwent the operation. The hand being taken off a little below the elbow, in order to clear the affected part of the bone; and thus, Sir, another plan to raise myself above want, and keep myself from the workhouse, was frustrated and dashed to the ground! On dissection, the bones of the fore-arm presented a very curious appearance—something similar to an empty honey-comb, the marrow also having totally disappeared; thus accounting at once for the weakness and pain I had occasionally felt in this arm for years, and which, without doubt, may be clearly traced to the same cause as the rest of my sufferings—viz. the Factory System.

"By the blessing of God, and under the care and attendance of the surgeons and nurses of the hospital, to whom I would ever hope to be thankful, I was restored to tolerable health, and was discharged on the 24th of November, 1840.

"Having applied to my late master for a certificate of character, I received the following:—

"The bearer, William Dodd, has been in my employ for twelve months, during which time he conducted himself in a sober, honest, and industrious manner; and I should have taken him again into my service, but for the misfortune of losing his hand, which renders him totally unfit for my business. Given by me this 26th day of November, 1840.

"JOHN KIRBY, Tailor,

"No. 2, Oldham Place, Bagnigge Wells Road, London."

"Figure to yourself, Sir, my deplorable situation at this time—just leaving the hospital, after a residence of six months within its walls, having lost the best part of my right arm!—a cripple in my limbs!—without a home!—without friends!—and with only 8s. in money!—in a strange place, and nearly three hundred miles from the place to which I belong!—and, in this condition, to brave the horrors of a severe winter! and provide myself a living in an unthinking and unfeeling world! But I put my trust in the Lord, and He has not forsaken me—He has provided me a shelter from the blast, and a crust to satisfy the cravings of nature; but this is only temporary, and must soon cease—what is to be my future lot, I know not. One thing I do know, it is not idleness, dissipation, or extravagance, that has brought me to poverty and want.

"When we read the history of some of the eastern nations, and there find, as is frequently the case, accounts of children having been tied in open baskets to the tops of trees, and there left exposed, an offering to their Gods, till the birds had eaten their flesh from their bones; and of others having been thrown into the Ganges, and there having found a watery grave—how eager are we, in our exalted ideas of civilization, to denounce them as barbarians, who could be guilty of such cruelties! But how much better would it have been for me, if I had had the good fortune to have been so sacrificed in my infancy, rather than have been put to daily torture for upwards of a quarter of a century, and with the certainty of my miseries still continuing, till my feeble frame sinks beneath its load!

"Leaving, therefore, the care of the Factories in the hands of you and a few philanthropic individuals like yourself, and humbly hoping that you will not desist from your labours till you have moulded the system into what it is capable of being made—viz. a blessing to the country, the manufacturer, the work-people, and all connected therewith, *nothing now remains for me, but calmly to wait, with patience and resignation, for that happy moment which shall terminate my earthly sufferings, and set my weary and troubled spirit free.*

"Yours, truly,

"WILLIAM DODD."

The simple eloquence and the undeserved sufferings of that victim, arouse feelings in my bosom which, without calm and considerate reflection, I dare not give utterance to. To know that the lords of such a cruel system, who have amassed so much wealth and have obtained so much power, are now gasping for the destruction of our nobles, after having succeeded in persuading them to disinherit the poor; that they should, at the same time, be using every exertion to defame and degrade the nobility, and be endeavouring to induce them, in the House of Lords, to frustrate the benevolent intentions of Lord Ashley, and thus transform the parties whom they are insulting, into their dupes and instruments in perpetuating their own tyranny;—I say, Sir, to know all this, and then to meditate upon the effects of their covetousness, in the forsaken and destitute condition of their cripples, forces me to the contemplation of subjects so tremendously awful, that I dare not, in this letter, give vent to the expression of my thoughts. In my next I will endeavour to adopt language that will be convincing; avoiding, if it be possible, any expressions approaching to violence or invective. In doing so, Sir, I must do violence to my own feelings, in the hope of persuading you, that it is now needful for "your order" to resist the allurements and temptations of your foes, the philosophers; to revert to Bible maxims, precepts and laws; and, at once, to repeal that accursed act, by which infidelity has chained you to his car, and is preparing to drag you as victims, amidst the insults and jeers of those who have seduced you, as well as the curses of the poor, whose natural protectors you are, or ought to be.

I would to God, Mr. Thornhill, that words might be given to me, which shall carry conviction to the hearts of those in whose hands, humanly speaking, the destinies of my country are now placed. For sure I am, that if the present system of legislation be long continued, a revolution, at the thought of which my heart sickens, must inevitably follow. God will not have His laws despised, and His poor oppressed with impunity. But for the present I forbear.

In a former letter I informed you, that a very old and dear friend of mine, had reproved me, for venturing to state that which I knew to be true, with reference to the objection felt by the army, to be the instruments of tyranny, in upholding the throne of the three Poor Law Commissioners.

My Rev. friend has, since then, read my observations on his remarks, and he

has favoured me with an interesting letter, which I am sure will be more useful than any opinions of my own. I wish that I might be allowed to add the authority of his name; that favour being denied, I must be content with the appropriate signature of his adoption.

"My dear friend,

"Leicestershire, 20th Feb. 1841.

"Your Fleet Papers of the 13th inst. (No. 7,) only reached me this afternoon. Every true Christian, and every constitutional Englishman, will thank you for it. I said the army 'was a terrific question,' and chided you somewhat for the mention of it. But your DREAD ARRAY of the word of the living God against the oppressors of the poor, is infinitely 'more terrific,' and makes all the power of all the armies of Europe dwindle into nothing, and appear like the wooden horses and soldiers of children!

"I did read those Scriptures—I had read them before many times in the 'Sacred Volume'—they had been engraved on my heart, delighted in, and acted upon. But when I saw them brought together, such was their power and glory, that I felt overwhelmed at the sight: it was like so many suns collected in one focus, too dazzling bright for the mind to contemplate. What majesty! what benevolence! what compassion! what justice! shone forth from such a view as they afforded of the divine perfections.

"How abject did all our Malthusian Philosophers, Political Economists, and Liberal Legislators, appear in my view, when measured by the august principles laid down in those passages by the Almighty Lawgiver!

"But how I trembled for those who wilfully oppose themselves to the settled decrees of Heaven, and obstinately refuse to hear the VOICE DIVINE. Will they dispute with Him who is *all-wise*?—will they contend with Him who is *all-powerful*?—will they deny to the 'God of the whole earth' the right to legislate for the creatures He has made? Blind and erring mortals—let them return into the path of rectitude—let them act upon the sovereign dictates of truth and conscience, and not be led astray by the vain delusions of presumptuous men, but return to the only solid basis of legislation—THE WORD OF GOD. We may then hope for security, prosperity, and happiness. At present, we have none of these things. Liberalism has ruined us, and we are, every day, sinking deeper and deeper into all the evils of misrule and impiety.

"Would that every person in the realm, high and low, rich and poor, may read that paper, and contemplate that galaxy of heavenly light which you have collected from the firmament of Scripture; contemplate it till their hearts are filled with admiration, delight, and sympathy; then would the way be prepared for the exercise of Christian legislation, which has been so long abandoned.

"I hope you will not permit that splendid quotation of Holy Writ to be hid in the past number of the 'Fleet Papers,' but produce it again, at least every quarter of a year, and hold it up as a living mirror before the eyes of your countrymen.

"It must be heard, or we are undone, and our beloved country will fall under the blasting influence of heartless liberalism, and false philosophy.

"Your old and faithful friend,

"To Mr. Richard Oastler, Fleet Prison."

"BRITANNICUS."

Yes, Sir, my Rev. friend is right, "the Word of God is the only solid basis of legislation;" "it must be heard, or we are undone!" The Wisdom therein revealed is better than rubies, the only way to durable riches and righteousness is by a strict implicit obedience to the commands of Almighty God.

See, in the distracted and disrupted state of English society, what mischief and expense, the enemies of Truth have engendered, under the names of "liberal principles, and enlightened philosophy."

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—Many kind tokens of friendship require an early notice.—R.O.

From a Clergyman.

"Leicestershire, Feb. 24th, 1841.

"My dear Oastler,

"I was incessantly engaged on Monday and Tuesday, or you would have had a Letter from me, to tell you of the high privilege I enjoyed on Sunday, of officiating in the Evening Service, and preaching to the inmates of the H—— Union poor-house.

"It is a noble building, and worthy of a great country, had it been an asylum for the poor and destitute, and not a prison—had its object been to foster the children of sorrow, and to reward the labours of the industrious poor, by affording them an honourable support in their declining years.

"It was half-past six o'clock—the inmates were assembled to about the number of 140 men, women, and children. The greatest order and civility prevailed. The chapel is a spacious room, and would not have disgraced the mansion of a nobleman. All the authorities appeared in their appointed stations; and the master acted his part, as usher of the rod, with as much state and dignity as he of the House of Lords or Commons.

"All was attention and silence, and the service began. The Prayers—the Lessons—the Psalms, all seemed more beautiful than they had done in my own church in the afternoon. It was the effect of sympathy.

"It was, you know, Quinquagesima Sunday, on which day our holy and venerable Mother, the Church, teaches all her children to pray for 'that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before God.'

"In following out the prescribed course, I discoursed from the 1st verse of the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians—'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not CHARITY, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.'

"I showed them, that the end of all true religion was to make them like God; and, if our religion failed in accomplishing this, whatever might be our knowledge, and with whatever fluency we might be able to talk about it—even 'with the tongue of men and angels'—it was of no worth—it was an empty, unmeaning noise, like 'sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.'

"I showed them, that by the 'Charity' of the text was meant *likeness to God*; and, that unless we possessed that, all our pretences to religion were vain. It was to accomplish this, that God had sent his Son into the world—it was for this end that Christ died and rose again—it was for this that God the Holy Spirit had become the Sanctifier of the Church.

"I showed them, that the great God could not love anything that was not like himself—that he had, at the first, created man 'in his own image'—that this had been destroyed by man's sin—that he had lost the divine likeness, become degraded and wicked, his whole mind and soul black and perverted by sin, so as to become the enemy of God, and, instead of loving, fearing, and serving him, to forsake, resist, and disobey him.

"Now, the design of the Gospel, I observed, was to recover him—to bring him back from his lost estate, and to restore him to the divine image, which was 'Charity' or Love.

"This, I showed, was stated in another Scripture to be the character of God. Saint John had told us, when speaking of the divine nature, 'God is Love,' or Charity, for they mean the same thing. He is Love itself—'Charity' itself; and from the very nature of God, it was absolutely necessary that we should become partakers of it, if we are to enjoy the presence of God here or hereafter.

"I then showed them, that the apostle had not left us in doubt as to the character of this charity. It was 'long suffering—kind—felt no envy—did not boast—was not puffed up with pride—behaved itself with propriety, in whatever station of life it was placed—did not seek its own, to the exclusion of the welfare and happiness of others—is not easily provoked, and so sincere, that it thinketh no evil of others—rejoiceth not in sin, but in the progress of truth, for the sake of which it beareth all things—respecting which it believeth all things—and for the extension of which it endureth all things.'—Verses 4, 5, 6, 7.

"This was CHARITY, of which God was the perfection and essence, and which he required to be formed again in us in its principles; and that we should be every day becoming more like him, and approaching nearer to the glorious image of the blessed God. Nothing, I showed, would do instead of it. Learning would not do—the knowledge of religion would not do—the gift of prophecy would not do—kindness would not do—nay, a man might 'give all his goods to feed the poor,' and it would be of no use, unless he was daily growing like God—nay, he might become a martyr for the truth of the Gospel, and 'give his body to be burned,' and yet be rejected by God.

"It is the renewing of the mind—the changing of the heart—the building up of the man in the image of God. All must have it: and with respect to it, all stand upon the same level. The provisions and promises of the Gospel are equally free to all. You, my hearers, are as free to all the privileges of Christianity, as the most learned, the noblest, and richest in the land.

"Tell me, were you not baptised in the same name? In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? Has not God in that ordinance undertaken to become a father to you? Will he not fulfil his engagement? Has he not shown his willingness, by giving up his son as the ground of your recovery?

"Has not Christ undertaken to become your Redeemer and Saviour? Has he not given himself, that your sins may be forgiven, and yourselves restored to the divine favour?

"Has not the Holy Spirit undertaken to sanctify you, and to restore you to your first estate—the image and likeness of God?

"What! I said, do I hear some of you saying—this is too much for us? Will the great God, indeed, look down upon such a poor, destitute, despised creature as I am? Can I be pardoned my iniquity, and changed into the image of God?

"Yes, you may believe it. He is God, and changeth not. He will do what he has undertaken. He is 'Charity' itself. You may depend upon what he has said, and are as welcome to all the treasures of his house as the most exalted creatures upon the earth. If you see the worth of those treasures—if you feel your need of them, they are freely offered to you. 'Whosoever WILL, let

him come and take of the waters of life freely.' Surely this is a promise extensive enough. You may become new creatures, restored to the divine image. However dark and ignorant you may be, the Spirit of God, who brought this world out of confusion and darkness, will shine into your hearts to clothe them with light and beauty, restore them to the likeness of God here, and prepare you to dwell with him for ever.

"With many such words did I speak to my *most attentive* audience; and I thought in your love and benevolence for the poor, you would like to hear how the Union was going on last Sunday evening.

"I know I could make these places just to your mind, if I might have my way with them. You say, in your vehemence, 'Pull them down.' No; I would make them the ornaments of the country. I would turn them all into Greenwich Hospitals. I would make them the abodes of peace and happiness. I would set them apart for the reception of the widows and widowers who had behaved well in their station of life, brought up their families with decency, and served their generation with industry. They should have a common refectory, and an honourable maintenance. This would be worthy of our country, and would bring down the blessing of Him 'who careth for the widow, the stranger, and the fatherless.' He would, then, be a refuge for us in the time of trouble; He would, then, cover our heads in the day of battle.

"I hope, in this great and difficult work which you have undertaken, of speaking to a whole nation, you will be guided by wisdom and prudence, and above all, 'Charity'—that you will bring a 'railing accusation' against no man—but that you will show that you are (as I believe you are) impelled by a love of your country. You will then be applauded and encouraged by all similar-minded men; and by none more than by

"Your old and faithful friend,
BRITANNICUS."

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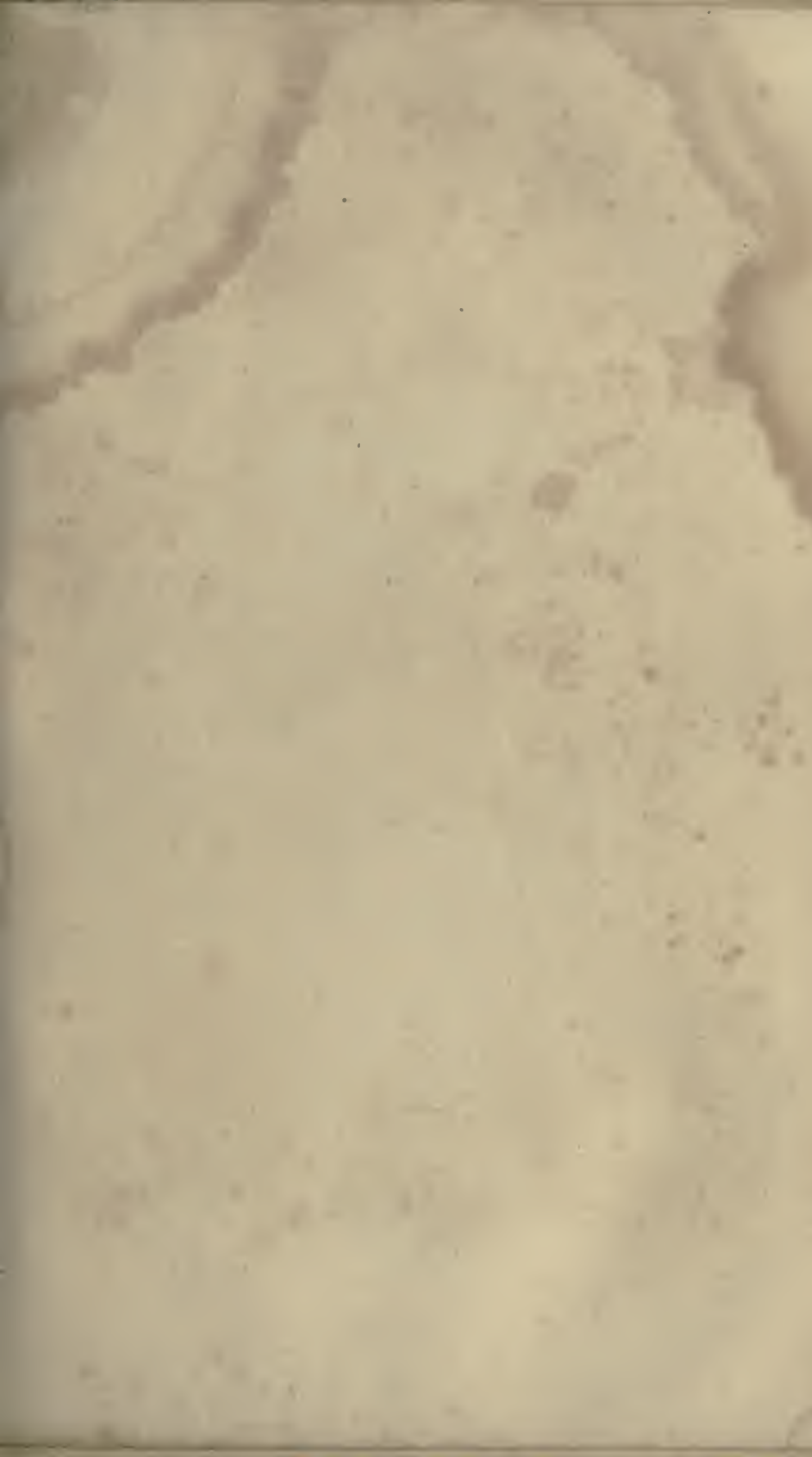
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Whaley J. & W. Umpton St. Pauls

Richard Buxton
12 Coffee Gallay Fleet Prison Dec. 9 1810.

THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY JOHN PAVEY,
NO. 47, HOLYWELL-STREET, STRAND.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Anonymous writers may be saved much trouble, by being informed, that without reading them, their papers will be burned.

All communications must be post-paid.

If it should so happen, that these Papers should be noticed *pro*, or *con*, by any organ of public opinion, R. O. will be grateful to any friend, who will send him a copy thereof, to the Fleet, London.

In consequence of many complaints from advertisers and readers, that the blue cover interfered with the distinctness of the type, a change is made, which it is hoped will be satisfactory to those friends who have been thus inconvenienced.

WITH THIS NUMBER IS GIVEN,

A

PORTRAIT OF MR. OASTLER, IN HIS CELL,

No. 12, COFFEE GALLERY, FLEET PRISON.

THE OASTLER FESTIVAL.

The demonstration of public feeling, in behalf of that much-injured and persecuted individual, took place on Monday evening, 25th of January, 1841, at the Philosophical Hall, Huddersfield. As the appointed day drew near, the demand for tickets increased in a most unexpected manner, and it was found necessary, with much reluctance, to suspend the sale of them. Some money, however, was taken at the doors. The hall was laid out with six tables, longitudinally placed; but from the vast numbers assembled, it was found necessary that only one portion of the assembly should be accommodated at once; it was, therefore, arranged they should take tea in two or three sittings. This gave much satisfaction, as it prevented confusion, and accommodated every one. Upwards of 650 persons assembled on this memorable occasion, fully demonstrating that 'King' Richard still lives in the hearts of his 'subjects' at Huddersfield. We were much pleased to observe, that nothing of party feeling was exhibited on the occasion, and among the company we noticed a very fair attendance of "blues," all anxious to testify the respect which Mr. Oastler still retains in their minds. On the table in the front of the chairman (Mr. Pitkethly,) was placed a most excellent bust of the 'King of the Factory Children.' The most perfect order, decorum, and good feeling pervaded the company during the evening's amusements. A most excellent band attended, and played almost without intermission, enlivening the company with overtures, marches, &c. Immediately after tea, the tables were removed, and the saloon cleared for dancing. The orchestra and gallery were completely crowded, and it became necessary to make a temporary accommodation under the gallery, by piling up forms, to accommodate the vast numbers. A most judicious resolution had been adopted, that no intoxicating liquors should be introduced. This was most praiseworthy. The entertainments of the evening, principally the 'tripping on the light fantastic toe,' continued with great spirit till twelve o'clock; when, after a most excellent speech and appeal from Mr. Pitkethly, the business concluded with a new version of 'God save the Factory King,' written for the occasion at the hall, during the proceedings; and the company departed, highly gratified with their entertainment, and not the less so on the consideration that the net proceeds would be appropriated to the assistance of our prisoner 'King.' The profits of this Festival amounting to 23l. 18s. were remitted to Mrs. Oastler.

Mr. W. Stocks opened the meeting in the following terms:—

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

"The sight before me this evening is one of a most extraordinary character, for we are assembled to condole with a friend in prison; and we might naturally have expected sorrow and sighing; but what do we see? cheerfulness and gaiety, and every counte-

nance beaming with delight and enthusiasm—from the infant to the aged, smiles and pleasure rival each other. But the time for my address is limited to fifteen minutes by the Committee of Arrangement, and our respected Chairman has not forgotten his duty, in reminding me of this; therefore I must be brief; and, as I think our time cannot be better occupied than in giving you a short history of our 'Old King,' I will proceed at once to do this without further comment. Richard Oastler, the gentleman in whose welfare we are particularly interested this evening, is the son of the late Mr. Robert Oastler, of Leeds, who was formerly a linen merchant of Thirsk. Mr. Robert Oastler was the friend and intimate acquaintance of that great and good man, the Rev. John Wesley. Mr. Oastler's house was the house of Mr. Wesley and his preachers on their way to and from the north and the south of England. The late Mr. Oastler was disinherited by his father for being a Methodist; but he persevered even to the end of his life, and God helped him. Few men have done more for religion than did Mr. Robert Oastler. The late Mrs. Oastler, mother to our valued friend in prison, was also a most exemplary Christian. From such a father and mother, we have a right to expect such a son. Yes, a son, who has given himself up for the universal benefit of mankind, and has spent his strength, time, and property for the welfare and comfort of the human race; and right glad I am to state to you, that his energies have not confined themselves to this island alone, but they are attracting the attention of most manufacturing nations in the known world: France, Prussia, Austria, Switzerland, Russia, and the state of Massachusetts, in the United States of America, are adopting laws for the regulation of Factories;—therefore one of the most powerful arguments of the opposers of the Ten Hours' Bill is done away with. Although our Chairman again reminds me of the time, yet I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without adverting to a close friend of our King—the late Mr. Michael Thomas Sadler. They became intimately acquainted in early life; and both were imbued with the true spirit of humanity and Christianity, and long acted together in fulfilling their important duties—particularly in visiting the sick and afflicted poor, when infectious diseases were raging with violence, so much so, that it was difficult to find nurses sufficient to attend to the wants of the infected, when these two worthies have been known to perform the office of nurse, where no other could be found. This is the school where our friend Mr. Oastler learned to feel for suffering humanity:—would to God our legislators had been at the same school, and learned the same lesson, then we should not have heard either of Rural Police or New-Poor Law Bills. But, my friends, many of you were at Leeds the other day, and what did you see there? something that would make many of you reflect most seriously. It was a building, that covered, according to report, upwards of two acres of land, and, according to the public prints, has cost so much money, that the interest would procure as many comforts and luxuries as it is possible for any human being rationally to enjoy. Therefore, what can be the aim of the proprietors, but an excessive thirst for wealth, which must be procured by concentrating the whole of the manufacture that was formerly done on the domestic system in such large buildings as that you saw. I have already told you, that the father of our friend, the late Mr. Robert Oastler, of Thirsk, was a linen merchant. He was engaged, during the time he lived at Thirsk, in collecting the linen made in the North Riding of this county, and travelled in the West Riding to sell them. But this domestic manufacture, which formerly employed the farmers' wives and daughters, and the wives and daughters of the farm labourers, in winter, and broken days in summer also, is quite superseded by the mills at Leeds; and this is not at all enough for our political economists, but they must now reduce France to the same destitution to which they have brought the poor of the North Riding of Yorkshire; for it is reported, that the large building you saw is to be appropriated to manufacturing all kinds of linen, from the sacking to the cambrie, which latter, until very lately, has been entirely done in France; and I wonder how much the expenses of Dr. Bowring & Co. to the Continent has cost this country, to try to bring the French and Germans to be as subservient to the Leeds monopolists as the North Riding of this county now is. Our Chairman is again reminding me that my time is expired; and, although there are many things I wished to say to you, I will conclude by wishing health and strength to our friend, Mr. Richard Oastler, and a pleasant evening to yourselves."

DUET 'Alls well,' by Mr. and Mrs. Gallimore.

OVERTURE.

The following Song, composed by Mr. W. Hulke, sung by Mr. Matthews:—

"When Reform boasting Whigs, amid noise and confusion,
Ascended to stations of wealth and of might;
And by hollow promises, arts, and delusion,
Would Englishmen rob of an Englishman's right;
Amid the wild uproar of discord and faction.
When knaves against Freedom would close every door,
Exposing their falsehoods, unaw'd by their faction,
Stood Oastler!—Stood Oastler!—
Stood Oastler, the Champion and Friend of the Poor!

"When Factory Tyrants, for Gold ever grasping,
Themselves had enlisted as Mammon's vile slaves;
Unmoved would behold helpless infants lie gasping,
From toil, or harsh treatment inflicted by knaves!
Who was it stood forth, unappall'd, their defender,
While pity's soft dew-drops burst from his heart's core,
Resolv'd on the rescue of infancy tender?
'Twas Oastler!—'Twas Oastler!—
'Twas Oastler, the Champion and Friend of the Poor.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage,"—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboreth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

Vol. I.—No. 12.

LONDON, SATURDAY, MARCH 20, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

"IN THE MULTITUDE OF THE PEOPLE IS THE KING'S HONOUR: BUT IN THE WANT OF PEOPLE IS THE DESTRUCTION OF THE PRINCE."—*Proverbs, ch. 14. v. 28.*

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—Knowing, as I do, that many thousands of persons will read the 12th number of the Fleet Papers, who have not seen any of my preceding letters; it will be necessary that I should detain you a few moments, before I proceed to the immediate object of this epistle.

Some of those new readers, who have heard that I am your Prisoner, will, perhaps, expect to find in these pages, vituperation against yourself, with murmurs and repinings from me. I need not assure you, Sir, that they will be disappointed.

That I am your *Prisoner*, is fact:—that I ought to have been your *pensioner* is true. The enigma is solved, when it is known that you have been mistaken; that the influence which has blinded so many wise and good men, and has well nigh uprooted the Constitution, undermined the Church, and destroyed the Poor, which has betrayed our nobility, and estranged them from the people, has also deceived you;—that you have, in my incarceration, become the instrument of that power, which is now preparing to sacrifice you and "your order." Hence, Mr. Thornhill, I can feel no resentment—no murmur can escape my lips, because I know that you have acted under that delusion;—that without being aware of it, you have sent me to Prison, as you supposed, to banish me from society, but as I now find, to enable me to attempt, with better effect, from this Cell—to war against the spirit which has deluded you, and which after having shaken the foundation of society, by oppressing and plundering the working classes, now seeks to destroy "your order." I have reason to bless God for the health and the happy state of mind which I have enjoyed, since I was, by you, counted unfit for the society of my fellow-creatures, outside.

During my stay here, I have sedulously pursued the enquiry—Why does Mr. Thornhill thus act? Why does he, whom I have zealously served for nearly twenty years, and whom my father served for years as many;—he whom I ever

believed to be my best friend, and whom, even in this Cell, I cannot help respecting,—why does he count me worthy of imprisonment? I am constrained to answer, and, Sir, I know that the reply is true,—It is because you have given heed to that spirit, which teaches, that there is no connexion between tenants and landlords, but the paying and receiving of rent—none between masters and servants, but the paying of wages and the performance of work. To that spirit which impiously teaches, that “the poor have no right to sit down at Nature’s feast!” That lying spirit has persuaded you, that *Property has no duties*; and has thus induced you to imprison me, for a debt, which was incurred, (as you know, and as you knew at the time), in the performance of *your* duties. You did not expect to pocket the money by my imprisonment. No;—your object was to crush my principles, and thus to establish those of your deluders, who are the most deadly foes of the aristocracy, as well as of the Church and the poor.

It has, however, pleased Almighty God to overrule the effects of your blindness, and to enable me, by means of these “Fleet Papers,” to speak to thousands of every class, and to maintain the only principles upon which “your order” can securely rest,—the principles that “*Property has its duties as well as its rights*,” and that “the husbandman that laboureth must be the first partaker of the *fruits*,” and also, that “in the *multitude* of the people is the King’s honour; but in the *want* of people is the destruction of the prince.” Reject those principles and, at one stroke, you will break the link which binds society together—you will remove the only props which sustain “your order.”

My imprisonment has also proved, that there are those of every rank and party, (from whom you would have excluded me,) who do not agree with you;—they are never ceasing in their kind attentions to me—so much so, that, till now, I was not accustomed to be overwhelmed with friendship’s offerings and her smiling favours. Nay, Sir, it has pleased God, through your instrumentality, even “to make my enemies to be at peace with me.”

In this letter, I cannot continue the long catalogue of the constantly recurring proofs of the sympathies of friendship; I must reserve that pleasing duty for a future number, assuring you, that never was man so proud of his prison, as is your Prisoner—never was your Steward so happy, as in the Fleet! Never did I feel so sure of conquest over your foes and mine, as I do at this moment. Why, Sir, this very pen is the pen of friendship; it is beautifully twisted and decorated with silk, and inscribed in golden letters, by the fair hand of one of England’s defamed but spotless daughters!—Yes, it is true, the accursed spirit which oppresses the poor, also strives to blast the fair fame of England’s mothers and her virgin daughters! It was one of the latter, Sir, who gave this pen to me, decorated so beautifully and so tastefully by her own hand. With this pen I will strive to repulse the monster who dares, even through the lips of an enslaved Howard, to sully the fame of England’s glory—the virtue of her fair ones!

How beautifully has she inscribed this pen! On one side, “Fleet Papers;” on the reverse, “Richard Oastler, the Factory Child’s Friend!”—Virgin daughter of England! I thank thee! I accept, with pride and gratitude, thy significant present;—thou hast honoured me by my proudest title; this pen shall never cease to be active in the cause of the factory slaves—it shall never weary in defending the spotless fame of England’s daughters.

Other tokens of kindness and friendship must wait for notice, although my list is very full.

Many persons who will now read the "Fleet Papers" for the first time, will, perhaps, (from the misrepresentations of my enemies), expect to find in them excitements to riot, rebellion, and bloodshed. How strangely will they be mistaken, when they find that my sole object is to support the institutions of my country, by demanding justice for all; — to point out the danger which now threatens the Church, the Throne, the Aristocracy and also the institution of Private Property, by listening to those traitors, who first misrepresent and then rob and oppress the poor; and at the same time to prove, that the oppressors of the poor, are the self-same parties, who delude, insult, and are attempting, at this moment, to betray the Nobles and the Church. I rejoice at the prospect of thus convincing many who may hitherto have been deceived respecting my principles, that, in my opinion, the only chance of security and happiness for the high and the low, is, by a return to Bible-Constitutional principles.

I was about, in this number, to have entered upon an investigation of the real merits of the Factory question, with a view to aid the friends of the poor Factory slaves, in their present attempt to obtain a real, good, effective 'Ten Hours' Factory Bill: and also to promote the establishment of an Asylum for Factory Cripples.

It cannot, however, be useless, previously, to explain somewhat of my views to those readers who have not seen my former letters: in which I think I have shown enough respecting Habergam and Dodd, to prove, that Factory Children deserve the amelioration which their friends demand for them, and that the enemies of the Factory Children are also the foes of the Aristocracy.

Having, for many years, been located in a district which was peculiarly subject to the spirit of innovation, where every kind of stratagem was used to seduce and delude the people—where the spirit of Infidelity and Tyranny assumed the mask of "Civil and Religious Liberty"—where the Church, the Bishops, and the Aristocracy were the general objects of contempt and vituperative slander—where it was usual to burn the nobles and the bishops in effigy, and to brand them with infamy! Nay, where the reigning monarch was treated, (even in public meetings), by the supporters of his ministers, in the most insulting manner, and was threatened with non-payment of taxes and decapitation, if he dared to resist their demands;—having seen the king thus degraded, and even his queen insulted by groans both loud and long, it was natural that I, (who was ardently attached to the altar, the throne, and the aristocracy, as well as to the poor,) should strive to ascertain what manner of spirit that was, which *boasted* so liberally and *acted* so tyrannically—the spirit which insulted and degraded royalty and nobility, whilst it crushed and oppressed the working classes!

I followed it, Sir, through all its ramifications, into its lurking places in the meeting-houses—the markets—the exchanges—the institutes—to political dinners—on to the hustings—into "the House"—up "the back-stairs,"—to the cabinet, and from thence, with sorrow, I traced it even to the bench of bishops!—Then its blood-steps shewed me the path to the Factories, the New Poor Law Bastiles, and to the dungeons of its deluded victims in the different prisons of the kingdom; until, at last, I found that it had successfully seduced and deceived you, and in the vain hope of crushing me, it had persuaded you to find me a home in this Cell.

It has not, however, as yet, found me a grave! It has only furnished me with a new starting point, after giving me a little breathing-time.

You know, Sir, that I have had unprecedented opportunities of watching the windings and workings of that fell monster. It is neither more nor less than Infidelity, which assumes every shape and every name, for the purpose of delusion. It is the enemy of the best interests of every class;—it counts nothing respectable—nothing honourable—nothing sacred, but *money!* It levels its attacks as surely against the throne, the hierarchy and nobility, as against the poor! It persuades the former, that the latter are idle and dissolute and rebellious,—it tells the poor that the bishops and the aristocracy are cruel, unjust and tyrannical. It charges the clergy with being bloated, bigotted drones—nay, to suit its own purposes, *to please the Beast*, it shuns not to sully, by comparison, the honour and chastity of English matrons and virgins! It is this self-same spirit which absolutely makes our ancient aristocracy tremble, because they are *noble*, and smile, when they are goaded to madness, by the plebeian owners of wealth! Nay, at times, when our nobles think it needful to fall down and worship *the Beast*, it almost forces them to deny their *right* to nobility, as in the case of Lord Morpeth, (whose blood has always been esteemed among the best and most noble in England,) when, in 1834, his lordship was dining with some two hundred tradesmen in Leeds, one of them paid his lordship the following *compliment*:—"Lord Morpeth is a miracle of a man, considering *the hole of the pit* from whence he has been digged." At this, Lord Morpeth smiled, and assured his *friend*, that "it was by pure accident, that he was born a lord!" Now, Sir, I ask you, is it to be wondered at, that rank and station and birth should be despised by the people, when a scion of the house of Howard makes so light of his noble descent? But, as we progress in this spirit of the age—this "liberal and enlightened age!" we get worse and worse. It was but the other day, that this same Lord Morpeth, absolutely, by comparison, without any incitement or provocation, impugned the virtue of his mother and sisters, when he went out of his way, (not being called upon by any previous observation, or, by the nature of the argument he was enforcing,) to assert in the House of Commons, "that the female portion of the Irish people exhibited more of *chastity*, than could be said of those of either of the sister islands!" Lord Morpeth must, of course, have been speaking of those females of whom he knew the most—of those with whom he was most intimately acquainted. No one had questioned the virtue of the Irish females—then why should Lord Morpeth strive to sully those of England? *The Beast* required it—and the *Noble* performed the graceless task!

You see, Sir, in the self-degradation of Lord Morpeth, the tyranny of *the Beast* which rules the destiny of England! It stops not at the poor, but it forces a *noble* to become the libeller of the females of his own and every other order!

The uncalled for expression might be intended to insult every female in England—every thing English being now out of fashion in our new-fangled policy—it *was* indeed an insult (from the Queen downwards), to every female who has honoured the noble (!) lord with her society! If the Queen has one subject, who ought to have been spared such degradation, Lord Morpeth is that one. The unsullied purity of his mother, has hitherto protected him from degrading remarks on the "pure accident" of his unlucky phiz; but the *Beast* has no mercy!

By such facts as these, Sir, I am enabled to prove that the spirit of the age—the “enlightened, liberal,” un-English spirit of Malthusian Infidelity, to which spirit every thing ignoble, tyrannical and ruinous may be traced; is as surely degrading and destroying the aristocracy, as it is robbing the poor and oppressing the Factory Children—truly, Sir, “you are all in the same boat!”

It is all one and the same spirit which insults royalty, deludes and defames the aristocracy, degrades the clergy, robs and oppresses the working classes, and insults woman!—It is an evil spirit of covetousness, which can know no rest, until it has destroyed all that is religious, virtuous and noble, and has enreled in its iron clutches, what it terms the “respectability” of England! It has persuaded our governors that Nature has made a blunder, that she can no longer be trusted in the matter of population, but that certain rules and tests of its own, must be applied to diminish “the multitude of the people.” She has discovered that the Bible is not true, and that now “in the want of the people is the king’s honour; but in the multitude of the people is the destruction of the prince!” Sir, to this lie against Nature—this treason against God, may be traced all the evils which afflict this country—all the difficulties which annoy and perplex our governors—all the oppressions and wrongs of the poor—all the danger to the rich.

It is because our governors have believed *that* lie, that the rich and the poor are now “alienated heart and soul”—that the government and the people are mutually jealous of each other—that the Church is in danger, and that the aristocracy is doomed! That lie, Sir, is the cause of the execrable New Poor Law.

It is because “the multitude of the people” is believed to be too great, that measures hostile to nature are attempted to be enforced; it is because the Bible is thus declared to be a Lie—that religion is set at naught. It is *that* war against nature, which bewilders our mistaken governors, and forces them to acts, of which no other Government was ever guilty. They are all at sea, having thrown overboard the compass—which is Christianity;—they do not attempt to legislate for the people—their only aim is to *diminish* them! Hence they have persuaded you, the landlords, that, if you do not send your “surplus”-population to be worked-up in their Factories, or to be poisoned in the Union Workhouses, they will eat up your estates! whilst at the same time they persuade the Factory population, if they are not allowed to feed on foreign corn, they will be pined to death! They have in a great measure succeeded by the New Poor Law, in separating the poor from any connection with the soil; they have, by deluding the people, nearly succeeded in forcing them to prefer the prosperity of foreign agriculture to our own!

Would that I could convince you of your danger, whilst listening to such ignorant “school masters,” whilst following such blind guides! There is nothing English, nothing Christian, nothing “Home” in their plans.

Shall I tell you a secret, Sir? If “your order” will read it, and believe it, and take a hint, mayhap you may save yourselves. I know that what I am about to state is true. *If the New Poor Law be continued, it is out of the power of man to prevent the entire repeal of the Corn Laws.* I shall not argue the questions of, whether it is better to encourage the growth of English corn, or the spinning of American cotton? whether it is wiser to force the population to inhale the impure fumes of the Factories, or to breathe the refreshing breezes of nature? to work by the light of gas, or that of the sun? to be crippled in child-

hood by excessive labour, and instead of being, in manhood, strong and able defenders of their country, to become a dead weight upon her charities? or whether "England would be no poorer if she were never to grow another ear of corn?" Sir, on this occasion, I will trouble you with none of these questions—but I will tell you a fact, which it will be well for you, landlords, to consider, remembering always, that that enthusiastic friend of the New Poor Law, Earl Fitzwilliam, has said—"If the Corn Laws are not repealed, the New Poor Law is an unjust measure."

You must remember, Mr. Thornhill, that about the time when you discharged me, I was engaged, with others, in a powerful movement in Yorkshire and Lancashire, against the New Poor Law. You know that your attempt to stay my proceedings failed, and that, in consequence, you discharged me. You will remember also, that, by some means, the movement against the New Poor Law was suddenly silenced. I will now tell you how that was effected. The knowledge of that fact ought to open the eyes of "the country gentlemen," to the delusions practised upon them by the Malthusians. Nothing is more clear, than if there are too many of us, we must seek food from our neighbours. Do you not see that, Mr. Thornhill? To hope for relief, from such an evil, from emigration, is absolute madness! You will learn by the fact I am about to state, how this great nation is now governed!

It so happens, that there are, in London, two men, who, in a private way, manage the domestic affairs of the Government. One of them is an M.P., the other was formerly an important and influential M.P. manufacturer. If it were needful, I could mention their names.

These two men are *avowed* Infidels and Malthusians; they profess to be Radicals, Chartists, or Republicans, or any thing, which, for the time, will best catch the ear of the disaffected. They keep up a regular communication with the Government, and also with a few honest men, who have much influence with the working people. These honest men, believe the two Malthusians to be as honest as themselves, and, consequently, they act with confidence on their suggestions.

Now, Sir, it so happened, that, at the time when we in the north, were busily employed in attending meetings to petition against the New Poor Law, the Government, finding it absolutely impossible to silence us by London Police, Spies, Russell Magistrates, or Troops—nay, after they found that the soldiers disliked to be employed on such service; and that, every where, our meetings were immensely numerous, highly respectable, unanimous, and peaceable; and perceiving that it was impossible for any law, which was so steadily and constitutionally opposed, long to remain on the statute book,—what trick, Sir, do you think the Government played, to please the landed interest, and to put down the loud cry against the New Poor Law? I will tell you, Sir.—They communed with their two friends, to whom I have above alluded. With them, a bargain was struck to this effect: "If you will put down the movement against the New Poor Law, we will agree to the repeal of the Corn Laws!" Do not start, Sir, what I tell you is the truth. The two Malthusians set to work immediately; they excited the hopes of the honest but mistaken friends of the working classes. The *Charter* was immediately urged upon the attention of the masses—the cry for the repeal of the New Poor Law was abandoned, and, at the instance of the Government, to gratify the country gentlemen, and to serve a Malthusian purpose, the agitation of the *Char-*

ter, was substituted for that of the repeal of the New Poor Law! The prisons are now filled with Government *Chartist* victims; and the two Malthusians are, at this moment, (backed by "the anti Corn Law league,") demanding of the Government "the pound of flesh" in the shape of "the repeal of the Corn Laws!" To serve the "country gentleman," the Government employed the Chartists, and thus retained the New Poor Law! To please the Malthusian cotton-gentry, the Government are now required to repeal the Corn Laws! and the Chartists, hoping to advance their own favourite question, have swamped the Metropolitan Anti-Poor Law meeting, and have insulted the chairman, Mr. Walter, whose disinterested and noble efforts for the poor, have endeared him to all but their enemies. Thus have the Chartists, while intending to serve the poor, delighted and strengthened the "man-without-a-heart," and all those who are determined to uphold the system of oppression under which the working classes now groan. The reward for the services thus rendered by the Chartists, is the transportation and imprisonment of their leaders, and the establishment of the Rural Police! The Chartist, may well say: "Call you this backing your friends."

Sir, I am not romancing; what I have herein stated is true. It is high time that this *Farce* of governing was ended. See the mischief that it has already engendered. Every institution, from the Church downwards, is shaken and threatened. Every party is divided by rancorous jealousy. There is no union or combination of interest; all is disjointed and unsettled. The very *pets* of the system themselves—the cotton Lords and *millionnaires*—dream of ruin and confiscation, even in *their* camp, doubt and uncertainty prevail, and each distrusts his neighbour. It is not safe that a great nation should any longer, by thus wafting in mid air, like a balloon, driven about by every breeze, having neither anchor, nor compass. That this is the true picture of England, facts innumerable prove—Government is no longer a science,—it is a trick, a swindle. The most cunning, not the most wise, is the admired. How long this state of things will continue, no one can tell; though all know, assuredly, that very long it cannot last.

Do you not think, Sir, that it would be better to legislate and govern upon some settled principle!—I do.—All this confusion, and fraud, and oppression, and injustice, arise from the adoption, by the Government of the insane notions, that there is no natural tie between the soil and the people—that property has no duties—that man has no natural *rights*—that there are too few acres, and too many men!

Until we can humble ourselves to obey Nature's laws, and to believe Bible truths, we shall thus go on blundering and floundering, until our institutions will be destroyed, and anarchy or despotism will be our inevitable fate! It is well worth the while of those persons who are possessed of large estates, seriously to resolve that these evils shall be averted?

If the facts which I have stated, should have the effect of inducing the aristocracy to "consider their ways," to see the danger which they are in by uniting with the Malthusians to rob and oppress the poor, this letter will not have been written in vain.

Surely I have already satisfied you, that, unless the nobles will unite with the people, their "order" will soon be extinct.

The object of the Malthusians is to transform this country into one great workshop, therein to work the poor to death, and thus to enrich the immense

capitalists—levelling every rank between. The object of a wise Government would be to encourage agriculture, to unite the owners, occupiers and tillers of the soil in one bond of interest and union—to restore, as much as possible, the domestic system of manufacture, and repress that infernal system of competition, which enables a very large capitalist to ruin a whole neighbourhood, and *millionize* himself, by schemes and plots as immoral and disgraceful as murder, robbery and fraud!

We must strive to get out of the clutches of these men, or, as a nation, we are doomed to be destroyed by them.

Since I have been shut up in this Prison, I have treated myself now and then with a page or two in Rollin. I was much struck with the following, and resolved to copy it for my readers, in the hope that they might admire the sentiments, and endeavour to act upon them. Would you be kind enough to read the quotation with attention?

“I have said, that husbandmen particularly, and those who took care of flocks, were in great esteem in Egypt, some parts of it excepted, where the latter were not suffered. It was, indeed, to these two professions that Egypt owed its riches and plenty. It is astonishing to reflect what advantages the Egyptians, by their art and labour, drew from a country of no great extent, but whose soil was made wonderfully fruitful by the inundations of the Nile, and the laborious industry of the inhabitants.

“It will be always so with every kingdom whose governors direct all their actions to the public welfare. The culture of lands, and the breeding of cattle, will be an inexhaustible fund of wealth in all countries, where, as in Egypt, these profitable callings are supported and encouraged by maxims of state and policy; and we may consider it as a misfortune that they are falling at present into so general a disesteem: though it is from them that the most elevated ranks (as we esteem them) are furnished, not only with the necessaries, but even the luxuries, of life. For, says Abbé Fleury, in his admirable work, of the manners of the Israelites, where the subject I am upon is thoroughly examined, ‘it is the peasant who feeds the citizen, the magistrate, the gentleman, the ecclesiastic;’ and whatever artifice and craft may be used to convert money into commodities, and these back again into money, yet all must ultimately be owned to be received from the products of the earth, and the animals which it sustains and nourishes. Nevertheless, when we compare men’s different stations of life together, we give the lowest place to the husbandman: and with many people a wealthy citizen, enervated with sloth, useless to the public, and void of all merit, has the preference, *merely because he has more money*, and lives a more easy and delightful life.

“But let us imagine to ourselves a country where so great a difference is not made between the several conditions; where the life of a nobleman is not made to consist in idleness and doing nothing, but in a careful preservation of his liberty—that is, in a due subjection to the laws and the constitution; by a man’s subsisting on his estate, without a dependence on any one, and being contented to enjoy a little with liberty, rather than a great deal at the price of mean and base compliances;—a country, where sloth, effeminacy, and the ignorance of things necessary for life, are held in just contempt, and where pleasure is less valued than health and bodily strength:—in such a country, *it will be much more for a man’s reputation to plough and keep flocks, than to waste all his hours in sauntering from place to place, in gaming and expensive diversions.*”—*Rollin’s Ancient History, Vol. 1, pp. 184, 185.*

What wisdom! what patriotism! are in that quotation! Would that every member of the aristocracy would seriously consider, zealously embrace and act upon, the views therein expressed. Then should we no longer be cursed with the expensive tyranny of Poor Law Commissioners and Rural Police—the heart-burnings which now divide the nobles from the people would no longer exist—then would England be herself again!

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—I would advise you, Landlords, to keep a sharp look out. The parties who were employed, at your bidding, to put down the cry against the New Poor Law, are, if I mistake not, (whilst I am writing) making an arrangement with Ministers as to their “pound of flesh.” Four shillings per quarter, import duty on wheat, is just now settling, as the *first instalment!* I “guess” that this is “no mistake.”—R.O.

" When 'brestal base' Whigs for economy raving,—
 Uncaring, imbedding what poverty feels,—
 Could doom human beings, for nourishment craving,
 To lingering deaths in their cursed Bastilles!
 Who was it stood forth to defy the vile faction?—
 Humanity's friend from the heart's inmost cure;
 Tho' loaded with calumny, lies, and detraction,—
 'Twas Oastler!—'Twas Oastler!—
 'Twas Oastler, the Champion and Friend of the Poor!

" Tho' the reptiles saw triumph, yet short its duration;
 Tho' the Champion of Freedom in Gaol they've confin'd;
 Yet soon shall they hear the loud voice of the nation
 In sympathy hailing the Friend of Mankind!
 Yes! soon shall their ears drink the loud execration
 From millions wide spreading from shore unto shore;
 But their voices shall change to one vast exultation
 For Oastler!—For Oastler!—
 For Oastler, the Champion and Friend of the Poor.

" Say, can you desert him? your Friend; your Protector!
 The Friend of his Country! the Friend of his Kind!
 Imprison'd! the butt of each foul-mouth'd detractor?
 No! Far be the thought from each true British mind!
 In our hearts we'll enshrine, with those hearts we'll surround him
 With his name on our voices, the echoes shall roar;
 For still shall we find him, as still we have found him;
 Brave Oastler!—Brave Oastler!—
 Brave Oastler, the Champion and Friend of the Poor!"

GRAND MARCH—COUNTRY-DANCE.

SONG 'Rural Lads and Lasses gay,' by Mrs. Gallimore.

QUADRILLS.

'Scots wha hae,' by Mr. Gallimore.

COUNTRY-DANCE.

'Farewell my Soul's best treasure,' by Mrs. Gallimore.

The Chairman then said ^o he took that opportunity to express the delight which he felt in witnessing a sight which could not fail to give pleasure to any king, and which he was sure would indeed have gratified our own 'king' to witness. So large, so happy, so truly respectable an assemblage joined in the bonds of friendship and harmony, vying with each other who could do him the highest honour, or offer him the most sincere homage.

^o This meeting was intended to shew our gratitude for unparalleled services rendered by Mr. Oastler in the cause of humanity—in defence of the factory slaves—for his efforts to emancipate the whole British slaves from the cruel and merciless hands of the factory tyrants, and their buffeting, beating with billy-rollers, strapping, bruising, kicking, hanging-up by the hair, torturing and imprisoning, understrappers called overlookers;—yes, for services which have rivetted him in the hearts of millions of his fellow-creatures in this country; and his fame and his deeds had extended to and spread over the continents of Europe and America, while he (Mr. P.) felt confident that thousands yet unborn would bless the name of Oastler, and that not more for his efforts in the factory cause, than for those in opposition to the slow, torturous, and inhuman system of wholesale murder, miscalled the New Poor Law Amendment Act, and for which he had no doubt, he was, after long persecution, now suffering a cruel imprisonment in one of the cells of a London gaol; and knowing, as we do, that his punishment is for his deeds of virtue and benevolence, nothing but a spirit of emulation who could shew the greatest respect, filled every bosom present.

^o He was proud of the honour conferred upon him of presiding over their proceedings that evening, and should remember it as the proudest day of his life. Mr. Stocks had given them a history of old and better times; he had described our ancestry, their condition, and mode of doing business, and had also given us a sketch of his (the 'king's') own life, and that too in a superior manner than he was capable of. He would, therefore, only beg that they would extend their indulgence while he read a short address which he had prepared for that occasion, and which, if they approved, he trusted they would adopt as the address of the meeting."

The following address was then read by the Chairman,—

"There can be no person but must be deeply impressed with feelings of admiration, at the long and unparalleled arduous struggles maintained by Richard Oastler, first for the emancipation of the African slaves in the Colonies, and subsequently for that of the white slaves in our factories at home, and the no less strenuous efforts made by him to prevent the enforcement of the hideous new Bastille Poor Law, the Rural Police, or espionage system, and, in short, the whole of the Melbourne scheme of legalized, wholesale murder and oppression; and, having often listened with delight to the persuasive tones of his harmonious voice, which never breathed ought but good-will and kindness towards us and ours, and having imbibed deeply in our hearts the brilliant effusions of humanity as they flowed from that fountain of Christian benevolence—his heart; and, knowing as we do,

his pure independence and the disinterestedness of his actions, and philanthropic magnanimity of conduct, his unquestionable talents and his sterling worth; knowing as we do, all this and more, we have viewed with astonishment, regret, and sympathy, this great, this good and benevolent man, driven from the happiest of homes by the machinations of his unrelenting enemies, who, stung to madness by the exhibition of virtues they cannot imitate, by the talents and fortitude they cannot, will not emulate, have, with the subtlety of the serpent, wound themselves round his master's heart, and deceived him—and like as our first parents were driven from Paradise, so were he and Mrs. Oastler driven from their Paradise, through the world to roam, without a home, without a resting place, and found none, till, after a wearisome, harassing and irksome delay, his late master, who had driven him from his resting place, from his beloved home, with his means wasted and his constitution impaired, provided him with another home (if home it may be called) in a cell within the walls of the Fleet Prison. Yes; hear it posterity! The champion of humanity, of benevolence, of freedom, is himself a prisoner! We, therefore, resolve, not only to mark our abhorrence of such anti-christian conduct, but we pledge ourselves to sustain, support, and bear up 'our good old King,' under his unhallowed and undeserved sufferings, inflicted on him by that person whose only feelings ought to have been those of gratitude.

"And now we must earnestly implore that the Ten Hour Bill Committees, of Yorkshire and Lancashire in particular, and throughout Great Britain in general, may be immediately re-organized; and we also appeal to every lover of justice and good order from every part of the whole country—we appeal to every factory worker—to every factory child—to every factory child's mother in the empire,—we call upon all who have hearts to feel, and gratitude to impel them to action, to come forward, and by their individual and collective exertions, to supply those means of comfort, which, had he not spent his substance in their defence, and for their redemption, would have been supplied by his own private fortune, and which, had he been a mercenary or unjust steward, he could have amassed in heaps."

Mr. Pitkethly then sat down amidst the most tremendous cheering, followed by three loud cheers for the "good old King."

Mr. Gallimore proposed, and Mr. Shaw seconded, the address, to be adopted by the meeting: It was unanimously passed, amidst loud cheering.

GRAND PROMENADE.

'England's own true blue,' by Mr. Bond.

COUNTRY-DANCE.

Mr. Gallimore then rose and proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman, which was seconded by Mr. Shaw, and unanimously carried. Mr. Pitkethly, in reply, said:—"He thanketh them for the honour they had done him, and for the excellency of their conduct and good order; and told them, how delighted and charmed the 'old King' would be to hear that they had been so happy."—(Loud cheering).

The entertainments concluded with the following new version of 'God save the King,' which was written in the Hall during the evening, and sang as a finale, in good style, by Mr. and Mrs. Gallimore.

"God save our Factory King,
Oastler, the brave, we sing,
 Long live our King;
Send him victorious,
Happy and glorious,
Long to watch over us,
 God save our King.

"O Lord, our God, arise,
Scatter his enemies,
 And make them fall;
On him our hopes we fix,
Confound their politics,
And from their knavish tricks,
 God save us all.

"Though in a prison vile,
Oastler may dwell awhile,
 Yet, shall he reign;

Deep within every breast
Shall his worth be imprest.
And by each tongue confest,
 Free from all stain.

"Thy choicest gifts in store
On him be pleased to pour—
 God save our King.
Oastler will still despise
Whigs, and their treach'rous lies,
While all his friends rejoice —
 God save our King.

"Yet, shall we live to see
Oastler, the brave, set free—
 Then shall we sing;
And our triumphant voice
Shall in loud strains rejoice,
While echo loud replies
 God save our King."

THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY JOHN PAVEY,
NO. 47, HOLYWELL-STREET, STRAND.

THESE Papers are principally intended for the perusal of the friends of Christianity, and the Constitution; particularly the Clergy and the Aristocracy, and of all persons who are possessed of Property. The object of the writer will be to explain the reason for the present alarming state of English society, and the consequent insecurity of life and property: also, to offer some remarks upon the folly and wickedness of attempting to uphold our institutions, particularly that of Private Property, by the unconstitutional means of Centralization, Commissioning, Espionage, and Force; finally, to state his own views on the best mode of restoring Peace, Contentment, Security, and Prosperity, to every rank of the people of England.

The author is perfectly aware of the fact, that every Parliamentary leader is now only attempting to legislate for the present moment—putting off the evil day—making laws “from hand to mouth,” in the hope that some unforeseen, fortunate event may enable succeeding Statesmen to legislate for permanency. He is also convinced that there is a mode of successfully re-establishing our institutions upon their original foundation—Christianity;—and that that is the only way to preserve them from the encroachments of political partisans, who are now only paving the way to universal Ruin, Anarchy, and Despotism.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

H. J. H. BROOKS, Ashton-under-Line is thanked for his kind communication. The notice from the *People's Magazine* was inserted on the cover of No. 6.

Anonymous writers may be saved much trouble, by being informed, that without reading them, their papers will be burned.

All communications must be post-paid.

If it should so happen, that these Papers should be noticed *pro*. or *con*. by any organ of public opinion, R. O. will be grateful to any friend, who will send him a copy thereof, to the Fleet, London.

In consequence of many complaints from advertisers and readers, that the blue cover interfered with the distinctness of the type, a change is made, which it is hoped will be satisfactory to those friends who have been thus inconvenienced.

NOTICES OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

"The FLEET PAPERS, Nos. 7 to 10.—Mr. Oastler has now got into a strain which we think will be found more generally interesting. His exposures of the evils of the New Poor Law and of the Factory System are of the most searching kind, and stamp a value on the "Fleet Papers,"—*Birmingham Advertiser*, Mar. 17, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS, No. 10, contains horrid pictures of Factory life, which fully excuse the extreme earnestness of Mr. Oastler in battling with the 'white slavery monster.'—*Berrows Worcester Journal*, Mar. 11, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS.—*Letters to Thomas Thornhill, Esq. By Richard Oastler. No. 10. London: Pavey, Holywell-street, Strand.*—In this number, Mr. Oastler gives a portion of the autobiography of a Factory victim,—and a most interesting one it is. It will be concluded in the succeeding one, and says Mr. Oastler, addressing Mr. Thornhill, 'thou wilt follow some remarks, which will, I hope, convince you and 'your order,' that the free-trading Malthusians must be repelled, or 'your order' must sink. They are fast sowing enmity between you and the people; and hitherto 'your order' has wickedly and foolishly sided with them! That, sir, is the great national mistake. I know not a more important subject. Perhaps what I shall advance may produce conviction on the minds of the aristocracy. I pray God that it may!—Amen, say we, most heartily, to that prayer,—convinced, as we are, that the greatest enemies of Britain and the British people are the disciples of that cold-blooded, heartless, and infidel—(for as its principles are opposed to the direct precepts and plainest doctrines of Christianity, it is infidel,) school of politics, philosophy, and political economy, out of which has sprung the factory system, the free-trade mania, (which, applied as it has been, has worked nothing but evil to the labouring classes.) and the new poor law. The principles of that school are rapidly undermining all of good old English feeling and modes of action, and subverting all reverence for rank, all respect for authority, all love for and confidence in superiors; all that sense of mutual dependence, and the necessity of mutual kindness, which used to characterize the rich and the poor in their dealings with each other; substituting in their stead, amongst the poor, a selfish indifference to others' woes,—a rude and vulgar levelling principle, which disdains the claims of antiquity, and disowns the rights of birth, of station, and of fortune; a discontented, disaffected, restless spirit, which makes them indeed 'rebels, idle, profligate and worthless;' and amongst the rich, a cold unchristian appreciation of the poor, merely as machines to do their will and promote their pleasures, or serve their interests;—a Malthusian determination to limit their numbers, to keep them in the lowest stage of existence, where able to work, and when they can labour no longer, to consign them to the work-house, where almost every privation that can affect the physical and moral sense of the victims awaits them. This is no exaggerated picture; it is a true description of the feelings which animate a large portion of the population of these kingdoms; and, unless repelled and put down by the counteracting principles of CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF ENGLAND CONSERVATISM, alas for poor old England! the sun of her greatness will, indeed, soon set."—*Hull Packet, March 12th, 1841.*

"The FLEET PAPERS.—Nos. 10 and 11 of these Papers are before us, containing some of the most valuable reflections that have yet appeared. The overhanging desolation that threatens this misgoverned country, without some speedy change, is plainly and seriously stated. The interesting account of the factory cripple is told with touching pathos."—*Manchester and Salford Advertiser, March 13, 1841.*

"OASTLER'S FLEET PAPERS, Nos. 9 and 10.—It was our intention to give a lengthened notice, and an extract from these excellent numbers of the 'Fleet Papers,' in our last; but circumstances prevented our being able to do so. We will not mar with commendation the touching and pathetic introduction of a factory cripple to his readers, by Mr. Oastler. It will speak better for itself than any language of which we are master. * * * Upon his favourite subject, Oastler is, of course, at home; and the treasure-house of his memory not seldom brings out matters in connexion therewith not less annoying to the lukewarm friends or open enemies of England's infant slaves, than serviceable to their cause. Such we apprehend the following reminiscences to be. * * * Thus has Oastler pinned Ashley to the post—whence if he flinch now—no flogging can be more severe than he will merit."—*Northern Star, March 13, 1841.*

"Does not every man of sober reflection see it? 'The poor,' as Dr. Hook says, 'are the aristocracy of the church.' The democracy of England in the House of Commons, with Lord John Russell at their head, are the enemies of the poor—of their less fortunate kinsmen and acquaintances. Purge the House of Commons of the scum which floats there, and we shall hear no more of the reign of terror, and the cruel ordinances which emanate from Somerset House. Do justice, and peace will prevail; but continue your despotism, grind the bones, fatten the ungrateful of workhouses with paupers denied, in almost every sense, Christian burial, and you will create feelings of wild revenge, the yell of which will be heard at Windsor, and make the favouritism and impudence of the Pagets a standing moral for future generations. We consider that we cannot, in better place, or more opportunely, communicate to our readers an extract from the last number of the 'Fleet Papers,' published by Mr. Richard Oastler, who is still in prison, at the suit of his whig landlord. In every word he says upon the factory system we most heartily concur, although it makes one's heart bleed to record its dreadful workings. * * *"—*Liverpool Mail, March 16, 1841.*

"The FLEET PAPERS, No. 11. *London: Pavey, Holywell-street, Strand.*—A few days back, Mr. Marshall, the son of that Mr. J. G. Marshall, who has been raised [under the old and mangled constitution, mind, which these Marshalls helped to subvert,] from obscurity, to wealth, power, and station, which has enabled him to mate with the aristocracy of the land, dared asperse the landed gentlemen of England; and to talk of the 'deadly' Corn Law, and 'its murders.' Before that person ventures again to denounce the 'cruel laws of the aristocracy, and to endeavour to excite in his dependents a hatred for the gentry of his country, let him read the 10th and 11th numbers of the 'Fleet Papers;' and if he has a heart, the simple pathos of William Dodd's narrative, with the touching eloquence of Mr. Oastler's comments, must pierce it. Let him, in parti-

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddleworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 13.

LONDON, SATURDAY, MARCH 27, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—No, no; you cannot do it! Your arm is not of sufficient length—your hand is too puny—you cannot eclipse the sun from your Prisoner! The glorious orb now shines, in all his majestic brilliancy, on me, though I am in the Fleet! His rays here are as pure as those with which he shines on you! And the birds, too—why or wherefore, I know not, but so it is,—the lark, the blackbird, the thrush, and the linnet have followed the *rural* Prisoner to his Cell, and are now singing to cheer him as sweetly and as merrily as ere they did in Fixby groves! It is so, Mr. Thornhill; while I write, they are warbling their sweetest notes, and are tuning my heart in grateful lays to the Giver of all good, to that God, who is the Father of us all. Soon we shall meet before His bar;—then shall we know why *I* am here, and why *you* are there! Meantime, we must be content to guess His reasons, knowing assuredly, that there is no chance in His arrangements.

The wall which fronts my window, reminds me, while the sun is shining, and the birds are singing, of the blossom on the trees, planted by myself, at Fixby. Some of those trees were purchased,—some were given to me by a dear departed friend. The wall before me is the racquet-wall, all whitened in round patches by the balls, which here, the defendants throw for their amusement, in defiance of the plaintiffs. 'Tis but a poor mimic of the original;—it is, however, the best which now presents itself;—on a day like this, I am predisposed to be pleased with every thing which most distantly resembles any of the former scenes which I delighted in. True enough, I cannot now regale myself and my friends with the fruit of those trees at Fixby, nor can I envy him who does.

The iron spikes which crown the racquet-wall, were they at Fixby, would prevent the mischievous peacocks from destroying the blossoms, as they were wont;—here, they are an useless waste of the public funds. They merely serve to frighten those outside, and us to laugh at. They portray the harmless bristling of our defeated captors.

I know not how it is,—but it is certain, that when the sun shines, every thing I see and hear reminds me of that loved spot—Fixby; which after thirty years

of your absence, is now, I rejoice to know, (from a circumstance too delicate to mention,) become as dear to you, and to one whom most you love, as it always was to me.

The gambols of the children here, and the athletic sports of the men, the music of which, mingling with the songsters, reminds me of such happy scenes in Fixby Park, when it was not counted a sin to tread upon the sward! Yes, every thing here reminds me of Fixby—the kindness of all around me;—why, Sir, that garden-pot in my window, so full of blooming flowers, was given to me by the kind wife of a prisoner here, (whose husband knows you well), as she said,—“to make this room a little more like Fixby!” How odd!—that even *your* friends should show such touching kindness to your Prisoner! Many other things, which I could name, refresh my memory, and whisper “Fixby”; but, for the present, I will leave them.

Then, we have our elections here, as well as you outside; at those times, we are as merry as you could wish us to be. We have instrumental music and singing, and speechifying, and banners, and all the etcetera of your own elections, save and except, the bribery and corruption.

What there is behind that wall, I cannot tell, but I can fancy anything—and to please myself, I often say, 'tis but the thickness of four bricks which hides me from the busy world—only a few miles that shut me out from rural prospects; and thus I prevent both prison-walls and the busy city from disturbing or annoying me; for, in a moment, I think of that sweet view eastward from Fixby Hall, and seat myself, where I so often have sat, upon the slightly elevated pavement, with pipe and friends, enjoying their converse, and that lovely scenery. Imagination, (a thing which laughs at man's power to restrain it,) soon realises all those fondly cherished scenes.

Sitting on those ancient oaken chairs, which *you* bought at *my* sale, with table well supplied with fruit and other homely cheer, surrounded by my friends and yours, how often have I there enjoyed “the feast of reason and the flow of soul!” Many will read this, who will remember those enchanting seasons, those treats which Friendship gives but to her pets. True, it was even then only the shadow of what old Fixby had been; but it was the best representation I had the power to make, whilst you were absent.

How we used to enjoy ourselves!—Tenants and neighbours, all were friends! How often have we there toasted “the Squire's good health!” Never was there waste, never riot, never dissipation—'twas really and truly, reason's feast. Many a poor man, as well as rich was there. Sadler the Champion, and the Crippled slave, have sat together with the “King,” and many friends—all were welcomed then. The ladies and the children would saunter and gamble on the lawn in front. Now, we joined them; then, they rested awhile with us, and sweetly seasoned Reason's feast! How, in such company, have I admired that view! The very remembrance of those happy days, would, if I were disposed to melancholy, drive that Hag outside these walls. What a scene was that! I have described the foreground. The Haha hid none of the view beyond. The gently sloping park, crowned by wood on either hand, gave all its beauties to our gaze, without hiding the rich and varied landscape, spreading all down Calder-dale. Many

villages bespangled that view, and sweet touches of nature's pencil beautified the scene. Merry Wakefield lent her matchless spire in the distance—and, midway, Dewsbury's tower, with many others, directed the mind of man to God. True enough, the foliage on the right, from the terrace where we sat, obscured that little beauty-spot—Woodhouse Church—where we were wont to worship; but there was no need for us to see it. Its site, its spire, its founder, its minister, and its people, were almost part of us; so we could see them always through the shade of things terrestrial. That burial ground, I have not named, at Woodhouse, which your wife so much admired. Before I left your Father's Hall, that ground was sacred to me. Some warm and friendly hands, which I had often clasped, some hearts which loved me, lay cold, entombed in *that* lovely spot. But, since I left, two other friends of mine—aye, very dear to me they were—are mingling their dust together in one tomb, in that consecrated ground! One of them was a friend of very many years, with crystal mind, and heart so tender. Many youthful recollections endear her memory to me, even here, sobered by after friendship. The other was, when I left Fixby, as one of my own, who used to call me "papa." Then she became a wife—a mother next;—but now she is a corpse!—Sweet Mary Anne!—thou wert very dear to me!—Thou wast Fixby's sweetest flower!—How often hast thou cheered and soothed me!—Death was angry when he nipped thee!—But he had not the power to harm thee! He stole thy body for awhile, and sent thy spirit to its native place; he cannot hold thee long. Soon he must relinquish e'en thy body!—But oh! how many tender cords he snapped, when he made prisoner of thee!— In Heaven they will all be reunited.—— Excuse me, Mr. Thornhill, you did not know that charmer; you never knew one so lovely, as was "the flower of Fixby." I wonder if her happy spirit is permitted, now and then, to visit her "papa" in prison. If I mistake not, it is even so. I never think of Fixby, but the beauty and the fragrance of that sweet flower is remembered by me. Dear Mary Anne!—If I should ever again visit my native county, *thy* tomb will be moistened by *my* tears.—— How is it!—of what essence is the mind of man composed? These prison prospects, all confined by high brick walls, and topped with *chevaux-de-frise* to keep our bodies safe, have actually tempted my wandering thoughts to ramble in premises now forbidden to me! Ah! Mr. Thornhill, parchments and rents bind *you* to Fixby;—to *me*, it is united by far stronger ties!

Well, well, I was sitting, as I thought, enjoying myself, as oft I have done, on the broad flags in front of Fixby Hall, looking eastward. 'Twas only natural that the spirits of departed friends who were dear, and who had often met me there, should, for awhile, detain me, and draw me from the contemplation of objects purely terrestrial.— That was a beauteous spot, Mr. Thornhill. The numerous herds of cattle, in the expansive park in front, were often a source of real pleasure to your steward. The "milch-kine," marking the coming weather by their stations, and lowing when the milk-maids tarried—the sheep grazing so peacefully—the little lambs frolicing so sportfully—and then, the herd of horses, young and old, romping so playfully;—these were scenes that oft delighted me.

You are fond of racing, Sir ; but you never saw at Doncaster, Ascot, or Newmarket, such good races as I have seen in Fixby Park. Oh ! how the steeds went prancing and neighing, and kicking and rearing, in a race of their own, from Morgan Clump—down the sweep—on the plain—and up the hill to the shepherd's cot—and then back again!—and how the victors would turn round and laugh at the vanquished—then try to tempt them to another strife by nips and caresses, running ahead of them, and looking after them, and then neighing most coaxingly ; or, if the sage ones were weary, and the defeated were dispirited ; we saw them herding together in the hollow, just in front, as if to gratify us with their graceful groupings. There were no spurs, no whips, in those races—no anxiety or loss in the result to any one—no unfair, dishonest gains. That was racing in perfection. It was nature's mode of strife—so harmless, yet so full of fun ! But what a halloo-bo-loo the hunters sometimes caused !—Then, all the cows, heifers, sheep, lambs, and horses, for the while, ran mad. Hundreds together mingled—gates flew open ; and the high pasture and the low pasture “stock” were all blended together in one indiscriminate herd—some trembling with fear, whilst others were excited to emulation by enthusiasm—the horses were neighing, the cows were lowing, and the trembling ewes and lambs were bleating most enquiringly. And then, the dogs and the huntsmen, with their followers ; oh, what a throng was there—what noise, and confusion ! Then, there was the poor jaded hare, who came to Fixby, seeking her wonted shelter on the left, in Gernhill Wood ;—poor puss, 'twas, after all, in vain.—That sight was wont to vex me. Strange, that in prison its recollection has no pang. When the work of death was done. The sportsmen and the dogs departed, leaving heavy work for Fixby's servants, to sort and separate the cattle, and drive them to their proper pastures ! I was wont to grumble then,—I thought that the *Gentlemen*, who hunted, should have paid your servants for that extra trouble.

Then there were the peaceful passengers across the park. They never annoyed me — they were not then *punished* if they went one step askew. It is not wise, in that district, to avail yourself of every provision granted by an act of parliament. I know what the law says, Sir :—I know also what good neighbourhood and nature demand. I was always happy to see the passengers enjoying the beauties of Fixby ; and when with my friends, they saw me seated there, I fancied that they were saying, “No man is so happy as Fixby's steward,” Thank God, his pleasure is *now* no less, although he is Fixby's martyr in the Fleet, at suit of Fixby's Lord.

How were those pleasures heightened by the reflection, that amidst all those beauties of nature, there were the delights of neighbourhood as well. There I could sit, knowing that I was surrounded by many hundreds of *your* tenants, and many thousands of *my* neighbours, who loved me, and were ready to sacrifice all for me. I needed no rural police to guard me, Sir !—I used to please the Fixby tenants, by styling them “my body guard—faithful and trusty.” Those were happy days !—and so are these, in prison ! “Inside” and “outside,” I have no lack of friends. I would be grateful to them, and to my God, who gives them to your prisoner.

You must excuse me, Sir ; so I beg that my readers will. I sat down,

intending to write about poor William Doid and the Factory system; but the brilliancy of the sun, and the singing of the birds, and the merry noise of the prison, and the pretty flower-pot in my window, have all combined to mar my project, and force my soul to Fixby. 'Twas natural that my pen should follow it. Hence, all this wandering.—You must forgive me. My heart is now at Fixby,—and one more tale, one little tale, I must now tell you; and then, Sir, I will get to the work which I have set myself.

I was once sitting on that very spot—on the well remembered terrace, in front of my entrance Hall, (which was formerly your library,) which will be shown in the view of Fixby Hall, which shortly will be presented to my readers. I was sitting with a very old, a very wise, and a very good man. He was born at “the Wood” in Fixby. He had seen some summers there, and then had left for Huddersfield. He was wont, now and then, to visit his home-spot, and could always edify me, by telling me what Old Fixby was, when he was young.

I shall not soon forget the first time I met that man. I was then a little boy: my father, for a treat, had taken me to Fixby. I had never been there before—never was I so far from home till then. Considering the tender care with which my fond and most beloved mother had nursed me, I was very venturesome. One sweet summer’s evening I wandered, all alone, from the Hall. I was then a little dumpy, rosy-faced lad,—resolved to see the world. I did not then know that it was so large: I fancied that I must be nearly at the end of it. With what anxiety I trudged up the hill, to Morgan Clump!—turning now and then, to see if I were pursued. When I arrived at the Clump, I noticed not the sweet view from thence.—I had lost sight of the Hall; no one was after me. I exulted to find myself, for the first time, *at large*! Away I ran, as fast as my little fat legs could carry me. I passed the plantation at *Coweliffe*, (that was before the wind had levelled it); with some difficulty I *scaled* the stiles, taking care to look back, from the top of the first, to see if I were pursued. Oh! how I gloried to find myself so far off the Hall, and still all alone—expecting, every moment, to see the end of the world!—the sea—the French and English fighting, and behind them a high, black, and unscalable wall, with its top in the clouds! Such were my expectations. Thus did I then think the world would terminate.

For the first time, I reached the summit of *Coweliffe*. I was all breathless with fatigue, and exultation, and expectation. I looked and wondered. There was no sea—no fighting—no high wall—but the world was just as large before, as all the space which I had left behind me!—and still unfinished! The impression which that view then made upon my mind has never been effaced. A thousand times I have stood there since, but I never *felt* that scene *enve* once. I was alone—I had escaped!—till then I knew not that the world was half so big—I seemed to have it all to myself. I wanted to grasp it;—I saw a town in the valley. I resolved to take possession of it. It was Huddersfield. Down the hill I hastened. I ran along the plain. That was my *first* journey from Fixby to Huddersfield. I was a little boy—all alone—gasping to see the world. My *last* journey was of a different character. Then I was old: I had spent the hey-day of my life in striving to bind your name to Fixby; but you frowned and banished me;—to comfort me, and show that I was beloved by those who had

witnessed my disinterested exertions in your behalf, a hundred thousand of my friends accompanied me: — I *had* then SEEN the world?

I remember the first time I passed up Kirkgate, crossed the Market Place, and traced the town till I was weary; talking to the boys I met, and asking all about everything. This unusual freedom caused the lads to congregate. I found myself inconvenienced by their pressure. I tried to wend my way back to Fixby. Being still more pressed, I went into a shop. A respectable looking gentleman was behind the counter. Some of the boys followed me. The master came round, took me by the hand, asked me who and what I was, &c. I told him all about it. He knew my father; bade the boys go away and leave me; kindly refreshed me; gave me some sweet “spice;” and sent a person, I believe it was his son, to see me safe at Fixby. This was the first time I had seen old Mr. Stocks. He afterwards continued to be my friend, and sometimes honoured me with a call, when he was sauntering towards his native spot. He would delight in telling me of many traits in your father’s character, and principally of his hospitality to rich and poor.

It was your father’s wont to meet the saunterers in the grounds—not to discharge them, but kindly to ask them inwards. According to their ranks, the servant’s hall, the housekeeper’s room, or his own table, afforded refreshment to their need.

He was the only *very* rich man in the place; and he was careful to prevent any, from being *very* poor.

In his days, Fixby Hall was renowned far and wide for good Yorkshire cheer. “Fixby” was then never uttered, but the fine old English Gentleman who owned it, and who resided there, was blessed and toasted.

My venerable friend would sit and tell me, with such animated glee, of former days, that it was delightful to listen to him;—of those days, when, what is now the park, was all in little farms, studded with buildings, stacks, and hedge-rows.

Sitting on the front, he would point with his trusty stick, and tell me who had lived and occupied here, and who there; and then he sketched their persons, characters, and habits,—and smiled, or dropped a tear, just as the facts demanded.

He would trace, too, the old pack-horse-road from Halifax to Huddersfield, between the ash and the oak on the left, under the sycamores at the Waste-gate, along the Haha, and then, on the right, between the oaks and the Scotch fir, up to Morgan Clump. Then he would, smilingly, tell of the time when “Old William,” (with his eight or nine galloways, bearing their bells and packs, or panniers,) passed, twice a week, conveying all the goods which were then exchanged between those towns, (that was then the only road betwixt Halifax and Huddersfield,) and how the women and the children always went to the Waste-gate, to see the string of galloways and their driver pass, gathering what news they could.

He often told, with glee, how the little ones would swing upon the gate, waiting for the ringing of the bells—the token that “William” would not be long in coming. Then the old man would say—“How times have altered!” and tell of the turnpike roads and canals already made, and of the railroads which were then projecting; and after all he would add—“they call it *improvement!*—but

misery increases fast as improvement marches!"—I remember well, that once he told me the following striking tale:—"I have now lived in four distinct ages! When I was a boy, a neighbour, who was 'well to do,' used to say to his neighbour, who was worse off, '*never mind, lad, if I can help thee, thou shalt live.*' Then, when I was a young man, it was always '*live and let live.*' But, when I got into years, the cry was, '*thou mayest live, if thou canst.*' Now, unhappily," said the venerable man, "in my old age, it is, '*thou shalt not live, if I can hinder thee;*' and yet it is pretended that the world is improved in morals and religion!" That good old man was living when I left Fixby. Since then, he too has paid the debt which nature claimed. How many of my Yorkshire friends have been arrested for *that* debt, since I was banished! Sir, is it sinful in this Prison to remember them?

Do you require an apology for detaining you so long from the solemn questions suggested by that very interesting letter from William Dodd, and that affecting tale about Joseph Habergam? If so, blame the sun for shining, and the birds for singing, the flowers for being so beautiful, and my fellow "collegians" for being friendly and merry,—do not blame me. It was those animating facts that drove me far away from this Cell, and made me forget, for awhile, the task which I had set myself.

Perhaps, after all, Sir, some of my kind readers will be pleased to learn how a *rural* Prisoner can cheat imprisonment, (even on a day like this—a lovely country day,) of the power to deprive him of any real enjoyment. They will be glad to find, that memory and mind can never be imprisoned by an angry plaintiff. I can assure them, it is not the first time that "Fixby" has forced me to forget myself. My fair juvenile readers (of which interesting class, I know that I have many,) will excuse an old man, if he strives to amuse himself in a city prison with pleasing recollections of rural scenes. They will not blame me for delaying a few pages,—the recital of facts, (which must make their tender hearts bleed) about the wrongs and sufferings of the poor Factory Children!

The short tale quoted from the lips of a very old and a very observing man, may, Sir, if you are wise, lead to serious meditation, and prepare your mind to enter upon the solemn contemplation of the Factory and the New Poor Law systems.

And now, Sir, before I enter upon the consideration of the two most important subjects that can, at the present moment, occupy the mind of my readers, permit me to state why I have been charged by the press, and by Her Majesty's Ministers, in both Houses, with being "an incendiary," "a madman," and "an enemy to social order." The reasons are—and I defy my bitterest foe, to prove the contrary—because I have resisted Infidelity in all its attacks upon our Christian institutions;—because I have asserted, that Factory Children ought not to be forced to work longer than the law allows slaves and felons to be employed—that ten hours a day of actual work, (*i. e.* from six o'clock in the morning to six o'clock in the evening, with proper time for meals,) is as long as little children ought to be allowed to work, in the heated and pestilential atmosphere of the factories; and also—because I have demanded that which is so well expressed by the Editor of the *Times*, in the following words:—

"We wish to return to the statute of Queen Elizabeth, to offer labour, and the just wages of labour, to all applicants for relief who can work, and in such cases to make honest labour, without degradation or punishment, the indispensable condition of assistance, and to give the sick, the old, and the impotent, and such only, a liberal measure of uncontaminated relief. This is the sole aim and object of all our exertions on the Poor Law question."

You know, Sir, and so does every one, who knows anything about my sayings and doings, know full well, that these are the three crimes for which I have been so long, so frequently, and so bitterly traduced by Her Majesty's Ministers and their servile portion of the press. You know also, and so do I, that had I not been guilty of those three sins against the spirit of the age, instead of being your prisoner, I should still have been your steward. You know also,—I am sure you do, because you have known my heart for many years—that, although I was proud and happy to be your servant—so proud and happy as servant never was before—I am more happy as your prisoner, (still maintaining those principles so dear to me,) than if I were your equal in rank and property, with my body at large, and my mind in chains.

True enough, I have some times been violent in my expressions. I *have* used strong language,—language which the facts demand. I never, on any occasion misrepresented facts. It will be my duty, in these Papers, to run over some of those truths; then, my readers will judge if language could be too indignant, too strong, too violent, in denouncing such horrible cruelties, such cowardly and wanton infliction of torture upon infants, both male and female! such unfathomable hypocrisy!

Sir, I had lived for many years in the very heart of the Factory districts, I had been on terms of intimacy and of friendship with very many Factory masters, and I had all the while fancied that Factories were blessings to the poor. Perhaps there was not, in Yorkshire, one man so unlikely as myself to engage in a war against the Factory Monster. But, what could I do? I did not seek the conflict. The secret was revealed to me unasked, and I was horrified! I did not before believe that human nature could have been so cruel,—nor that the human frame could have endured such protracted torture!

The horrid tale was first told to me by a conscience-stricken Factory master. By him I was urged to commence the war against the Factory Monster. To this hour I have continued it; and I rejoice that I have now a weapon trusted into my hands, by God himself. With this weapon, by His help, I will war to conquest, against that Monster which binds so many Britons in abject slavery. My very bonds have given me strength to break the chains of others—thanks be to God.

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—I rejoice to inform you, that I have received 5*s.* from a London Curate, and 10*s.* from a Gentleman of Ham Common, for the poor Factory Cripple, William Dodd. They have my thanks and his.—R.O.

cular, read the passage we submit; and, when he looks round on the splendid monuments of benevolence raised by the aristocracy and merchants and the traders of England, upon the hospitals they have built,—the infirmaries they have founded,—upon the almshouses, and other princely charities they have endowed,—let him tell his Factory people all that the Factory Lords have omitted to do; and read to them the following simple demonstration of the Factory Lord's carelessness."—*Hull Packet*, March 19, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS, No. 12.—The veteran 'king' has redeemed his promise, as indeed he has never yet been known to fail in doing, and presented us with his portrait in No. 12 of his very interesting series of original papers. There is a likeness to the original, certainly, in this picture, but we miss somewhat of the proportions of a stalwart frame, which is as remarkable as the strength of the mind which has its residence there. Mr. Oastler is represented as seated at a table in his narrow cell, with the elegant lamp lately handed to him as a token of respect by some kind-hearted admirer, and in the act of transcribing, by the assistance of his light, the beautiful and touching verses from the sacred scriptures, which faintly embellished and strengthened one of his addresses to Mr. Thornhill, with a pen which he styles 'the very pen of friendship, beautifully twisted and decorated with silk, and inscribed in golden letters, by the fair hand of one of England's defenceless but spotless daughters—obverse, 'Fleet Papers'; reverse, 'Richard Oastler, the Factory Children's Friend.' We take some extracts from the present paper."
—*Liverpool Mail*, March 20, 1841.

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THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY JOHN PAVEY,
NO. 47, HOLYWELL-STREET, STRAND.

THESE Papers are principally intended for the perusal of the friends of Christianity, and the Constitution; particularly the Clergy and the Aristocracy, and of all persons who are possessed of Property. The object of the writer will be to explain the reason for the present alarming state of English society, and the consequent insecurity of life and property; also, to offer some remarks upon the folly and wickedness of attempting to uphold our institutions, particularly that of Private Property, by the unconstitutional means of Centralization, Commissioning, Espionage, and Force; finally, to state his own views on the best mode of restoring Peace, Contentment, Security, and Prosperity, to every rank of the people of England.

The author is perfectly aware of the fact, that every Parliamentary leader is now only attempting to legislate for the present moment—putting off the evil day—making laws “from hand to mouth,” in the hope that some unforeseen, fortunate event may enable succeeding Statesmen to legislate for permanency. He is also convinced that there is a mode of successfully re-establishing our institutions upon their original foundation—Christianity;—and that that is the only way to preserve them from the encroachments of political partisans, who are now only paving the way to universal Ruin, Anarchy, and Despotism.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. Oastler “at home” on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

“Your Knightsbridge Parson” next week.

R. O. is obliged by the transmission of “Adjunct to Remarks, &c.” Useful, as the publication would be, at this period, he has no funds for the speculation of “a thousand copies neatly and correctly printed, for the information of friends in the Huddersfield Union.” To whom shall the MS. be forwarded?

R. Cox, 153, Chester Road, Hulme, Manchester, is sincerely thanked. R. O. most cordially agrees and heartily says—Amen! The fourth line, in the second verse, on the last page of cover No. 12, is a misprint. It should have been printed—“On Thee our hopes we fix.”

Anonymous writers may be saved much trouble, by being informed, that without reading them, their papers will be burned.

All communications must be post-paid.

If it should so happen that these Papers should be noticed *pro*. or *con*. by any organ of public opinion, R. O. will be grateful to any friend, who will send him a copy thereof, to the Fleet, London.

In consequence of many complaints from advertisers and readers, that the blue cover interfered with the distinctness of the type, a change is made, which it is hoped will be satisfactory to those friends who have been thus inconvenienced.

NOTICES OF THE “FLEET PAPERS.”

“The FLEET PAPERS, No. 12.—With this number there is a tolerable likeness of Mr. Oastler in his cell, which will, no doubt be considered by many hundreds of the readers of the ‘Fleet Papers’ very precious. The matter that occupies the pages, however, requires more this week than a mere passing notice. After stating his impression of the real cause of his imprisonment, Mr. Oastler goes on to point out the miserable policy that infidelity and tyranny, under various shapes, names, and guises, have at last driven our once boasted proud aristocracy to pursue.

Glancing at the conduct of Lord Morpeth, who unnecessarily, and, apparently, gratuitously, went out of his way in order to denounce the ladies, and the whole female sex of England as impure, he traces, with vigour and effect, the un-English, Malthusian spirit that is gradually upsetting the Bible, destroying its sound precepts, and setting at nought its divine Institutions. 'To this lie against nature,' to use the writer's emphatic language, 'this treason against God, may be traced all the evils which afflict this country—all the difficulties which annoy and perplex our governors—all the oppressions and wrongs of the poor.' Another pregnant hint is given relative to the agitation of the charter, which was done in order to drive off the formidable movement then making against the poor law amendment. Two men, one in parliament (both, by the way, ought to be damned to everlasting infamy), avowed infidels, Malthusians, radicals, chartists, or republicans, as may best serve, keep up a regular communication with the government, and, through some well-meaning friends of the people, with the working classes also. These men were called in to stifle the anti-poor-law petitioners. • • • •—"Manchester and Salford Advertiser, March 27, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS, No. 12. London: Pavey, 47, Holywell Street, Strand.—This number gives a portrait of 'our Old King' sitting in his cell. As a lithograph, it is well executed. The topics adverted to in the 'Papers' of last Saturday, are the conduct of Mr. Thornhill, and the various measures of the day. In alluding to the spirit which prompted his persecutor, Mr. Thornhill, to immure him in the Fleet, Mr. Oastler thus describes it:—• • • • We do not think Mr. Oastler's mode of accounting for the origin of the Charter is a correct one. It was not brought forward by any Malthusian manufacturers, to swamp the cry for the repeal of the New Poor Law: if it were, it has failed in its effect, for Mr. Oastler well knows that the Chartists have been always the most opposed to the New Poor Law, and have always aided him in his praiseworthy efforts."—Northern Star, March 27, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS, No. 12.—Mr. Oastler has given us, in this number, a portrait of himself, and a little insight into the origin of the 'People's Charter,' which it would be well for all Chartists to read, in order that they may see the purpose for which that 'juggle' was palmed upon them. Upon the whole this is, in fact, the best number that has appeared."—Birmingham Advertiser, March 25, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS. Being Letters to Thomas Thornhill, Esq., from Richard Oastler, Pavey.—The subject of the paper before us is the Factory system, which is denounced with the earnest eloquence so characteristic of the writer. A fearful picture is given of the misery to which the unbridled thirst for riches reduces the 'victims' of the factory; and there are few who will not agree that the 'Factory master' should be made to provide for the subsistence of the wretches whom excessive toil and want have rendered powerless. The accumulators of wealth, as Mr. Oastler observes, have never advanced a step towards the establishment of asylums for the cripples their system has made. The hardening power of wealth has been strikingly exemplified in the indifference with which the sufferings of those from whom their profit is derived are uniformly regarded by the great body of manufacturers. The exceptions prove nothing. All that has been done for the protection of the slaves of the system, has been conquered from, achieved in spite of, the mass of their masters. The manufacturing millionaire cares nothing for the welfare of his workpeople—would at any time sacrifice it when his interest demands it. Mr. Oastler's sympathies are all on the other side, and his efforts to disseminate better feelings, and expose the miseries of which he has had experience, will, we trust, be not only generally useful, but beneficial to himself, as well as others."—Satirist, March 28, 1841.

The following letter to Mr. Oastler, is from a very intelligent and influential Farmer in the South of England.

"My dear Sir,

"Your most delightful 'Fleet Papers' are, by every right-minded Englishman that I have conversed with on the subject, pronounced splendid, bold, and brilliant; and I believe all true Christians that read them, most sincerely pray God to give you the blessings of health, strength, and courage to persevere in the honourable course you have so far pursued. The force and power of such language and unanswerable arguments, with the proofs and facts, must command attention; and, with the blessing of the Almighty, Truth and Justice in the cause of the poor will ultimately prevail over Tyranny and Oppression,—especially supported, as I believe they are, by the voice and assistance of all the best men of the country, east, west, north, and south. See *Petitions*, and many other proofs of this fact in the public papers,—from Ipswich, Suffolk, in the east—Weymouth, Dorset, Clyst, Honiton, Devonshire, in the west—from Kent and Sussex, and many other places, in the south—and nearly all parts of the north; from reports and proofs at the Mansion House, Hatton Garden, &c., in London, as the following selections will show. But first, as you have favoured us with some account of what has been doing in the north, I will give you a short account of the south, where I have met with a few persons who have returned from the north most cruelly disappointed; and they were led to believe they were sold or to be sent to 'the promised Land, flowing with milk and honey.' Three men, with their wives and families, four widows and families, and several orphans, and making together more than fifty persons, who, by the torture and torment of the practice of the New Poor Law, were driven from their homes in the south, for shelter in the north. By the horrid cruelties of sleeping by night in cold stone cellars, &c., and by hot steam, &c., in the mills in which they worked by day; some of their families did not live to return to tell their tale of woe and misery; but those I saw did, just as you have described in your 'Factory letters,' had felt the strap and the hilly-rollers, some had marks and sores on their heads, where the hair had been torn up by the roots, by lifting them up by it, and throwing them with vea-

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Alar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

Vol. I.—No. 14.

LONDON, SATURDAY, APRIL 3, 1841.

Price 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

Sir,—My last letter was principally intended for the perusal of my fair juvenile readers. It was written on one of those sunny days, as when I was wont to be visited at Fixby by many sweet-blooming young ones, who flourished on, and around your estates.

The thoughts of them, and of their smiles and interesting converse, mingling so sweetly with the pleasing prison sounds and scenes, tuned my heart to the old strain,—and I seemed to be "at home" again.

Now, the east-wind blows—the atmosphere is gloomy—and I am influenzaish. I am not disposed to be melancholy—but I can now treat a melancholy subject seriously. That subject is the Factory Question.

The first Factory fact which was communicated to me, was almost incredible. I never shall forget the horror with which my mind was filled, when I first heard it from one who could not be mistaken—one who had practised it for many years—one who had amassed immense wealth by it—one whose conscience rebelled against that sin!

The astounding fact was—"that, in the Worsteds Mills of Bradford, in Yorkshire, many hundreds of little girls and boys were regularly worked, standing all the while, from six o'clock in the morning till seven o'clock in the evening, with only thirty minutes allowed, in all that time, for meals, instruction, and recreation! Many of those children being only from six to seven years old!—some only five!" It is an easy thing to *write* those words; but oh! how difficult to *apprehend their meaning!* The aches, and pains, the bodily, and mental anguish of the industrious victims!—all undeserved! And then the sordid money-grubbing sensuality of their oppressors!—often unpunished here! But "He that is higher than the highest, regardeth; and there be higher than they."

The knowledge of that one astounding Factory truth, without entering into other details, satisfied me, that humanity demanded an alteration. I ventured to mention it in a letter which was printed in a Leeds newspaper. I naturally expected, that all parties would immediately unite with me to obtain an amelio-

ration. The fact being known was, as I thought, enough to secure an amendment. I had miscalculated the power of wealth. My antagonists were numerous, malignant, and influential!

Finding myself assailed, instead of being assisted, I perceived that I must either quit the field, and leave the innocent victims in the hands of their tormentors, to perish; or prepare for a most serious, and, as far as I was concerned, a ruinous conflict. My conscience would not permit me to retire and leave so many thousands of little helpless children to their cruel fate! So I determined, God being my Helper, to investigate the system of factory labour through all its ramifications; and then, to publish the facts as I discovered them; and, if I could not make him yield, I resolved to wage a war, till death, against that Monster of tyranny, oppression, and fraud. The conflict has been long and severe; but, from the day I first heard of his cruelties to this moment, in health and sickness, in prosperity and adversity, in joy and sorrow, whether maligned or applauded, at large or in bonds, I have never laid down my weapons, I have fearlessly encountered the grim foe in many battle-fields, and, even now, although I am your Prisoner, by the aid of Omnipotence, I hope to conquer.

Never—never, since the world began, was such a tale of woe unfolded, as is the Factory tale! Its realities, are fiction and romance on wild horses! Lust, Intemperance, Tyranny, Fraud, Cowardice, Hypocrisy, Covetousness, and Murder, have revelled in luxuriance under that accursed system. The horrid fact which first so startled me, now seems, compared with its enormities, a beauty-spot, rather than a blot!

Some of its horrors I will detail to you, Sir,—others are secure from publication, by their abominable indecency. Still, in the Fleet Papers, the Monster shall have no quarter. I can tell enough to arouse every English, Christian, and natural feeling; and fearlessly, that tale I will relate.

It has slain, by its tyranny and villainy, hundreds of thousands of human beings—it has not erected a monument to one! Thousands of crippled or emaciated victims now crawl, in poverty and agony, unpitied, upon the soil of Britain! but it has raised no subscription—it has founded no asylum, even for one!—although Sir Robert Peel, whose father is said to have made millions of pounds by it, has declared in the House of Commons,—

“I am one of those who have derived our fortunes from the industry of the operative classes, and I trust that others, who owe their prosperity to the same causes, will feel as I do. THAT IT IS OUR DUTY TO RELIEVE THE PUBLIC, BY TAKING UPON OURSELVES THE CHARGE OF A JUST REQUITAL TO THE CLASSES FROM WHOM OUR PROSPERITY HAS SPRUNG!”

I rejoice at this opportunity of quoting a sentiment from Sir Robert Peel, of which I so heartily approve. If Sir Robert has any confidence in his own opinion, and any influence with his own “order,” not a worn-out Factory operative can hereafter remain without a comfortable asylum.

The “JUST REQUITAL,” of which Sir Robert speaks—the “requit” for loss of form, of health, of strength to labour!—the “requit” for pain in every limb, and for a mind oppressed beyond endurance!—the “requit” for a shortened life, and the robbery of education!—the “JUST REQUITAL” for injuries which money cannot repair!—must, at the very lowest calculation, be an asylum of com-

fort and of plenty, administered in such a manner, as to assure the injured victims, that they deserve reward from those who have obtained their wealth at a price so awful! If such an Asylum be not immediately established, Sir Robert Peel's remark about the "Duty" of his "order," was worse than senseless—it was cowardly and insulting!—It was the rich, elevated Millocrat, casting his last arrow at the poor degraded Factory labourer! The rampant *millionnaire* confessing his debt to the most abject of his victims, acknowledging that "justice" demands "requit," but, resolving, that his *just* creditor shall perish, rather than his heap of blood-acquired gold shall be diminished!

My object, Sir, is, to watch events, to mark the most fitting opportunity, and, when I see that a stroke will *tell* against the Monster, to level it, by conveying information which will be useful to my country. I prefer this method, rather than, in these Papers, to confine myself to a regular detail of my proceedings against the Factory Monster. I think that, by such a plan, my warfare will be most successful, and I believe, also, that it will be less wearying to my readers.

I shall not, however, leave you in ignorance of any important fact, (excepting those discoveries which I have made, of the revellings of Lust in those dens of infamy;—decency and religion, forbid that I should relate those truths,) but I shall drop all needful facts on paper, at intervals, choosing my times and opportunities, as best may serve the Factory Children.

At present, Mr. J. G. Marshall, the Flax-spinner of Leeds and Shrewsbury, has made himself very prominent, by taking Earl Fitzwilliam to task.

It is not my intention to interfere in their quarrel, but I cannot permit such an opportunity to pass unheeded. I grieve to think that a nobleman should, by his own imprudence, have given the Millocrat a lever with which to assay the destruction of his "order."

The noble Earl's never-to-be-sufficiently-deprecated recommendation "to pay no more taxes"—his close connexion and constant friendship with the Leeds "reformers," who threatened "to behead the King," and who "groaned at the Queen:"—his strenuous support of the New Poor Law, and other matters in Earl Fitzwilliam's political career, render him a vulnerable foe.

Although I shall not interfere in the dispute, I shall do good service to my country, if, by his works, I show you who and what this Champion of Liberty is, who has undertaken to throw a lance at Earl Fitzwilliam.—Who is this friend of the working classes? Who is this liberal reformer? The following statements may assist you in calculating the character of this foe to "your order." They may also serve to convince the people of England, that nothing will be gained by them, if the Millocrats should happen, unluckily, to supersede our ancient Nobility—the disgrace of the latter is, that they have been keeping company with the Tyrant Millocrats, and have taken some lessons out of their book; else, not a nobleman could have supported such a cruel, tyrannical, execrable, and atrocious measure, as the accursed New Poor Law.

If you, the landlords of England, instead of listening to, and leaguering yourselves, with the Millocrats, had maintained the rights and independence of your labourers,—if, in place of sacrificing the latter, by delivering them up to the tender mercies of the former, you had encouraged and protected their labour in

your fields, we should not now have witnessed a Leeds Flax-spinner daring to charge Earl Fitzwilliam and his order with robbery, fraud, and murder! It is not, however, the first time that Satan has been charged with reproving sin. The facts which I shall relate, selected, at the moment, from many more, will prove how much "Brass" must have been required, to enable Mr. J. G. Marshall to appear in the field as the public Champion of Liberty and Justice!

My object, Sir, in publishing the subjoined extracts, at the present moment, is solely because I think it opportune to warn the Aristocracy, and to induce them to leave off meddling with the philosophy of the "liberal and enlightened" Factory Monster. The New Poor Law is only *one* branch of the Factory system, *intended* to drive the agricultural poor into the Factories.

I do not ask you to take this assertion on my authority. The letters of two great Millocrats, Mr. Edmund Ashworth and Mr. Robert Hyde Greg, to Edwin Chadwick Esq., Secretary to the Poor Law Commission, prove that fact to be true.

The cruel Factory Monster had already devoured the poor children which had been supplied from the London, Birmingham, and other workhouses; then followed the children of the poor in the manufacturing districts, and those of the neighbouring agricultural parishes. The Monster was not even satisfied with the addition of those from Ireland, but panted for the choicest blood in England—the infantile population of the distant agricultural provinces!

When the New Poor Law was concocting, Ashworth thus expressed his wishes to Chadwick:—

"Great complaints are made of the surplus population of the agricultural counties, whilst here our deficiency is made up by a vast influx from Ireland, of ignorant, discontented, and turbulent people, who, introducing and widely spreading their own habits, have a tendency gradually to demoralize our own native population. In the centre of the county of Essex, in a neighbourhood with which I happen to be acquainted, I find the agricultural labourers, in every respect, well qualified for our manufacturing districts."—"It is often the practice here, if a mill-owner is short of work-people, to apply to overseers of the poor, and to workhouses, for families supported by the parish. Of late, this has not always been attended with success. _____, sent a person, who had lately gone out for them during a period of twenty years, to seek families in the neighbouring parishes; but this year he could not find an overseer in all the county of Chester, who was willing to allow a family to leave his parish, because, they said they were beginning to be short of labourers themselves."—"I am most anxious that every facility be given to the removal of labourers from one county to another, according to the demand for labour. This would have a tendency to equalize wages."

Greg begins his letter to Chadwick, thus:—

"I have for some time thought of addressing you on the same matter as my friend Ashworth did some time ago, namely, the propriety of opening a communication between our (strange to say) under-peopled districts and the southern over-peopled ones."

Greg then tells the New Poor Law Secretary, that one of his mills has been standing for want of hands twelve whole months; that he is unable to start another for the same reason; and that his parlour doors cannot be mended, "because the carpenter has been short of men all the year!"

By such representations as these, the Landlords of England were induced to agree to the New Poor Law, by which they were empowered to *sell*,—yes, to *SELL*—

their labourers to the Factory masters! How that trade in human beings was carried on—how the poor in your own districts were kidnapped and sold; and were afterwards cheated and killed in the north, and, how, under the blessing of God, I was enabled to put down that infamous traffic, will be detailed in future letters. At present, my duty requires, that I should return to Mr. J. G. Marshall, and show you the result of “liberal and enlightened Philosophy,” in the regular workings of his own Mill-system. You will then be able to appreciate the reproofs of the defamer of your order, and to estimate the character of those persons who have induced you, the landlords, to treat the labourers of England worse, far, *very far worse, than negro slaves!*

I have not had to travel far for the extracts which follow—they are *all* selected from *one* volume, viz.—“The Report of the Select Committee on the Factories’ Regulation Act, printed by order of the House of Commons, 8th of August, 1832.” These extracts all refer to the work-people of Mr. Marshall, the Flax-spinner of Leeds and Shrewsbury. If more should be required, the same volume will supply them. I have no room for comment; they need none.

“My name is Eliza Marshall.—I live in Leeds.—I was born in Doncaster. I am seventeen years old. My father is dead. He was guard of a coach. My mother came to Leeds when I was nine years old, to seek work for us. I got work at Mr. Marshall’s Flax Mill, in Water Lane. I left there because it was so dusty; it stuffed me so, that I could scarcely speak. It affected my health,—I should not have lived long, if I had not left. The Factory-bell was a doleful sound to me. My father was dead, my mother was very poorly off, and my sister and I did what we could for her. I have cried many an hour in the Factory. I could scarcely get home; I was exceedingly fatigued at night. Sometimes I had to be ‘trailed’ home. I have an iron on my right leg,—my knee is contracted. It was a great misery to me to work. I was straight before. My sister has carried me up to bed many a time. I have been an out-patient of Leed’s Infirmary nearly twelve months, and this last winter I have been into the Infirmary six weeks. I was under Mr. Chorley; they put irons on to my legs, which cost the Infirmary 3l. I have gone with great difficulty to the Mill, and could not tell any body what I suffered. They could not believe me, I am sure, if I did. My mother was very unhappy to see me so dealt with; she cried, but she could not keep me at home. I was obliged to go, or else drop in the streets. I went to the Mills as long as I could. At last I cried, and used to fall back in bed when they called me,—so that, they could not find in their heart to send me. I now live with my mother. Mr. Chorley has examined me thoroughly; he says it is with longstanding, and that the marrow is dried up quite out of the bone. He says, that when the marrow gets dried out, it will never be formed again.”

Charles Burus, states:—

“I live at No. 26, Duke St., Leeds. I am thirteen years old. I began to work in Mr. Marshall’s Flax Mill when I was near eight years old; I was then a bobbin-doffer. We worked from six in the morning to seven at night. We had forty minutes allowed for dinner! We had no allowance for breakfast or afternoon ‘drinking’! I was very much tired and fatigued;—as soon as I went home, and sat by the fire, I fell asleep directly. I afterwards went to work at Mr. Leighton’s Flax Mill. We were not allowed to sit down in Mr. Marshall’s Mill during the whole day! If we did, we should get beaten! It is a common thing for the children to be beaten. I had a sister, who worked at Mr. Marshall’s, and she got killed there. The overlooker behaved very bad to the children. When my sister was working there, he beat her, and the rest of the children also. I was not able to attend a night school, or a Sunday school. I had to rest on the Sunday morning. I should have liked to have gone to the night school, but I could not. The boys and girls that are so over-worked consider their case to be one of great hardship and suffering. They are very unhappy indeed; when they want to eat their bread, it is so dusty, they cannot eat it; their food is spoiled, it is so dusty. They lose their appetites. Some of them are ill, and then they have to go

home, and many of them die! They are almost always missing their meals. Being so dusty, they are forced to take their meat home again."

Mark Best, says:—

"I am about fifty-six years old. I have been engaged as overlooker in the Flax Mill of Mr. Marshall. The regular hours of work are, from six to seven. When they are 'throng,' from five to nine at night! They only allow forty minutes for dinner! No time is allowed for breakfast or 'drinking'! The children put the food on one side, and eat it as they can. Sometimes, when their work is bad, they are prevented getting it at all;—they have then to take it home again. Sometimes it is so dirtied, that it is rendered unfit to eat. The dust flies about till they can scarcely see each other! In the card-rooms, the refuse hangs about their mouths, while they are eating their food! Sometimes, in those dusty places, it takes away their appetites, and they cannot eat. They beat the boys and girls with a strap, to make them look sharp. When they are fatigued and tired, they are obliged to use them worse, to make them keep up! *The masters know very well that the children are thus beaten and strapped; they encourage the overlookers to do it!* The straps are about one foot and a half long, and there is a stick at the end of some of them, and the end of the strap, which they beat them with, is cut or slit into five or six thongs. They are regularly made for the purpose! Unless they are driven and flogged up, they cannot get the quantity of work they want from them. They are fined as well as beaten. They are fined for speaking to one another!—for combing their hair!—for washing themselves!—or cleaning their shoes!—or doing any thing, so as to go home decent at night! They are not allowed to do any such thing, if the work was going on ever so well;—profound silence is enjoined! The children were exceedingly fatigued. The usual hours of labour are too long for children to bear. When they go home, if they get set down before the fire, they are asleep in a few minutes. The fine spinning rooms are very much heated, and full of steam. In winter the clothes of those who live at a distance, will be frozen to their backs, and quite stiff before they get home! I have known the period of long labour from five to nine, continue for five or six months together! When the children are at home in consequence of illness from overworking and long hours, the master neither pays their wages nor for the Doctor! When any visitors are coming to look over the works, they used generally to come round, half-an-hour before, and tell us to clean, and get our machines clean and tidy against the time! There was no strapping or cruelty going on when the visitors were there."

Stephen Binns, aged thirty-nine, informed the Committee:—

"I began to work in the Factories when I was about seven years old. I have worked in nine different Factories. At Mr. Marshall's Factory, there is as much food belonging to the children spoiled, as will half keep the overlooker's pig! The work in the mills produces deformity in the children—it lames them! The work exacted from the children is the utmost possible we can get done!—it cannot be done without resorting to flogging! It is an offence for any to speak to another! The water used for hot-spinning, is heated to 110 to 120 degrees. The children have almost continually to plunge their hands and arms in that water. The heat of those rooms and the steam, almost macerates their bodies, and their clothes are steamed and wet. When the masters go into the rooms, they do not look to the fatigue of the children; but if every one is not doing their work, there is a sharp look out after them. If they fall sick, it is hardly thought twice about, but they are sent home directly. *The employers have abundant opportunity of noticing the excessive fatigue of the children employed!* It is not allowed to have seats at all! They are not allowed to speak to each other! I never knew an overlooker discharged for cruel conduct. If a child complains of ill-usage, she gets discharged—that is all the redress she can have! The present system is ruining the rising generation; it is sacrificing the children for a paltry consideration!"

Samuel Downe, of Hunslet Car, near Leeds, reports as follows:—

"I am twenty-nine years of age. I am a native of Shrewsbury. I was about ten years old when I began to work, at Mr. Marshall's Mill, at Shrewsbury. When we were brisk, we used generally to begin at five in the morning, and run till eight at night! The engine never stopped, except forty minutes at dinner time! These long hours were very fatiguing. The children were

kept awake by a blow or a box! Very considerable severity was used in that Mill! I was strapped most severely, till I could not bear to sit upon a chair without having pillows; and I was forced to lie upon my face in bed at one time! and through that I left. I was strapped on my legs, and then I was put upon a man's back and strapped! and then I was strapped and buckled with two straps to an iron pillar, and flogged!! After that, the overlooker took a piece of tow, and twisted it in the shape of a cord, and put it in my mouth, and tied it behind my head! He thus gagged me, and then he ordered me to run round a part of the machinery, and he stood at one end, and every time I came round, he struck me with a stick, which I believe was an ash-plant, and which he generally carried in his hand, till one of the men in the room came and begged me off!!! At one time I was beaten so, that I had not the power to cry at all!! I was then between ten and eleven years old! It was winter time, and we worked by gas-light, and I could not catch the revolutions of the machinery, to take the tow out of the hackles; it requires some little experience, and I was timid at it, and pricked my fingers very much with the hackles. I cannot assign any other reason for it! He was not discharged from the Mill. We were never allowed to sit! We were not allowed to talk!—not at all, by no means! If this man heard us, he came to us with his stick! Young women were beaten as well as young men!!”

Jonathan Downe's statement follows:—

“I reside in Leeds. I am twenty-five years old. I first went to work at Mr. Marshall's Mill when I was seven years old. Very severe methods were adopted, in order to compel us to work their long hours. I have seen boys knocked down with a strap: they have been called from their work, flogged, and then knocked down on the floor; and when they have been on the floor, they have been beaten till they have risen, and when they have risen, they have been flogged to their work again! That was very common! I know many who have been boozed to pillars, and then flogged—it is quite common to do so! Females were also chastised! No means were taken to remove the overlooker who inflicted such extreme chastisement! If we had complained to Mr. Marshall, we should have been discharged; and whatever hand was turned away from Mr. Marshall's, Mr. Beynon would not employ; and whatever hand was turned away from Mr. Beynon's, Mr. Marshall would not employ;—and these were the only two Mills in Shrewsbury. I have known a mother of two children, in Mr. Marshall's employment at Shrewsbury, knocked down by the overlooker! Horseman, the manager, will go to the overlookers, and, if they have not done something severe, he will say, ‘I have never heard of your doing anything—you have never quarrelled with any of the hands—do something, that I may hear of it, and I will stand your friend!’ It is the usual practice to prepare Mills, previous to their being inspected by strangers. It is a frequent thing at Mr. Marshall's Mill, where the least children are employed, (there are plenty working at six years of age!) provided a child should be drowsy, the overlooker walks round the room, with a stick in his hand, and he touches that child on the shoulder, and says, ‘Come here.’ In the corner of the room, there is an iron cistern—it is filled with water; he takes this boy up by the legs, and dips him overhead in the cistern, and sends him to his work for the remainder of the day! and that boy is to stand, dripping as he is, at his work! he has no chance of drying himself! That is the punishment for drowsiness!—for other offences, there is a stool fixed up at the end of the room; the boy who offends is put to stand on this stool, sometimes on both legs, and sometimes on one of his legs, with the other up, and he has a lever to bear in his hands, raised and stretched over his head; and there he has to stand, for ten, or fifteen, or thirty minutes, just as the overlooker chooses; and, provided he should lower his arms, (and it is a great weight to bear for a quarter of an hour,) I have seen the overlooker go and say, ‘Hold up!’ and sometimes the boy will try to hold it up, and yet not have strength to raise it, and the overlooker cuts him with his stick, until he does actually get it up; and the tears will run down his face when he is there standing! I have seen this done there frequently—it is the regular practice! We have a vast number of cripples. Some are crippled from losing their limbs—many from standing too long. It first begins with a pain in the ankle; after that, they will ask the overlooker to let them sit down—but they must not. Then they begin to be weak in the knee—then knock-kneed—after that, their feet turn out—they become splay-footed, and their ankles swell as big as my fists. I know many deformed in the way described.”

The perusal of such horribly disgusting, cruel details, showing by what means Mr. J. G. Marshall has been made a rich man, makes the heart sick, and throngs the mind with thoughts that require well balancing, before they are expressed in words. That men who have waded through such means to wealth, should dare to beard our nobles, may be strange to you, Sir; but to one who, like myself, has narrowly watched the increasing arrogance and impudence of the Factory Monster, and the yielding subserviency of our Peers, that fact is not surprising. I have long seen, that the spirit which rules in the Factories, has usurped the seat of Patriotism in the Senate; and that it has enslaved the Noble, as well as the Factory Children! Yes, Sir, "I have seen the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province" by the power and influence of that spirit. I have looked in vain to the Nobles for deliverance from its power. At length, I have learnt that it was my duty to "marvel not at the matter," but to remember that. "He that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they." If, however, it be possible that words of mine may catch the ear of our Nobles, I will not cease to urge them, no longer to parley with their enemy. They may be assured, that he who strives to separate them from the working people, and to think harshly of them, is the worst foe they have. It may not be amiss, also, to remind Mr. J. G. Marshall, that when a gentleman knows that he lives in a glass house, he should be very careful not to throw stones at other peoples' windows. It is by giving heed to the philosophy of the mills, that Earl Fitzwilliam has been induced to support the accursed New Poor Law—surely, now, his Lordship will strive to escape from the net in which the crafty (for he can be crafty as he is cruel) Monster has entangled him. Would that our Nobles might at this, the eleventh hour, eschew Philosophy, embrace Christianity, and take their proper places as the Fathers, Leaders, and Protectors of the People! Then would the accursed New Poor Law fall.

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—Sir, if there be one fact more than another which delights me, it is this—viz. that the eyes of the Government must now be open to the delusions which have been practised upon them by their own tools—the New Poor Law Commissioners.

The Government were persuaded, by the Commissioners, "that the New Poor Law was a popular measure," that "it worked well," and "that it was only opposed by a few demagogues, such as O'Connor, Stephens, Oastler, and so forth." The "Demagogues" have all been caged, the Commissioners, backed by all the force of the Government, have long had the field to themselves,—and what is the result? A Parliamentary opposition to the accursed Law, which staggers Lord John Russell, shakes Sir Robert Peel, and makes the Commissioners confess "that they are surprised!," The New Poor Law, which passed, seven years ago, with acclamation, which has been more praised by the Ministerialists, than any other measure—which has been upheld at the point of the bayonet, and to enforce which, the land is covered with police,—is at length discovered by both Lord John Russell and Sir Robert Peel, to be unpopular! This fact should convince Lord John, that it is not the "Demagogues," but the Commissioners, who have deceived him.—R.O.

gence on the floor, or perchance against the machinery. Some of the boys being twelve to fourteen years old, driven to desperation, came home again; and one poor little orphan, called thirteen, but only ten years of age, dropped by the road-side near London, and was left by his companion (about thirteen). They had 1s. only when they started, to come near 200 miles, which was, of course, gone; and thus this little orphan was left alone to come through London, and near 100 miles; and he got safe home, but of course nearly exhausted. Some of these families had from sickness, some from masters of mills having died, or made the business over to others, become chargeable to the parishes, and came or were sent home to the south again; and there they were put into the Bastille, and all the horrors and cruelties of the practice of the New Poor Law are stretched and extended to the utmost, in revenge for their coming home again! The hardships which these poor defenceless creatures undergo, is far beyond my powers of description; and every one that complains, is marked for revenge by some of the cruel parties that feel themselves aggrieved by such complaint; and if any one stands forward to protect the poor, the whole host are set in motion, and votes of censure passed against them. See Mr. Ryder's letter, *Morning Herald*, 17th November last. The Hon. and Rev. Mr. Osborn, Eton Union, another Clergyman in HoU Union, Kent, and many others, as well as yourself, Dukes, Lords, and Squires, being chairmen and ex-officio guardians, are all up in arms; and in all the mock trials, the guardians acquit the guardians and all the crew. A great majority feel everything of this kind as an attack upon them, and impute to personal and interested motives, arising from the violent hatred to what they call these *happy changes* of elevating and exalting the independent labourers!

"I hand you, on another sheet, a few cases,* selected from the public prints from London and different parts of the country. They are all plain facts, which cannot be disputed; and I hope you will send them forth to speak for themselves, as I have seen some account of the lovers and admirers of the law in Manchester and the North, where it has not been tried long, say it works well in the north. Let them read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest these facts, and then judge for themselves. Look them over from A to Z coolly and fairly, and see these 'exalted' and 'independent poor,' in the renowned city of London, imploring to be sent to prison, and committing crimes on purpose. Then see D and M, the good man Whittle and wife, at Weymouth, leave their children to lie down and die. Then see F, Horatio G. Coe, ask the Mayor how he could avoid crime and save life? Then see G, eleven men, Cambridge Union, with the guardians begging more food for them. Then see H, above sixty vagrants—men 'exalted' to ruffians—frequent highway robberies, and, for security of life and property, they are escorted out of town by the police. They all appeared to join with the woman and her children, who said, 'she would do anything rather than go into a union house.' Then return to London, and see N, the Committee of St. Andrew, Holborn, where they found some dead, and the spirit to lie down and die *frightfully prevalent* among the poor, rather than go into the Bastille. Then such numbers of young men and women committed to prison, (see W and X) that the jail would not hold them, and the governor actually paying the fine, and giving them money and clothes, to get rid of them; Well may you say, 'What a state we are in!' If there are not proofs of the failure of the New Poor Law, what can be?"

"Instead of producing respectful obedience, happiness, and content, these facts are proof that it has produced distress, misery, desperation, and murder by wholesale, and, among many of the poor, a sad sullen spirit of savage fury and revenge; and when this fire is fanned into a flame, Heaven knows where it is to stop. May God in his mercy grant that your powerful heart, hand, and pen may awaken our Nobles to a sense of these dangers, before it is too late.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Your sincere

"FRIEND IN THE SOUTH."

* These interesting facts and cases will keep;—they are so many arrows in my quiver.—R. O.

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THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY JOHN PAVEY,
NO. 47, HOLYWELL-STREET, STRAND.

SECOND EDITION of No. 12, *FLEET PAPERS*,
with the *PORTRAIT* of Mr. OASTLER.

In consequence of the great demand for No. 12, of *THE FLEET PAPERS*, a Second Edition has been printed, which may be had at the publisher's.

On the 26th of June, 1841, will be published,

PRICE TWOPENCE,

No. 26, of the *FLEET PAPERS*,

WHICH WILL CONTAIN A PORTRAIT OF

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.,

OF RIDDLESWORTH, IN THE COUNTY OF NORFOLK,

Orders received by the Publisher, Mr. PAVEY, 47, Holywell St., Strand, London.

NOTICE TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. Oastler is "at home" on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

William Barker, Netherton, near Huddersfield, wishes to know, "if the returning officer of the Huddersfield Union can disfranchise 142 voters, for the non-payment of a highway-rate, which has been made more than six months, but not demanded?"—No doubt of it. The returning officer can, with the sanction of the Commissioners, disfranchise what rate-payers he chooses, and return such candidates as he thinks proper. The Commissioners will is the only law,—the returning officer is the mere tool of the Commissioners, the guardians are the paymasters of both. R. O.'s Huddersfield friends will remember, that, from the beginning, he told them all about it. Their experience of the last two years has proved that what he said was true. The recent disclosures in the House of Lords have established the truth of his position, from the lips of the highest Poor Law functionaries. He is only surprised that any person of respectability can now be found to accept the office of Poor Law Guardian.

R. O. has received one shilling from a London Book-keeper, and an order for one sovereign from a Barnet M.P., for the Factory Cripple, William Dodd. W. D. desires publicly to return his thanks to his kind benefactors.

Anonymous writers may be saved much trouble, by being informed, that without reading them, their papers will be burned.

All communications must be post-paid.

If it should so happen, that these Papers should be noticed *pro*. or *con*. by any organ of public opinion, R. O. will be grateful to any friend, who will send him a copy thereof, to the Fleet, London.

In consequence of many complaints from advertisers and readers, that the blue cover interfered with the distinctness of the type, a change is made, which it is hoped will be satisfactory to those friends who have been thus inconvenienced.

"THE FLEET PAPERS, No. 13, is, from beginning to end, a digression from the political subjects of the Papers; but *such* a digression as we think no one who loves beautiful writing and truth to nature can complain of. In a popular novel, it would be considered a passage of interest and sublimity; and the thought that it is true, though it may render it distasteful to others, only makes it more interesting and more sublime for us. Scarcely without tears could we follow the old man in his recollections and wanderings; and the exhibitions of so kind and true an English heart makes us ready to forgive, even before they are explained, the aberrations which we formerly condemned."—*Birmingham Advertiser*, April 1, 1841.

James Montgomery, Esq., the Poet, having been requested to attend the great County Meeting, in the Castle Yard at York, to consider the propriety of Petitioning both Houses of Parliament, in favour of Mr. Sadler's 'Ten Hours' Factories' Bill, wrote as follows, to Wm. Osburn, jun., Esq., Chairman of the Factory Bill Committee, Leeds:—

"Sheffield, April 21st, 1832.

"Dear Sir,

"I received your circular yesterday, and if it had not been accompanied by a letter from the Rev. G. S. Bull, I should not have deemed it necessary to trouble you with a reply, which could only have been an intimation of my regret that I shall have no opportunity of shewing my good will to your good cause, by my presence at York, on Tuesday next. Probably under no circumstance should I have found courage to appear publicly on such an occasion, but it so happens that I have every year, on Easter Monday, three engagements connected with efforts of Christian benevolence, one of these is to attend a dinner, which a few of us have given uninterruptedly for four-and-twenty years, to the climbing boys of this neighbourhood, whose condition, so far as it is locally implicated, has been greatly improved since we first adopted a plan for abolishing the employment altogether, but not having yet succeeded in that, we determined to abate the evil as far as possible. I would to God that the effect of infant slavery in Factories were not on the whole more pernicious than those of the brief but cruel hardships which climbing-boys daily undergo, though, after the *seasoning*, which is atrocious, and the atrocity of which cannot be mitigated, (but it may be aggravated beyond what the hideous necessity of the case requires,) though I say, after the *seasoning*, the occupation of chimney-sweepers' apprentices, disgusting as it is to the eye, and revolting to the feelings, is preferable to that of many of their little brothers and sisters, wearing out body and soul in pestilential factories, in which legs and hands, and eyes, are all the faculties requisite in these *living* portions of the general machinery; while incomparably the most exquisite, ingenious, and intellectual part of the labour, is performed by the *dead* portions. The latter, indeed, are so admirable, that they seem to want nothing but consciousness to enjoy their work, so easy and brilliant their performances appear to all except those who can never enjoy *theirs*; but who, with spirits that shall outburn the stars, are made the menial servants of the unintelligible apparatus, at the time when they ought to be alternately at their book and at play, exercising their limbs, and improving their minds to render them good and useful and happy men and women in due season.—But men and women they hardly can become even in a stunted degree, under the factory system, in which the animal spirits are daily spent by long and wearisome attention to two or three unvarying objects, the limbs restricted to adopt as many mechanical movements, and all the powers of the immortal being within the little live automaton left unemployed, unawakened, and, as far as refers to any healthful purpose, in-existent—one of the worst consequences of employing such young agents in great establishments is, that (in many cases, at least,) the order of nature is reversed, and children are compelled to work for the maintenance of idle and profligate parents, instead of diligent and sober parents working to maintain their children in those years of freedom for the latter, which are necessary for their health, their growth, their temporal and moral well-being.

"I am truly, Sir,

"Your friend and servant,

"J. MONTGOMERY."

The following excellent letter from a very influential Millowner, John Wood, jun., Esq., late of Horton, near Bradford, Yorkshire, now of Theddon Grange, near Alton Hants, is of great weight and importance, and does equal credit to the heart and head of its very deservedly esteemed author. It was written some years ago with an intention of aiding Mr. Oastler, when he first attacked the Factory Monster:—

"To the Editors of the Leeds Mercury.

"Gentlemen,—However, as a Bradford Worsted Spinner, I may feel disposed to quarrel with the high colouring of Mr. Oastler's statement of the hours of labour, &c. in our mills, I freely offer thanks to him publicly, for having directed his humane attention to the subject. His having done so, I feel confident, will prove the means of relieving some thousands of children from a severity in their employment, (rendered so by its being too protracted,) which I believe to be without parallel in the widely extended mechanical operations which this country presents. I do not doubt he will have aided to bring to a successful issue a renewed attempt on the part of those Worsted Spinners, who a few years ago, from a conviction that the hours of labour were so prejudicial to the health of the children, felt desirous of making them the subject of legislative controul.

"Had I not entertained some fear, lest some letters which have already appeared in your paper on this subject would have some influence in retarding that alleviation which the case so seriously requires, I would have avoided this publicity.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddleworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

Vol. I.—No. 15.

LONDON, SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 1841.

Price 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—I do not write to you for the purpose of liberating myself: I write in the hope of emancipating the Aristocracy and the Poor of England, from that oppressive power which now enslaves them—the power of that wealth which is *obtained* by the moral and physical destruction of the working classes, and which is *used* to vilify, degrade, and destroy the nobility of England. True enough, I am the victim of that spirit of "enlightened and liberal philosophy;" but, I thank God, I am not—I will not be—its slave!

I am content to receive, at your hands, imprisonment, as the reward of nearly twenty years of service by the best of fathers and the best of stewards; and as many years of labour and anxiety from myself, to promote your interest, and that of your tenants; if, as I believe the event will prove, I shall, under the blessing of God, make my imprisonment one means of emancipating my enslaved prosecutor, "his order," and the oppressed, plundered, and industrious sons and daughters of toil, the working classes of England.

Oh, yes, Sir, the joy, the heartfelt gratification with which I sit down in this Cell, and pen my thoughts, knowing that thousands of influential persons will peruse them,—the exultation of hope for the good of others, which animates and elevates my soul, as I pen these pages,—the certainty that *now* I do not labour in vain,—the conviction, that, although your Prisoner, I am God's ward; fully repays me for the knowledge that the lock at "the Gate" hinders me from pacing Farringdon Street, Fleet Street, the Strand, and so on, to Sloane Street, and then to Knightsbridge Chapel, where, if I had my will, my little world would terminate,—save, now and then, a trip to Nottingham, Yorkshire, and Lancashire. Enough, at present, on that subject.

When I ponder over the evils and miseries of the Factory system, and of its dreadful effects on the moral and physical condition of the people, I am lost in wonder, that, in a Christian country, it has been allowed to progress so steadily, until, at last, the Lords of that system dare to compete with the ancient Aristocracy, even in matters of legislation; nay, are enabled, by their wealth, tact, and sophistry, to manage the public affairs of this country, in direct contradiction to the plainest principles of the Constitution; and have succeeded, not only in destroying the once happy condition of the working classes, and the prosperity of

the small manufacturers and shopkeepers, but have also actually transformed a very large portion of the aristocracy into their subservient tools.

I need not, in this letter, describe to you the condition, the happy condition of the British labourers before the Factory system was known, nor the abject and miserable plight to which that system has now reduced them. It is enough, for my present purpose, that one of the Factory Lords, Mr. J. G. Marshall, the Flax-spinner of Leeds, has publicly called the attention of the nation to the latter fact. In his memorable letter to Earl Fitzwilliam, he thus apostrophizes his Lordship:

“Look again at the crowded streets of our great manufacturing towns; peruse the various statistical accounts by impartial observers of the terrible destitution; the fearful want, disease, degradation, misery—physical and moral—in every shape that reigns there. Look at the wan and haggard faces of the workpeople that come into our Courts of Justice, that attend our public meetings. See how the very race of Englishmen is dwindling down, and degenerating under the effects of the unremitting labour, the insufficient and unwholesome food that their country's laws allow them to enjoy.”

Methinks, Sir, that, if you have attentively read my last letter, you will admire the ingenuousness of Mr. J. G. Marshall's candid confession; however, you may be astounded by *his* audacity, in charging those evils upon the aristocracy.

The picture is faithful—it is painted by a *master*-hand. The cause, so far as Mr. Marshall is concerned, is given from the lips of his own slaves, copied in my last letter from official documents. Do turn to the evidence of those poor “wan and haggard work-people,” and say, is not the system adopted in Mr. Marshall's mills, eminently calculated to produce just such “a destitute, diseased, and degraded population,” as Mr. J. G. Marshall describes? Is not the “unremitting labour” demanded and obtained by Mr. Marshall, sure “to dwindle down and degenerate the very race of Englishmen?” Then, as to the “insufficient and unwholesome food that their country's laws allow them to enjoy,” see the *laws* of Mr. Marshall's mill interfering, so as to make that food still more “insufficient and unwholesome,” nay, so very bad, as to be rejected altogether by his “wan and haggard” slaves, and to be given up, (thus increasing the wages of his overlooker out of the small pittance of his slaves,) to the pigs of their tormentor!

The only equivalent which the nation gains by this system of horror, is, that Mr. Marshall may have made a million or two of pounds, and so may a few more such *patriots* as he. The wonder is, that having created such misery, his son should have the hardihood to exhibit its picture, and cast the blame upon a Noble, whose fault has been, an unwearied endeavour to uphold the system of Philosophy, which ensures the destruction of the nobles and the people, and the exaltation of the Lords of the Mills—the Marshallians. No doubt, Earl Fitzwilliam deserves reproof, but to receive it from a Marshall, is what his Lordship never could have expected.

Mr. J. G. Marshall refers Earl Fitzwilliam to “the various statistical accounts by impartial observers,” for proof of his assertions. I find, in the Report of the Committee on the Factories' Regulation Act, from which volume I quoted very largely in my last—“a statistical account,” drawn up by the officers of Government, and laid before that Committee, for its information on the Factory question. If one more fact were required to prove the destructive tendency of the Factory system, that table settles the question. The *official* “comparative table of the duration of life,” proves to a demonstration, that the unremitting

labour" of the Factories is actually more destructive to human life, than famine, war, or pestilence!

I started from the perusal of that table with indescribable horror—I could scarcely believe my eyes! But the facts are indisputable!—the data most correct! The horrible Factory system is making a Charnel-House of England,—it cuts off life at both ends,—it works the living to death,—it genders death, untimely death, even in the womb!—It destroys the stamina of both father and mother—it ushers into the world, children who are incapable of life!—it actually cuts off one half of the years of human existence! I do not exaggerate. I appeal to the official table of Births and Deaths. The following extracts from that table will prove if I am not abundantly borne out in all which I have asserted.

In every 10,000 burials, in the undermentioned places, read the awful result:

Places.	Died under five years of age.	Died under twenty years of age.	Died under forty years of age.	Lived above forty years.
Rutland.....	2,865	3,756	5,031	4,969
London.....	3,805	4,580	6,111	3,889
Bradford, Yorkshire.	4,687	5,896	7,061	2,939
Macclesfield.....	4,462	5,889	7,300	2,700
Wigan.....	4,790	5,911	7,117	2,883
Preston.....	4,947	6,083	7,462	2,538
Bury.....	4,864	6,017	7,319	2,681
Stockport.....	4,879	6,005	7,367	2,633
Bolton.....	4,939	6,113	7,459	2,541
Leeds.....	5,286	6,213	7,441	2,559
Holbeck.....	5,090	6,133	7,337	2,663

Now, Sir, if you take the *average* of the above Nine Factory districts, and compare it with Rutland and London, the result will be as follows:—As compared with Rutland, an increase of deaths under five years of age, of 2,017; under twenty years of age, 2,272; under forty years of age, 2,287.—As compared with London, the increase of deaths will be found to be, under five years of age, 1,077; under twenty years of age, 1,448; under forty years of age, 1,207.

In Rutland, the survivors at forty years, are more by 2,287, out of every 10,000, and in London by 1,207, than they are on the average in these Nine Factory districts!

In fact, the murderous result developed by this official table, is, that about as many human beings die before their *twentieth* year, in the Factory districts, as before their *fortieth* year, on an average, elsewhere!

It is necessary I should inform you, that Manchester is excluded from this official table, because the Returns of Burials from that place, were so incomplete as to render them useless for this comparison. But we have the evidence of Mr. Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, Dr. Kay, that "*in Manchester more than one half of the offspring of the poor die before they have completed their fifth year.*" And, in proof that the Factory system impoverishes and degrades, as well as kills its victims, the Doctor adds, "*more than one half of the inhabitants of Manchester are either so destitute or so degraded, as to require the assistance of public charity, in bringing their offspring into the world!*"

Is it possible to urge a stronger reason for restraining this accursed Monster?

The poor children still pray for the "Ten Hours Bill;" but hitherto the power of their tormentors has triumphed! I know that these letters are read by many influential persons, who probably, for the first time, obtain the knowledge of the unmerited sufferings of the Factory slaves. I do hope, Sir, from this Cell, to create an influence in Christian England, which shall, at no very distant period, effectually curb the tormenting and destructive power of the Factory Monster! Methinks, already, that many, who afore time thought me violent, are already convinced that there was just cause for all the harsh expressions which I have ever used regarding this man-degrading-child-killing-monster-making-system.

So much, Sir, at present, for official tables and official persons. For a while, I must leave the *general* question, with Mr. J. G. Marshall and Earl Fitzwilliam, because, just now, the case of *one* Factory slave demands my notice.

William Dodd, the poor destitute Factory Cripple, has again been here; and although it may suit the purposes of philosophy, after having destroyed the form, the health, and the strength of its victims, to brand their characters with infamy, and to pass coercive laws for their destruction, (witness Lord Brougham's execrable Speech in the House of Lords, on introducing the New Poor Law,) Christianity demands, and justice requires, that the truth about those poor victims shall be told.

You, Sir, already know some little of William Dodd. Be not angry, if I tell you somewhat more. Poor fellow!—it is a hard case, after having gone through what he has suffered, that, when he applies for a vacant situation, which he thinks he is capable of undertaking, he should be rejected with—"Your shape is against you!—Your deformity is an objection!"—Think, Sir, of the Cripple's feelings, when thus repulsed!—not on account of his character, but because of his deformity! He has sacrificed his health, strength, and form, by endeavouring to provide an honest livelihood,—what could he do that he has not done, to obtain his "daily bread?" He has testimonials of industry, honesty, and ability, from all his employers; but he is cut off by society, not because he is "drunken, idle, and imprudent," but because he no longer retains the form of man! His over-industry has crippled him; but no occupation, no asylum awaits him, save the accursed prison of an union workhouse! Still he is required to believe that we are Christians! He has spent all in enriching society—and then, she contemptuously snaps her finger at him, and condemns him, as you have condemned me, to imprisonment—poor William's prison being far worse than mine!

I was much affected when William Dodd called here the other day. He often borrows a book from me,—he is so fond of reading. That was his object when last he called. During our conversation, which is always very interesting, he said, "I had once a library of two hundred volumes of my own; the want of bread forced me to *sell* them all but *one*!—and, even *that*, I was forced to *pawn*!—I would not *sell* my Bible!"—He continued, "I had once a prayer-book, which I valued very highly, it had been my sister's!—It was given to her by the Vicar of Kendall, as a reward for her good conduct and regular attendance at church. She gave it to me on her death bed, and charged me 'to keep it for her sake,' but *want compelled me to sell it!* I have redeemed my Bible. *I resolved, come what might, I never would SELL it!*"—Are you not affected by that simple narrative? If not, Mr. Thornhill, I cannot envy you.

When will those wealthy men of Sir Robert Peel's "order," "who have derived their fortunes from the industrious classes," perform their "duty," and make "a just requital" to such as William Dodd?

If there be one feature in the history of the "Fleet Papers," which pleases me more than another, it is the fact, that, in many places, these little sheets are attracting the serious attention of the Clergy, who will, I hope, soon, as a body, espouse the cause of the Factory Children. I have already presented you with some very interesting letters from my clerical friends and readers. I have now before me, one from my beloved Knightsbridge Parson,—he from whose ministry your vengeance has dragged me. He reads my little *Fleeters* with interest, and commends, or reproves, as he thinks they merit. The case of William Dodd has arrested his serious attention. I have great pleasure in presenting you with a copy of his letter to me;—by that letter you will, in some measure, be able to appreciate the punishment you have inflicted upon me, by forcing me from his public ministrations. His kind visits here, thank God, you cannot hinder. The following is the letter of my Reverend Friend:—

"My dear Friend,

"I wish, through you, to assure William Dodd of the kind sympathy of many of your readers. His is indeed a melancholy tale. I do not think it will have been related in vain. Nature and Truth speak everywhere in it. But happily, the feelings of the Christian are mingled with those of the man. It is easy to see in him the spirit 'which endures hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.' I hope that a brighter future will yet be his in this life; but if he remains faithful to the end, as may be hoped of one nurtured with the bread of affliction, and with the water of affliction, trained and tried as he has been, none who believe in a life to come, can doubt how infinitely his lot would have been to be chosen before that of all 'that lay up treasure for (themselves) and (are) not rich towards God.' 'Go to now, ye rich men (says Saint James), weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire.' 'Woe unto them that call evil, good,—and good, evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!' 'Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight.'

"We live in a mysterious world;—the circumstances by which we are surrounded, and the influences to which we are exposed, mislead many in various ways. It is thought and reflection alone that can deliver us, under the help of God's Word and of God's Spirit, from the over-powering effect of things, which are temporal and seen. Indeed, after we have broken through the mere world of sense, after we have seen through the delusion of the lower passions, and been delivered from their bondage, the present still remains able to raise emotions strong enough to endanger our faith.

"When we read the history of William Dodd,—when we see that his life of forced, excessive, and injurious labour commenced in his fifth year,—when we find from his account, and from the evidence given before the Committee of the House of Commons, that many thousand children go through trials similar to his, and, in the case of hundreds, with the same results,—a crippled body and a ruined constitution,—knowing also how the greatest part of the wealth is employed, which is wrung out of their 'uninterrupted, unmitigated sufferings,'—(I use William Dodd's words, the English language affords no better),—we may well be tempted to ask:—Is there verily a God, that judgeth in the earth? Does He show Himself strong in the behalf of the oppressed? Are the young and the tender, the innocent and the helpless the special objects of His care? Let us turn to revelation. The case is stated in strong general terms,—'I considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun; and behold the tears of the oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of the oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter.' 'And moreover I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there. I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked.' This is the right and only satisfactory reply that can be given to those confused, perhaps unacknowledged, and imperfectly understood feelings, that agitate the soul in the contemplation of many of the evil

things that are done under the sun. 'If (then) thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter; for He that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.'

"There is a very general disposition in men to follow one part of their nature only. Some, in the common phrase, are all heart—others, all head. Not only, however, has the head need of the heart, but the heart has need of the head continually, in matters connected both with this life and with the life to come. Feeling requires to be united with and balanced by reflection. We are to examine and try the impulses of which we are conscious, and the conduct of life is to be regulated by such impulses as we find to be in harmony, not with any particular set of passages in Scripture, but with the general spirit of Scripture. So, again, in what pertains to faith.—Those who are best acquainted with the inherent weakness of man, and with the conflicting impulses to which he always remains exposed, are best aware, that principles founded upon Scripture are necessary in order to 'Stablish, strengthen, and settle' the soul,—principles to which we may resort with confidence when agitated by the powerful impulse of some present emotion.

"If the contemplation then of the cruelty, the oppression, and the injustice that prevailed so long, and does still partially prevail in the Factories, should well nigh overwhelm our faith, we may refer, so far as the attributes and the promises of God are concerned, to the principle of a day of judgment, in which the attributes of God will shine forth clearly to the conviction of all,—and of an after state of 'reward and punishment,' to which the promises and the threatenings of God often, and, indeed, chiefly belong, and in which they will be equally and completely fulfilled.

"Facts and faith, in this life, seem often at variance,—(how indeed could faith otherwise exist;) but the principles of the Bible embrace eternity,—and it is eternity alone which can show their full extent, and attest their truth. To interpret the promises and the threatenings of God in a literal sense, and to connect them with temporal prosperity and adversity, or with the pleasures and afflictions of our carnal nature, is an error to which all men are exposed by the influence of what is present, and by the strength of personal feelings. The promises and the threatenings of Scripture are to be taken in a figurative and spiritual sense,* and to be referred to eternity. Any expectation of their being literally accomplished in this life, will mislead the mind, and will, probably, sooner or later, undermine the faith. Let those who believe in God, and in His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, wait patiently unto the day of judgment, when certainly a perfect measure of retributive justice will be rendered to all by Him, whose divine power will exactly fulfil the sentence pronounced upon each human spirit.

"If, again, we are perplexed in contemplating the past history, and present state of mankind—if, in the records of former days, as well as in the existing circumstances of our own, we find some things that scarcely seem reconcilable with the attributes of God, we may turn for support to the principle, that earth is the scene of an ever-varying contest between good and evil; a contest, which commenced before earth and the human race existed, and the consequences of which extend throughout the universe and eternity. The Bible shows us, that there is a connection between all things that have been, that are, and that shall be. Now, we must feel at once, that many things are not known, and cannot be known by us, which are absolutely necessary, in order to judge of the relations, the bearings, and the ultimate results of that extremely small part of God's counsels and doings, belonging to our little world, and to the spirits born in our flesh after Adam, which, at the best, can be known by us very imperfectly. Let us beware then of being betrayed by the pride of reason, and by any false notions of the extent of our knowledge. Let us pray continually to be kept back from presumptuous sins, lest, being vainly puffed up by our fleshly minds, we should seek to intrude into those things, which no man hath seen, nor can see.

"With respect to the case of individuals,—of William Dodd, and of similar sufferers,—we may derive consolation from the principle that the spirits, which pass through a brief and indeed momentary existence upon earth, are probationers for eternity, and that all whom God chastens for their profit, howsoever grievously, all, who being thus made partakers of His holiness, inherit glory, and honour, and immortality, will have abundant cause evermore to bless and praise Him, who

* Several of the things specified by our Lord in the 10th chapter and 29th verse of the Gospel of Saint Mark—'Verily, I say unto you; there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the Gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time; houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life.'—show plainly two things, 1st, that this promise, like the promises of Scripture generally, is to be understood in a figurative and spiritual sense; and, 2dly, that although men 'enter through much tribulation into the kingdom of God,' yet that 'in this time,' during this present life,—they shall receive an hundred fold in the joys of the soul, in the sense of God's favour, and in the blessed hope of eternal life.

'chose (them) in the furnace of affliction,' who purified them by its fires, and made all things work together for their eternal good.

"Let none however be led into error by the frequent declarations of Scripture concerning riches and prosperity on the one hand,—poverty and affliction on the other,—God so carries forward His marvellous work in the world and in the soul, as in all respects to 'hide pride from man.' Affliction itself is sometimes no blessing. Prosperity is sometimes no curse. Therefore let us judge nothing before the time. 'The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal—The Lord knoweth them that are His,'—and, 'Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'

"The principles that have been touched upon will bear reflection. And the considerations, connected with and arising from them, will help to sustain our faith, while they ought not, in the slightest degree, to diminish our abhorrence of oppression and injustice, nor to relax our determined opposition to it.

"The remarks which you have taken so well from me, concerning some things in the 'Fleet Papers,' were not intended to produce these effects. When I consider the nature of the cause to which you have now for so many years devoted yourself,—when I remember the number and the influence of those opposed to you,—I see the need of a warm, an indignant, and a resolute spirit like your own for such a task.—The cruelties that have so long taken place, and that are still partially taking place in the Factories, have the usual characteristics of great wrongs. They have grown up gradually. They are parts, although unwise and unnecessary, as well as hateful parts, of a long established and deeply-rooted system. On the side of the oppressors there is power; and the oppressed would be (humanly speaking), without help but for men like yourself. I congratulate you, your friend the Rev. G. S. Bull, late of Bierley, now of Birmingham, and those that have acted so zealously with you, on the partial success that has already attended your unwearied exertions in this good cause. I congratulate you on the plans that have been adopted by our own legislature, and on the consequences that have followed throughout Europe.*

"I bid you to be of good cheer, and I doubt not that the Ten Hours Bill will eventually, and indeed soon be past. You were born in a manufacturing district, and have had opportunities of witnessing many things, which required to be publicly and strongly exposed. I do not wonder that such facts, as that given below,† such statements as that quoted by William Dodd from Chambers Edinburgh Journal—'The life led in the Factories is agreeable and pleasant in the highest degree;' and such evidence as that of Edward Hulme, M.D., of Manchester,‡ should sometimes over-beat your mind and disturb your judgment.

"In considering the state of the world as well as that of individuals, the emotions roused by the present require to be balanced by reflection upon the past and the future. Many a heart has been its own tormentor; many a mind has been paralyzed by dwelling only upon the dark shades in the varied picture of nature and of grace. We find in the Bible promises mingled with threatenings, mercy with judgment, and hope respecting the future with denunciations against present evil. In taking away the confidence of men in their own strength and wisdom, (which I would ever desire heartily to concur with you in doing,) do not neglect to disclose the everlasting foundations of the trust of Christians. Leave us hope in the Providence of God, and in prophecies not yet, as I conceive, fulfilled. Remember what is said of hope by inspired authority—'We are saved by hope.' Remember that hope is the ally of faith and charity, and accordingly, when hope deserts the breast, unbelief and malice seldom fail to enter.

"Permit me, in conclusion, to caution you publicly, as I have already done privately, against the habit of prediction. I do not think that a revolution, such as you announce, will take place in England;—I do not think that there will be a 'dreadful collision' (No. 8, p. 63.) between the Army and Police, which (you say) 'sure I am no human foresight can prevent.' I do not like

* See the admirable Pamphlet of Leonard Horner, Esq., P.R.S., Inspector of Factories, entitled, 'On the Employment of Children in Factories and other works in the United Kingdom and in some foreign Countries.'—Longman & Co., London.

† See note A, on the next page.

‡ Edward Hulme, Esq., M.D., Physician to the Manchester Infirmary, Dispensary, Lunatic Hospital and Asylum, and the House of Recovery, was examined before a Committee of the House of Lords on the 27th of May, 1818. He was a witness for the Cotton Factory Masters, and against the late Sir Robert Peel's Ten Hours' Factory Bill. Lord Kenyon, the Chairman, after in vain endeavouring to obtain from Dr. Edward Hulme an opinion, as to how many hours in the day he thought a child might be worked without injury to his health, asked the Doctor the following question—'Suppose I were to ask you, whether you thought it injurious to a child to be kept standing twenty-three hours out of the twenty-four, should you not think it must necessarily be injurious to the health?' To which Dr. Edward Hulme replied—'Before I answered that question, I should wish to have an examination to see how the case stood!'

your frequent repetitions of such and similar confident statements; and I beg you to recollect the effect they are calculated to have. I beg also to remind you, that He who alone knows the future, has carefully and completely concealed the particular circumstances of the future from every human being.

"I remain, your sincere Friend, to whom you have already alluded as

"YOUR KNIGHTSBRIDGE PARSON."

"P.S.—May I request that you will oblige your readers with the story of Grace Wallis."

Poor William Dodd will have more pleasure in reading the foregoing, than will those persons who have gained by his oppression! Yes—yes, the day of judgment will balance all accounts.

I will not attempt to add to the force of my dear Friend's letter by any remarks of my own. I thank him for thus honouring my literary bantling.

In my next, I shall say a few words respecting my Reverend Friend's remarks about my "predictions," premising, that I pretend not to the gift of prophecy. The interesting and affecting "story of Grace Wallis," shall not be long delayed.

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER

P.S.—I have no room for the postscript which I have written.—R.O.

Note A.—"From the Evidence of Mr. Gillet Sharp, the Overseer of Keighley, Yorkshire, p. 210.

"Q. 5,500.—Have you any reason to think that any of the children lose their lives in consequence of this excessive degree of exertion?"

"A.—I have no doubt in my mind that such has been the case, and I may mention one instance of this kind.—Four or five months back, there was a girl of a poor man's that I was called to visit; it was poorly—it had attended a mill, and I was obliged to relieve the father in the course of my office, in consequence of the bad health of the child; by and by it went back to its work again, and one day he came to me with tears in his eyes.—I said, 'What is the matter, Thomas?'—He said, 'My little girl is dead'—I said, 'When did she die?'—He said, 'In the night; and what breaks my heart is this,—she went to the mill in the morning; she was not able to do her work, and a little boy said he would assist her if she would give him a halfpenny on Saturday;' I said 'I would give him a penny.' But at night, when the child went home, perhaps about a quarter of a mile, in going home it fell down several times in the road through exhaustion, till at length it reached its father's door with difficulty, and never spoke audibly afterwards: it died in the night."

THE FACTORY CHILD'S LAST DAY, WRITTEN BY MICHAEL THOMAS SADLER, ON RETURNING FROM THE COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, AFTER RECEIVING MR. GILLET SHARP'S EVIDENCE MR. SADLER WAS THE CHAIRMAN OF THAT COMMITTEE.

" 'Twas on a winter's morning,
The weather wet and wild,
Three hours before the dawning
The father roused his child;
Her dally morsel bringing,
The darksome room he paced,
And cried, 'The bell is ringing,
My hapless darling, haste!'

" 'Father, I'm up, but weary,
I scarce can reach the door,
And long the way and dreary,—
O carry me once more!
To help us we've no mother,
And you have no employ:
They kill'd my little brother,—
Like him I'll work and die!'

" Her wasted form seem'd nothing,
The load was at his heart:
The sufferer he kept soothing,
Till at the mill they part.
The overlooker met her,
As to her frame she crept,
And with his thong he beat her,
And cursed her as she wept.

" Alas! what hours of horror
Made up her latest day;
In toil, and pain, and sorrow,
They slowly passed away:
It seemed, as she grew weaker,
The threads the oft'ner broke,
The rapid wheels ran quicker,
And heavier fell the stroke.

" The sun had long descended,
But night brought no repose;
Her day began and ended
As cruel tyrants chose.
At length a little neighbour,
Her half-penny she paid,
To take her last hour's labour,
While by her frame she laid.

" At last, the engine ceasing,
The captives homeward rush'd;
She thought her strength increasing—
'Twas hope her spirits flush'd;
She left, but oft she tarried;
She fell, and rose no more,
Till, by her comrades carried,
She reach'd her father's door.

" All night, with tortur'd feeling,
He watched his speechless child;
While, close beside her kneeling,
She knew him not—nor smil'd.
Again the Factory's ringing,
Her last perceptions tried;
When, from her straw-bed springing,
• 'Tis time!' she shriek'd, and died!

" That night a chariot pass'd her,
While on the ground she lay,
The daughters of her master
An evening visit pay;
Their tender hearts were sighing,
As negro wrongs were told,
While the white slave was dying,
Who gained their father's gold!"

* This is true of another Factory Child, who lately died of a consumption, induced by Factory labour. With the last breath upon her lips, she cried out, 'Father, is it time?' and so died.

Mr. Townend, in his reply to Mr. Oastler, states justly the preference given to girls, and observes correctly the character of their occupation; he is also no less correct and happy in his definition of the employment—'consisting chiefly in the quickness and attention given to the machinery.' I cannot, however, agree with him in thinking them possess 'abundant time for taking refreshments;' at least not in the manner in which, I doubt not, Mr. T., as well as myself, and as your correspondents like to have them, and as the parents of those children employed in connexion with our mills will have them—during an unbroken interval. The opposition to the existing system for taking breakfast being such only as the due discharge of their quickness and attention to the machinery will permit. When it is considered that many of these children live at a distance of a mile or a mile and a half from the mills, and that your usual attendance at six is absolutely required by us, (and what must during the dark winter months frequently be the state of the mornings on which they move thus early!) we may be able to estimate the comfort a few allotted minutes would afford, whilst taking this first meal. The necessity of an allowance of proper time for meals is more evident, when it is considered, that the employment almost constantly requires the children to be in a standing position.

With the introduction of machinery the exertions of the labouring classes are supposed to have been much alleviated, but so long as we adhere to the present harassing system, the children so employed exhibit a deplorable evidence to the contrary! Happily, however, this does not exist of necessity. The operations of the machinery ought to be suspended to allow its wearied attendants to take meals—at the same time affording relaxation from their long supported 'attention and quickness.' It is this unvarying closeness, when stretched as it is by established custom from six in the morning to seven in the evening—very often to eight, and sometimes even to nine at night, with but one brief interval of thirty minutes, that constitutes what I think Mr. Oastler has justly designated "Slavery." (These remarks apply only to the children from seven to fourteen years of age, alluded to by Mr. O., and not to the young women earning from six to twelve shillings per week, as stated by your correspondent; they have piece-work, and are not the subjects of this restraint.)

Let these evils be remedied by allowing proper intervals for meals, and by curtailing the present unreasonable hours, and then I have no fear of an increase to the pleasure of your correspondent, whilst being a witness to the bustling mirth of the children at mid-day, instead of night, and perhaps with the chance of a reply to his question—feeling they can then spare a moment, and 'break the interruption;'—neither should I at all apprehend that 'the majority of the healthy and well regulated in the Sunday School' of my Brother Spinner, Mr. Townend, would be at all endangered.

Regardless of all the playfulness of your 'respectable correspondent unconnected with trade,' of the picture he draws, or of the brief exhortation of 'Verax,' I hope Mr. Oastler will repeat his lecture, (if in language a little softer, perhaps it would be more acceptable;) or, if more efficient, (for I believe him to feel a deep interest in the welfare of his fellow-creatures,) call an occasional meeting, till he compels us to resort to the same and only corrective against the evils he so loudly denounces, as the advocates for the abolition of Colonial Slavery so earnestly seek, namely, legislative authority. I will not attempt a parallel—neither ought it to exist; the evils of both, whatever their comparative degree, have a like original, however deeply we may feel ourselves wounded whilst Mr. Oastler, in his natural bold-daring, ventures to describe it.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient Servant,

JOHN WOOD, Junr.

Horton, near Bradford, 27th Oct., 1830.

N.B.—I shall not soon forget the pleasure which the above letter gave me. At the time when it was published, I was beset by a nest of hornets, and was delighted to have them frightened away by a millowner.—R.O.

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THE FLEET PAPERS.

Critique of the ODD FELLOW on the FLEET PAPERS, with observations on the same by Richard Oastler.

"The FLEET PAPERS, by Richard Oastler, Pavry, Holywell-street. Weekly Numbers.—We have been prevented, by a variety of circumstances, from noticing these papers at an earlier period; but we do not regret the delay which has occurred, as it enables us to form a better judgment of their scope and object (having now twelve numbers before us), and to point out to our readers a few errors and inconsistencies into which we are surprised Mr. Oastler should have fallen.

"Few persons can read his able strictures on the New Poor Law and the Factory System, interspersed throughout these Papers, without being struck with the ability and zeal with which he defends the rights of the poor. At the same time, it must be admitted, that in these 'Fleet Papers' there is sufficient to indicate that Mr. Oastler's main object is to bolster up the principles of ultra-Toryism—which, viewed under their most benevolent aspect, aim merely at making the working classes comfortable slaves rather than enlightened freemen possessing equal political rights with the other classes of society."

Obs.—Mr. Oastler has never, for one moment, concealed, that, in politics, he is an ultra-Tory. If he knows any thing of his "main," nay, his only "object," it is, that the institutions of this country should be made (as he is convinced they were intended) to advance the well-being and liberty of all the people. The idea of "slavery" being made "comfortable," is so repugnant to Mr. Oastler's views, that he is surprised the Odd Fellow should gather such a strange notion from the perusal of the Fleet Papers. It is to eradicate "slavery," mental and bodily, that Mr. Oastler has laboured for many years—it is to attain that object, that he is now directing his prison efforts.

In the second number of these Papers Mr. Oastler gives a detailed account of his interview with the Duke of Wellington. He tells his readers he 'reverses' the character of the Duke. He reverses the character of a man upon whom a corrupt Parliament had lavished immense wealth, when he well knew that the Duke supported the New Poor Law, and at the same time allowed his own mother to be a pensioner receiving 900l. a-year, wrung from the hard-earned pittance of the poor factory slaves, whose unhappy condition Mr. Oastler so feelingly commiserates. We will not deny that the Duke of Wellington may have displayed great skill in butchering his fellow creatures; but we look in vain for true greatness in the character of the Duke of Wellington. His sanction and support is invariably refused to measures calculated to promote the prosperity and happiness, and extend the liberties of his poor fellow countrymen. Mr. Oastler should not publicly profess to 'revere' the character of the Duke of Wellington, who supports the New Poor Law and the atrocious Factory System, while he denounces other men not of the Tory party for doing the same things that are done by the 'revered' Duke of Wellington."

Obs.—Mr. Oastler has "reversed" the character of the Duke of Wellington, not because he "allowed his own mother to be a pensioner, receiving 900l. a year,"—not because "he supported the New Poor Law," or because, as the Odd Fellow says, (which Mr. Oastler did not know before,) the Duke "supports the atrocious Factory system,"—but because the Duke had successfully resisted and completely defeated the enemies of England. Mr. Oastler has not shunned boldly to declare his opinion, both to the Duke and to the public, of the Duke's support of the execrable New Poor Law. The English language does not provide terms sufficiently strong to express the disgust and sorrow which that event has caused to Mr. Oastler. That the Duke of Wellington should be in possession of such an ample reward for his labours, granted to him by a grateful country for his services, and should afterwards support a law which consigns his BROTHER HEAOKS, their wives, their fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and children to imprisonment, starvation, and separation, is a circumstance which has caused Mr. Oastler more pain than has any other political event. Mr. Oastler is not conscious that he has ever allowed an opportunity to pass, either with the Duke personally, or before the public, where he has not registered his opinion, in terms which cannot be mistaken. He has ever been as free to remark on the Tory supporters of the New Poor Law, as on those "other men not of the Tory party." On the very same principle that Mr. Oastler justifies the liberal reward which has been granted to the Duke of Wellington for his great services, does he demand a comfortable retreat and sufficient relief for all who, as members of the commonwealth, have done their duty in private or in public stations. Mr. Oastler has not neglected to tell the Duke of Wellington, that if the New Poor Law it just, Rents and Pensions are plunder and robbery.

"In No. 8 the same want of reflection is apparent—truth, judgment, and common sense is sacrificed to feeling. Mr. Oastler declares that 'there is no class of my fellow-men whom I honour as I do the clergy.' 'I do love their 'order'.' Let any honest and sincere man who has read the New Testament attentively for himself, say whether the atrocious laws that have been passed from time to time by a corrupt legislature would ever have disgraced our country had the clergy done their

duty, and been entitled to honour? Have they ever stood forward in defence of the benevolent principles of Christianity? The clerical magistrates are notoriously the most cruel and unjust in enforcing the atrocious enactments of the Legislature, of all the unpaid magistrates in the kingdom; nay, have not the clergy been mainly instrumental in crushing liberty in this and in every other country wherever it has lifted its head? They never, as an order, in their public meetings, vindicate truth, liberty, and justice, or denounce cruelty or oppression exercised against the poor; and yet Mr. Oastler loves their order, and honours the clergy more than any other class of his fellow-men."

Obs.—Aye, this is indeed the tickle-point; and if "truth, judgment, and common sense" demand that the "order of the clergy" should be despised, Mr. Oastler must plead guilty to the entire lack of those three commodities. He does "honour and love the clergy;" and he believes that amongst that "order" are to be found the most sincere and devoted friends of liberty and of the poor. Mr. Oastler may be devoid of "truth, judgment, and common sense," as those terms are understood by the Odd Fellow, but he has learned not to despise men because they are abused. He has mixed much with the clergy, as with other orders, and he has met amongst them with more instances of self-denying devotion to the poor, than he has seen in any or in all other classes. Mr. Oastler is not one of those who approves of making Parsons into Magistrates; he thinks the "order" is degraded thereby. With all Mr. Oastler's attachment to the clergy, he has often mourned that, as a body, they have not taken the place which God has assigned to them—to rebuke the oppressors, and to shelter and defend the oppressed. If, however, there be a worthy class amongst us—a class of benevolent, oppressed and injured Englishmen—in Mr. Oastler's opinion, that class is, the Working Clergy of the Church of England. He has had some opportunity of judging of their merits, and he should esteem himself to be deserving the Odd Fellow's charge of "a want of truth, judgment, and common sense," if he were to permit himself to withhold his testimony to their disinterested sacrifices for the poor.

"In No. 12 is a statement which is **UTTERLY FALSE**, and we fear there is a little swerving from that political honesty and love of truth for which we have ever given Mr. Oastler credit. He appears anxious to rob the 'honest' working men he mentions of the honour of originating the 'People's Charter,' but neither Mr. Oastler nor any other man can do it. The Working Mens' Association was formed in June, 1836, and was composed of nearly all the active men in the metropolis, who had advocated the principles of the Charter for many years before the Association was formed. Early in 1837, the Working Mens' Association called a public meeting at the Crown and Anchor, Strand. The room was crammed to overflowing. It was computed, also, that two or three thousand persons were unable to obtain admittance. The resolutions and petition were all moved and supported by working men; and the petition, which was drawn up by Mr. Lovett, contained all the principles embodied in the Charter:—Universal Suffrage, Annual Parliaments, Vote by Ballot, No Property Qualification, Equal Electoral Districts, and Payment of Members. This petition was unanimously adopted by the meeting, and received two or three thousand signatures the same night, from persons who attended the meeting. The Association next determined to test the Members of Parliament who professed Liberal principles, by calling a meeting at the British Coffee House, Cockspar-street, of as many of them as the Association could induce to attend, to discuss the propriety of some one or more of them bringing in a bill, embodying all the objects of the petition. Nine or ten Members of Parliament attended; among whom were Colonel Thompson, Mr. Charles Hindley, Mr. O'Connell, Mr. Hume, Mr. Sharman Crawford, and Mr. Hawes. This discussion lasted two nights, on the second of which the Association succeeded in pledging some few of them to support and bring in a bill embodying the principles of the petition. A committee was then formed, consisting of six Members of Parliament, and six members of the Working Mens' Association, to prepare the bill; but, as is ever the case where working men and gentlemen are associated for any object, the work fell exclusively, with the exception of Mr. Roebuck, upon the members of the Association. They prepared the draft—discussed, in the Association, every clause—rejected some, introduced others, and ultimately submitted it for public sanction.

"That Mr. Oastler may be no longer in the dark on this subject, we will furnish him with the names of the persons appointed to prepare the People's Charter. He will not find the names of the 'M.P.' or the 'M.P. Manufacturer' to whom he refers. Why should he not name them? It is 'needful' that there should be neither mystery nor falsehood in this matter; and, therefore, we will state, that Mr. Hume and Mr. Francis Place, the two persons referred to, had no more to do in originating the People's Charter than had Mr. Oastler himself. To assert, therefore, that these gentlemen, or the Government, 'employed the Chartists' to put down the agitation for the Repeal of the New Poor Law, is a gross and disgraceful calumny upon all the 'honest' working men referred to by Mr. Oastler, and upon Messrs. Hume and Place. The following are the names of the persons appointed at the second meeting, held (June 7, 1837) at the British Coffee House, Cockspar-street, to draw up the People's Charter:—J. A. Roebuck, Esq. M.P., Charles Hindley, Esq. M.P., Col. P. Thompson, Esq., Sharman Crawford, Esq. M.P., Daniel O'Connell, Esq. M.P., and J. Temple Leader, Esq. (not then an M.P., he having lost the first election for Westminster), Mr. H. Hetherington, Mr. W. Lovett, Mr. John Cleave, Mr. James Watson, Mr. R. Moore, and Mr. Henry Vincent."

Obs.—Mr. Oastler has carefully read the above, and compared it with the statement in No. 12 of the Fleet Papers; he is, however, unable to discover what "statement which is UTTERLY FALSE" can be referred to by the Odd Fellow; or in what part of No. 12 of the Fleet Papers, "he appears anxious to rob the honest working men he mentions of the honour of originating the People's Charter." Mr. Oastler has not, in No. 12 of the Fleet Papers, said one word about the origin of the People's Charter; its origin was clearly antecedent to the period mentioned by Mr. Oastler. When such serious charges, as "falsehood" and "robbery" are made against him, Mr. Oastler thinks it is only reasonable that the Odd Fellow should point out the passages in No. 12, with reference to the origin of the People's Charter, upon which he founds them. Mr. Oastler believes the Odd Fellow's statement respecting the origin of the People's Charter to be true; and he is not aware that he ever spoke or wrote any thing on the subject, which in any-

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddleworth, in the County of Norfolk :

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 16.

LONDON, SATURDAY, APRIL 17, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—How thankful am I, that the New Poor Law does not move so smoothly through the House of Commons, as the Commissioners had expected! Were it really a good measure, surely, by this time, its merits would have been discovered. Never was any act of Parliament "so puffed," and be-praised, and so well supported by "physical force," as this "crack" act of the "reformed" Parliament!—but, somehow, the real English stomachs of the people reject it, and, even in the "reformed" House of Commons, it has become a spectre! They tell me, also, that your friend the Duke of Rutland has, at last, seen into its monstrosities, and is now its foe. Surely, Mr. Thornhill, you will sometimes think on our conversations and correspondence respecting it, and believe that I was not so foolish as you then fancied.

I have just opened a letter from a very dear Clerical Friend, and I cannot help quoting a few words therefrom for your perusal, to show you, that other friends of the Church and Constitution, as well as myself, are delighted to see Monster writhing in a net of his own making. My Parson friend, speaking of the New the Poor Law, says:—

"I do trust that Monster has received his deadly wound!—even in his own Den—the House of Commons—he staggers! Oh! 'tis refreshing to observe these men of all wisdom, but that from above, biting the file, and vomiting their own sweet morsel! I see that God is sending the spirit of confusion into their counsels, and making them fall upon each other. Amen!"

Excuse this digression—when the heart is full, the mouth will speak. My object, in this letter, is not, however, the New Poor Law. I pant, fairly to combat with that Monster—I dread not the result of the encounter. In a few numbers, I will meet and grapple with that foe to God and man: at present, I have other business.

At the conclusion of my reverend friend's letter, (a copy of which adorned my last number,) he alludes to certain remarks of mine, about the Army and Police, and my "prediction" that a collision between these two forces was inevitable.

Do not suppose, Sir, that I am about to set myself up for a prophet. I merely calculate that certain causes will produce certain effects.

Perhaps it may not be unprofitable to you, who have so great a stake in the

present arrangements of society, to be told why and wherefore I believe, that the props which are now applied to prevent the Pillar of State from falling, will inevitably, if not removed, push down the edifice.

The very essence of the British Constitution is self government,—the tendency of every plan of the reformers is centralization, or, in other words, despotic power. If there be any excellency in the Constitution of England, over that of all other nations, it is in this—that it leaves the inhabitants of every locality to manage their own affairs. It is, in fact, an infinity of republics under one head; which head is not intended to exercise any influence or controul over the executive in different parts of the provinces, but is established to poise and regulate the whole, by preventing the jarring which would otherwise be inevitably occasioned by the separate independencies. It is, in fact, the “fly wheel” of society, interfering with none of the intricacies of its machinery, but regulating the movement of the whole.

Now, Sir, the object of centralization is to create one ruling, prying, irresponsible, despotic power, which is incapable of co-existence with our constitutional Monarchy and republican social system. It is intended to degenerate England into London, and thus to prepare the way for “the destruction of the freedom of the people.” To destroy the local influence of property and of character, and to centre all power, both legislative and executive, in an irresponsible Government.

Does it never strike you, Sir, that such a change cannot take place in England, without an entire destruction of the present social system? Do you never contemplate, that the same principle which now demands the sacrifice of the rights of the poor, must next demand those of the rich? Do you not perceive that the only way in which the new system can be carried out, is, that you, who possess such very large estates, must yield up the local influence which such property gives you? It is evident to by-standers, like myself, who have no interest in the matter, that the only way in which “the Commission scheme” can be made to “work well,” is the entire destruction of every local influence, and the absorption of *all* power by the central Commission. It is, therefore, evident, that such a measure must entirely break up our present system of society; and, consequently, I maintain, that it is safer to restore the sacred and constitutional rights of the poor, than to persist in a course which must inevitable bring ruin on its authors, the rich.

“Ah!—but,” say you, “when the powers of Government are centralized, there can be no movement, excepting under their controul—the mobs can no longer agitate society by their turbulent assemblings—every attempt at rebellion will be nipped in the bud—all then will be security and peace.” Say you so? Then, Sir, you have discovered the folly of the institutions of the Monarchy and the Aristocracy—you have proved them to be useless, expensive mischief-makers! You have found out that our wisest law-givers were fools, and that all wisdom has, till now, been locked up in a Commission box!! Beware how you make so light of established principles! Be careful how you build the *Commission* buttress against the constitutional Pillar!

I know not if you will understand me. I sometimes fear that “your order” is given up to blindness, that they have forgotten the *foundation* of society, and that *their* security depends upon *its* peace.

We have long been travelling far away from the Constitution ; but we are now flying away from it at a railroad-pace. Our present critical circumstances appear, however, to have been fore-seen by Lord John Russell, who, in the following passage, p. 396 of his " Essay on the History of the English Government and Constitution," says : —

" Thus a series of measures injurious to the interests and honour of the country are persisted in for a long time by mere force of authority, and the private advantages which individuals acquire by supporting the system. IN GOVERNMENT, MORE THAN ANY THING ELSE, POSSESSION IS NINE POINTS OF THE LAW. At length, the evil is carried beyond bearing: the people see they have been misled and benighted, and determine to dismiss their guides. But, even then, the holders of power have innumerable means of softening, perhaps of totally averting, their disgrace and they proceed for some time longer, conducting the nation through fresh morasses, and involving the state in new and greater perils."

From these " new and greater perils," in the hope of " totally averting their disgrace," it is evident, that the holders of power are now looking for deliverance to " a standing army" of Police, even at the contemplated price of " the freedom of England" !!

I am far from thinking that Lord John Russell is a prophet ; and yet, judging from causes, he has as clearly foretold the present state of the Government, as if he had possessed the gift of prophecy. Do, Sir, read that quotation over again, and say—Is it not even so ?

Are you not aware, Sir, that the establishment of the standing Army is unconstitutional, and that the Mutiny Act is required to be annually passed to enable the Government to keep it on foot ? We, however, already find, that that force is insufficient for the despotic intentions of our reformers, and that they require the aid of a Rural Police, as an *established* unconstitutional force, to enforce an unconstitutional Act of Parliament upon an unwilling people. But, Sir, mark the difference, the continuance of the Rural Police is not required to be annually sanctioned by Parliament,—it is appended to the reformed social system as a necessary adjunct ! It is well known to the Government, that the Army has expressed an unwillingness to be employed any longer to enforce an unconstitutional Act of Parliament, which is as surely aimed, eventually, at Chelsea and their pensions, as at the rightful relief of their Fathers, Mothers, Wives, Children, Brothers, and Sisters—which relief is as much their *Right*, 'as your rents are your own. The Army is also known to view the establishment of Police with extreme jealousy, the pay of the Soldiers being little more than half that of the Police.

Thus, Sir, all these acknowledged, though unwelcome facts, being put together, lead me, naturally, to the conclusion, that, seeing the Army is composed of men, the time will arrive, when a dreadful collision must take place between that Force and the Police.

There is nothing singular in my apprehension. 'Others, who have studied the Constitution of this country, and the habits and prejudices of the people of England, have seen great danger from the establishment of Police amongst us. They have foreseen that the " freedom of England " could not exist in its presence.

I am strengthened in my conviction, by the fact, that Lord John Russell himself has published his opinion of the destructive tendency of the Police. I wonder

that his Lordship has not been impeached for his introduction of that force into these Realms. I believe, that, if Her Majesty were aware of his Lordship's declaration, (in a book which he published in 1823,) and then of his having brought in a bill for the establishment of a Rural Police, she would not allow twenty-four hours to pass without making very serious inquiries into the matter. The passage which I now allude to, is at p. 378, of "Lord John Russell's Essay," &c. It is as follows:—

"A very short examination will, I am convinced, bring every rational man to this conclusion, that the real danger to be feared is, that the whole government, consisting of its three branches, King, Lords, and Commons, may be made to rest upon military force. Every government, and every part of government, it is well known, is liable to abuse; the English constitution, however, provides this remedy for abuses, that the whole machine of the State is ventilated and visited by the air and light of popular opinion. The administration, however corrupt it may have become, is obliged to purify itself, in order to conciliate that public favour by which alone it stands. The House of Commons, however ill-constituted, must yet yield occasionally to national opinion; and either make itself a just representation of the people, or act as if it were so."

It is evident, from what follows, that Lord John Russell foresaw that the time might arrive when "a corrupt administration" would defy "the national opinion," and entirely "rest upon military force." He knew also the kind of "military force" which would be required for such a treasonable purpose. He was evidently, even then, aware, that the army would never forget its constitutional allegiance, or lend its aid to "the destruction of the freedom of England," by "establishing the despotic power of a host of corrupt senators, and half a million of petty tyrants!"

The passage which immediately follows what I have already quoted, demonstrates, that Lord John Russell proposed the establishment of a Rural Police, for the treasonable purpose of "destroying the freedom of England."

I wonder, Sir, that the House of Commons is not besieged with petitions for the impeachment of that minister. I wonder that no peer has patriotism and nobility enough to represent the danger, to Her Majesty, of confiding in such a self-convicted traitor. Bear in mind the last quotation, and read the following which immediately follows it, in Lord John Russell's book:—

"But if the corrupt administrators have an army to support them, the necessity for reform vanishes, abuses are perpetrated, and the reign of freedom is closed for ever."

"It is in this point of view, that the increase of a standing army is really dangerous, and the encouragement of military habits most pernicious. And the reptile is the more to be guarded against as it would approach without the rattle which gives warning of its vicinity, and serves as a preservative against its poison. A standing army which destroyed the freedom of England, would not march by beat of drum to Westminster, and dismiss the House of Commons; it would not proscribe the House of Peers, and deluge the streets of London with the blood of her magistrates. It would appear in the shape of a guardian of order; it would support the authority of the two Houses of Parliament; it would be hostile to none but mobs and public meetings, and shed no blood, but that of labourers and journeymen. It would establish the despotic power, not of a single king, or a single general, but of a host of corrupt senators, and half a million of petty tyrants."

When my kind friend has read the foregoing remarks and extracts, I hope that he will not think the gift of prophecy is necessary to know, that, if the present system is persisted in, a revolution must be at hand. The fact is, Sir, that the system of Centralization, of Commissions, Espionage, and Police, although

it is a necessary appendage to a despotic Throne, is at war with every principle of a limited constitutional Monarchy; it is also totally incompatible with the "freedom of the people!" These are truths which it does not require time to establish, or prophecy to foretell. Lord John Russell is evidently well informed on these subjects, and he has satisfied himself that they are truths—else, he never could so correctly have portrayed the present position and conduct of Ministers, or have described with such minute accuracy "the standing army which would destroy the freedom of England!" My prayer is, that God would inspire the people with courage to *destroy* the "Reptile," and to *retain* their "Freedom!" So much for my opinion upon the result of the treasonable scheme of our present "corrupt administration."

The transition, in my mind, from a crippled Statesman to a crippled Factory boy, is so natural, that I shall not apologize for immediately turning from Lord John Russell to Joseph Habergham, the poor Factory cripple, about whom I told you a very affecting anecdote in my ninth letter. I never think of the Rural Police Props for the political cripples, Lord John Russell & Co., but that very iron frame which I assisted in providing for the Factory cripple, Joseph Habergham, is forced to my recollection. I and others have succeeded in getting poor Joseph out of the frame; I hope also, before I am emancipated, to deliver Lord John Russell from the Police! If Lord John be as noble, as wise, and as honest, as Joseph Habergham, I shall have no difficulty.—For the moment, Sir, I wish I were H. B.; then, instead of a letter, you should, this week, have a sketch of John and Joseph commiserated your cast-off Steward.

I believe that there are many persons who have read my ninth number, who wish to be more familiarly acquainted with Joseph Habergham. I have found somewhat about him, in the book, in which I discovered so much about Mr. Marshall, the Flax-spinner of Leeds and Shrewsbury, and his slaves. Joseph's history, as told to the Select Committee of the House of Commons by himself, is very interesting, and conveys some further insight to the Factory system. I here transcribe it, for the information and gratification of my readers.

"My name is Joseph Habergham. I live at North Gate, in Huddersfield. I am seventeen years old. My father died six years ago. I begun to work at Mr. George Addison's worsted mill, at Bradley Mill, near Huddersfield, when I was seven years old. Our hours of labour were from five in the morning to eight at night! Our only interval of rest was thirty minutes at noon! Not one minute more! We had to eat our meals as we could! I attended, what we called the throstle machines, for two years and a half, and then I went to the steam looms for half a year. I believe there were about fifty children, about the same age that I was, at that mill. They were often sick and poorly;—there were always, perhaps, half-a-dozen that were ill from their excessive labour! We became very drowsy and sleepy about three o'clock, and grew worse and worse, and it came to be very bad towards six and seven;—but still we had to labour on! We were kept at our work so long by an overlooker, who was kept on purpose to strap us—the same as strapping an old restive horse that has fallen down and will not get up!—it was his constant practice day by day! The children could not be kept at their labour without it—they are obliged to do it. We thought it very bad usage,—and towards the end of the day, when we were so sleepy, the "flies" of the machines would burst our knuckles! I had, at that time, a brother and a sister similarly occupied. John was seven years old when he began. They were very often sick. John died three years ago, in his seven-teenth year. My mother and his medical attendants said, that he died from working such long hours, and that it had been brought on by the Factory! His spine became affected, and he died! I have had to drop it, from ill-health, several times in a year! When I had worked about half-a-year

a weakness fell into my knees and ankles,—it was attended with great pain, and got worse and worse. I had to work as often as I could with it! No allowance would have been made, by my master, if I had not worked! I lived a good mile from the mill. It was very painful for me to move;—in the morning, I could scarcely walk, and my brother and sister used, out of kindness, to take me under each arm, and ‘trail’ me to the mill; and my legs dragged on the ground in consequence of the pain!—I could not walk! We were sometimes too late; and if we were five minutes too late, the overlooker would take a strap, and beat us till we were black and blue! He knew what caused us to be a little too late—we told him, but he never minded that; he used to watch us out of the windows.—(Here the witness stood up and showed his limbs.)—I was as straight and healthful as any one, when I was seven years and a quarter old! There were other children who became deformed at the same mill by this labour. My mother could not afford to take me away,—she was a poor widow! I have seen her weep oftentimes, and I have asked her why she was weeping? But she would not tell me then, but she has told me since—that it was from seeing my limbs giving way by working such long hours! One of the overlookers professed to be very religious, and he beat us sadly! We were cruelly beaten for speaking to each other—they will not allow them to speak! The masters are aware that the overlookers treat the children in this manner, and they encourage them to do it! I have seen, when the master has been standing at one end of the room, and two of the overlookers speaking to him; and if he has chanced to see two girls speaking to each other, he has said, ‘Look yonder at those girls talking,’—and he has run and beat them, the same as they beat soldiers in the barrack-yard for deserting! We had to clean the spindles out of the thirty minutes allowed at noon. This took from five to ten minutes. On Saturday night we professed to give over at six; but we used to stop one hour-and-a-half to ‘fettle’ and clean the machinery! Sometimes, at dinner-time, when we had just done ‘fetting,’ and we had but half got our dinners, he would put the clock forward to one, and then he rang the bell, and we were obliged to run back to our work—that was not uncommon! There were about a dozen died during the time I was at that mill! The owner or manager never sent to look after, or inquire about them;—some would live two or three months after they left. If any body had had the curiosity to have inquired after the deaths at this mill, the deaths of those children would not have been included in that statement, they did not die in the mill; but I knew one boy, who died when he had only been out of the mill two days!—he was stuffed up by the dust. Our food is very often spoiled by the dust—it often makes us sick. When trade was brisk, I worked from five to nine!—we worked this hour extra two summers; and for six months over-work, our master gave us, big and little, 10*d.* a piece for the whole time! We were forced to work that additional hour. We should have been discharged, if we had refused. The overlooker was a very savage man, and he used to strike the children under the ribs, till it took their wind away, and they fell on the floor, and lay there perhaps two minutes! The master knew of this severity, and put them up to it, they could not get the quantity of work done they wanted, unless they were to beat them! I next went to Mr. Brook’s woollen-manufactory, Upper Mill, Huddersfield. Our regular hours were from six to eight, with two hours off for meals. We could not stand it. I was ten, when I went there—I remained nearly four years. I worked at the Lewis’s machine. When trade was particularly brisk, we were obliged to work from five in the morning till ten, and sometimes eleven o’clock at night, for four months together! I once was obliged to work all night! We had no option, if we had left,—it was the same in other places when the trade was good;—besides, it is not so easy to get a new place. This labour was very distressing to me—it increased the pain in my limbs very much, and also my deformity! I have had to drop it for a fortnight together several times! At this mill we were beaten to make us do the work, but not with straps—they used to strike us with their feet! During the time I have worked there, I wished, many times, they would have sent me for a West India slave!”—(Out of this mill, as well as many others, I have, at election times, seen yellow flags waving, with “No Slavery” printed on them!—R.O.) “I had heard the condition of the slaves in the West Indies described. I was miserable, and I thought there could not be worse slaves than those who worked in Factories. I have had one of my arms broken—I was working at what is called a brushing mill;—there is a pin they put into the roller, to make it run round, and the pin caught my sleeve, and twisted my arm round, and broke it; and another boy had his arm broke in the same way. There was a boy, who, to ‘fettle’ the machine, was kneeling down, and a strap caught him about his ankles, and carried him round the wheel, and dashed his brains out on the floor! That was about half-past seven in the evening! I

have always had harder labour than my strength could bear! I have been rendered ill, deformed, and miserable, by the Factory labour! Oh! if I had a thousand pounds, I would give them, to have the use of my limbs again! One morning I was between ten and fifteen minutes too late, and the overlooker met me, and he gave me a knock on the head, and sent my head against a step, and caused a great haump to rise,—he said, 'he would turn me off—a young devil—for being too late.' I ran round the steps to get away from him, and I left that place. I went to Mr. William Firth's, Green Head, Huddersfield. At this place they 'bated' the boys, for being too late, 1*hd.* for six minutes, and a man 3*d.*; and when it got to sixteen minutes, they doubled it—6*d.* for a man, and 3*d.* for a boy; and it was doubled again when it got up to thirty-one minutes. For thirty-one minutes a boy forfeited 4*d.*, his daily wages being—for twelve hours work, 10*d.* or 1*s.*, or so. I do not know who got those fines. We were beaten as well as fined!—it is a regular thing to have fines at mills. The longest hours I had at Mr. Firth's were from five to nine, with two hours off for meals. I left there because I could stand it no longer; the weakness was so bad in my knees and ankles—I was obliged totally to give up work! I believe I should have died if I had not given up! I was an out-patient of the Huddersfield Infirmary, under Dr. Walker's care. They could not take me in—there were so many accidents that they were obliged to take in. They would have taken me in if they could. I left my work to go to the Leeds Infirmary, as an in-patient. There I was under Mr. Hey's care. He examined me, and said it came on with Factory labour, working so long, and standing so many hours! He said, 'There were poor hopes for me.' Dr. Walker says, 'I never shall be right any more.' I cannot walk above thirty yards, before my legs begin aching very bad, and then I cannot walk at all! I am now trying to learn to write—before, I did not know how to hold my pen. I do not think that above one Factory child in a hundred can write. In the Leeds Infirmary, now, there is another Factory boy, who is weak in his knees, the same as I am, but not quite gone so far—he is under Mr. Smith, Surgeon; and there is another Factory boy, in the same ward as I am; he was struck by the stubber with a billy-roller on his hip: there is also another Factory boy, who was kicked by an overlooker with his foot,—and his body is the same as if it was taken off and set on behind him; his body is twisted, and he goes upon crutches. I have been at the Leeds Infirmary a week last Saturday night. Last Tuesday but one, there was a boy brought in, about five or six o'clock in the evening, from a mill; he had got caught with the shaft, and he had both his thighs broke, and from his knee to his hip, the flesh was chipped, the same as if it had been cut by a knife,—his head was bruised, his eyes were nearly torn out, and his arms broken! His sister, who ran to pull him off, got both arms broke, and her head bruised, and she is bruised all over her body. The boy died last Thursday night but one. I do not know whether the girl is dead, but she was not expected to live. That accident happened in consequence of the shaft not being sheathed! The shafts might be boxed off at very little expence. Dr. Walker ordered me to wear irons from the ankle to the thigh; my mother was not able to get them, and he said, 'he would write a note, and she might go to some gentlemen in the town, and show them that note, and see if they would not give her something towards my irons;' and so she did, and I had got the bare irons made; and Mr. John Wood, of Bradford, gave me a sovereign, and so I got them finished. Mr. Oastler knew all about this, and about how my lameness had come on; and so he happened to mention it at the County Meeting at York, and so it got into the newspapers. My master happened to see this—he had not patience to read it—he is an enemy to the Ten Hours' Bill; and he sent the foreman on to our house, where I lived, to tell my mother, 'I suppose it is owing to our place that your Joseph got the use of his limbs taken away?' And my mother said, 'He was informed wrong; that he had it before he went to that Factory.' But he said, 'If he (Mr. O.) had said anything about our Factory, we shall certainly turn Joseph off, and both his brothers.' I have two little brothers working at the same place."

Such, Sir, is Joseph Habgerham's melancholy tale,—it is copied from the authorized report! It affords much matter for reflection and observation; but another victim, (not of the Factories,) one of your own order, who is deprived of his rank and his estates, and is now my Brother Prisoner, demands my attention. I shall devote my remaining space to his history—it will make a good postscript.

I am, Sir,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—The rule which I had proposed to myself, did not admit of my communicating any of our Fleet Family affairs in these Papers. To that determination I shall strictly adhere, excepting at the request of individuals, who may wish publicity for themselves, and whose cases are of a nature to interest my readers.

Just such a circumstance presents itself, in the detention of my fellow prisoner, Edmund Davenport, who is the next in succession to William Davenport, who was the last proprietor and rightful heir to the Brownhall estates, Cheshire; being the fourteenth in regular and uninterrupted succession from the Royal grant of Edward III. Edmund Davenport, instead of being in possession of his rightful estates, is now, and has been for SEVEN years, a prisoner in the Fleet! The estates are held by Salisbury Price Humphreys, who was the steward of the late William Davenport, and who married Maria, the *reputed* illegitimate daughter of his master. I say *reputed*, because Maria's mother, Peggy Brook, is said to have declared, on her death-bed, that John Thornley, and not William Davenport, was the father. Be that as it may, the late steward is now in possession of the Brownhall estates; and the rightful heir is, at his suit, confined a prisoner within these walls.

It is not my intention to weary you with a tedious account of all the persecutions of which Edmund Davenport has been the victim; suffice it to say, he informs me, that when his relation, William Davenport, was living, all his attempts to obtain an introduction to him were repulsed by his steward, the present possessor of the property, the old man being entirely under the controul of his steward. On the death of William Davenport, Humphreys claimed, and seized possession of the estates;—Edmund was advised to commence proceedings in law and equity against Humphreys. In Chancery he failed, in consequence of some irregularity in the Bill, although the Lord Chancellor declared, “that there was not a link in Davenport's pedigree wanting, and that unquestionably Edmund Davenport was the heir-at-law.” After two actions of ejectment in the courts of law, Edmund Davenport was declared to be the rightful possessor of the land; but the third time, Humphreys produced some document, which turned the verdict in his favour. The Judge viewed the document with strong suspicion, and ordered that a copy should be taken, at the charge of the Court, for the use of Edmund Davenport; and he also *recommended a new trial*.

Poor Edmund's means were, however, more than exhausted, and, instead of being enabled to prosecute his claim, his body was seized in execution for the costs in Chancery, and, during his imprisonment, he has suffered the loss of his wife—(being permitted, by the kindness of the Lord Chancellor, to visit her three times on her death-bed). His prosecutor is thus not only in possession of his patrimony, but has also the custody of his body!—which latter, I am told, he has offered to release, if Edmund will sign a document, relinquishing his title to the Brownhall estates!

Such, Sir, is the case of one of my fellow “collegians;”—and who is this prisoner? By birth, he is one of your own order—his only brother fell at Waterloo: he is also one of England's brave defenders! Read the short history of his exploits, and of his fate. In 1794, he entered the 22nd Light Dragoons. In 1795, he accompanied his regiment to Ireland; June 7, 1798, he was severely wounded with Colonel Lumley, and in the same charge. In 1800, his regiment embarked for Egypt, where he served under Abercrombie and Hutchinson, until the peace. In that campaign he was afflicted with ophthalmia, the effects of which he severely feels to this day. He received his discharge in 1802, when the regiment was disbanded at Weymouth. He afterwards removed to Ireland, where, for eleven years, he served as a volunteer in the Irish disturbances. He has no pension! *The Fleet* is his reward for all these services! It would seem that England is a hard task-master! It is “too bad,” that one of her defenders should perish in prison, and be deprived of his rightful property, at the bidding of an usurper, merely for the want of a few pounds to prosecute his claim! Such, however, is his case. I publish it at his request, in the hope that some plan may be discovered to enable the old veteran to obtain his rights!—Truly, Sir, it is too often the rogues outside, who drive honest men into this cage.—R.O.

who contradicts that statement, on the contrary, he remembers to have stated many of the same facts in nearly the same words, in letters which were published in several newspapers.

Mr. Oastler has likewise been considered a man of veracity—in capable of asserting a deliberate falsehood. He says, in this twelfth number of his "Fleet Papers," that the Government played a trick—to please the landed interest, and to put down the loud cry against the New Poor Law. They commenced with these two friends (Mears, Hume and Place), 'with them a bargain was struck in this effort.—If you will put down the movement against the New Poor Law, we will agree to the repeal of the Corn Laws. The two Malthusians set to work immediately; they excited the hopes of the known but sinister friends of the working classes; the Charter was immediately tried upon the attention of the masses.'—Sir, I am not reasoning; what I have here stated is true. We are sorry to read such a declaration as this coming from Mr. Oastler; because we know it to be, of our own knowledge, UTTERLY AND ENTIRELY FALSE; and we challenge him in a fair and candid spirit, to prove the truth of his assertions. We cannot do it. In making the attempt, he must descend from vague and inflated assertions to facts, dates, and persons. Fear not to give names, Mr. Oastler, when Truth is your object. Mr. Francis Place and Mr. Richard Oastler were both elected Honorary Members of the Working Men's Association—not because the members generally agreed with the Malthusian doctrines of the one, or the ultra-Tory doctrines of the other; but because they were considered men of great ability, honestly intending to promote the interests and improve the social and political condition of the working classes. Mr. Oastler avers, that the 'honest' men among the working classes, to whom he refers, 'believe these two Malthusians (Mears, Hume and Place) to be as honest as themselves.' Of course they do—why should they not? They do precisely the same with Mr. Oastler, the ultra-Tory. He further says,—speaking of these Malthusians,—these honest working men act with confidence on their suggestions.' Mr. Oastler greatly underrates the character and intellect of these 'honest' working men, if he think they can be made tools of by any party—either by the Malthusians, the ultra-Tories, or the Government. With regard to the assertion, that they 'act with confidence' on the 'suggestions' of these Malthusians, it is quite true that they do so when the suggestion is deemed a good one; but it is equally true, that they unceremoniously reject it when it appears to be bad. In this respect they act towards Mr. Oastler. They receive his suggestions with deference, and act with confidence upon those when they appear to be just and proper, but promptly reject them when they do not appear calculated to further the exalted and praiseworthy objects of the People's Charter. Whoever, therefore, has furnished Mr. Oastler with the statement he has published, is a slanderer of the honest originators and supporters of the People's Charter; and it appears to us, that it is Mr. Oastler's duty to call upon his informant to prove the truth of his statement, or acknowledge that it is destitute of foundation. We shall hold Mr. Oastler to our challenge. We know that the whole of his statement (in No. 12) about the Chartists is FALSE—it is a gross calumny upon the honest working men who zealously uphold the People's Charter, from a deep conviction of its pre-eminence, over every other subject of agitation; and we maintain that Mr. Oastler is bound to attempt to prove the truth of his statement, or unhesitatingly retract the assertions he has cast upon the honest and persevering advocates of the People's Charter.

Ours,—Mr. Oastler is not aware that he has "cast any aspersions upon the honest and persevering advocates of the People's Charter." The Odd Fellow will perhaps be good enough to say where and when he has done so. If what Mr. Oastler has published in No. 12 of the Fleet Papers, respecting "the putting down the movement against the New Poor Law, the repeal of the Corn Laws, and the Charter being urged upon the attention of the masses," is "UTTERLY AND ENTIRELY FALSE," why then Mr. Oastler admits that it is his duty "unhesitatingly to retract." Mr. Oastler never publishes any statement which he is afraid to investigate—truth, and truth alone, is his object—"facts, dates, and persons" can only advance the development of truth. Some of the facts are stated in No. 12 of the Fleet Papers—the dates fasten themselves to these and other facts, i.e. the period when Lord John Russell excited the people to attend public meetings in his speech at Liverpool—the time when the deputation was sent from London, to agitate the Charter at the anti-Poor Law meetings in the North—and when the agitation for the repeal of the New Poor Law was suppressed by the agitation for the Charter. Then the progress of that movement to its ultimate termination, by the prisoners being fitted with Chartist victims. Mr. Oastler has never suspected the honesty of the persons who were deputed by the Working Men's Association in London to agitate the Charter in the North; he has always believed them to be the friends of the working classes. But he has got to know that they are too wise to be deceived. Mr. Oastler believes that they were deceived; and that the agitation of the Charter, from its commencement by Lord John Russell, to its termination in the dungeons of the Chartist prisoners, was a government plot, to obtain two objects—the suppression of the cry against the New Poor Law, and the removal of a great number of obnoxious individuals. Mr. Oastler has never viewed Frost, Williams, Jones, O'Connor, O'Brien, and the whole host of convicted Chartists, in any other light than that of government victims. The facts related in No. 12 of the Fleet Papers have served to strengthen that conviction. Two names are quoted and mentioned by the Odd Fellow, why or wherefore, is best known to himself. One name will, at present, suffice for Mr. Oastler. Mr. Francis Place was the person who communicated the facts mentioned in No. 12 to the parties who repeated them to Mr. Oastler. Although the Odd Fellow says, "he knows that the whole statement is FALSE," he must surely Mr. Oastler, who still believes that it is true. The facts were related to Mr. Oastler by two persons, (the one a Chartist, and the other a Radical, as Mr. Oastler believes);—those persons narrated the circumstances at different times, without varying in their statements; they are persons upon whose testimony Mr. Oastler places the most implicit reliance; and, would the facts are denied by Mr. Francis Place, Mr. Oastler would have the strongest doubt of their truth.

Mr. Oastler evidently upholds the ultra-Tory party, because he himself is heartily disposed towards his poor oppressed fellow-countrymen. He has, doubtless, many true friends among that party for whom he has formed a strong personal attachment; and he writes more from a feeling of

personal regard for them, than from the dictation of a sound judgment. Hence we find him designating the New Poor Law—the Whig-Malthusian New Poor Law; though every one knows it is a law enacted by the rich of every party—Tory, Whig, and Radical Malthusian—to rob the poor for the purpose of relieving their own pockets. It is not true, therefore, to say that it is peculiarly a Whig-Malthusian law, any more than it would be to call it an ultra-Tory law. The law is supported by the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel, and the whole Tory party, with very few exceptions; it is also supported by Lord Melbourne, Lord John Russell, and the whole of the Whig party, with very few exceptions; and it receives the support of Lord Brougham, Mr. Hume, Mr. Grote, Mr. Roebuck, and the whole of the Malthusian party, with very few exceptions. Mr. Oastler cannot with truth, then, fix this law upon either of these parties—they are united in upholding it, and every honest man must see that the enactment of such an atrocious law results from the non-representation of the working population;—it is a law made by rich plunderers against the defenceless but industrious poor, by which they hope to put into their own pockets what they save by starving the poor, or forcing them to live 'upon a coarser kind of food.'

Obs.—Mr. Oastler is utterly at a loss to account for the serious charge brought against him by the Odd Fellow in the above paragraph. He is not aware that he has ever styled the New Poor Law "The Whig Malthusian New Poor Law." He does know that he has often reproved others for so naming it. He has before him a copy of a speech delivered by himself in Huddersfield, January 14, 1837, which was afterwards published. At page 13 in that pamphlet, he finds the following declaration:—"Now, Tory, Whig, and Radical, hear me; the accursed Poor Law Act, cannot, with justice, be charged upon any separate political party. The Tories call it a Whig measure; but I know that the Duke of Wellington supported it; it is then a Tory measure, as well as a Whig measure; and it is a Radical measure, as well as it is a Tory and Whig measure.—It was supported by the Tory, Wellington,—the Whig, Brougham,—and the Radical, Hume. Let us hear no more then, about its being a Whig measure. It is only fair to give the Devil his due. It is an Act passed, by the Union of every faction, in the hope of their being able to crush the rights of the people,—the working people. But it will as assuredly undermine the Throne, and the Aristocracy, as it will, if enforced, enslave the Labourer. This, the Aristocracy cannot yet understand, but the Jews, the Slaughter-house money-changers can." So far as Mr. Oastler is aware, such is the manner in which he has always spoken and written on the subject; if he has been guilty of the serious crime charged against him by the Odd Fellow, perhaps his accuser will condescend to furnish him with proof; that being done, Mr. Oastler's apology will not tarry.

Mr. Oastler's style is vigorous and original; and when he pours the beauties of nature, the happy homes of by-gone days, or the miseries of the accursed factory system, his powers of description are little inferior to that truly great man, Cobbett; and, indeed, the 13th number of the 'Fleet Papers,' which we have just perused, containing a beautiful description of Fixby, revived the pleasure we formerly derived from reading Mr. Cobbett's inimitable 'Rural Rides.' The most interesting numbers are those which expose the 'accursed factory system.' Who can read the affecting description of the two factory cripples, Joseph Habergham and William Dodd, without feeling a lively affection for the 'good old Factory King'—Richard Oastler—who so nobly defends the cause of these victims of the accursed system? The Whig 'Morning Chronicle' may rail at him, and call him 'incendiary,' and assert that he is 'mad;' but every good man will thank him, and hold him in affectionate regard, for his generous advocacy of these defenceless and ruined cripples. How touchingly he describes the gratitude of Joseph Habergham, who left a sovereign with Mr. H—, as a grateful testimony of affection for the 'good old King' who had saved his life! How truly noble and delicate was poor Joseph's reply, when his gift was refused by his benefactor, who recommended him to send it to his mother—'I will send it to my mother, sir, and tell her that you sent it her, for you saved my life—I owe you all!' The case of William Dodd is painfully affecting, and the long and interesting letter which that unhappy cripple wrote to Mr. Oastler, ably detailing his sufferings, we deem of so much importance, exposing as it does, the cruelties of the factory system, that we shall insert it entire in our next number. Everybody should lend a helping hand to destroy or greatly mitigate the evils entailed upon human beings by the factory system. We hope some permanent means of living may be discovered for this worthy but disconsolate victim of an unfeeling, cruel system. Here is a man whose dimensions prove that Nature intended him for a robust, powerful man, at the age of thirty-seven, a ruined cripple by the factory system. He has been twenty-five years in the employment, and well acquainted with every department. He could take a fleece from the back of a sheep, and make it into cloth. We have seen him, and can testify to the truth of the poor fellow's condition. He writes like one in despair. He has a claim upon our columns as he is a brother Odd Fellow; and we sincerely wish our means were commensurate with our desire to render him a service. Mr. Oastler's 'Fleet Papers' abound with highly interesting statements upon various subjects, and we only regret that his ultra-Tory principles sometimes lead him to speak disparagingly of the right of the whole population to be fairly represented in Parliament."

Obs.—Mr. Oastler is not aware that he has ever "spoken disparagingly of the right of the whole population to be fairly represented in Parliament;" on the contrary, Mr. Oastler has always asserted, "that the House of Commons ought to be a fair representation of the whole people;"—but, in his opinion, the representation, as proposed in the People's Charter, would practically give the whole representation to the working classes, instead of to the whole people. The principle of the Reform Bill is, on the contrary, contrived so as to exclude the working classes; hence Mr. Oastler is surprised that any Statesman professing Tory principles can agree to Lord John Russell's dogma, "the Reform Bill is a final measure." The Tory principle of representation is, that all classes shall be fairly represented. Mr. Oastler intends very shortly in the Fleet Papers frankly and fully to state his opinions upon the subject of representation.

THE FLEET PAPERS.

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SECOND EDITION of No. 12, *FLEET PAPERS*,
with the *PORTRAIT* of Mr. OASTLER.

In consequence of the great demand for No. 12, of *THE FLEET PAPERS*, a Second Edition has been printed, which may be had at the publisher's.

On the 26th of June, 1841, will be published,

PRICE TWO PENCE,

No. 26, of the FLEET PAPERS,

WHICH WILL CONTAIN A PORTRAIT OF

THOMAS THORNHILL, ESQ.,

OF RIDDLESWORTH, IN THE COUNTY OF NORFOLK.

Orders received by the Publisher, Mr. PAVEY, 47, Holywell St., Strand, London

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. Oastler is "at home" on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

J. S. BANKFOOT is received. His kind and affectionate notice of the labours of his "King" in the service of the helpless poor, brought some tears into the old man's eyes. His excellent hints on the abuse of machinery are highly valued, and will, in due time, be used. Would he be kind enough, in confidence, to name the Clergyman to whom he alludes? Mr. Oastler altered the *CHURCH* of the *Fleet Papers* to accommodate the Advertisers, and those who wished to read their comments.

WILLIAM ATKINSON'S Letter on the Hand-loom Weavers' Commission will appear shortly.

WILLIAM DODD'S interesting communication will be inserted in an early number.

A PHYSICIAN, DEVON, will shortly meet with attention.

W. MILNER is thanked.

L. S., Charlton in Medlock, is received. The Horrible details of the indecencies of Factory Masters (married as well as single) with young women in their employ, which he has witnessed, and which are very common in the Factories, are too disgusting to appear in print. *STAMMERS* may thereby know, that, revolting as is the character of the Factory Master, his brutal indecencies prevent his full length picture being presented to them. Chambers' mode of accounting for the deaths, and his description of the factory life prove, that he is either ignorant or dishonest. L. S. is thanked; he should not be surprised if a Whig Bookseller refuses to sell the *Fleet Papers*.

Mr. Oastler is exceedingly obliged to many of his friends in the North, by the kind interest they have taken, requesting Charles Hebble, Esq., the talented and indefatigable Parliamentary agent of the Licensed Victuallers, to communicate with him. Mr. O.'s friend Hebble is very kind in his attentions.

Mr. Oastler has received for William Dodd, the Factory Cripple, 10s. from a London tradesman, 1s. from a Young Lady, London, and one pound of Spanish Chocolate from a friend. W. D. is very thankful to his benefactors.

NOTICES OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

"The FLEET PAPERS, champion the cause of the poor and the Factory Slave."—*Berroe's Worcester Journal*, April 8, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS.—"No human being can read, without emotion, the details of the Factory system in Mr. Oastler's simple and touching, and therefore most eloquent, 'Fleet Papers'—more particularly the fates of infants and deformed persons, for whose relief the boasted wealth of the mill-owners has not yet provided a single asylum."—*Standard*, March 22, 1841.

The FLEET PAPERS.—"Agreeing, as we do, in the opinions of that humane, that excellent man Richard Oastler, with respect to the vile New Poor Law, and the infamous Factory Regulations, we at once illustrate the working of the latter system by an extract or two from the 'Fleet Papers,' (No. 14.) By this we shall see what the actions are of a professed Liberal, friend of the poor, &c. &c., and all the other humbug professions and protestations, that emanate from the same squad, who are now rolling in riches, obtained by degrading and torturing humanity—whose gold and silver is the blood and sinews of children, crippled by the hard taskmaster, out of love, we suppose, to the 'working classes,'—the people,'—liberty,' &c. &c. Thus writes and quotes Mr. Oastler:—
 "Thus we see what friends these millowners are to the people. One of the Marshalls has lately married the daughter of Lord Montecagle, and next week Lord Montecagle will be married to Miss Marshall, the sister of his daughter's husband! From the toil and sweat of poor children, this democrat has struggled to obtain wealth, and now gratifies his ambition by making his daughter Lady Montecagle! The very man who pretends to despise the House of Lords, and with his mouth prates of the liberty of the people. The Factory Slaves in Shrewsbury are bound, hand and foot, to obey the mandate of the tyrant's lickspittle toady, Mr. Horsman. Will the men of Shrewsbury, who boast so much of their independence, consent still to drag the chain of the Factory Tyrant, and vote as he wills it! If so, they are base indeed! In our fourth page will be found a Report of some Evidence, given before a Committee, on the Factories' Regulation Act, and printed by order of the House of Commons, on the 8th of August 1832. As this evidence bears upon the manner in which the Factories of Messrs. Marshall are conducted, in this town and at Leeds, it may be important that as much publicity as possible should be given, to expose the diabolical heart-rending cruelties inflicted upon helpless children by the Mill-owners and their hellish agents. The evidence of Samuel Downe and Jonathan Downe, both natives of Shrewsbury, discloses a system of torture, of barbarity, which till we read it we could not have believed possible to exist in England. It may be supposed that we print this evidence from political motives, because Mr. Marshall, and their Agent in Shrewsbury, Mr. Horsman, are Liberals. We shall be content to state, that cruelty and oppression will ever find us an irreconcilable adversary, whether it be exercised by a Tory or a Radical. The lives of children are far above the interest of speculative Politicians; and let the wretch be of what party he may, we should loathe him, and hold him up to public scorn, for oppressing 'the fatherless children and widows.' We appeal to the human heart, divested of all the petty ephemeral jealousies connected with political creeds—we appeal to man's better nature, and ask, are Englishmen, or Savages, even justified in tolerating such scenes of suffering? We appeal to the Father of a Father, with his little ones around him, and ask, would you take the last beloved of these, and give its little bones and muscles to the torturer? There is a cause above all consideration connected with party, the cause of the weak and the Poor—it is the cause of Nature, who, by the spirit of God, calls on us to protect those who are helpless. Whether it be the rich Peer, or the wealthy Mill-owner, the man who would harm 'one of these little ones' is a libel upon the Creator who formed man in his own image, and a curse and pestilence on the earth. It is well for the man of thousands of pounds to loll on his sofa, or sit with his feet upon a rich carpet, whilst sipping wine, and partaking of the choicest viands, to think lightly, if at all, upon these things. It is well for such, in their own estimations, not to trouble their heads about minor details, such as contracted joints—death—sickness, &c. &c.; but a day of reckoning will come when the dross will be as valueless to them, as the corpse of the poor girl who sank into her grave, some years since, whilst striving to earn a pittance, surrounded by insult and oppression. There must be Masters and Servants,—wealth gives an impetus to industry, and industry creates wealth,—but Christians, human beings, should not be treated like dogs—worse than dogs. Here is a specimen, from the evidence of Samuel Downe:—

"I was strapped on my legs, and then I was put upon a man's back and strapped! and then I was strapped and buckled with two straps to an iron pillar, and flogged!! After that, the over-looker took a piece of tow, and twisted it in the shape of a cord, and put it in my mouth, and tied it behind my head! He thus gagged me, and then he ordered me to run round a part of the machinery, and he stood at one end, and every time I came round he struck me with a stick, which I believe was an ash-plant, and which he generally carried in his hand, till one of the men in the room came and begged me off!!!

"The practice of flogging girls, as well as boys, is spoken to by other witnesses; also, that the silence system is adopted, of late put into operation in our gaols. Jonathan Downe states—

"I have known a mother of two children, in Mr. Marshall's employment at Shrewsbury, knocked down by the overlookers! Horsman, the manager, will go to the over-looker, and, if they have not done anything severe, he will say, 'I have never heard of your doing anything—you have never quarrelled with any of the hands—do something, that I may hear of it, and I will stand your friend!' It is the usual practice to prepare Mills, previous to their being inspected by strangers. It is a frequent thing at Mr. Marshall's Mill, where the least children are employed, (there are plenty working at six years of age!) provided a child should be drowsy, the over-looker walks round the room, with a stick in his hand, and he touches that child on the shoulder, and says, 'Come here.' In the corner of the room, there is an iron cistern—it is filled with water; he takes this boy up by the legs, and dips him overhead in the cistern, and sends him to his work for the remainder

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddleworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."
"The Husbandman that laboreth, must be first partaker of the fruits."
"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break
in pieces the oppressor."

Vol. I.—No. 17. LONDON, SATURDAY, APRIL 24, 1841.

Price 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—Yes, it is even so, you have succeeded—you have punished me! Surely your revenge will now be gratified. I do feel imprisonment to be painful, when the Church bells, all around, are ringing—"ding-dong, ding-dong,"—"come-come-come!" My heart responds, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the House of the Lord."—I am ready, with my Bible and my Prayer-book, this moment to accept the invitation of the Church,—thus to follow the dictate of my heart, and "go into the House of the Lord;" but, an angry aristocratic creditor, has "lodged his detainer at the gate"—and thus forbids me! He, a poor finite creature like myself, bars the way between a willing worshipper, and "the House of the Lord!"—And why? Not for any sin of mine against him;—never was man more devotedly and disinterestedly served, than I served you; but, as the sequel will disclose, because your youthful follies had driven you from "the hall of your fathers;" and I, your Steward, was resolved, at all risks, to try to perform your neglected duties. That, Mrs Thornhill, is, as you well know, the only reason why I am barred inside the Fleet—your prisoner:—why I am, by you, forbidden to accept the invitation of our Church. The *Fleet Papers* will, in due time, explain to their readers "all how and about it." I often think how strange it is, that a *Clergyman*, whom I had introduced and recommended to my Master, and thus to the Lord Chancellor, and to his vicarage, should, aided by an *Aristocrat*, whose neglected duties I had endeavoured to perform, become the instrument of inflicting upon me all the punishment which I am capable of receiving,—banishment from "the House of the Lord!" So, however, it is and so my duty requires, that I should kiss the rod which smites me.

I was walking, a Sunday or two ago, behind the prison, in the racket-ground, with a fellow prisoner—a kind, affectionate friend, and a faithful Minister of God—a Clergyman of the Church of England. The Church bells were then ringing,—our hearts were willing to accept their invitation: but angry moths, called creditors, hindered. My imprisoned clerical friend, said to me, "What mockery. Mr. Oastler, the bells of the national Church say, 'come, come;' we are both willing to obey, but, because two men are angry, we may not go!" Truly, Sir, that deprivation is your only power of punishment.

I had written thus far, when another cause of grief was added,—it was unexpected, as my last words must prove to you. It is an article of “news,” about which I may not write, else this paper should receive the impress of my heart on that subject.

I have just heard that a vacancy has taken place in the representation of Nottingham; and that Mr. Walter, the powerful opponent of the accursed New Poor Law, is a candidate. I *am* grieved that I am in prison just now, because, I think that I could render good service to my country, if I were “out” for a day or two, by aiding and assisting in Mr. Walter’s return. I must, however, be content. Had I a thousand votes, Walter should have them all. If the law would permit, I could give many reasons why I would thus support Mr. Walter—reasons which could not fail to satisfy every one who believes, that the Poor have a Right to Liberty and Life!

I thank God, that you cannot hinder me from praying, which I do right fervently, that the friends of the Poor, in Nottingham, may unite, as one man, in recording their detestation of the horrible and atrocious New Poor Law, by voting for, and returning to Parliament, its most powerful foe—John Walter. So prays Richard Oastler, the imprisoned “King” of the Poor Factory Children!

I am very anxious to enter the field, and wage a pitched battle with that hungry Monster—the New Poor Law. But, Sir, I am not devoid of gratitude; and the crowded catalogue before me, reminds me, that I have too long delayed recording the offerings of friendship to your Captive Steward.

I told you how it would be: I know that you sneered at me; but, Sir, it is true—the *Lord does provide*. You believed that this Cell would extinguish my principles, and bury my name. You fancied, that it was upon *your* favour that *my* fame rested, and that the withdrawal of *your* countenance, the fact of *your* hatred, would blast *my* prospects, obliterate *my* name, and destroy *my* principles. Such, Sir, I know, were your hopes and expectations. Your underlings were taught to speak of “Oastler’s fall,” &c. You and they had forgotten, that God is greater than man, and that man’s extremity is only *His* opportunity. I told you, that I entirely relied upon *Him*—that I was sure, as long as ravens had wings, I should not want. Read, in the following pages, how faithful God is to His imprisoned, though unworthy servant. Mark, in these touching and affecting instances of kindness, the certainty that my principles cannot die! See, there, the condemnation awarded to your conduct. That award, Sir, is from clergy and laity, from noble and plebeian, from rich and poor, from churchmen and dissenters,—from Tories, Radicals, Chartists, and Whigs. In the following list, they all record their sympathy for your Prisoner, their condemnation of your tyranny.

To my friends, I need not apologise for occupying so many pages with such pleasing records. They know that a heart like mine cannot enjoy itself in secrecy.

To my enemies, if such there be, who read these letters, I would say, excuse one whom you think to be a weak old man, if he should weary you by the long tale of friendship, which his imprisonment has forced upon him. I am content that my foes should think that I am a weak, insane, or mad old man. I am not however willing, that ingratitude should be charged against me.

My last account of “offerings” was to February the 22nd. Since then, besides the beautiful pen, which a young lady gave to me, and the flowers which a prisoner’s wife presented to your Prisoner, I have been honoured by the following

tokens of friendship and esteem. Do not permit the list to weary you, Sir; it is not quite so long as is your rent-roll—but it is much more estimable. You inherited that,—*this* you have purchased for me. The price I will not name.

The variety of these tokens of friendship—their touching eloquence—the peculiar circumstances, all, all combine in adding to their interest and their value. Party and sectarian walls are levelled by them, principle alone remains. A very kind old lady, the wife of one who was a faithful servant of yours, who now resides at Brompton, sent me some hunting-nuts, of her own making. She thought that I should enjoy the “domestic manufacture” of a friend: and so I did. A Yorkshire operative, knew that he could not please his “King” better than by presenting him with a “piece” of his own county—a Yorkshire oat-cake. A Leeds “liberal reformer” was aware that his old opponent sometimes indulged himself with a pipe, and so he brought to my Cell a quantity of tobacco, and left it there. Next came the kind remembrance of my faithful Keighley friends, inclosed in a letter from one of the very best men I know, who wrote to me as follows:—

“My dear Sir,

“Keighley, 25th February, 1841.

“I am requested to forward you the sum of 3*l.* 12*s.*, the proceeds of a tea party, and have forwarded you a bank order for the amount. Have the goodness to send me a receipt. I expect that you will be receiving a sum of money from the Short Time Committee in the course of a few weeks. Accept my respects to yourself, and remember me to Mrs. Oastler.

“I remain, dear Sir, yours, ever faithfully,

“DAVID W. WEATHERHEAD.”

Then, Sir, a Yorkshire lady, who is a Whig, presented me with 20*l.*; and next, a Tory—Lady ———— honoured me, by sending me a copy of ‘Helen Fleetwood,’ the Factory Girl. Were I to tell the noble donor’s name, I should surprise you—my heart felt grateful, and feels so still. A brother “collegian,” who was going “outside,” left me a token of kind remembrance—a light summer-hat. On the same day, I fancied that a “lark” had been played upon a tradesman. A young man, from Oxford Street, entered my cell, and said, that “he had come to measure me for a suit of clothes.”—“It is a mistake, my friend; you have been hoaxed. I am in no want of clothes.” Such was my reply. “Is your name Oastler, Sir?”—“It is, my man; but I have not sent for you.” The youth then presented me with the following note:—

“My dear Sir,

“An esteemed friend of yours, from Lancashire, is desirous of presenting you with a suit of clothes, and has therefore ordered us to have your measure taken, that we may supply the same. The bearer of this will take your directions.

“Believe me, my dear Sir, yours, very sincerely,

“1, Vere Street, March 2, 1841.”

“W. UNDERWOOD, Jun.”

In a day or two, sure enough, a suit of the very best West of England black, was added to my prison wardrobe. Before that suit arrived, a well-wisher, who is a Chartist, in Edgware Road, sent me 1*s.*, mourning over “his poverty, which prevented him from paying off your claim;” and my kind friends in Clayton West, near Huddersfield, replenished my purse with a 5*l.* note, which was forwarded to me in a letter from my old “companion in arms,” Joseph Wood Hall. The following extracts from that good man’s epistle are worth preserving:—

“I am desired by your friends in this little village to send you the sum of 5*l.*, that has been raised by subscription. We are heartily sorry that the sum is so small; but though the sum is

small, it may do you a little good—it can do you no harm. Could we have raised more, there is not a man to be found in the world so welcome to it as our ‘King.’ Though he is in prison, we love him. You are the father of a very numerous family—yes, the most affectionate father that the factory children ever had. Yes, Sir, and they will bless your name, and hold your memory dear, long after your spirit has gone to its reward in heaven. My dear Sir, many a time, when I have been looking at your labours in the cause of the factory children, and the sufferings brought upon you through your advocacy of their rights, I have felt a spirit of revenge to get hold upon me for the moment, till I have heard the voice of the Prince of Peace whispering within, and saying, ‘Vengeance is mine,—I will repay.’ Then, thought I, he must have his reward in another world. And I have thought of the hundreds that have gone to a premature grave through their factory labour, and that have got, through the mercy of God, into heaven, who will be ready to give their best earthly friend a hearty welcome. The prison may cut short your days; but this blessed assurance of future happiness lifts up the fainting spirits. Let this, my dear Sir, be your consolation, that your reward shall be in heaven.

The next mark of friendship was, to me, peculiarly affecting. The poorest creature within these walls—a worn out old Hertfordshire earth-stopper, who is here “for contempt,” which, in his case, means nothing more than ignorance—and a very natural suspicion that his opposing attorney wished to cheat him,—that is his only crime, Sir; still, it should seem that he is to be here for life.—Well, this poor man’s son brought him a root of horse-reddish, all the way from Ware.

The old man was so kind as to present it to me!—*That* was a real prison scene; but, by contrast, it reminded me of one “outside.” When the rheumatic, ruptured, old Englishman stood at the door of my Cell—a willing almoner—my thoughts turned instanter on the contrast—“a fine old English Gentleman,”—“outside,” but not “of the olden time,” whose rental is far heavier than was his honoured father’s, who once met two little children in the road. *He* was seated in his carriage, and *they* were gathering acorns for their fathers’ logs! The Squire was a great friend of the accursed New Poor Law,—he ordered his coachman to “pull up.” He then actually stole the acorns from the children, and drove home with that plunder in his carriage! He afterwards threatened to discharge their fathers, who happened to be his labourers! He stopped the usual allowance of soap from his kitchen, and it required the intercession of his amiable Daughter “to set matters right!” I contrasted the *generosity* of the poor imprisoned earth-stopper, with the *cruelty* of that rich Squire “outside;” and then, I wondered where *Justice* had *hidden her scales*. Ah! Mr. Thornhill! talk no more of *your rents* and *your winnings*—that gift, the offering of the honest earth-stopper, conveyed, to my mind, a joy which all *your gold* cannot purchase. A Baronet, M.P., was my next contributor. He gave me two sovereigns, (he had given me three before,) and his friend left me one. Then, my faithful “man-friday,” Joseph Habbergham, brought me another nice home-baked loaf.

A sound old fashioned Yorkshire Tory, presented me with Ten pounds; and his affectionate daughter sent me a beautiful silver pencil-case. I must write to that young friend some day soon! A Glasgow Operative would replenish my tobacco-box,—one, from Huddersfield, left me a cordial in my Cell. A kind Clergyman, from Rutland, insisted on my taking 10s. from him. Some one, I know not who, left in my Cell half-a-pound of the Indian weed. Do you know, Sir, I fancy that it was Habbergham, but I am not sure. An Author, a commoner, presented me with his volume, and so did one of noble grade. Tobacco again! and from a “Leeds reformer.” Surely these Leedsers do not intend that I should puff me

out! A snuff-box, pens, sealing-wax, paper, and wafers, next followed, from a London Lady, her Son, and her two Daughters: they are all Chartists—who, afterwards, kindly presented me with a leg of mutton, a large loaf of bread, and some Scripture pictures, as my young friend said, "to pass on my lonely hours by gazing at." The next offering, was from one of Her Majesty's servants,—you must guess what it was, I will not tell.

Read now, Sir, of the kindness of my Lancashire friends. The following letter is from Chorley:—

"Sir,—I have the pleasure to inform you, that when your Central Committee recommended that a national testimonial should be got up, as a token of the gratitude the working classes owe you, for your unwearied exertions in their cause, we formed a committee in Chorley, and were very anxious to do our best; but owing to the depression in trade, and some of the public works being at a stand, we only mustered *£*42.; so we determined to let the matter stand over a little, until some of the works re-commenced, thinking we might then be able to renew the subscription to advantage. We have now re-commenced our exertions. I will write you the result. The above is ready at your call. You will please to inform us how you are getting on, and perhaps communicate something that may be of advantage in our present labours. I hear you are sending out some *Fleet Papers*. I think we could dispose of some in Chorley. You will say how it is. My wife begs me to present her respects to you, and hopes you will yet live to triumph over your enemies. I have left three bell-holes, the Factories, more than four years since, and am doing well. The Old Paver is yet alive, and in health.

"Believe me, Sir, ever truly yours, JAMES PIERCE."

How kind! Bless the people of that place! I shall never forget our memorable meeting there! And the poor, good, "old Paver," too!—Thereby hangs a tale, Mr. Thornhill—a tale which I will some time tell. The "old Paver" and I, intend to meet in that place where cruel tyrants have no sway. I thanked the good people of Chorley, and requested my friend Pierce to send the *£*42. to the Testimonial Fund at Huddersfield.

Then, from my Huddersfield Tory friends, I received *£*51., which were forwarded to me by my faithful friend, the veteran Champion of his Country, who knows what danger is, but never learned to fear, in battle or in breeze. Read, Sir, the gallant Sailor's letter to your prisoner.

"My dear Mr. Oastler,

"Huddersfield, March 16, 1841.

"It is with feelings of the greatest pleasure, I now inclose you *£*51., which I have collected for you among our Tory friends; and for your sake, most sincerely do I wish it were twenty times the sum. I am, you are well aware, but in a very humble sphere of life; but 'where there is a will, there is a way;' and I am decidedly of opinion, that there is no man so poor or so humble, but may find the way to do some good, if he possesses the will. That the enclosed will do you some good, I sincerely hope—in fact, situated as you are, it must. I have often pondered on your words, that you were probably destined by an inscrutable and overruling Providence to perform some good work, for the benefit of your brethren—the human race. And I verily believe and hope that such will eventually be the case. At present, you are certainly not in the position to gratify your hearers by the convincing arguments of your eloquence; nevertheless, as you possess the will, so have you discovered the way to be heard. Scarcely three months have you been incarcerated, yet, through the medium of your little 'Fleeters,' have your opinions been heard from one extremity of the Kingdom to the other—from the Land's End to the Orkneys; and I very much question, that had you been suffered to remain unmolested in your quiet and pleasant little retreat at Chorley, if you could, by any possibility, have obtained a *better* opportunity of doing good, than you now have. This opportunity, even in the Cell of a prison, have you eagerly embraced. Go on and prosper,—convince the world that you are neither 'madman,' 'rogue,' nor 'insensate,' but that the welfare of your country, and the happiness of *all* classes of your countrymen, is the object nearest and dearest to your heart. I cannot, however, deny, that you may be an *enthusiast*; but, in such a cause, how

glorious, how noble is the enthusiasm! How many great, good, and virtuous men have been vilified, slandered, or despised as visionaries or enthusiasts! Yet, now, their names are *venerated* by posterity, as the disinterested benefactors of mankind. The names of a Howard, a Wesley, a Wilberforce, a Sadler, purified from the errors of those misty east round them by prejudice, are now universally respected, and statues are erected to perpetuate their memories; and the day will come (may it be long first) that a similar honour will be done to the memory of Richard Oastler! That, that honoured name, will yet be rescued from the load of obloquy which factious men, for their own ends, have heaped upon it, I cannot, for one moment, permit myself to doubt. I say again, go on and prosper. Mrs. Hulke unites with me, in desiring our best regards to Mrs. Oastler, and your dear adopted Maria; and believe me to be, dear Sir,

“Your faithful (tho’ humble) friend, W. HULKE.”

What say you, Mr. Thornhill? Is not that good, from an old, gallant Jack Tar? The same day, a much greater (I do not mean bigger) man than yourself, gave me five sovereigns, as he said, “for a few extra comforts here.”

Then, the wife of one of your friends, who is imprisoned here, brought me another garden-pot of flowers,—these were violets, the others were crocusses. That Lady often decorates my mantel-piece with nosegays. These prison gifts, from prisoners, are truly, very sweet, Sir! A fellow worshipper at Knightsbridge Chapel, would leave a bottle of home-brewed; and one, who is striving “to turn the world upside down,” left me his offering—a quantity of most excellent oranges. A London friend, who was introduced to me by a North Briton Baronet, sent me six bottles of capital brown sherry,—observing so kindly, “as you permit me to have the pleasure of calling on you and enjoying your conversation, permit me to add a little to your comforts.” A dear friend, from Hampstead, would make me accept of half-a-dozen new laid eggs—her husband, at the same time, right stealthily, placed on my mantel-piece, and left it there, one pound of prime Virginia. Those are Tories, Sir. A Cambridgeshire Clergyman, famed for his constitutional and anti-New Poor Law principles, thought that figs were wholesome, and so he left me some. And then, a Sheffield Operative, now resident in London, brought me a most beautiful cornelian, silver mounted, ivory-hafted seal. The engraving is the very best that I have seen,—“R. O.” in the centre, on blue, surrounded by a garter, which is most beautifully inscribed, “THE ALTAR, THE THRONE, AND THE COTTAGE.”—The ivory is thus engraven, by his own hand—“Presented to Richard Oastler, as a mark of respect for his powerful and manly advocacy of the rights of the poor, by an admirer of his principles.—March 25th, 1841.” The generous, bashful donor, the noble-minded artisan, would not inscribe his name on that Seal. I urged him, but he repeatedly refused. His name shall not die, if mine lives—it is ALFRED BAGSHAW. A London book-keeper would force me to allow him to replenish my stock of “Bacco;” and then, from the hands of that faithful friend of mine, the benevolent Pitkethly, I received *£*12.18*s.* from my kind friends at Sutton, in Ashfield. I extract the following from his letter:—

“Since writing this morning, I have received from your poor, but kind friends of Sutton in Ashfield, the sum of *£*12.18*s.*, the proceeds of a tea party. They lament exceedingly that their poverty has debarred them from doing more. They say that trade is improving a little; and they hope that they can, by and by, send you more.”

Bless those kind, good, industrious, poor creatures! They deserve a better fate than theirs is! I will not rest, Sir;—although in prison, I will not rest, until *Industry and Poverty are divorced!* The day after my letter about the “singing birds and Fixby,” a sweet songster, in a cage, was housed in my Cell. Why

Sir, how is it? all are friends to me! A poor lay assistant to a clerical friend of mine, sent, from a midland county, a quantity of my favourite luxury—the smoking herb; and so did a London friend from Fleet Street. Then, came a quantity of “Queen’s heads,” from one who has much “say” in all political affairs; and next, a saddle of Welch mutton from —— I will not tell you who. A friend, whom I first met with in the Conservative News Room, at Nottingham, forced me from his bounty, to replenish my stock of cordial, preserves, and wine. I next received a small note, sealed up quite close, from the hand of an old Fixby friend—it contained two sovereigns, and the following:—

“Dear Mr. Oastler will gratify an old and sincere friend, by his acceptance of the enclosed trifle.”

That, Sir, is all I can learn about it. I pray that God would bless my “old and sincere friend.” A Yorkshire Lady next forwarded to Mrs. Oastler, a view of Fixby Hall, sketched by herself. You shall see a copy of that sketch, in these Papers, soon after you have seen yourself. I could not refuse a bottle of pickles, which was sent to me, from a female friend, by a youth, whom the longer I know, the more I love. Would you, Sir, have rejected it, had you been in prison?—or, on Good Friday morning, two hot-cross-buns, if a prisoner’s wife had placed them on your breakfast-table? I did not. And when the Hon. Col. —— sent me two volumes, and a kind note, I could not but feel thankful. It may be useful to extract from his epistle the following, so I will:—

“Dear Sir,—I have just been perusing your appalling accounts of what is daily passing in our Manufactory mills, and begin almost to doubt whether I am really alive, and residing in what was once denominated good, moral, happy, and free Old England, where every labouring man had a right to demand sufficient for his daily toil to enable him to support himself and his family (if not in luxury) in comfort and contentment, and trust that the breath of heaven which you and others are infusing into the public mind, on the working of our unjust and inhuman Poor Law Act, will, ere long, produce good fruit. — Wishing for your being relieved from your present annoyance,

“I am, with esteem, dear Sir, yours, ——.”

My next friend was a Huddersfield operative, who left me a book, and 2s. 6d.—there was no saying, nay, to him. A stranger, from Hertfordshire, sent a kind friend of mine with a fine cucumber; and a very dear soul, from the neighbourhood of Bradford, Yorkshire, wrote to me a most interesting letter, with many hints, which, in due time, I shall use. He enclosed me 6d. Poor fellow!—his gift and letter made the “old King” weep. But what shall I say to the next donation? I know no one in Coventry—I am a perfect stranger there! My friend Joseph Oughton is unknown to me. The postman brought me the letter—there can be no mistake. I extract a few sentences for your perusal.

“Believe me, when I say, I am truly sorry that one so honourable and so able should thus be confined, as I am obliged to hear that you are, from week to week. Duty and love constrained me to act as the following lines relate. To manifest my tender sympathy and respect to you, I resolved to make a subscription amongst my fellow labourers, towards sending you a trifle to contribute a little to your bodily comfort, but more especially to convince you that you have sincere friends in Coventry. Therefore, look not so much at the money, as the feeling which has produced it. I collected it from some of the poorest of this city’s inhabitants—many who are destitute of the common necessaries of life, but wishing to manifest their sincere love to you. We willingly subscribed to the amount of 1*l*. You will oblige me by publishing in your paper, that you have received the above-mentioned sum from me, not because it deserves publishing, but to satisfy the subscribers that you have received the same from me.”

I have received that pound from Joseph Oughton! I thank him and the men of Coventry! The last gift in money which I have received was yesterday—2l. from a Reverend friend, whom I may not name. If you knew all about it, you would be as much surprised as I was delighted to see that unexpected visitor. Bless him! I cannot even give you one hint. God knows who he is, and God will reward him—I know that He will.

Last evening, a Sheffield manufacturer sent me a pair of scissors each, for my Wife and Child, with their names tastefully printed, in Old English, on the blades; and, this very day, a Sheffield merchant and cutler has given to me a beautiful ivory-hafted pocket-knife.

Such, Sir, is the simple record of friendship's offerings, to your Prisoner, since the 22nd of last February! Does not that list surprise you? Methinks I hear you snrily reply, "Their folly does!"—Sir, it is your cruelty which surprises them! 'Tis God who overrules the whole!

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—Since the foregoing was in the press, I have received a letter from Bradford, Yorkshire, which has made me weep. My heart is not callous to the softening influences of friendship, although it is impervious to the shafts of malice! My Bradford friends have had an "Oastler Festival"—a Tea Party. The proceedings of that evening I hope to be able to give with my next letter, as well as their kind Address to me, and my Reply thereto. I cannot, however, withhold from my readers the following kind, affectionate, and, to me, heart-moving letter.

"Mr. Oastler.—Dear Sir,

"Manchester Road, April 14, 1841.

"Agreeably to your request, I will just give you the outlines of our proceedings at the tea party on Tuesday evening last. We had a glorious time. We commenced with singing 'Grace' before tea, which was sung in grand style, and after tea also, by about 500 persons; after which, we appointed Mr. Brook (a real staunch friend of yours) Chairman. He opened the business in a very neat speech, enlogizing you not a little. We then sung a hymn, composed for the occasion by a person of the name of Akroyd, an overlooker. I was then called on to read and move the Address, which was listened to with the greatest attention; after which, the band of the Royal Foresters played a lively air. I first remarked on your exertions in behalf of the Black Slaves abroad, then on the White Slaves at home, and next on the accursed New Poor Law system; and finished with a few remarks on the blood-thirsty police. Although not mentioned in the Address, yet you had always fought against it; and we had just received news, that they had got a majority of thirteen against its introduction, at the Wakefield Meeting. When this was announced, it would have done you good to have heard the thundering applause with which it was greeted. The whole meeting rung again. I introduced a letter I had received from 'your parson Bull,' as you call him, and when his name was mentioned, cheering continued a considerable time. I also read the letter you sent to me, which called forth much cheering. The Address was seconded by Mr. Spencer, from Bankfoot, and supported by Mr. Mark Crabtree, from London, who delivered the request you had consigned to him, which was, 'that if you died in the Fleet Prison, Yorkshire should demand your bones.' This was received with thunders of applause from all parts of the room, and with cries of 'We will have him.' The band then played again, and we sung a second hymn, composed expressly for the occasion, by the same author as the other; after which, a vote of thanks was given to the Chairman, who returned thanks in a neat speech. And after three times three cheers and one more were given for 'King' Richard Oastler, three times three cheers and one cheer more for the Rev. G. S. Bull, for standing side by side with the 'old King,' to help to fight their battles together, the meeting broke up, highly delighted with the entertainments of the evening, and that they had once more had an opportunity of showing their thankfulness to one who had spent his all on their account.

"Yours, respectfully, SQUIRE AUTY."

"P.S.—I should have told you, we calculated that 500 sat down to tea, and that at one time about 700 were in the room. I should also say, that when Colonel Tempest, of Tong Hall, and the Rev. J. A. Rhodes, the Magistrates names, were mentioned, ten thousand thanks were given to them, for their opposition to the police at Wakefield."

Do not you *think*, Mr. Thornhill, that you made a mistake, when you thought to extinguish my principles, and to separate me from my friends—to put me down!—by sending me to the Fleet? I *know* that you did!—R.O.

of the day! and that boy is to stand, dripping as he is, at his work! he has no chance of drying himself! That is the punishment for drowsiness!"

"The Mr. Horman here referred to, is now a Member of the Shrewsbury Town Council, elected those by the Reformers of Shropshire—or rather, by the Parents of the hapless children who fall in the Mill for a precarious subsistence. The cause witness continues—

"For other offences, there is a stool fixed up at the end of the room; the boy who offends is put to stand on this stool, sometimes on both legs, and sometimes on one of his legs, with the other up, and he has a lever to beat in his hands, raised and stretched over his head; and there he has to stand, for ten, or fifteen, or thirty minutes, just as the overlooker chooses; and, provided he should lower his arms, (and it is a great weight to bear for a quarter of an hour,) I have seen the overlooker go and say, 'Hold up!' and sometimes the boy will try to hold up, and yet not have strength to raise it, and the overlooker cuts him with his stick, until he does actually get it up; and the boys will run down his face when he is there standing! I have seen this done here frequently—it is the regular practice! We have a vast number of cripples."

"This approaches what we have read of the conning and exquisite torture inflicted by the Spanish Inquisition. Let no one who reads this try to deceive himself by saying—it is a lie! The statements have been sifted, and published, by the legislature, and we doubt not but instances of cruelty worse than those we have quoted have occurred. It will inform the mind, and touch the heart, of any man who will peruse carefully the extracts we have printed in our fourth page; and we do hope, say, we entreat, that our townsmen will exert themselves to procure an Act of Parliament to reduce the hours of work at Factories. Exposures like these, exhibiting the wants of our fellow creatures, and their sufferings, are of more importance than the question of, who shall form the Ministry of the Crown? whether Tory or Radical. We fritter our time, and our passions, on shadows, about men who have only ambition to gratify, and leave the substantial wrongs of the poor and friendless unredressed. No man is a Christian, or a good Citizen, who will look coldly on, knowing that such things are."—*Shropshire Conservative*, April 10, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS Nos. 14 and 15. Pavey, London.—These two numbers are of an unusually stirring and interesting character, and not an admirer of Richard Oastler should for a moment—they will not, we may say—be without them. It is not that we have much from Mr. Oastler's own pen in either number; what little we have is of the usual sterling quality, and is permeated with the eloquence and earnest good-heartedness of the writer; but it is on account of the very appropriate and entirely severe quotation of evidence from the workers in Mr. J. G. Marshall's own mills, by way of contrast against his heavy denunciations of the landed aristocracy for the cruelty he charges them with, that the two numbers before us are so interesting and valuable. After Mr. J. G. Marshall has thundered away his discharge of grape-shot amongst the aristocracy, for what he calls their inhumanity and want of feeling, all of which is asserted in vague and general although sufficiently insignificant terms, what will he say to the bomb-shells the 'Old King' has thrown into his factory, every shot of which tells with terrible effect, and is taken from his own store-house? Oastler then opens and continues his broadside:—

Who does not feel his blood creep through his veins at the foregoing recitals of the deliberate, cold-blooded, and barbarous slow murder of the young children of the factories? Good God! and yet a man in prison for exposing these enormities, and for advocating humanity to the pallid, debilitated, wasting, and perishing victims! We have read that our forefathers in Druidical days made baskets of wicker-work, rudely shaped in the form of man, and then filled them with human offerings, whom they burned alive to appease or satisfy their savage gods. Here was, at all events, some sort of purpose, fell though it might be; it had religious feeling for its basis; and the suffering, though horrible and awful, was not very protracted; but this devotion to the God Mammon—Moloch is more selfish, is for mere gain, only, and prolongs the sufferings of death for day after day, month after month, or year after year, torturing its victims as the tiger does his weak prey, as if feeding on their pangs and lengthened agonies. As Mr. Marshall has figured away against Lord Fitzwilliam, with the aid of a friend in the background, who has served him as the monkey served his master with the chesnuts in the fable, we would suggest the propriety of his appealing to his friend to give him a helping hand to get him out of the mire into which he has dragged him.—We must close the plumes of No. 15 for our next."—*Northern Star*, April 17, 1841.

Review in Number 16.—At page 121, line 17 from bottom, for *Minster*, read *the Minister*. Page 125, line 27 from bottom for *communicated*, read *communicated by*. Page 128, for *Brown-hill estate*, read *Brankhall estate*.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

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TESTIMONIALS EXTRAORDINARY.

From Dr. Cummings, Lecturer on Medical Jurisprudence of the Aldergate School of Medicine.

Dr. Cummins presents his compliments to Mr. Paul, and begs to inform him, that his Every Man's Friend has entirely taken away his corns, and he has recommended it to several of his friends and patients, and in no instance has it failed in entirely eradicating both corns and bunions.

From Dr. H. Ley, Midwifery Lecturer at St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

Dr. H. Ley, presents his compliments to Mr. Paul, and begs to inform him that his Corn Plaster has entirely taken away both the corns that he has been troubled with.

From Dr. Walshman, fifth year Physician at Kennington.

Dr. Walshman presents his compliments to Mr. Paul, and begs to inform him that he has recommended his Every Man's Friend to several of his friends and patients, and that in no instance has it failed in entirely eradicating both corns and bunions.

H. Williams, Esq., Surgeon, Halberton Lodge, near Tiverton, Devon.

Had been, for a long time, troubled with several painful corns, which nearly rendered him lame, neither could he obtain any benefit until he persevered in the use of the Every Man's Friend, which entirely cured his corns without pain, after every other application had failed.

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THE FLEET PAPERS.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. Oastler is "At Home" on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

JOHN JONES, MIMICRY, will be inserted shortly.

Many persons, in different towns, have written to ask "how they can obtain the *Fleet Papers*?"—The *Fleet Papers* may be had of any bookseller in the Kingdom, who has an agent in London, by ordering them as all other periodicals are ordered. If persons are told, as many persons have asserted, that "they cannot be obtained," the publisher assures those parties, that the statement is not true. Second editions of the early numbers have been printed, and all orders can be regularly supplied, by application to Mr. Pavy, 47, Holywell Street, Strand.

FESTIVAL IN HONOUR OF MR. OASTLER, AT BRADFORD, YORKSHIRE.

(From the *Halifax Guardian*, *Leeds Intelligencer*, *Northern Star* of April 17th, 1841, and other sources.)

For a few days past, the Committee appointed to get up a festival at Bradford, in honour of the "King of the Factory Children," the strenuous opponent of the accursed New Poor Law, or the "Good Old King," (as Mr. Oastler is humorously, but affectionately styled, by those who appreciate his humane and unflinching exertions,) have been very active and zealous in their endeavours to make the affair succeed, so as to demonstrate the extent of their animosities and respect. On Easter Tuesday, the 14th of April, the day announced for the festival, the Temperance Hall was crowded by groups of young and old, varying from the youthful admirer to the grey-headed old man, interspersed amongst whom were not a few of the "sweet blossoming young men;" and all were very respectably attired, especially the females, who were conspicuous for the neatness and elegance of their dress. An air of cheerfulness and hilarity beamed in the features of all, who cordially participated in the pleasures of the festival with great delight. The heart of the "Old King" could not have been lighted up with more pleasing beams had he been a "real King," and that his own subjects, than it would have been had he been present to witness the loyalty of his voluntary legions on the present occasion. The band of the Royal Foresters was in attendance, and added to the effect of the festival, by playing various entrancing pieces before and during tea time. The Temperance Hall is a rather plain and spacious, though somewhat elegant building, and was well suited for the purposes of the party. The whole of the arrangements, which, we were informed, were made by working men, reflected great credit on the parties. An ample provision of "the good things" was provided, as far as we could see, for all. Mr. Oastler's portrait was exhibited in various places, and many wore medals, bearing his profile on one side, and a sketch of his residence on the reverse. Before tea commenced, Mr. Auly gave out the following Hymn, which was very well sung by the company, standing:—

- ' Come, let us all together sing,
May pleny crown our faithful King;
For his endeavours for the Poor,
May Heaven reward him evermore.
- ' Brave Oastler has, in by-gone days
Fill'd the oppressor with shame—
Standing upon the rock of Truth,
He nobly pleaded for our youth!
- ' Proud tyrants frown'd; but, by his might,
He show'd them all that he was right.—
Through persecution's hottest blast
Our Hero hath majestic pass'd.
- ' And to his Call he wou'd not fear,
For God his hoping soul will cheer.—
With Truth and Justice on his side,
There's none can stem the rolling tide.
- ' Truth will prevail, oppression fly
Before his keen piercing eye.—
Then Englishmen give him your aid,
Whom wicked men would now degrade.
- ' Look, where he takes his lofty stand
Upon the Rock—but on the sand!—
Then men of Bradford loudly sing,
Long live our brave and humane King!

So numerous was the party, that after one portion had taken tea, they were obliged to give way for another. There were between 600 and 700 persons present. When all had been attended to, and the "crochery-ware" was removed,

Mr. AURY came forward to say, that as it was necessary for some one to preside on the present occasion, he had great pleasure in moving that a staunch old friend of the good "Old King," Mr. Thomas Brook, should take the chair. (Loud cheers.)

Mr. SEWSEN seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

Mr. BROOK then took the chair, amidst loud plaudits. He expressed his pleasure at meeting them on the present occasion, and he was glad to perceive that his friend Mr. Oastler was such a friend with the ladies, as they showed him to be by their presence that evening. (Loud cheers.)—He only wished he could have been present to have seen it for himself. They were met to promote the cause of benevolence, and in honour of one who often practised it. (Applause.) He was sure he need not mention the name of Mr. Oastler as the person to whom he alluded. He had fought the battle of a certain class for years, and though he had fought the battle zealously, and perhaps vehemently, if he (the Chairman) admitted thus much, which his enemies brought against him, it was only saying Mr. Oastler was not a perfect man. He thought the name of Oastler was as much connected with the Poor Law and the Factory question, as that of the "hero of a hundred fights" was with the battles of Salamanca and Waterloo. (Loud applause.) The Poor Law had met in him a determined opponent. That law was a cruel law, an un-English law, and an unconstitutional law. There had been manifested in the recent debates on the question a desire to modify that law. To whom were they to attribute that?—To Richard Oastler. (Hear, hear.) He had no doubt that if it passed, it would pass in a different form to what it had hitherto appeared in. He hoped that, at least, they would do away with the Commissioners. With these few remarks, the chairman concluded.

The CHAIRMAN then announced, that the following Hymn would be sung, which had been composed for the occasion by Mr. Ackroyd.

Mr. ACKROYD said, if Mr. Oastler had been present, and seen the assembly before him, no doubt it would have gladdened his heart. No one esteemed him more than he (the speaker) did, for his exertions on behalf of the working classes, more especially on behalf of the Factory Children of this land—(applause)—and for his determined zeal in opposing that accursed and tyrannical Bill, the New Poor Law. What he (the speaker) had to do was to make a poetical speech, and then they were to sing it.

Mr. ACKROYD then read the following Hymn, which was sung with much enthusiasm by the audience standing, accompanied by the band.

- "The Poor in Britain—let me sing,—
High raise their voices for our King;
Could his old Master hear them pray,
I think it would his vengeance stay.
- "Thousands of Factory Children dear,
Their injur'd King would gladly cheer;
Could they but see him in his Cell,
With briny tears their eyes would swell.
- "He oft hath wept on their account
And had huge trials to surmount;—
Forbear to love so good a man?
They never will—they never can.
- "Ah! no, let's all together vow,
Both rich and poor, both high and low,
Assembled here this very night,
To serve our King with all our might.
- "Now ev'ry day you're spar'd to live,
Your kind affections to him give;
And pray to God, who rules on high,
That soon he may from Prison fly.
- "To labour on through this, our Isle,
And make the poor and needy smile;—
And we will help him all we can,
Till every Slave is a free Man!"

Mr. AURY then read the address to Mr. Oastler, which expressed deep sympathy with him in his present imprisonment, and a high eulogium upon his past endeavours, and "noble and energetic exertions in opposing the Poor Law, both in days gone by, and at the present time in the valuable *Fleet Papers*." It concludes with a pledge that the addressers will use every exertion in their power to promote his interest, and a heartfelt wish that God might enable him to persevere in the laudable and benevolent work, and overcome all his enemies. The address was cheered throughout, at the end of various sentences.

The Band then played "Rule Britannia."

Mr. AURY next addressed the assembly for some time, and stated, that he had seen such straightforwardness of conduct, such honesty of purpose, such a determination to resist oppression in Mr. Oastler, that he admired him now more than ever he had done. (Hear, hear.) He admired his exertions in the black slavery question; but what was black slavery compared with the white slavery of which such horrible particulars were given in the *Fleet Papers* every week? There was an account of the treatment of the children in Marshall's mill, which would make any man's heart bleed. There was a tale of a poor factory child, who died saying, "Its time—its time," alluding to the factory, and then gave up the ghost. (Shame, shame.) These papers showed that the treatment of white slaves was worse than that of the black slaves in any part of the world. After a few

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."
"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."
"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break
in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 18.

LONDON, SATURDAY, MAY 1, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—The God of your idolatry is ERINGO!* You think that he is the best horse in England,—on him you are now fixing your hopes! You anticipate that he may win the DERBY. Then, for the present, you will be satisfied, because you will pocket large stakes, and be the owner of the fleetest horse in England!—No matter, then, if your tenants are dying of broken hearts,—the Hand-loom Weavers are living on carrion,—the Factory Children are torturing their short lives away,—and if the Paupers are in abject destitution, dying of want, nay, killing their babes, because their breasts are barren, and they cannot bear their infants' cries! No matter then, Sir, if the labourers' pigs are perishing for lack of the acorns which are stolen by an aristocrat from the children of his labourers!—or if an aristocrat, the god-son of a King,—a warrior, should die of want and a broken heart in prison, forsaken of his family, and neglected by all his "outside" friends! No matter, I say, Sir, whatever woes betide your native country, whatever curse hangs over her!—if Eringo wins the Derby, you will be satisfied! In that horse and that race is, just now, centered your Religion and your Country! Thus could Nero fiddle, even when Rome was in flames! Would that I could awaken you from your dream! could make you feel that you are an Englishman! and force you to think of that dread account, which, one day, you must give of all the talents you possess!

May be, you at present prefer the dream of folly to the wakefulness of wisdom!—Then, thoughtless mortal, sleep on—take your fill of folly's cup, but, remember, that what a learned and pious Divine has said is true!

"Nations and individuals may plant, in their own bosom, seeds strong and fertile in evil, striking root downwards, and bearing fruit upwards. There is a period in the lives of particular persons, as well as in the annals of nations, when their day of grace, their time of visitation, comes to an end, when they are given over to judicial blindness,—that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand, until punishment take hold upon them."

Eringo may win or lose—you may exult or be angry—but, in either case, the cry of the oppressed *will be heard*, their wrongs *will be avenged*, and their oppressors *will feel the fury of their God!*

* Eringo is a favourite race-horse belonging to Mr. Thornhill.—R.O.

It is utterly impossible, Sir, that matters can very long proceed in their present course, for, as Dr. Johnson has said:—

“WHEN ABUSES ARE ENORMOUS, NATURE WILL RISE UP, AND CLAIMING HER ORIGINAL RIGHTS, OVERTURN A CORRUPT POLITICAL SYSTEM.”

The knowledge of your present absorption in the result of Eringo's efforts in the Derby—the misery which overspreads your northern estates, and, as far as the labourers are concerned, the whole country—the heaving of the breasts of your poor tenants, and the aristocratic plunder of widows and children, even to the leavings in the harvest-field! and the gatherings of acorns!—with Edwards' mournful fate!—all these facts crowding together, force me, Mr. Thornhill, thus to address you.

You, and your whole order, are now on the very brink of the precipice of destruction; and still the main question at all your assemblings is—“Will Eringo win?”

Perhaps you will sneer at these remarks.—— Well then, sleep on—dream away—and let Eringo win the Derby! The day will come when Eringo will be forgotten; but then, Sir, the *Acorns* will be remembered!

Poor Edwards! His fate has made me very, very mournful. But what a contrast between his friends and mine!

In my last, I recounted a long catalogue of friendly tributes to your prisoner. Since then, many more have been received into my treasury, which, some day, I will tell you of.

Poor fellow!—Edwards had budded in the King's garden!—he had basked in the sunshine of Royalty! His spring was promising and brilliant! But what a winter at thirty-five! He was in prison at the bidding of a Jew, and his aristocratic friends forsook him—left him to pine away unheeded,—then to die of want! Shame on your order, Sir! I am in prison at your suit, and friendship crowds my Cell! I am grateful,—but Edwards' mournful fate oppresses me! You have sent me here to learn, and I am learning fast. The lessons will be useful to my country. Who can be surprised, that those who leave their friends to die of want in prison, will legislate for death to paupers? I am not. No wonder now, that poverty is declared a crime! The secret I have discovered, and I will reveal it.

But, first, about my Bradford friends. They have had a “tea-drinking,” in honour of myself. Bradford is hard-by your Calverley estates. Seven hundred met together to remember me! That looks well, Mr. Thornhill.—Had I deserved your hate, they must have known it. So must those of Huddersfield, close by Fixby, where also seven hundred persons met, a few weeks ago, in honour of your banished Steward! Those good people of Huddersfield and Bradford have not bowed down to wealth and worshipped it!—hence they remember your cast-off and your prisoner, nor dread your frown! Had Edwards' friends been thus faithful to him, he would have lived! His *friends* have murdered him! Their blow was at his heart!—and, Sir, my prison experience tells me, that, though not so speedy, heart-blows are as fatal as those on the head!—Fear not, you cannot touch *my* heart!

It will be useful to my readers—it may be so to you—that I should publish the address of my Bradford friends to me, and my reply thereto. We have been thought to be turbulent and rebellious—firebrands and incendiaries! In these documents, our hearts breathe through our pens—we think aloud. Say, ye Ministers of Victoria, who have been taught to believe that we were disturbers of the peace, and traitors, and have told the Senate so,—is the language which we use, destructive, disloyal, or unchristian?

Remember that these good people know me; that they have watched me, sometimes, with suspicion—they know all about my out-goings and my in-comings; if I had deserved this prison for my home, would they thus speak to me!

To Richard Oastler.

“Revered and persecuted Sir,

“It is with feelings both of joy and sorrow that we, your staunch and loving friends, at this time address you. Of joy, to see so many who are willing to show their attachment and thankfulness to one who has spent his all in endeavouring to do good to all mankind—of sorrow, to think that tyranny and oppression should so far persecute its victim, as to tear you from your quiet resting-place, prepare for you a dreary cell, and deprive you of that liberty which is the choicest and richest blessing Englishmen can possibly enjoy. Such is the case, Sir, with you, our revered and respected friend, notwithstanding all the advantages of the Fleet Prison, if advantages they can be called. However, Sir, we congratulate you on being called to suffer in such a righteous cause as we know you are at this time enduring. We have admired your conduct ever since you became a public man—yea, even before that time. We deeply respect and venerate the memory of your honoured and beloved father, for his Christian and humane conduct towards his fellow creatures, and for having been the means, in the hands of an all-wise dispenser of all good, of training up his son to be as Christian-like and as humane as his father before him. We will not, nor can we ever forget your exertions on behalf of the poor Black Slaves of the West Indies, Jamaica, Barbadoes, and other places. Your exertions to emancipate those slaves, along with the good and philanthropic Mr. Wilberforce, deserve to be held in our remembrance so long as memory retains her seat. But more especially do we feel it to be our bounden duty to thank you for your never-tiring exertions on behalf of the White Slaves at home. Yes, Sir, when we enter upon this subject, we scarcely know where to begin. We would ask, what would have been the state of the Factory workers at present, but for your timely interference checking the Factory Maaster in its deathly career? What numbers more of the Factory workers must have inevitably perished, if there had not been some limitation to the hours of Factory labour? What would have become of the education of the children, but for the interference of you, Sir, well styled the ‘King of the Factory children,’ with a host of worthies, whose names deserve handing down, with immortal praise, to unborn generations? Your sacrifice on this benevolent and humane object is more than we can tell. The whole nights of labour, the days, and months, and years of time which you have spent in endeavouring to ameliorate the condition of the Factory labourers, deserve our everlasting praise. The money, the health and sacrifice of your dearest friends, and raising up whole hosts of interested enemies, and your magnanimous spirit, and bold and unflinching perseverance, together with your never-to-be-forgotten consistent conduct at all times, leave us no doubt that you will yet live to see your wishes accomplished, and that your efforts will not have been in vain, but that God will abundantly bless and crown all your labours with success. Nor do we feel less grateful, Sir, for your strenuous and powerful opposition to that abominable and accursed New Poor Law Amendment Act!—a law which severs the nearest and dearest ties of love and friendship! which rends asunder the very bonds that tie society together!—a law which saps the foundation both of Christianity and the Constitution! and will, if persevered in, cause anarchy and confusion to spread through the length and breadth of the land! It is a law which wages war against the rights of labour. It does not fear to set up its unblushing front, and contend against, and set aside, our common Christianity, by instituting the law of man for the law of God! In fact, language would fail to describe the foul and abominable system! We therefore return you our warmest thanks

for the part you have taken against such an obnoxious law; for your noble and energetic exertions in opposing that law, both in days gone by and at the present, in your valuable *Fleet Papers*; for, thanks be to God, through the instrumentality of your old master, good comes out of evil, and you are enabled, through the medium of your *Fleet Papers*, to reach the hearts of many, who would never otherwise have read your powerful arguments against that oppressive and tyrannical law. Go on, then, noble and respected Sir, in your philanthropic, patriotic, and Christian-like conduct, until the foul and abominable law be erased from our statute-book!—and we will wish you good luck, in the name of the Lord.

“ In conclusion, Sir, we address you at this time with feelings both of gratitude and thankfulness for your exertions on other occasions; for your defending right against might; for the excellent motto you have nailed to your mast-head—“The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage;” for your endeavours to protect the Poor against all those who would oppress them; and for your determination—come friend or come foe—that the judgments of the Lord from the Holy Bible shall be pronounced against the oppressors of the Poor! And we now pledge ourselves, that we will use every exertion to promote your interest, by every means that lays in our power. That God may enable you to persevere in your laudable and benevolent work, and overcome all your enemies, and bring you at last to his Heavenly Kingdom, is the sincere prayer and hearty wish of

“ Yours, &c.

“ THOMAS BROOK, Chairman.”

“ Bradford, Yorkshire, April 13th, 1841.”

To that affectionate address, I answered in language from my heart. These documents will pave the way for the full developement of my principles, which I know that many of my readers wait for, and shall have, as opportunity permits. Read my reply with care and thoughtfulness,—and leave Eringo for the while.

“ To Mr. Thomas Brook and my Bradford Friends.

“ The Fleet Prison, April 21, 1841.

“ My dear Friends,—The perusal of your affectionate Address has brought many persons and many subjects of deep and affecting interest to my mind. To be remembered by so many friends, amongst whom and with whom I have so long laboured—to know that my past exertions still live in your recollection, and meet with your approval, even when I am a captive, in a distant prison—to receive, under such circumstances, a testimonial of affectionate attachment from so many who have watched my conduct through life, and, consequently, know me well, is a gratification which words cannot express, and which it requires all the peculiarities of my experience to appreciate and feel.

“ I can truly say, that to be assured of your constancy and sympathy, under my present circumstances, yields me a pleasure which I must ever have been a stranger to, had I not been an inmate of a prison, banished, by the fiat of wealth, from your society; but, although I am ungenerously shut out from personal liberty, and am deprived of many enjoyments to which you know that I have been accustomed, knowing that I have not deserved this fate, I can look with love and pity upon those who have lodged me here. The kindness of every inhabitant of this place, from the esteemed warden to the lowest officer, the courtesy and affection shown to me by every prisoner, and the constant attachment evinced towards me by whole hosts of friends,—nay, (I say it with gratitude and pride,) even by my former opponents ‘outside,’—make up for all that I have lost of what the world calls pleasure. I am, indeed,—I should be ungrateful if I were not so—I am truly happy.

“ Since I came into this prison, I have not experienced an unkind look—I have not received an angry word. My soul has been, thanks be to God, kept in perfect peace. I have enjoyed excellent health, and a peaceful, unruffled mind, which feels that these arches, locks, bars, and spike-topped walls are unable to crush or restrain it; so that, in the midst of many things which are calculated (and which were intended,) to annoy me, I can assure you, that I daily enjoy settled peace, and I rejoice in the opportunity now afforded (which, whilst I was at large, I sought in vain)—an opportunity of pleading, in a more effectual way, the cause of the afflicted, the oppressed, and the poor! —————

“ I am daily learning lessons here, too,—lessons which I could never have learned elsewhere: these lessons will, sometime, be useful to me and to you.

" This very moment, the body of one of my fellow prisoners is stretched upon the cold floor of the prison dead-house. He was the son of an aristocrat!—the god-son of our late King!—and an English warrior!!! We have been told from high quarters, that the labourers have not natural feeling for their kind! Such a case as that of poor Lieutenant Edwards has surely never blackened the character of England's artisans! For what his family cared for him, Edwards might have died of want! I have been sent here to learn with what grace the aristocracy may malign the labourers, by charging them with the want of natural affection! I will nail Edwards' death to the New Poor Law question; and, by it, I will teach the aristocracy to shun the lessons of Philosophy, and, in future, to be less lavish of their scandal against the poor!—But I am running away from my subject, which is your kind Address. You know me, and will excuse me; had you seen what I have seen during the last three days, you would not blame me for this digression. Sometime, I will tell you all about it. Just now, 'my heart is in the Dead-house there with Edwards' ————

" Your mention of my late venerable Father, recalls to my mind many pleasing recollections of his benevolent exertions and unwearied assiduity in behalf of the friendless and destitute. He was never weary in well-doing; and had he lived until now, his voice would, I am sure, be raised, and his utmost energies exerted against the unchristian system of tyranny and oppression, which, unhappily, prevails. He obtained a good name, which Solomon says, 'is better than precious ornament,' and his memory is indeed blessed. I am grateful that I am the son of such a father; and I pray that, like him, I may not cease, so long as I live, to maintain the cause of the injured and weak against the might and cruelty of their unjust oppressors.

" Your recollection of my efforts, under the leadership of Wilberforce, is very pleasing to me. It is gratifying, when in prison, to be reminded of one's efforts to set others free. But, how strange! When I was young, Wilberforce was abused and persecuted (and so was I for supporting him,) by the 'liberals'; when I grew old, the same men 'sainted' him and hooted me, because I wished to emancipate White Slaves as well as Black ones!

" Believe me, my friends, Christianity is always the same—benevolent, kind, and charitable!—it is Covetousness which makes men cruel, oppressive, malignant, 'liberal'!—

" When, during many years, I toiled for the liberation of the Blacks, I was not aware that a system which was still more cruel and abhorrent to every feeling of humanity existed in Christian England! The enormities of our English system of slavery were, indeed, of such a nature, as, when described, the truth was quite incredible; and when I dared to relate the astounding cruelties which were practised in almost all the Factories, I was accounted mad, or I was charged with being the libeller of men who were esteemed as the most humane and highly respectable in society. Of such a hardening nature and all-absorbing power is the love of money, that, for the acquisition of wealth, Justice, Mercy, and Truth were expected to fall prostrate before it, without daring to offer the slightest resistance to its oppressive power. No matter, however great the sacrifice, whether of life, health, morality, religion, or national tranquility and prosperity, the love of gain prevailed; and a feverish ambitious thirst for ascendancy over all nations in a commercial point of view, plunged its vintaries into difficulties the most appalling, if not inextricable.

" I do, however, rejoice, that it hath pleased God so far to bless my endeavours, in conjunction with those of Sadler, Bull, and many others, to effect some amelioration in the condition of the enslaved, cruelly oppressed, and tortured Factory Children. England should blush, and plead guilty before God, for so tardily and reluctantly yielding to the voice of mercy. The recollection that I have on no occasion succumbed to the grim Tyrant of Infancy—the remembrance of the long, protracted, and keen contest which it has been my privilege to maintain against that scourge of England—that blasting pestilence, which has swept off our youth by thousands!—that hungry Monster, which always craves for more, and bloats itself with infants' gore!—I say, my friends, the sweet remembrance of my labours in that sacred cause, against that accursed devastating system, makes my pillow easy, and my slumbers sweet, though I am in prison. Yes, yes, the Tyrant thought that he had silenced me, and that I was fallen; but the God of the little ones is my shield and my hiding-place, and He enables me from this cell to continue the fight. 'No surrender' is, as you know it ever was, my motto!—the Bloody Tyrant shall relinquish his hold! I heed not his wealth, his power, his 'respectability,' his 'liberality,' his 'piety,' his cant, or his storm—he is the first-born child of Hell, Covetousness!—and before the Truth of God he must fall!

"Blessed be God, the Monster has furnished me with the means. He hoped to defeat Sadler by delay and cost,—he forced the philanthropist to examine his deep and dark recesses! Undaunted the man of God entered, and dragged the hideous thing to light! True, he became a martyr; but, before he yielded up his spirit to his God, he struck the death-blow of his foe! Writhe the Monster now, but rise he shall not! His picture, so far as man dare paint it, is indelibly delineated! The Parliamentary records of Sadler's committee were 'Tyranny's last shaft.' In hopes of overwhelming Sadler, the Factory masters demanded another inquiry. They had it! and by that investigation, sooner or later, the Monster must fall. Let him, on the presumption of his 'respectability,' 'humanity,' and 'piety,' try, as he was wont, to gull and dupe the people of England by 'enlightened' theories and 'liberal' professions. *The Fleet Papers* shall reflect his image from the mirror of Parliament, and make him stagger at his own resemblance! I will thus drive the hideous beast into his lurking places; but even there his own enormities shall scare him!

"Something has been done, but most reluctantly,—much still remains to be accomplished. The question, in all its bearings, he forced us to sift, and we have discovered, that hitherto machinery has been made a curse to the many, and has enriched very few. The subject shall never rest, until it becomes, as all inventions are intended to be, a benefit to all. The more than ten years war which we have waged against the Factory Monster, has forced us to search closely into every fact and argument; and we are now prepared to prove, that no system ought to be encouraged which decreases the comforts of the labourers. The comfortable condition of our artisans, and not the amount of our exports, must, hereafter, be the test of our national prosperity.

"Our 'Ten Hours' Bill' labours here, have influenced foreign nations; and, very soon, the question must be universally decided, whether the Factory system shall be destroyed or regulated.

"The most accursed New Poor Law, against which I have warred from its first introduction, is fast destroying the liberties of Englishmen. Its projectors and supporters are staggered at its awful results, but they are obstinate.

"That atrocious and avowedly unconstitutional Act of Parliament, is a concoction of tyranny between the covetous mill-owners and the encumbered estates-men. The former, having 'worked up' all the children of their districts, wanted more infants for the slaughter, and the latter fancied that they had too many people encumbering their estates—forgetful, that it is their own extravagance, and 'the Cash Payment Bill,' which has encumbered them. The New Poor Law is a 'brat' of the Factory system, and, like its Sire, it is unchristian, unnatural, and unconstitutional. If it be enforced, the Altar, the Crown, and the title to property, will inevitably be destroyed. When the poor man's right to relief and liberty is questioned, the only bond which ties society together is loosened; hence, being, as I am, a lover of order, the Church, the Crown, and the Constitution, I am resolved to demand the repeal of that 'abortion'—called, very unconstitutionally, Law—until I conquer or die. The present bewilderment of its supporters, is the sweetest balm to my prison hours.

"Go on, my friends, go on steadily opposing that Act; give it no quarter—hold no parley with its friends—resolve to trust no man, be he of what party or sect he may, who supports that accursed enactment.

"If that Law (!) be just, Rents are robbery!—the Constitution is folly!—Christianity is a fable!—and Nature is a lie!

"By all that is just, good, and true, let us one and all swear, that *that act shall be repealed!* You are at liberty, and can do much. I am in prison, and I will do what I can. *The Fleet Papers* shall keep up a war against every oppression;—wherever they go, the rights of all shall be vindicated. The great, the powerful, and the rich, shall therein be taught to respect the rights of the poor; and the poor shall be instructed, in the enjoyment of their rights, to respect the rights of all.

"If, in this Prison, I can be the means of relieving the distresses of my fellow creatures, I shall glory in my bonds; and whatever may be the power and the malice of my persecutors for my adherence to the principles of humanity and truth, I will count it all joy that I am privileged to suffer in that holy cause! Although new trials may await me, I will not despair; but, by God's grace, I will always set my face against the mighty oppressors of the poor!

"Let us then, my dear friends, in the fear and the strength of our God, put our shoulders to the work of the Lord: let us not be unmindful of the rock of our salvation, but seek diligently unto God, who is alone able to help and deliver us. And, seeing that God does never afflict His children without a cause, let us consider and seriously inquire why He hath dealt thus and thus with

us?—and humble ourselves under His mighty hand, that orders thus He may exalt us. —

How pleasing thus to write to those who know, and those who love me!—Farewell!

“God bless you all!”

“So prays your Captive King.”

“RICHARD GASTLER.”

Do not complain, Sir, that I have troubled you with this long correspondence—there is a cause! I have, hitherto, been misunderstood. I have been represented to be a traitor and a blood-thirsty monster. Her Majesty's Ministers, from Lord Melbourne downwards, at the instance of Daniel O'Connell, have been made to believe that I and my friends were enemies to the Constitution and to our country! and, deeming me to be a person of some importance, (they never mention you, Sir,) they have thought it to be their duty, as Ministers of the Crown, to inform the Houses of Lords and Commons, that I was a very dangerous man, a disturber of the peace, and all that sort of thing. Now, Sir, I think it is but fair, (as I am aware that they read the *Fleet Papers*,) that they should know what my sentiments and principles are, and also those of my friends. That is the only reason, Mr. Thornhill, why I have troubled you with these long letters.

And now, as I have still a little room, I will use it for an exposure of the most disgusting—yes, *disgusting*—trick which ever was played off by a hypocritical Government upon a confiding people. It has a connexion with the rights and feelings of the poor, and therefore I do not apologize for introducing it to the readers of the *Fleet Papers*.

You remember, that some time ago there was a “hue and cry” about the Resurrectionists—the dead-body stealers.—Those men were not partial. The bodies of the rich were subject to their depredations, as well as those of the poor. Compared with the present Government, the Resurrectionists were decent, respectable men! Do not start, Sir, I am about to prove what I have asserted. The best feelings of the nation were aroused against the body-stealers—those feelings were lulled by Government. A law was passed, called the Anatomy Act, for the avowed purpose of destroying the trade of the Resurrectionists, but really to make an office, and to quiet the disturbed feelings of the people! By that law, no body was to be dissected, without the consent of the party when living—nay, even the paupers were protected, if they signified their wish to be buried unmutilated. An officer was appointed, at the expense of the nation, to see that the Anatomy Act was enforced. Well, all this seemed to be very good and right, and praiseworthy.

If once you deprive a people of respect for the remains of the dead, you lay the foundation for Atheism. In order to make the people believe that the Government revered that feeling, the Anatomy Act provided—

“That, even if the pauper did not object to be dissected, his remains should be carefully gathered together, and decently buried, according to the religious faith of the person, within six weeks after the removal of the body for dissection.”

You will, however, be surprised, when I tell you, that under the Anatomy Act, many members of the Government are now receiving the profits of the Resurrectionists, and that the officer who is paid by the people is the agent, not for enforcing the law, but for conniving at the illegal ministerial trade in paupers'

dead bodies, for the profit of Lord John Russell, the Marquis of Lansdowne, Viscount Ebrington, Lord Monteaule, Sir George Grey, Bart. & Co.!!

This, Sir, is a very serious charge. You know that I never assert that which I cannot prove.

If the people of England knew the agony which fills the minds of the paupers in the London workhouses, I am sure that the tables of the Lords and Commons would be loaded with petitions, praying them to put an end to the ministerial and illegal trade in dead bodies!!

Now, Sir, although you and the public may stagger at the mention of this disgusting fact, what I assert is already well known to Lord Melbourne. My friend, Mr. Roberts, has written to him, (and his letters have been published in the *Courier* and *Medical Times*,) informing his Lordship of the following facts; but his Lordship has hitherto taken no notice of Mr. Roberts' communication. In the hope of putting down the new dead-body snatchers, and thus quelling the fears of the London paupers, I extract from Mr. Roberts' letter the following facts:

"It has been the practice of the Inspector to send to the schools human bodies which have had all their internal parts taken out at the workhouse! So far from the officer enforcing the burial according to the act, a teacher of anatomy told him, to his face, that a part of a human body, then before him, should be kept for an indefinite period in his lecture-room; and knowing that it was the common practice thus to break the law, he dared the Inspector to hinder him! Sunday is sometimes the day fixed for delivering the dead bodies to the schools. Some parishes have supplied the bodies of paupers to University College at 3s. or 4s. each, and such body has afterwards been cut into six or eight parts, and then retailed to the students after the rate of 4l. 12s. 6d. per body!! Ten members of the Government have shares in that School, and thus obtain an enormous profit, by illegally selling the flesh and bones of paupers!!"

Remark is needless, excepting on the hypocrisy and venality of the Government, who pretended to obtain a law out of respect for the national feeling of reverence for the dead, and then became traders (under the management of a public officer, who is supposed to be appointed and paid, for the sole purpose of enforcing the Anatomy Act), for the sake of gain, in the purchase and sale of the bodies of the poor!

One more fact may be useful. Instead of burying the bodies according to law, at University College, they formerly put the mangled remains of the paupers into a large cistern, and then the corrupt mass was afterwards emptied, and carried away in carts!! That plan was discovered; so now they have dug a deep pit, into which the paupers' remains are thrown to rot! So that many members of the Government which supports the New Poor Law—which law deprives the poor of liberty or life—have thus contrived to evade the law which was passed to calm the disquieted feelings of the people on the subject of the Resurrectionists, and have themselves become Body-Snatchers!—and, with the bodies of the paupers, they are now "driving a roaring trade" against the law, and thus making immense illegal profits!—Was ever anything so mean—so horribly disgusting?

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—I have again no room for the postscript which I wrote three weeks ago.—R.O.

more remarks, Mr. Auty read the following letter from the Rev. G. S. Bull of Birmingham, in reply to an invitation forwarded to him to attend the festival:—

Paragon, St. Matthew's Birmingham, April 10th, 1841.

"Dear Sir,—I have received the hand-bill and the accompanying note which you were so good as to send me, announcing the Bradford tea party, for the benefit of Mr. Oastler. It would give me great pleasure to join you on the occasion, but this must not be. I have known Mr. Oastler now since 1831, and few of his friends have known more of his heart than I during that period. A more sincere friend, and a more upright man, I must say, it was never my lot to meet with. I bear him witness, that he never smothered, never disguised in the parour, the great truths, so interesting to every class in society, which he proclaimed from the platform or published from the press. The working community have ever possessed in him a really staunch friend. Where he has thought them in the wrong, he has faithfully told them their errors, at whatever risk of losing their favour. That he has survived to this day the gigantic exertions he has put forth in various ways, by, or that his sensitive mind has not broken down under the pressure of his more recent trials, I can only regard as the effects of providential support and care. I trust many will bear the voice of honest truth from the cell of the prisoner, who turned a deaf ear to it when Oastler was possessed of his freedom. I am sure your sympathy at Bradford will cheer his heart; and knowing, as I well do, how truly sincere the affection is which is entertained for him by many among you, I must say, I almost envy you the pleasure of expressing it. Oastler's lessons will outlive him. Who, in the course of nature, his mother earth shall long have covered what is mortal of him, his recorded anticipations will be realised by survivors, and the senators of Britain will stand amazed at their own folly in rejecting his sound practical and Scriptural counsel. Until legislators will obey the Word of God, and begin at the right end, by protecting the wages of the labourer, and guarding them from the grasp of the speculating or the avaricious capitalist, nothing can go on well—no class can prosper—and no nation can continue great, wealthy, or happy, where the profits of industry are unscrupulously and obtrusively fleeced from the pocket of the producer to fill the Jew's box.

"I remain, yours truly, G. S. BULL."

Loud and long-continued cheering followed this letter. Mr. Auty next proceeded to allude to the New Poor Law, and upon the public feeling with regard to that measure in Bradford, in which town and neighbourhood they had returned Guardians opposed to the law. He was determined to oppose that law as long as it was on the statute book. If the "Old King" had never taken up arms against that law, he would never have been in the Fleet Prison. He would read a letter he had received from him that morning. Mr. Auty read as follows:—

"The Fleet, April 10th, 1841.

"Dear Sir,—Accept my sincere thanks for your kind favour which I received this morning. I do assure you, that the many tokens of friendship which I am constantly receiving from all ranks, parties, and sects, and from so many different places, contribute to make this cell a Bethel to its prisoner occupant.

"It was intended to destroy my influence, and crush my principles, but God has overruled the malice of my proud and ignorant foes, and has made my incarceration the stepping-stone to usefulness which I never could have accomplished had I been left at large.

"I pray to God, that all my writings, which now are read by the most influential men in England, may be in accordance with his holy Word, and that they may be the means of delivering the poor oppressed factory children, and their parents, from that state of misery and degradation into which the ignorance and the avarice of their employers have plunged them. I hope also to be useful in releasing the two orders, which have been made the immediate instruments of my persecution, the clergy and aristocracy, from the mists and chains by which they are enveloped, and in which they are bound. Nay, my friends, this confined cell seems daily to enlarge my heart, and I hope I shall not be released hence, until I have convinced the icy, benighted, sordid factory masters, that their interest is interwoven with the well-being of all who are engaged in their works. Yes, yes, my heart warms when I think of you all; and I begin to hope that the day is dawning when the labourer shall take his scriptural place at Nature's board, and be the first partaker of the fruits. God grant it. Amen.

"You ask me if I have any suggestions? None, save this:—Let nothing be done or said which may grieve or annoy my persecutors. The war is theirs, not mine.

"Tell all my friends that they are very dear to me. Remind the children, especially the factory children, that 'their King' loves them. I pray for you all, constantly. Pray for me!

"Believe me, my friends, I am, truly yours,

"RICHARD OASTLER."

The reading of the above letter was accompanied with tremendous applause. It showed, continued the speaker, that the "good old king" was as determined as ever he was. He would just mention that he had received a note from Wakefield, and he was sure it would warm their hearts when he told them that there was a majority of thirteen against the introduction of the Rural Police into Yorkshire. (The announcement was received with hearty cheers.) He then read an extract from the *Fleet Papers*, in which Mr. Oastler acknowledged the receipt of 7l. 5s., sent up to him from the people of Bradford. He (Mr. A.) hoped that what would be sent up that evening would prove equally agreeable and gratifying to him.

Mr. SPENCER then resumed the address, and made a number of observations upon the exertions of Mr. Oastler and the Rev. Mr. Bull for the factory children, and also upon the effects of machinery and several other topics, in the course of which he was several times cheered by the assembly.

The band here struck up a tune; after which,

Mr. CHARTERIS from London addressed the company. He had known Mr. Oastler from the commencement of the agitation respecting the factory system. He had been in London lately, and had seen Mr. Oastler on Thursday last, when he said he wished to be remembered to his Bradford friends—subjects he might call them—and he (Mr. O.) said, if he should die in London, he sincerely trusted his

body might be brought down to Yorkshire to be buried. (Loud cheers, and cries of "We will have him"). He (Mr. Crabtree) had witnessed the effects of the factory system in America, and he had seen the tears of the fathers and mothers, who wished they had men like Oastler, Bull, and Wood, to advocate the cause of the factory children there. (Loud applause.) Mr. Oastler had never stated in private, what he would not do in public; and he would never state that which he did not know was the truth. A gentleman* had said to him that day, that he could not countenance a man who told a lie—meaning that Mr. Oastler had uttered one; but he (Mr. Crabtree) had told him, that Mr. Oastler would not tell a lie. In regard to the factory question, they all knew what Mr. Oastler had done, but they did not know all that he had done in the Poor Law question. What did the Poor Law Commissioners do? They sent a number of the agricultural labourers from the rural districts, and thus swamped the manufacturing districts with a number of unemployed hands, which made the condition of the working classes still worse than it was before. He knew of families in the neighbourhood of Ripponden that were living in harns, and had not blankets to cover them with at night, and were lying on nothing but straw. (Shame, shame.) Oastler had told the tyrants of Somerset House and the country of this. Let them look at the consequences of these people working at lower wages, and competing with other hands. Whilst Oastler opposed that system, they could not get hold of him—he told the truth about them—so they sent word to Thorthill to dismiss him from his service, and imprison him; for had it not been for that, the Poor Law would have been repealed. He (Mr. Crabtree) said it did not now stand in a good position. (Hear, hear, hear.) They were told it would work well in the manufacturing districts. If they (the meeting) saw how it operated in the agricultural districts, they would be almost ready to tear out of their houses those who were in favour of it. He had been sent down by Mr. Fielden—a gentleman who had opposed that bill from its commencement, and who would continue to do so, if well supported by the people with numerous petitions. They had heard of the pretended good effects the Poor Law would have on men of good character—he would tell them what it was. A man of good character, they said, never would go into the workhouse—he would always manage to keep out. Now, he had been determined to try the effect of this. He had gone to a place in Bedfordshire, adjoining the estate of Lord John Russell, and had there found a man who had worked with one master for sixteen years, which they knew was a character of itself. He had a certificate of his good character. This man, when the old Poor Law was in force, used to have some little assistance in the shape of out-door relief. In consequence of this being withheld, he was obliged to break up his small establishment, and dispose of his little property. He commenced eating his furniture, as he might call it, bit by bit. He then went to the workhouse, and, after having been there three months, came out again, with his wife and family, who were

"Cast abandoned on the world's wide stage,

And doomed in scanty poverty to roam."

However, a kind farmer took compassion upon him, and allowed him to go into his barn. He and his family remained in the stackgarth (as it was called in Yorkshire) for two nights, and their only covering was an old coverlet. He went again into the workhouse, and remained there for two more months, and after being there he left once more, and hired an old cottage, without doors or windows or any furniture, and begged a little straw to make beds for himself and family to lie upon. They laid on these more like dogs or beasts of any kind, than human beings. His constitution was thus broken up, and he went to a farmer to get work. He got something to do, and the first or second night he applied for his 1s. 6d. for his day's work (for he was obliged to get it daily, to supply the wants of his family), when the farmer told him he could not do his work. On the third night he went, and the farmer said, "I don't want you any more: I won't be bothered with you." After this he went to the workhouse, and died. (Cries of "Shame, shame," and expressions of deep indignation.) What he, (Mr. Crabtree) would ask, was that sort of murder? His wife came out afterwards: poor creature! she could not bear to stay where her husband had been murdered. His two daughters left also; they are separated from the mother, and she does not know what has become of them or where they are. Such was the effect upon the man of good character: yet Lord John Russell had said, there ought to be no distinction between the deserving and the undeserving under the old law, whilst this had happened under the new. He (Mr. C.) sincerely hoped they would never permit the law to be carried out in Bradford. (The speaker then sat down amidst loud cheers, and cries of "We went.")

The CHAIRMAN then put the address, and it was unanimously adopted, with the most hearty and unequivocal tokens of approbation.

MR. ACKROYD gave out another Hymn, which was sung as before, by the company standing, and partly accompanied by the band. Three cheers were given at the conclusion.

Three hearty and enthusiastic cheers were also given for the "good old king."

MR. HOSLER proposed, and MR. BUCKLEN seconded, a vote of thanks to the Chairman, which he acknowledged in a brief, but appropriate speech.

Three cheers were given for the thirteen majority against the Rural Police; three more for the Rev. G. S. Bull, of Birmingham; and three, in conclusion, for the ladies who had honoured Mr. Oastler by attending the festival.

The company separated, highly delighted at being able once more to show their attachment to the man whom their hearts delight to honour. We must not forget to add, that prior to the meeting breaking up, news arrived of the splendid majority of the West Riding Magistrates against the introduction of the hated Rural Police; three times three hearty cheers were immediately given, and for the Rev. J. A. Rhodes and Colonel Tempest, who had so ably and successfully opposed the obnoxious measure.

* If the person here alluded to were a "gentleman" he would have communicated with Mr. Oastler, and not have slandered him behind his back. Mr. Oastler is never afraid to meet his opponents face to face—he hates the sin of back-biting. The slanderer is, no doubt, a proud, cruel, rapacious coxcomb, who has been bred in a factory—a tyrant, a knave, and a drunken "Saint."—R. O.

THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY JOHN PAVEY,
NO. 47, HOLYWELL-STREET, STRAND.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. Oastler is "At Home" on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

T. H., Leeds.—And so, John Fagan was the black-craped, bloody-axe executioner, at the Leeds Reform Meeting! and the men of Mr. Ex-Mayor Holdforth were the principal actors in that treasonable affair! And Heaps, and a young man employed in the Mercury Office, tore Mr. Oastler's coat, in the White Cloth Yard, in Leeds. It is well to know these parties.

ISSUE HAS is thanked for his kind letter. The best service that can be rendered to Richard Oastler is, to spread the circulation of the *Fleet Papers*.

Some complaints are made respecting the folding of the *Fleet Papers*. As soon as it is possible to procure paper of a different size, the folding will be altered.

Many persons, in different towns, have written to ask "how they can obtain the *Fleet Papers*?"—The *Fleet Papers* may be had of any bookseller in the kingdom, who has an agent in London, by ordering them as all other periodicals are ordered. If persons are told, as many persons have asserted, that "they cannot be obtained," the publisher assures those parties, that the statement is not true. Several editions of the early numbers have been printed, and all orders can be regularly supplied, by application to Mr. Pavey, 47, Holywell Street, Strand.

THE FOLLOWING AUTHENTIC REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS ON THE INQUEST ON THE BODY OF LIEUTENANT EDWARDS IN THE FLEET PRISON, IS INSERTED HERE, TO ENABLE THE READER THE BETTER TO UNDERSTAND THIS LETTER.

An inquest was held on Tuesday, April 20th, by Mr. Payne, the coroner for the city of London, on the body of Zachary Edwards, formerly a lieutenant in the 16th regiment of Lancers.* The greatest interest and excitement have prevailed amongst the inmates of the prison ever since the death of the unfortunate gentleman, who appears to have possessed the respect and esteem of every individual with whom he had been in any way associated. Considerable anxiety was also manifested on the subject of the typhus fever, of which disease the deceased was stated eventually to have died.

The body having been viewed,

George Cooper was called in and examined.—He said, that he was a surgeon residing in Torrington Square, and that he and his uncle had attended the deceased for three days previous to his death. When he was called in, he found Lieutenant Edwards labouring under an attack of typhus fever, accompanied with very bad symptoms. Lieutenant Edwards, he understood, was ill about ten days altogether—six or seven days before he had seen him. He had understood that the deceased had been a man of somewhat intemperate habits; and that he had been accustomed to take large quantities of drink. He died near 8 o'clock on Saturday evening, from the effects of typhus fever.

Victor Louis Chemery, who is at present confined within the prison, stated, that he had been on intimate terms with Lieutenant Edwards. When he had first become acquainted with him in 1825, Lieutenant Edwards was in the army. At the time of his death, he was about 35 years of age, and had been in the prison about eight months. He had been ill about ten days; his cough was extremely bad, and it was accompanied by excessive shaking. Prior to Mr. Cooper having been called in, the deceased had been attended by a very clever medical gentleman, who was also, unfortunately, a prisoner. The name of that individual, of course, he did not wish to mention. The deceased had for some time been severely suffering from great mental anxiety and distress, but not from any bodily harm. During his illness, the deceased had had every care and attention bestowed upon him. The deceased, shortly before his death, had divulged various matters relative to his affairs and the causes of his mental anguish, which he should have wished to make public, provided a gentleman of the name of Fitzgerald, who was Lieutenant Edwards' guardian, and who too had

* I am informed, that in the "Oracle" a report is circulated, that "Mr. Edwards was never in the Army." It is very easy for a person, who has committed murder, to tell a lie. Such is, no doubt, the origin of that falsehood. Lieutenant Z. Edwards will be found in the Army List of March, 1824, in the 6th, or 2nd York-North-Riding Regiment. He was also in the 13th Foot, as well as the 16th Lancers.—R.O.

been summoned, had been present. In his absence, however, he did not feel that he could enter into a detail of all the circumstances which had pressed so sorely and so bitterly on his poor friend. There were several questions he should have desired to put to Mr. Fitzgerald had he been in the room, for he was satisfied that up to his latest moments he had never told his friends the whole of his mind. The night before his death, he had desired him, about 2 o'clock in the morning, to draw near to him the table, and he then asked him—(The witness here became so deeply affected, as to be unable to proceed for several minutes). On recovering himself, he apologized to the coroner and jury, and said, that the situation in which he had been placed was in every way of so very painful a nature, that his feelings had been overcome. He then went on to say, that in the course of that night the deceased had made a disclosure to him of some circumstances and facts which, in the absence of the gentleman whose name he had already mentioned, he could not, as a matter of justice, divulge upon that occasion. He must, at the same time, express his regret that that gentleman was not present. Lieutenant Edwards, however, had confided to him matters of the greatest interest and importance, and had dwelt with great fervour and feeling on the conduct of those who ought to have been kind to him, and rendered him assistance. The more he considered the subject, the more did he lament the absence of Mr. Fitzgerald. The deceased had been left without the means of keeping or supporting himself; he had absolutely wanted food, and when he had found that to be the case, and that his poor friend was evidently sinking from want of sustenance, he had himself written to his friends, but none of them had come forward.

The Coroner.—Then it is your opinion, that distress of mind, arising more particularly from the neglect of his family and friends, was the main cause of his illness?

The witness replied in the affirmative, increased undoubtedly by his absolute inability to obtain a sufficiency of food to support nature. He was quite certain that anxiety of mind had brought on the illness which had subsequently terminated his existence. The deceased had at times drunk freely, but it was from great excitement. He was not by any means a drunkard; he was not a drunkard from a natural inclination. On one occasion, Lieutenant Edwards had called upon him in his room, and had taken more than usual; next morning he said, "I am sure you would blame me for drinking so much, but you must excuse me; I had eaten nothing during the day, and I was in such a state of mental agony, I really did not know what I was doing." He was a man of an acute and finely constructed mind and feelings; so much so, that when he had anything on his mind, he could not bring himself to make his family and friends acquainted with it. Lieutenant Edwards, he had no hesitation in saying, had died of a broken heart, produced by the conduct of those who, in reality, ought to have been the most attentive to him, especially as he had been confined for debts, not of his own, but of others. The amount for which the deceased had been detained in prison was about 8,000*l.*; and he had understood, that not one farthing of that liability had been actually on his own account. The debts had been incurred, through his having been induced by some friends to put his name to bills.

One of the Jury inquired whether the friends of the deceased were in such circumstances as to have been able to render him assistance?

The witness.—Oh yes, they were very wealthy. On Thursday he had sent his wife to Mrs. Fitzgerald, the wife of the deceased's guardian, with the hope that her representation of his friend's condition might induce some assistance; but she had not succeeded in obtaining an interview with that lady. The latter, however, had sent word, that she would tell her husband; but so late as 9 o'clock on the following evening no tidings had reached the prison from that gentleman. The medical gentleman who at that period had been attending the deceased, finding him in so bad a state, then wrote a letter to him, which he had forwarded in one from himself to Mr. Fitzgerald's house in Dorset Street, Piccadilly. To neither of those two communications had Mr. Fitzgerald deigned a reply. Of those two letters, Mr. Fitzgerald had never taken any notice, to him, but he had re-scaled his letter, and had re-directed it, with the enclosure, to Mr. Pugh, of Northumberland Street, with whom Lieutenant Edwards had been in partnership. He had, however, this day received the following letter from that gentleman:—

"Merstham, near Shoreham, April 19.

"Sir,—Your letter of the 17th inst. was forwarded to me here, for I left town immediately after I received your last letter, being under an engagement to meet a person on business. I had no time to communicate personally with Mr. Edwards' partner, Mr. Pugh, of Northumberland Street, Strand; so I sent him your letter straight from Dover Street, relying on his doing everything requisite, at that, the last moment of his friend's existence; and I presume he acted accordingly, as would become him on such an occasion.

"I cannot be in town before Friday; then I will join Mr. Pugh, in anything he may have directed respecting the funeral, which of course will be as quiet as possible, under the unfortunate circumstances of poor Edwards' fate, which I am perhaps more grieved at than anybody.

"I remain, your obedient servant,

"Mr. V. Chemery. Fleet-prison."

"T. FITZGERALD."

Mr. Pugh had certainly done all he could, for whenever his father had given him a sovereign, (being a young man,) as soon as he had discovered the destitute condition of the deceased, he had come and shared it with him. As he had already intimated, in the course of the conversation with the deceased the night previous to his death, many things had come to his knowledge which he should have wished all his friends to be made acquainted with; but as they were of a very singular nature, and, in some instances, reflected upon others, he did not, in their absence, feel at liberty, notwithstanding his anxiety to do so, to make them public. From what had come to his knowledge, he did not hesitate to say, that there were circumstances in this case which demanded that the closest inquiry should be gone into.

Mr. H. O'Shaughnessy, also a prisoner, was with the deceased when he died, and his conviction was, that he had died of a broken heart, induced by the treatment he had received from his friends. Lieutenant Edwards had frequently used the expression, that his sufferings were in the heart, and not in the body. There were many gentlemen in the prison who had been very kind to him as soon

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboreth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 10.

LONDON, SATURDAY, MAY 8, 1841.

Price 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq. The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—Do we, or do we not live in a civilized country? Are we, or are we not a nation of Christians? If we are civilized, if we be Christians, how then is poverty punished as a crime? How is it that charity is declared, by law, to be a vice? Would that I could awaken you, and your "order," from that deep lethargic sleep which now bewilders you! Would that, if not for the love of God and your country, still for the honour of your fathers' name, and eventually for yourselves, I could startle and awaken you! Believe me or not, still, Sir, time will unfold the awful truth, that, although Eringo may win, and you may, despising your long cherished name, advantage, for a moment, by making your confiding tenants smart;—still, Sir, the end will come, and "the Judge of all the earth will do right!"—"He will break in pieces the oppressor." Mark what I say,—if you make present gain, by thus taking advantage of the confidence which your poor tenants reposed in your honour, and in the name of your forefathers—if you thus resolve to increase your enormous rent-roll,* I care not, if the law sanctions your resolve, I know that justice awards no such gains, and I know that you will hereafter smart for it. Say not, Sir, that "it is no business of mine." I have spent too much in money, labour, and mental energy, to uphold the honour of *your* name, silently to witness your committing an act of parricide and suicide at one blow. You shall not disgrace your father's fame, and destroy your own, without remonstrance from your Prisoner. Your advisers are your foes! Relent!—I complain not that they have induced you to treat me with injustice and cruelty; I smile at their pany efforts, through you, to destroy me. You, they may thus damage!—me, they cannot harm! They may, indeed, find me a death-bed in this Cell; but my grave will be in Yorkshire,—my principles will triumph,—my name will live,—when they, and you, and your Eringo, shall be forgotten! Sir, I can well afford their malice and yours! You cannot afford the enmity of your tenants, which, through the advice of others, you are now fast purchasing!

You have drank deep at the heart-hardening cup, mixed for landlords by the New Poor Law Commissioners!—but I know you well; that heart of yours does still, sometimes, melt in *secret*—those eyes sometimes, when no one sees you, moisten, at the thought of *your* father and *my* father—of *your* Fixby and *my*

* I allude to the recent *unjust* proceedings, with reference to the "chief cottages" which have been erected on the Fixby Estates by the tenants.—R.O.

Fixby—and of its imprisoned Steward! I know that it is even so. But if even your honoured father's name were no longer valued, remember your own sacred promise, as you stood last summer, uncovered, on the edge of the Haha, fronting your father's Hall, and there addressed, for the only time in your long life, your listening and exulting tenants. Remember, that you then solemnly promised, that “for their kindness shown to you that day, you would return them tenfold!” And will you listen to the voice of your enemy and theirs, and break that solemn pledge, by robbing them? From you, their revered landlord—from a Thornhill, they expected better things! Excuse me, Sir, I see in you a specimen of the Pro-New-Poor-Law landlords of England, who are now not too proud to steal acorns from children! It is all one question—the rights of the poor and of the tenants are all one; but be careful how you play that dangerous game, upon your *Fixby* estates! The south country labourers may be so humbled by the New Poor Law tyranny, as to see their children robbed of acorns by an aristocrat, and not resent it; but, Sir, believe me, I have lived amongst them, and I know that Yorkshiremen are made of sterner stuff! They will not submit to be trampled upon by a mere boy-steward, backed though he be by an absentee squire! I have no other mode of warning you. I love your tenants and yourself—beware of thus plundering them!—

But to my question—are we a nation of civilized Christians, or mere brutish slaves, the field for cold-blooded capitalists to experiment upon? Is honour fled our isle, and has religion emigrated? Why do I ask these questions? I will tell you, Sir. Barring the plans which you are now adopting towards your old steward and your tenantry—the finest tenantry in England; I ask these questions, because I have this moment read in the *Halifax Guardian*, of the 17th ult., a declaration made by a well-paid officer of Government, an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner: when, in his official capacity, he was addressing the Halifax Board of Guardians on the 14th ult., he thus insulted the Guardians, when he told them, “IF THE COMMISSIONERS WERE TO LISTEN TO KIND-HEARTED PEOPLE, THE LAW WOULD NEVER BE CARRIED INTO EFFECT”!!!

The law to which Mr. Mott was alluding, was the New Poor Law; the Commissioners were, of course, those of the New Poor Law;—the Speaker is one of their officers, in the pay of the country. The quality denounced, as inimical to the enforcement of the Law, is a Christian, benevolent, charitable “kind-hearted!” You admire that Law, you uphold and obey those Commissioners, and, as far as you have the power, you have learned to persecute the “kind-hearted people.” Tell me, then, is this Christianity?—Impossible! Christianity cannot exist where the “heart” is not “kind”! To Christians, then, it is impossible that the New Poor Law Commissioners can “listen”! This, Sir, is what I have ever asserted. Now, Mr. Mott, the Assistant Commissioner, has proclaimed it! These hard-hearted Monsters would harden yours! Once more I beseech you to listen to your friend, your Prisoner! and thus save yourself from the curse of your tenants! Never, Sir, never was I so horrified, as when I read the audacious declaration of Mr. Mott. I know him—I had thought better of him. I believed, that the love of place and power had blinded him. I could not, however, believe that he, or any man, in a Christian country, dare obtain a living, by obeying officers avowedly hard-hearted! But, how shall I express my disgust, when I read onwards, and found that the Halifax Guardians, instead of driving the unchristian Monster,

(that man, Sir, is a monster, who would separate "kind-heartedness" from Christianity,)—how can I, I say, express my disgust, when I read, that the Halifax Guardians, (amongst whom, I thought, I numbered many Christians,) instead of shaming Mr. Mott, who so unblushingly denounced Christianity, (for what is Christianity without "kind-hearted" charity,) actually passed "a vote of thanks to Mr. Mott"!!!—

Never, never, never was I so thoroughly disgusted with the New Poor Law and its unchristian crew! The Guardians of Halifax may think that such conduct becomes them. If they are Atheists, it may; if Christians, they have betrayed their master's cause into the hands of (as Mr. Mott styled them) "The Devil Kings." But to return;—forget Eringo,—remember your father,—blush at the acorns, and acknowledge your transgression! It is not Christianity,—nay, it is not even brutality, Sir!—it is unnatural Atheism, which believes not in a God or an Eternity!—it is cold-blooded, sensual, voluptuous, soul-destroying, Covetousness! But, Sir, it is a system of cruelty; and fraud, and robbery, which will, very soon, find you all out. You think, (I speak of your "order,") that the poor are weak and defenceless; you forget that God is their secret keeper, and that He bottles their tears.

Thus far had I written, when I received five letters from Nottingham!—and what news, Sir, do you think they have brought me? I will tell you.—They told me, that the days of tyranny and delusion were ended!—that the whole system of Poor Law and Police Centralization was exploded!—that the People of England were awakened from their slumbers!—that Philosophy was pronounced a fable, and that Christianity was once more enthroned in Britons hearts!—that Englishmen can no longer exist under the accursed rule of Commissioners!—that they can save themselves, in spite of Melbourne, Russell, Hume, O'Connell, or, (hear it, ye who call yourselves Conservatives!) Wellington, or Peel!

That thunder from Nottingham asserts, that the law which requires men "never to listen to those of kindly hearts," shall be repealed! It is a voice all-powerful, all-spreading—it must, it shall, it will prevail! It is the voice of all classes, and of all parties! If their leaders be deaf to it, it will displace them! Call it prejudice or humbug, if you will, laugh at it, sneer and joke about it, still, Sir, it will prevail! It is Nature's voice, speaking through every breast: urged on by God Himself, it will overcome every obstacle, destroy every enemy, and find its way from every hustings to the House of Commons, until it is enthroned in the Cabinet! Let your "order" be deaf to its cry, and their days are numbered! Listen to it, and your "order" will once more live in the hearts of the people! That voice will burst the barriers of the accursed bastiles, and shame the monsters in human form who have their keeping!

The voice of Nottingham echoed back my heart breathings—it exulted in Walter! the friend of the Constitution!—it groaned at Larpent, the friend of Centralization! All is now right,—not for Peel, not for Melbourne, not for O'Connell, nor yet for any party; but for my native country—for England!—all is now right! That voice declares—and Melbourne, and Russell, and Wellington, and Peel must hear it, and yield to, or bow beneath it—that voice thunders, from Tories, Chartists, Radicals, aye, and even Whigs, "The Constitution shall not be changed—England shall not be centralized;—down with Commissions, New

Poor Law, and Police!" Do you understand that voice, Sir? You heard its whisperings, from your old Steward, some years ago! You then thought that it was the voice of folly! Do you think that I am a fool now, Sir? Time has sanctioned all that I then told you—all that I have told to Wellington—all that I ever told the People!

To the men of Nottingham, my half native town, (my wife was born there,) I tender my hearty, my most grateful thanks. Their fiat will save their country; but, if the leaders of the political parties will not hear, their doom is fixed! and God will raise up others, obedient to His laws!

Down! down! ye accursed crew of Centralizers and Commissioners—down to the hell from whence you came! "We will have our *limited* MONARCHY, our *ancient* RELIGION, our LOCAL Government,"—all, all asserting and maintaining "THE SACRED RIGHTS OF THE POOR!!"—Call not the triumph of Christianity at Nottingham, a Conservative, or, a Chartist victory!—it is the victory of the Constitution against Centralization and Commissioning!—it is the triumph of Christianity over Infidelity!

So much, at this time, Sir, for the glorious triumph of my friends at Nottingham!—Now to this Prison-house!—Why is it, Mr. Thornhill, (I am serious, Sir,) why is, that any law should give *you* the power to leave *me* here to die of want? And, if the law gives you that power, how can honour use it? I have not deserved death at *your* hands—you know that I have deserved a pension; but, so far as you can accomplish it, *you* have murdered *me*! And because I have not complained, you now embolden yourself to return the confidence of your poor tenants in your father's name and your promise, by unjustly charging them an increased rent for their own improvements! It is the New Poor Law spirit which thus hardens you. Sir, it is a dangerous, a very dangerous game! Remember, Mr. Thornhill, your father's name and your promise, given in person, to your tenants! and provoke not *that* tenantry to retaliate! All men will not suffer as patiently as I can suffer—suffering to me is joyous, because it is your will, and it is working out the liberty of thousands. Yes, though your malice had been as powerful as it is malignant; though I had been left to die of hunger—as, for all you cared, I was—I would have made no sign! Yet, Sir, I have a right to demand of you, how dare you leave a mortal thus to die? And, of the law-makers, how can they give that power to tyrants? Are you worse than savages, or more brutal and ferocious than the monarch of the forest—he only kills when he is hungry?

Perhaps, Sir, you will be astonished at the altered tone of my letters. I can bear your vengeance and the law's vengeance *on myself* with calmness; but my spirit is awakened, when I see your attempt upon your Yorkshire tenants!—my disgust is excited, when I see the cold and hardened hand of wealth, committing legal murders on my comrades in this Prison! If *your* word is worthless to your tenants, if they are unworthy, then take their money from them!—if a debtor deserves death, hang him in open day; but do not hide your cruelty in prison, and murder him by inches!—I speak thus for others. For myself, *you* cannot touch *my* soul—*you* cannot move *my* heart—I am in perfect peace;—it is only my health that you *can* injure. But I have seen murder perpetrated in the Fleet—murder upon an aristocrat—murder upon a King's Godson—murder upon a warrior—murder *by Law* uncivilized, inhuman, unnatural, unchristian! If the God of

this country, *Gold*, demands such sacrifices, while I live, he shall not enjoy them in secret! No, Sir, if Edwards deserved death, this prison was not his place—Newgate and its front would have supplied its place and its *materiel*; then the culprit would have been *mercifully* cut-off in presence of the public! But, the lingering torture of six months in private, is now preferred for debt! It may be sport for creditors; but you shall no longer enjoy your sport *in secret*! You have sent me here to murder me! My friends have hindered you!—But, I demand of you, —and you shall answer,—by what law divine, what law of nature, you have the right to take *my* liberty, and leave me here to starve? I demand an answer—and I will have one, Sir!—if not now, when you shall visit *Firby*! I demand, too, of the legislature,—and an answer I will have,—upon what principle of religion, of nature, or of civilization, an Englishman can be deprived of his liberty, and left to starve, as crimeless Edwards was, UNDER THE SANCTION OF THE LAW! Sir, I thank you for sending me here! I am learning lessons, which I will use hereafter to pull down tyranny! I have hunted the grim, but powerful monster, in the Factories and the Bastiles—I will hunt him in the Fleet, and, by the help of God, I will yet humble him before I die.

Thank God, I am in no danger from your brutality; my friends have followed me, and thus I need no aid from you! Others there are, who do die of want, as did poor Edwards—a nobler victim than myself. That Law is murderous, which gives a cruel creditor such power! It is a blot, a bloody blot, on our Victoria's diadem! Had my friends not aided me, *you*, Sir, would have been guilty of *my* blood! Say not that you were advised and urged on by your attorney, your new boy-steward, or your friend (my former friend) the Vicar: you are not a child, unconscious of the crime! The sin is yours, and one day your conscience will upbraid, or God will punish you! The death of Lieutenant Edwards has forced me thus to write. That death, that *murder*, has taught me a great lesson!—Shall I tell you somewhat of poor Edwards and of his sad fate? I will attempt the task.

You know, Sir, that one reason why the accursed New Poor Law was enacted, was said to be, because "*the poor* were devoid of natural affection." Never was a broader lie invented!—but it served the purpose of those who planned the slavery of the people, and thus death's law was passed!

"The Poor have no natural affection!" Thus aver their rich accusers! But how of yourselves, Sir? Lieutenant Edwards was of an old and wealthy family: his father is said to have possessed a very large estate; nay, he, (I have it from one connected by marriage with him,) if justice had been done him, would now have had a rent-roll of 15,000*l.* a year! his mother is again married, but enjoys, as I am told, a jointure from Edwards' father, of 1,200*l.* a year; his brother is in commission in the Army; his sister's husband is a Colonel in Jamaica. Edwards was Godson to King William, and, when a child, was a royal favourite; but he died of neglect and want in this prison, a cast-off, forsaken by his kindred—too proud to tell his tale, when the charity of his prison-friends might have saved him.

About three weeks before his death, he was at Church; afterwards I walked with him, in the racket-ground. He told me of the Sunday habits of his "Governor," and spoke of former days—they had been days of joy and gaiety and splendour. He told me of his trials, too, but not of his extreme penury and want.

I urged him to intercourse with his friends. He shook his head: he did not

sign, but he made the sign of sorrow, when he smothered it. He pulled up his person and stretched himself, as proud men do when they will not moan! He said to me, that "he thought it hard, that all the suffering should thus fall upon himself. They should remember," he added, "I was only in my teens when they placed me in a very gay regiment. I had plenty of money, gay companions, and a young head! It is hardly fair to punish me in this way. But I am expecting the Rev. ——, who left the prison a few days ago, will see my 'Governor,' and make all right."

— I did not know that he was *in want*. Afterwards I did;—but, then, *it was too late!* Talk not of "want of natural affection in the poor." There, Sir, there you have it in your own "order," even unto death!!

Edwards was a remarkably mild tempered man; but it seems that his spirit was too proud to bend to charity—his friends too cruel to relieve him—and so he died! He died of want in prison!

Trifling circumstances often become important after death! Edwards' Cell looked on the entrance to the prison. He once said to me, "What a number of friends you have, Mr. Oastler, and how courteous you are to them. I have seen you go nine times this morning with them to the gate."—"You are a pretty fellow thus to watch me; I shall be taking you for a government spy, if you watch me so," was my joking reply.—He added, "I generally sit looking at the gate out of my window."—I knew not, then, the pang that expression gave him!—Ah, poor Edwards, and there he has sat, day after day, week after week, month after month, looking for the face of a friend, till hope expired, despair overwhelmed, and hunger murdered him! But Edwards will no more sit looking out of that Cell-window at the gate, hoping in vain to see a friend.

Thank God! his last days were tranquil, soothed by the kindness of two brother prison-friends, and a kind prisoner *Clergyman*. He rests in peace!

Never shall I forget my feelings, when one came to me, the day before he died, to borrow my Prayer-book and my Bible,—his own were pawned! Shame on your order! The Godson of a King, a British warrior, (for he told me he had fought in India in the *Burmese* war,) an English aristocrat, forced to borrow your prisoner's Bible and Prayer-book, on his death-bed, because his own were pawned! Shame, Sir, I say, eternal shame on your order! We will hear no more about "the want of natural affection, in our paupers!"

His prison-nurse was a French officer!—a brother-prisoner! It is worth spending twelve months in prison, to gain the friendship of such a man. I have done so in less time, and am thankful. Monsieur V. L. Chemery watched over Edwards, with such care and anxiety as I have never seen surpassed, (I have seen some death-scenes, Sir). From Wednesday morning to Saturday night, Chemery never left his friend—he never changed his clothes! Think of that sacrifice of friendship—the close cell—the contagion—the labour of body—the torture of mind—the anguish of separation—the unutterable disgust at the conduct of Edwards' *friends!*—think of all, Sir, and estimate Chemery's sacrifice, if you can. Still, Sir, the English Law dooms that French philanthropist to death, in this prison, if his friends forsake him! How is it?—is this justice?—is it Christianity?—is it Nature? No, no, Sir,—it is the soul-freezing power of money!—it is Covetousness!—As death drew nearer, another prisoner, Mr. O'Shaugh-

nessy, watched over Edwards as a brother. He is a Roman Catholic, Sir. Oh ! it was delightful to know, that in the necessary absence of the Clergyman, the "Papist" ministered to his friend's spiritual wants, by reading *our* prayers to him ! This prison serves to humanize mankind !—it demolishes party and sectarian walls. "Inside," a "kind-heart" is not, as with yourselves "outside," authoritatively denounced, and written down, a nuisance ! Well may such men as I have named be counted unworthy of their liberty, in a land of gold-worshippers—where monsters in high, fat offices, "will not listen to kind-hearted men !"

His physician, too, (who is driven here by the ingratitude and perfidy of a nobleman, and who has watched the sick bed of royalty ere now,) had his patient been a King, could not have attended him with more anxious care, than he watched over the abject destitute King's Godson ! It is indeed, Sir, it is the cruel unfeeling monsters "outside," who drive the benevolent "kind-hearted" souls into this Prison !

I have desired my dear friend Chemery, (we shall be friends to death,) to write to me about poor Edwards ; he has done so. His letter will please my kind friends in the North,—I am sure it will,—so I will insert it. They will rejoice that I have found a friend so kind, so benevolent, in Prison. This is Chemery's letter :—

" To Richard Oastler,

" The Fleet, April, 27th, 1841.

" My dear Sir,—The interest that has been excited by the melancholy death of my poor friend, Mr. Z. Edwards, which took place in this prison on Saturday, the 17th of this month, urges me to make a statement to you of the circumstances which led to that sad event, and which, in death, were, in a great degree, the cause of his death. I do this the more readily, knowing that, through the powerful means which you are master of, the public will have a true and authentic account of all that it appears so anxious to be put in possession of.

" The first acquaintance which I made with that unfortunate gentleman was at St. Omer, in the year 1825. He was at that time a lieutenant in the British service, and I was in the French service at the same place. I met him at a ball given by the French officers who were quartered there to Charles X., who came to inspect the camp. From this, a degree of intimacy took place between us, so great, as to enable me to have an entire knowledge of his natural disposition, which was, in every point, really excellent.

" Early in life, he was under the care of Thomas Fitzgerald, Esq., of 48, Dover Street, Piccadilly, who was his appointed guardian, and who gave him an education of the best description, and afterwards procured for him a commission in the British service. The duties of our profession separated us after an intimacy of considerable duration ; and I lost sight of him, till I found him incarcerated in this gloomy and wretched prison. So altered was his appearance, which in his youthful days was full of activity and vivacity, that I did not recognize him,—I only saw a man evidently bowed down by misfortune, suffering under anxiety of mind, and afflicted by poverty. He, however, immediately knew and addressed me. I need not, therefore, say, that from that time to the hour of his death, a period of seven weeks, our former intimacy and friendship were warmly renewed.

" However painful it is to my feelings again to call to my mind the affecting circumstances of his last illness, I, my dear Sir, think it right, so far as honour and propriety will allow me, to repeat to you some of the points that came to my knowledge, which fell from his own lips, as he lay on his death-bed, when languishing in pain of body and in anguish of mind, burning with raging fever, tortured by the heart-breaking certainty, that his dearest and dearest relations had deserted him ; that his own mother had unexpectedly cast him off ; and that his wealthy Guardian, revelling in luxury, with an income said to be 20,000*l.* per annum, refused even to receive a message from him. Under such an accumulation of misery, could that bed be other than his death-bed ?

" Two days previous to the last sad scene, I, being in attendance on him during the whole of his illness, sent a message by Mrs. Chemery to Mrs. Fitzgerald, hoping that an interview between the two ladies might, by the means of softening the hard heart of his former guardian, the very individual who was placed in the sacred situation of a father to him, and who, when darkness and distress overtook him, forsook and cast him aside. Mrs. Fitzgerald, alas ! would not even see Mrs. Chemery for a moment, though made acquainted with the nature of the message ; and suffered her to return to me with the cold message, conveyed to her through a servant, that she would inform Mr. Fitzgerald of the nature of her call, and that most probably a servant would be sent the following morning to INQUIRE as to the truth of her statement. I, consequently, waited with the greatest anxiety the whole of that day, but no servant made his appearance. At length, having received a note from his medical attendant to this effect—

" April 16th.—Dear Sir,—I have no hesitation in saying, that Captain Edwards is in a very precarious state ; and that if you know of any of his friends in London, you would do well to apprise them of his situation immediately.

" The vomiting and pain in the abdomen, that have returned this afternoon, are very unfavourable symptoms in connexion with his reduced condition.

" Your obedient servant,—M. D."

" I inclosed it to Mr. Fitzgerald, stating as follows:—

" The Fleet, April 16th.

" Sir,—I yesterday took the liberty of requesting Mrs. Chemery to wait on Mrs. Fitzgerald, to inform her of the very dangerous state of Mr. Edwards. I did so, conceiving that a personal application would give more information than a written one, and I am very sorry to find that I was mistaken.

" The inclosed note to me from Dr. ——— will, however, speak, I am sure, most powerfully to you, on whom I could not very well ask Mrs. Chemery to call. No time is now to be lost;—one hour may be of essential consequence.

" I have the honour to be, Sir, your very obedient servant,

" Thomas Fitzgerald, Esq., 48, Dover Street.

" V. L. CHERMERY."

" This was as late as 9 o'clock in the evening, and no notice was taken by that gentleman further than re-sealing my own letter, and directing it to Mr. Pugh, who was a friend to Mr. Edwards, at the same time stating to the messenger, 'that he (Mr. F.) was about to leave town early the next morning.' The messenger did not return to me till nearly ten o'clock, and, from the regulation of this prison, I could not send him again to Mr. Pugh that evening; it therefore remained in my possession till the next morning. The impression on my mind was, that the letter contained a communication to Mr. Pugh, likely to be beneficial to poor Edwards, which, had that been the case; might, under Providence, have been instrumental in preserving his life; but no such kindness was therein. How, my dear Sir, shall I make you even conceive the hours of that dreadful night?—how can I make you understand what I felt when my poor dying friend, in the eagerness of his last hope, questioned me as to the result of the interview which he supposed had taken place between Mrs. Chemery and Mrs. Fitzgerald? I did not (knowing the consequences) comply with his request till I was compelled to do so; having then gone so far, I also told him of the communication between myself and Mr. Fitzgerald. He desired me to show him the letter. I did so; he looked at the address to his friend Mr. Pugh, and in heart-broken accents he exclaimed, 'THIS IS THE ORDER FOR MY FUNERAL'—and down on his pillow he sunk, in utter despair!! As soon as he revived, he desired me to draw the table near to his bed, and write some memoranda, feeling that the time of his death was at hand. After I had written all he wished, he then divulged to me circumstances of the most painful nature, declaring, that during the last three months he had frequently passed a whole day without anything to eat (I use his own words) except boiled potatoes, and some days without food of any kind, from inability to purchase. He spoke also of many matters relating to his own family history, and highly creditable to himself, which I am not at liberty to mention; but should this narrative ever meet the eye of him to whom these circumstances allude, full well will he understand what is meant! and not for all his wealth, or for the wealth of the whole world, would I possess his feelings!

" Poor Edwards, after this, rapidly sank. He expressed a wish for a clergyman to pray with him—one was at hand. He expressed to him, and to all around, his entire and perfect forgiveness of all and every injury he had experienced in this world. He fully forgave the harsh unkindness of his relations, he feelingly expressed his charity to all mankind, and, in the faith of his Saviour, my poor friend bowed his afflicted head, and died!

" Thus was lost to society a young man in the very prime of life, who, in the beginning of his career, had the brightest prospects of prosperity and happiness before him, and who ended his days in this prison in misery and want, the victim of a senseless law, aggravated, even to the death, by the most stony-hearted cruelty!—cruelty inflicted by those very persons who were most sacredly bound to ward from him all unnecessary pains and wretchedness!

" I need not, my dear Sir, describe to you the proceedings at the Inquest held on his remains—you were present; and your eloquence it was that drew tears from the eyes of all who heard you address the jury on this most melancholy subject. Listen to their verdict once more—it speaks volumes: 'We find that the deceased died of typhus fever, brought on by anxiety of mind.'

" Dear Sir, farewell! May God in his mercy grant that it may never fall to my lot to write to you again on so heart-rending a subject, or for you again to suffer in listening to the detail of such extremity of human misery.

" Ever yours, gratefully, V. L. CHERMERY."

Let that letter, and one other fact, suffice, at present, for poor Edwards' mournful history. When the messenger from the Prison announced his death, this question was asked, "Did Mr. Edwards destroy himself?"—"No," was the answer; "he died of want and a broken heart?" The rejoinder was, "Oh, that is shocking!"—Do you require a better proof that it was *hoped* he might have been driven to commit suicide? I do not!

Now, Sir, a word or two about these prison juries. Is it fair that we should die off as we do, and be "sat upon" by a jury of "outsiders?" To me, it seems unfair. It is impossible that "outsiders" can really understand all the circumstances of this Prison. Had there been one "prisoner" on Edwards' inquest, the verdict must, according to the evidence, have been—"Died of typhus fever, brought on by *want of food* and anxiety of mind." I shall revert to this subject in a future letter.

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—The new move by Ministers on the Corn Laws was explained and anticipated, some weeks ago, in No. 12. of the *Fleet Papers*. You see, Sir, that I am not a fool in these matters.—R.O.

as it was known that he was in such a dreadful state of want. Mr. Oastler has been particularly kind, but all their kindness had come when it was too late.

The Coroner here said, he understood there was a gentleman present who attended as the representative of Mr. Fitzgerald. Upon that fact, he merely had to ask the jury whether it was their wish that gentlemen should be examined.

The Jury were most anxious to hear what that gentleman had to say, because he probably was in a position to offer some satisfactory explanation.

The gentleman, who stated he resided in Hereford Street, Park Lane, said, that he had merely attended there at the request of Mrs. Fitzgerald for the purpose of informing the jury and the coroner, that Mr. Fitzgerald was out of town at the time the summons had reached his house. Soon that hour, 2 o'clock that afternoon, he had made inquiries into the matter, and he had ascertained, that Mr. Edwards had had no claim upon Mr. Fitzgerald, although that gentleman had from time to time advanced him various sums of money, out of, as he supposed, a feeling of interest towards him. There was not any relationship between the parties, and some part of the deceased's conduct had been such as to accomplish the loss of his former friend's friendship. He felt called upon, in consequence of what had fallen in the course of that investigation from one of the witnesses, to say, that a more upright man did not exist than Mr. Fitzgerald. Neither did he know a man who was less disposed to resent an injury, or more ready to render assistance to a fellow creature. What transaction it was which had caused the loss of Mr. Fitzgerald's friendship for the deceased, he had not ascertained. Mr. Fitzgerald had left town for Sussex on the morning which had been named, on business, and, being a magistrate for that county, had probably gone down to attend the sessions last week.

Mr. Chemery would take that opportunity of stating, that Lieutenant Edwards had possessed a most lawful claim on Mr. Fitzgerald; and he trusted the jury would afford him the chance of meeting that gentleman, when he would ask him several questions upon the point.

Mr. Williams stated, that for some time the deceased had lived in his room, and had continued to do so until he was unable to pay. He had never seen him drunk. The deceased had upon one occasion said that Mr. Fitzgerald, some years ago, had given him a cheque for 7,000*l.* Now, if there had not been any claim between the parties, it was not very likely that that would have been done. The deceased had been in the *Lancers*.

The Coroner thought it not improbable that the cheque alluded to had been paid to the deceased when he had come of age by Mr. Fitzgerald, in the character of his guardian.

Mr. Oastler also bore testimony to the temperate habits of the deceased, who was as gentlemanly, as high-minded a man, and as delightful a companion, as he had ever met with. But there were cases in that prison where persons went without food, he might say, for days, because they had not the means of paying for it. We have in this place gentlemen of high rank, some from the army; and although they may be very poor, they are too proud to say that they are hungry! Now, if a gentleman calls upon another, it is not usual to offer him bread or a slice of meat, but it is very common to ask, "Will you take a glass of wine?" This may be repeated during the day; and the poor gentleman, having eaten nothing that day, may become intoxicated, without coming under the appellation of a drunkard. He had been in this prison since the 9th of December, but he had never seen, nor had he ever heard, that Lieutenant Edwards was tipsy. A more orderly, well-behaved man, he had never seen. Lieutenant Edwards was a Godson of King William the Fourth, was a great favourite with the King when Duke of Clarence, and had often dined with him at Bushby. It was hard enough for such a man to be forsaken by his friends, and left to die of want in prison, without adding the false charge of drunkenness, when the poor fellow was unable to answer for himself. There were very many whose feelings were such as to prevent their asking for food, they would rather die first—and Edwards had died first.

The Coroner then said, the deceased appeared to have died from typhus fever, brought on by anxiety of mind and hard treatment. It was greatly to be regretted that any persons in such circumstances as the friends of that gentleman were stated to be in, should have pursued the conduct which they seemed to have done. It was much to be lamented that the deceased had not met with that kindness and assistance at their hands which might have been anticipated and looked for. He thought, as had been said by Mr. Oastler, that there might be some persons in a prison whose feelings of pride and shame were such as that they would rather suffer the extreme of want than make their destitution public. However melancholy these cases were, he did hope that what had taken place on that occasion would lead to good. It could not help the poor creature whose inanimate body they had recently seen, but it might tend to the benefit of others who were nearly similarly circumstanced. He did not mean to say that Mr. Fitzgerald was in fault. His conduct, if wrong, could be inquired into in another place; but they heard it declared on all hands, that the deceased had complained of having been ill-treated by that person. At all events, he had been greatly neglected—his mother and brother, as well as every other friend upon whom he possessed a natural tie and claim, seemed to have left him, to have turned their backs upon him, and to have left him to die—and to die, as had been said, of a broken heart, the result of their conduct towards him. These were very painful considerations, but it was his duty to point out to the jury the various facts which appeared to be calculated to produce death.

The Jury begged to ask Mr. Cooper, the surgeon, whether anxiety of mind would lead to typhus fever.

Mr. Cooper.—Most undoubtedly it would.

The Jury then returned a verdict, "That the deceased died of typhus fever, which had been brought on by anxiety of mind."

Mr. Oastler wished to say, that there were several gentlemen then in the prison who were fast dying; and that if they were not removed, the Coroner would, ere long, be compelled to make another melancholy visitation.

The Coroner much desired that Mr. Oastler would suggest any plan by which such an occurrence could be avoided.

Mr. Oastler knew of no other than that of the restoration of the parties to their liberty and homes. Let their creditors be compelled to relinquish their claim upon the *bodies* of debtors. When what had taken place on that occasion should have gone forth to the world, probably some of the friends, or some one or other of their respective creditors—he was well aware that his creditor would not—would come forward, and make such arrangements as should release them from their confinement. There were some who it might be said had been sent there by their parents, with the idea that it was a good school, and was calculated to correct an extravagant inclination. He thought, however, such an opinion would quickly change, after a perusal of the proceedings of that day.

The inquest then separated.

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On the 26th of June, 1841, will be published,

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OF RIDDLESWORTH, IN THE COUNTY OF NORFOLK.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. Oastler is "At Home" on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

ISAAC BARR.—His messenger departed before his note was opened. He is thanked.

THOMAS FRASER, Leeds.—His lines and letter will appear at the earliest convenience. Richard Oastler is grateful to his friend.

J. M. ALVERTHORPE, near Wakefield.—Ditto, ditto.

CHARLES JONES.—The information he requires will be given in No. 26, with Mr. Thornhill's Portrait. His remarks about Erlingo, Lieutenant Edwards, Mr. Fitzgerald, White Cross Street Prison, the Fleet, &c. &c. will be best answered by a personal interview. He may assure himself, that Mr. Oastler can never be displeas'd with the "content" of his communications.

Some complaints are made respecting the folding of the *Fleet Papers*. As soon as it is possible to procure paper of a different size, the folding will be altered.

Many persons, in different towns, have written to ask "how they can obtain the *Fleet Papers*?"—The *Fleet Papers* may be had of any bookseller in the Kingdom, who has an agent in London, by ordering them as all other periodicals are ordered. If persons are told, as many persons have asserted, that "they cannot be obtained," the publishers assure those parties, that the statement is not true. Second editions of the early numbers have been printed, and all orders can be regularly supplied, by application to Mr. Pavey, 47, Holywell Street, Strand; or Mr. Steill, 20 Paternoster Row.

If it should so happen that these Papers should be noticed *pro. or con.* by any sort of public opinion, R. O. will be grateful to any friend who will send him a copy, directed to the Fleet, London.

NOTICES OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

"The FLEET PAPERS, No. 16, are more than usually eloquent on the wrongs of the poor factory slave and on the misgovernment of the Whigs. With respect to the New Poor Law and the Rural Police, we give the following quotation:—
Berrow's Worcester Journal, April 22, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS (Pavey) still keep up their interest, and expose, as they have done, the horrors of the Factory system, and the late (surely it will not again be the present) Poor Law. We really think that some public good may result from Mr. Oastler's imprisonment, which has led to their publication."—*Birmingham Advertiser*, April 22, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS, Nos. 14, 15, and 16.—London: Pavey, Holywell Street, Strand.—The principal topic treated of in these numbers is the Factory system; with now and then a blow at the New Poor Law. In No. 14 are several extracts from 'The Report of the Select Committee on the Factories' Registration Act, printed by order of the House of Commons, 8th of August, 1832.' On the 5th of February, 1841, Mr. J. G. Marshall, of Leeds, writing to Earl Fitzwilliam, drew a painful picture of the condition of the poor,—and added, 'I have not space to depict one-tenth part of the misery that the cruel laws of our aristocracy heap upon our people.' We wish he would read these extracts: we wish he would read the narratives of Eliza Marshall, Charles Burns, Mark Best, Stephen Binns, Samuel Downe, and Jonathan Downe,—all factory slaves; all employed in the Mill of this Mr. Marshall; and all enduring more mental and physical misery, and physical disease, bringing on physical deformity, than anything Mr. Marshall has described in his letter to Earl Fitzwilliam; and this produced, not by the 'cruel laws of the aristocracy,' but by the grasping, unfeeling avarice of the mill-owner, the noble Earl's correspondent. It must be judicial blindness, that will tempt a man situated like Mr. Marshall to attack the aristocracy. We regret that some of the aristocracy, by their support of the Factory system, the New Poor Law, and the other centralizing schemes of the 'liberals,' should be fighting the battles of the mill-owners, and doing their best to bring their order into contempt. Mr. Oastler labours hard to open their eyes; we know that, in some quarters, the *Fleet Papers* have produced their proper effect; and will tell the aristocracy, that nothing could be more easy than for them to obtain the love and devoted confidence of the working classes. Let them insist upon a Ten Hour Factory Bill, and a repeal of all the harsh provisions of the New Poor Law, and they would find their reward in the enthusiastic gratitude of the poor."—*Hull Packet*, April 23, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS.—Even the enthusiastic and noble-minded and oppressed Richard Oastler has come unaffected through the ordeal of an intimate intercourse with Chartists, still a staunch Tory,—though if ever man had cause to hate and despise Tories he has."

"We heartily concur in the sentiments expressed by Mr. Oastler in the seventeenth of those unrivalled *Fleet Letters*, which have conferred upon his late employer, Mr. Thomas Thornhill, a notoriety, and will confer upon him an immortality, not to be envied by the most miserable inmate of a union workhouse, though bringing as its accompaniment the gentleman's estate:— * * * Mr. Oastler does not pray alone; all who wish to see ascendant the principles of Christian benevolence, feel with him, and, it would be injustice to doubt it, pray with him. In such prayers there surely is no irreverence, and there can be no shame in confessing that they are offered. They are not prayers for national, or party, still less for personal advantages; they are prayers for a national return to the path marked out by Him who, in almost every page of his Divine dispensation, teaches that the first of temporal duties is a tender regard to the happiness of the poor and needy. If we are right in believing, as we do firmly believe, that the Christian modification of the New Poor Law will be a beginning of a more Christian course of legislation generally—and in expecting which we do with as much confidence, that the election of Mr. Walter must open such a beginning at once. There is nothing extravagant in attaching to it the highest importance."

"So long ago as the 20th of March last, Mr. Oastler exposed their intrigues (the Ministers) with the itinerant agitators and their employers, in an article, part of which we have copied into our first page. * * *

"We will take leave of the philanthropic secretary (Lord John Russell,) with the following extract from the last number of Mr. Oastler's *Fleet Papers*: it is a mirror in which he may contemplate his smiling benevolence. The letter is addressed to Mr. Thornhill, who once had the honour to be the amiable and eloquent writer's friend and employer, and who now has the pleasure of being his detaining creditor in the Fleet:— * * *
 —*Standard*, April 24, and 26—May 1 and 8, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS. Pavey: London.—In our last week's review of Mr. Oastler's papers, we quoted pretty freely, especially that portion relating to Mr. Marshall's Mills and the evidence of the children.

"In No. 15, the subject is continued. We give the following passage, to show that the absolute shortening of life is no reckless assertion, but a melancholy fact, borne out by irrefragable evidence.— * * *
 ."—*Northern Star*, April 24, 1841.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."
"The Husbandman that laboreth, must be first partaker of the fruits."
"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break
in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 20.

LONDON, SATURDAY, MAY 15, 1841.

Price 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—The legal murder of Lieutenant Edwards has opened your prisoner's eyes. Until that sad event, I had never known, that in enlightened Christian England a human being had, by law, the power to place his guiltless brother or sister in circumstances which involved the sacrifice of life! Till Edwards died in the Fleet, of hunger and a broken heart, I was not aware that imprisonment for debt, in England, was equivalent (if the debtor had no funds or generous minded friends,) to the sentence of a lingering death! You have sent me here, and have left me unprovided; and thus, Sir, as far as you are concerned, you have compassed my death. But God has graciously interposed: he has raised up friends who, by their kindness, have prevented you from murdering me! I bear you no malice, Sir, but I would rouse you and others to the serious consideration of such crimes; for if a barbarous law gives you such power, be sure the ferocious murderer, who avails himself of it, is guilty of his brother's blood! Honour, justice, and humanity, which were once enthroned in your breast, must have departed, when you listened to the evil advice of your betrayers. Henceforward, Sir, I shall address you in terms befitting what you are—never forgetting that anger or resentment may have no place in my heart.

Although I must always feel grateful to God that He has disposed the hearts of my friends, by their liberality, to provide every comfort for myself, my wife, and my adopted child, I can never forget that the laws of England have awarded death by starvation to me; although my conscience tells me that from my childhood to this hour, my object, end, and aim has been to support the Constitution, and do others good;—nor can I forget, that you, an English aristocrat, have awarded death to me, in prison—death to my wife—death to my child, as the reward of my father's services and sacrifices and my own for nearly forty years! You know, Sir, that I have sacrificed all for you and your tenants. They were grateful; and *after* you had discharged me, they sent me a very handsome piece of plate, in token of their love—it is inscribed as follows:—

"This piece of plate is presented by the tenants of Thomas Thornhill, Esq., who are resident in the township of Fixby, to Richard Oastler, and is intended as a feeble expression of their sincere respect and heartfelt affection both towards himself and his revered father, who, together

have, for thirty-eight years, discharged, with unblemished integrity, genuine kindness, and unsuspected disinterestedness, the office of Stewards upon Mr. Thornhill's Yorkshire estates, and who will both live, at whatever distance of time, in the best feelings of their hearts."

"Fixby, 25th of August, 1838."

Thus, Sir, did you tenants record their opinion of me, whilst you (a *Thornhill!*) banished me from Fixby, nor rested till you doomed me, as far as you were able, to a lingering death in this prison.—And do you think, by such cowardice and cruelty, that you have exalted yourself or your order? Then, Sir, you are greatly deceived!—you have magnified me—you have placed my character and principles upon an eminence; but you have sunk your own name, and, so far as you have the power, you have degraded your order. Say not that you knew my friends would supply my wants—your hope was, that they would not follow me to prison.

Sir, I have before me a pamphlet on "the Debtors' Laws," written in 1838, by one who is now a brother prisoner here. I could not restrain a smile whilst I read the following passage; but when I smiled at your impotence, I blushed for your malicious cruelty. Speaking of the inhabitants of debtors' prisons, the eloquent author says:—

"If there exist beings so tempered and so polished that they pass through the filth and slime of a prison unsoiled—if there be souls so brilliant that they pass the fire unscorched, or yield but a purer light, what does it prove?—that to virtue nothing is impossible. Yet look not for such among those who have filled the highest stations. These men, history, ancient and modern, and daily experience, have proved unequal to adversity. They lose even their moral conduct, without one trace of past elegance—even that decency which habit alone might be supposed to have induced. We behold princes, dukes, cardinals, lords, men having sustained honourable and important charges, sink, under imprisonment, into the vilest dissipations of the basest and most degraded nature. Such men live but on men's opinion, and die without it! Such stern virtue is but to be found among those who, having built their happiness in the innate applause of a purity of conscience, bear, wheresoever they go, the tranquillity it throws around them, and comprehend not what means a reverse of fortune, while they possess that peace which gilds their path, but which the world can neither give nor take away."

So that, you perceive, nature's nobility stands the test of persecution, when that of human patent is destroyed by trial. If for no other reason, I rejoice that I am here to witness, prove, and feel the truth and force of that quotation. I revered too highly the hereditary aristocracy. You have sent me here to learn that virtue has an aristocracy of her own. But, remember, it is not justice that imprisons me—it is shameless ingratitude, unmanly malice, and unchristian revenge.

Thus much, Sir, I deem it my duty, at this time, to tell you, respecting ourselves. Now to business of much more serious concernment.

The bubble has burst—the scales have been forced from the eyes of Ministers. Wellington and Peel must listen to the voice from Nottingham. Delusion has done its worst—its mists are dissipated—its falsehoods are exploded—the Lion of England is roused—and woe be to those foolish statesmen, who hope again to lull him by *false* hopes and promises about "cheap bread." That day is passed. He knows that the doctors who thus prescribe are of the Factory, Bastile, and Skilley school! What little power I possess (and, although in prison, my influence is not imprisoned with myself,) I will use, by preparing, in many towns, for the same battle which Nottingham has won. Party and sectarian names will all be lost hereafter; and every candidate who "hems and ha's," and refuses to give his

solemn pledge against the New Poor Law, the Rural Police, Commissioning, and Centralization, will fall, like *Larpernt*, to the bottom of the poll.

A general election must very soon take place. The Ministerial "tub" will, no doubt, be the Corn Laws. Irish questions are no longer all-absorbing—O'Connell's occupation is almost gone. The honest Tories, Whigs, and Chartists will improve the time between now and the forthcoming election, to merge their party differences, and will all unite, in every town, to support those only who grant, that every man has a right—mark, Sir, a *Right*—to life and liberty in the land of his birth; those who believe, that the rate-payers are capable of managing their own affairs, and who abhor the thought that poverty is to be punished as a crime; those who detest Centralization, and eschew Commissioning; those who despise the thought of governing by coercion:—then they will support none but men who believe that there is room, and that there may be food enough for all the people, and who are resolved to use their influence and talents, not in wasting our resources by exporting our artizans, our labourers, and our capital, but who will devise and adopt plans for their profitable employment at home.

I am already in correspondence with many influential persons on this subject; and, in spite of all that the tools of the New Poor Law Commissioners, aided by their Factory "cheap bread" league, can do, I fear not, that when the general election takes place, the universal call will be for men who, be they what they may besides, will promise unequivocally to vote for the total and immediate repeal of the New Poor Law and Rural Police Act. And, oh! how I wish that they may add—the impeachment of those Ministers who dared to propose such treason. I do not give up the hope of one day seeing justice overtake those men.

I have this moment received a very important letter on this subject from my highly respected friend, Mr. W. S. V. Sankey, which I cannot refrain from inserting. I request you, Sir, as you value your estates, and your constitutional rights, carefully to peruse that letter. It is written by one who has studied the Constitution of England, and who is well versed in ancient and modern history and literature. The opinion of such a man must have weight, even in the highest quarters. In the note which incloses the letter, Mr. Sankey says to me,—

"I inclose you my thoughts on an important constitutional subject. I am, perhaps, the more alive to everything of this kind, as having been instructed and imbued with the principles of liberty by a respected father, who was a Member of Parliament, and (as was remarked to me by one who knew him well) a first-rate constitutional barrister. Himself the younger son of a gentleman of extensive landed property, he often lamented to me the growing indifference for the poor exhibited by the country gentlemen."

The letter to which the note refers, is as follows:—

"To Richard Oastler.

"My dear Sir,—I am much gratified to find you, in No. 16, urging the people to follow my example in petitioning, as I did last year, for the impeachment of Lord John Russell. I think the publication of my petition might be useful, as it supplies a formula. I was happy you quoted the words of my petition in No. 6, p. 41, expressing the inroads made on the constitution by centralization. With respect to the impeachment of a Minister of State, both my character and feelings would lead me to treat every one with the greatest possible leniency; but, so long as the *Arcton* of the law maintains that 'the Sovereign can do no wrong,' we have no security against despotism, but in the impeachment of the responsible Minister whenever his acts are such as to demand it: and this the more, if he has been one who has professed an attachment to constitutional principles, and has made his way to power on the shoulders of the people, only to abuse that power by

enslaving them. We have the highest authority for visiting a Whig Minister with tenfold more severity than a Tory. 'He that knew his Lord's will, and did not according to that will, shall be beaten with many stripes,' &c.

"With regard to Lord John's conduct, I view it in this light: associating with Theorists and Maliciousians when out of office, the carrying of the New Poor Law became one of his darling objects as soon as he came in. Right or wrong, he was determined to carry it out. The good feeling, however, of the people in the North, led by yourself, O'Connor, Fielden, and others, he found to be too strong for him. The army was not to be trusted, neither was it consistent with his *theory*; and having, as I know, been much on the Continent, he thought to borrow a leaf from foreign surveillance, and extend over the whole country a general system of police, which, I regret to say, had been commenced before in Ireland, and transferred on a small scale to this country, in the introduction of the Metropolitan Police. He well knew, however,—as he himself acknowledges in Parliament,—that the feeling of the country would be against him, and, besides, that the country gentlemen and farmers might not like the drain upon their pockets. What was to be done? He found it necessary to enlist their *fears* on his side in favour of a New Police or Gend'armerie. With this view, taking advantage of the excited state of public feeling, he purposely proclaimed, at a dinner given to him at Liverpool, near the disturbed districts, the right of the people to meet in public assemblage. Now there was nothing wrong in this in the abstract, but the sequel has shown that *his* object was to encourage tumultuary meetings to a *certain* point and *time*, with a view to alarm the gentry, and thus prepare them to accept a Rural Police. A feeler was thrown out by Mr. Hawes's Bill, brought in at the time the Convention was sitting, which I met by moving an address, which I have reason to know was beneficial in quickening some of the opposition given in the city, and would have been more useful still had that publicity been given to it which ought to have been done. The good sense of the people having kept them from falling into the trap which was laid for them, and the tone of feeling among the gentry not being considered ripe enough to pass the Police Bill, Lord John availed himself of the move at Birmingham, and the excitement there is no doubt his agents encouraged, to produce that alarm in the minds of the aristocracy which enabled him to *hurry* the Rural Police Bill through the House of Commons at a *late* period of the session, when he knew most of its opponents would be *absent* at the Assizes. Immediately after this, with a view to evade the responsibility, he removes to the Colonial Office. This, however, makes him not the less responsible for the acts of his own administration; and were his impeachment decided on, I have no doubt those who would be appointed Commissioners of the Commons, to conduct it before the Lords, would find sufficient proofs to sustain that impeachment, in documents at the Home Office and Police Office, which would fix on him a criminal connivance at least, even where direct proofs of encouragement may be evaded.

"Now, I know no crime of greater magnitude against the liberties of the people than a *deliberate attempt* to alter the Constitutional privilege of *Local Government*, and substitute in its stead a Centralized *irresponsible* authority. I have said to one of the most eminent Constitutional Barristers of the day, who fully responded to my feelings, 'that much as I detest and abhor the suspension of the Constitution, I much prefer it to that *total change* which is craftily and *surreptitiously* brought in under the guise of a Parliamentary enactment, since the very *suspension* itself still implies the *Constitutional* principle.' Just as the dictatorial power at Rome, as *originally* limited to six months, was preferable to the later system of governing the Republic by commissions appointed by *Senatus Consultum*, or Decree of the Senate, such as that for regulating the affairs of the state, under which the three Commissioners, or triumvirate of Octavianus, (afterwards Augustus), Antony, and Lepidus, tyrannically disposed of the lives and fortunes of the people; or that other decree which lodged absolute power in the hands of Augustus, as Emperor or Commander-in-Chief for *ten years*, which formed the precedent for continuing it to him for ten years more, and so on, by three successive decades, to the end of his life. The old names of the other officers remaining all the while the same, the people were *imposed on*, and continued to call the state a republic in opposition to a kingdom, whilst it had, in fact, become an imperial monarchy or autocracy.

"Wishing you complete success in your war against the New Poor Law, &c.

"I am, dear Sir, very truly yours, WILLIAM S. VILLIERS SANKEY."

"30, Harwood Street, Camden Town, April 28, 1841."

Nothing can be more constitutional than the argument of Mr. Sankey. Our

governors should be instructed that they are responsible, and that the Constitution may not be destroyed with impunity. The petition to which Mr. Sankey refers, is inserted on the cover of this number. May we soon see the table of the House of Commons covered with such petitions.

In my 12th letter, dated March 20th, I informed you that Ministers had entered into an agreement with certain individuals, that "if they would put down the movement against the New Poor Law, the Ministers would agree to the Repeal of the Corn Laws." No doubt you thought that I was mistaken. Circumstances are now proving the truth of my assertion. True, we only, at present, witness the first step in that movement. "A protecting duty" is talked about, merely for the purpose of blinding the landlords, who are in the influence of Government. But, Sir, it should never be forgotten that the *principle* upon which the demand for "cheap bread" is founded, involves the false facts "*that nature never designed this country for agriculture,*" and that "ENGLAND WOULD NOT BE POORER, IF SHE DID NOT GROW ONE GRAIN OF CORN!" This is the position taken by the enlightened and liberal philosophers of the free trade school. It is, therefore, worse than waste of time and words to argue the question on any other assumption. A mistake in the principle upon which the theory is founded would be ruinous to the argument — that principle is neither more nor less than *the perfect uselessness of the land*. It is the self-same principle which has been adopted by the advocates of the New Poor Law, of cutting off the link between the labourers and the soil of England, and which must involve the separation of the landlords from their estates by making their land worthless. It would be irrational to suppose otherwise. You know, Sir, that I have always warned you on that point. I have ever assured you that "you, the labourers, and the Factory children, were all in the same boat." We are about, if common sense does not soon take the place of philosophy, to witness the full developement of this anti-English system. You, however, have no right to complain—you have punished me with discharge and imprisonment, because I resolved to be faithful to you, and would not see you aid in undermining the value of your property by destroying that of the poor. The people have been separated from the soil of England, by the atrocious, execrable, and accursed New Poor Law: by it, they have been driven from agricultural pursuits into the Factories and the Bastiles. Thus has the soil of England been proved to be useless. The demand for the produce of foreign soils is forced upon us; and now you grumble because foreigners *must* grow the corn which, in order to get rid of your people, you would not permit them to produce! This is the position into which our country is driven, by following, as our governments (whether Whig or Tory) have done for very many years, the dogma of the liberal and enlightened philosophers. *Nothing is more clear, than that if you will insist on the continuance of the New Poor Law, you must eventually submit to an unrestricted free trade in corn.*

Until the New Poor Law is repealed, which, in point of fact, is the master-hinge of these liberal principles, it is of no use to reason. No, Sir, if, as by the New Poor Law, you will "free trade" the rights and bodies of the labourers, you must and you shall march onwards, and allow a "free trade" in your rights and yourselves.

It may not, however, be out of place, at the present moment, to say a few words

on the means which have been, and are being adopted, by the friends of free trade—the Cotton-Lord-Manchester-Anti-Corn-Law-League.

You are aware how we of the Anti-New-Poor-Law school have been traduced, abused, and punished; you have aided the Anti-Corn-Law-League in that cry and that punishment yourself—you have imprisoned me because I could not yield to the cruel monster at your bidding. We have been denounced by the press, from the hustings, in the two Houses of Parliament, aye, and even by the Ministers of Her Majesty, as incendiaries, cut-throats, torch-and-dagger men, disturbers of the peace, madmen, separating employers and employed, fools and demagogues, merely because we opposed a law which Lord Chancellor Brougham pronounced “unconstitutional” —which ex-Chancellor Earl Eldon declared to be “the most execrable and atrocious law ever enacted”; and with reference to which the Bishop of Exeter assured the House of Lords, “when the New Poor Law is properly understood by the people of England, *they will not submit to it,—AS ENGLISHMEN, AND AS CHRISTIANS, THEY OUGHT NOT TO SUBMIT TO IT.*” Whilst *we* have been thus denounced, *our traducers and persecutors*, of liberal-and-enlightened-free-trade-philosophy, have been lavish in the praise of those “talented,” “disinterested,” “peace-making,” “honest,” and well-paid advocates of free trade in corn, who have been engaged, during late years, in propounding their destructive theories in our cities, towns, and villages.

These Ministerial agents have been represented as the most “wise,” “liberal,” “enlightened,” and “humane philanthropists,” “peace-makers,” and “patriots!”

Now, Sir, it may so happen that the “demagogues” who have opposed the New Poor Law are not all classical scholars, the clearest reasoners, or the most eloquent speakers; their *honesty* has, however, been tested—they have passed through the fire of persecution unscorched. They are not afraid to meet their accusers, their persecutors, and “their enemies in the gate.”

At this moment, it may be well to inquire somewhat into the real “talent” and “peaceful” principles of the individuals who have been so lauded by the Ministerial press;—I mean the itinerant, well-paid Anti-Corn-Law Lecturers.

I have only witnessed two exhibitions of one of these prodigies—others may have seen more. Let those who have had better opportunities report more fully. I will be faithful, just, and true in mine. I pledge myself to the correctness of what I state. I copy from notes which I made at the time. I wondered then, I wonder now, that persons who are so cunning as the Manchester-Anti-Corn-Law-League, should have been so foolish as to spend their money in the propagation of such villainous trash.

It so happened, when I was “at large,” living with my wife and child in Sloane Street, Chelsea, that I one day saw a placard posted in all directions, giving notice that “Mr. Sidney Smith would lecture on the Corn Law Question, on the evening of April 8th, 1840, at the White Hart Inn, Chelsea.” As I had been informed that Mr. Sidney Smith was really an eloquent speaker, and a correct reasoner, and understanding that he was the head of the Anti-Corn-Law-Lecturing-Itinerant-Staff, I was very anxious to hear him. I was really desirous to listen, whilst the question was ably stated, and, if possible, rationally supported. I went—I saw—I listened. I made some notes: they are correct, I aver: before I say another word, I will copy them as I find them in my note-book.

" Mr. Sidney Smith said, at the White Hart Inn, Chelsea, April 8th, 1840.

" Money is the most powerful engine for influence and government. The aristocracy have robbed the country of 75,000,000*l.* a year by the Corn Laws, and are thus enabled to pocket all the other taxes, and rule the country. Their power is greater now than ever; consequently, liberal and enlightened principles have not power to contend with money. The aristocracy have it all. [Mr. Smith actually said so; although his masters, the Anti-Corn Law-Leaguers, boast that they can buy up the aristocracy.] The people are starving. The merchants and manufacturers are ruined. The mills are standing, and millions upon millions of woollen pieces—[these are his very words] and millions of yards of cotton, are, at this moment, rotting in their warehouses. The friends of free trade subscribed 7,000*l.* to continue their exertions the day after Villiers was defeated. [If what he had just before told us were true, they must have borrowed this sum of the aristocracy.] The aristocracy were forced to mortgage their estates—[having previously all the money in their pockets]. Manufacture and trade would never prosper with the Corn Laws. 1835 was the best year for the manufacturers ever known, because corn was low;—could not, that year, get sufficient hands. One man told him, he had got a hundred men from farming districts. They had then orders upon orders that could not be executed. Wages were high, work was sure, and all were happy and contented. [All this prosperity was under the Corn Laws.] If the Corn Laws were repealed, there would be no need for the women and children to go into the Factories. [I assure you the lecturer said so!] Husbands could then earn as much as would keep all. Children would go to school, and wives would be, where every Englishman's wife ought to be, nursing her darling infant at home, and making all clean and comfortable for her husband and family. If Corn Laws were repealed, corn would fall 40*s.* per quarter, and wages would rise. [I am positive the man said so!] England would be the cheapest country in the world. Manufactures and shipping would increase, and scraping bad soils and dragging after the plough would decrease. The Members of the House of Commons are a proud, ignorant, drunken set. The Lords are the tyrants of England. Property qualification is a monstrous evil. Melbourne is the greatest fool in England; he has no more sense than a dried ass's head. [So said the orator, and also, that] Peel is the greatest rogue, villain, rascal, liar, and thief in England. The Bishops, and particularly of London and Exeter, are hypocrites; the Clergy are the paid tools of the aristocracy. O'Connor is a deceiver, a deluder, and a fool. Oastler and Stephens are mere humanity-mongers. Stanhope and Ashley are saints, hypocrites, rascals, villains, and infidels. The manufacturers are good, honest, sincere, and patriotic. [Hear that, ye factory-slaves.] England must rise or fall with her manufactures. God never designed that England should be an agricultural nation. All the paid Anti-Corn-Law-Lecturers are honest men. [I thought that that was well spoken.] The Earl of Darlington is a fit subject for the tread-mill. The Reform Bill has failed. The people are not represented. The Lords rule more completely than ever. O'Connell declared, that 'he believed that no people were so much reduced as the Irish; but the Devonshire labourers were worse off than they.' Devonshire labourers earn 9*s.* a week; Irish labourers earn 5*d.* or 6*d.* a day for nine months,—the remaining three months they are beggars. The reason why the Duke of Buckingham opposes them is, because he knows that if the Corn Laws were repealed, he would be reduced to a labourer at 9*s.* a week. His estates are the worst land in England, fit only to grow thistle-down for asses; the whole would be worth nothing—nobody would even have his land at a gift. The Duke's estates are deeply mortgaged. If the Corn Laws were repealed, he would not be worth one farthing. [So said Mr. Smith.] The four paid Anti-Corn-Law-Lecturers were more efficient than the 14,000 paid tools of parsons, going about in their parishes, with their ink-horns buttoned to their waistcoats, with petitions in their hands, seeking up the labourers in the lanes and fields, and forcing them to sign for dear bread. An agricultural labourer could only afford to have one pair of breeches in thirty-three years; they then weighed forty pounds, with patches. One pair of shoes in a year and-a-half—paid for (10*s.*) by instalments—having one year to pay it. The petitions are signed by 800,000, and are kicked on one side by the House. Large exports are a proof of the distress and poverty of the people of England. He (Mr. Sidney Smith) is very fond of Polish black bread—he prefers it to wheat bread; but Devonshire black bread is horrible, nasty, stinking stuff, fit only to throw on to the dung-hill. Ireland is the dearest country in the world, and the lowest wages. [If so, O'Connell must be mistaken.] Cotton manufacturers are selling their goods in America at 50 per cent. loss. Landlords are getting 2, 3, and 400 per cent. more for their land than it is worth: they are pocketing the labourer's and the farmer's profits. The little farmers are all ruined, and have become labourers. Twenty farms are now

united in one, for the purpose of having twenty competitors for one farm, and thus getting a high rent. If the Corn Laws were repealed, where England has now one ship, she would then have fifty. In 1835, the whole cost of wheat was 31,400,000*l.*; in 1839, it was 56,533,000*l.*—[The ‘honest’ man had just before told us, that the aristocracy had robbed the country of 75,000,000*l.* a year by the Corn Laws.] The agricultural population is only one-fourth, compared with the manufacturing population. [How very wise this ‘honest’ man is!] During the war, 500,000,000*l.* were spent upon the aristocracy, all of which they pocketed. It was employed in the Christian work of blowing out the brains and sabreing our fellow creatures and fellow Christians. When peace came, they had the fund no longer to go to—hence the Corn Laws, for the express purpose of enabling the aristocracy to enrich themselves by robbing, plundering, and enslaving the people of England—[How very ignorant this *honest* man is of the origin of the Corn Laws.] He never, in all his life, saw such a fool, such an ass, as Lord Melbourne was the other day, when he stood before the delegates. All the taxes are paid out of labour. [This confession of the truth from the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law-League, satisfied me for the time lost in hearing Mr. Sidney Smith.]”

Thus did Mr. Sidney Smith edify the good people of Chelsea on the subject of the Corn Laws. There were about 90 or 100 persons present. When I left the Inn, one of them, who wore an apron, remarked to me, “That man shows he is paid for it. If he were paid by the other side, he would say as much for them.” Whether the man with the apron judged correctly I have no means of ascertaining. I do, however, think that “the other side” would have more sense than to pay Mr. Sidney Smith to *advocate* their cause.

On the 15th of the same month, the “honest” orator addressed the Chelseans once more. As in duty bound, I again attended. He repeated much of what he had previously told us—taking especial care to abuse Lord Melbourne for a fool, an ass, &c.; in addition to which, he instructed us in the following facts:—

“Mr. P. Thomson once asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, ‘What taxes farmers had to pay?’ The answer was, ‘I know of none, but that for shepherds’ dogs.’ The tax upon bread paid to 30,000 landlords, is 60,000,000*l.* a year. [Before he told us that it was 75,000,000*l.* a year!—that, however, may be considered a trifling difference by ‘the leaguers,’ who, when it suits them, can boast that ‘they can buy up the aristocracy.’] The taxes paid to the Government are *only* 45,000,000*l.* a year. The Duke of Sutherland received 360,000*l.* a year, 200,000*l.* of which was *robbed* out of the poor by the bread tax. He paid no more for the bread tax, nay, not so much, as a labourer at 10*s.* a week; but a government officer, at 300*l.* a year, paid 30*l.* or 40*l.* a year for the bread tax. The cost of the bread tax to the Navy was, by the computation of an old naval officer, 800,000*l.* a year; on the Army, the loss was 2,000,000*l.* 10,000,000*l.* would be saved in the government and other expenses by the repeal of the Corn Laws—viz. 4,500,000*l.* in the Poor Laws; 2,000,000*l.* in the Army; 800,000*l.* in the Navy; and 2,700,000*l.* in the salaries of public officers, prosecutions of felons, &c. &c. If the landlords would repeal the Corn Laws, the merchants and manufacturers would agree to pay all the poor-rates. Lancashire did not grow 1,000 quarters of grain. This he could undertake to assert on his own knowledge.”

The inhabitants of Chelsea did not know that Lancashire contained 1,131,270 acres!!—Space forbids remark. I commend Mr. Sidney Smith’s Lectures to Lords Melbourne and Fitzwilliam;—perhaps they will read my observations thereon in my next letter. I have some notions about the Corn Laws, which “the League” are welcome to, for the small sum of two-pence.

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—You will agree with me that no danger can accrue by leaving Mr. Sidney Smith in possession of the argument one whole week.—R.O.

"The FLEET PAPERS. London; Pavey.—In the eighteenth number, among other matters equally distasteful to the palates of the Whig-Radical Government, is an exposure of the indelicate and unfeeling bartering with the dead bodies of paupers which has lately (and not without foundation) been charged upon some of its members. Mr. Oastler says:—
—*Herron's Worcester Journal*, May 6, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS.—Do we, or do we not live in a civilized country? Are we, or are we not a nation of Christians?" is the nervous comment of No. 19 of Mr. Oastler's invaluable *Fleet Papers*; and after some allusion to Mr. Thornhill's conduct, the prisoner King thus proceeds:—
* * * * *—*Halifax Guardian*, May 8, 1841.

Copy of a Petition which was presented to the House of Commons by Lord Teignmouth. A conversation arose on its presentation. Mr. Gisbourne asked Lord Teignmouth "If he had made Lord John Russell acquainted with the petition?" His Lordship replied in the affirmative, adding, "that he (Lord Teignmouth) considered the petition perfectly constitutional;" on which the Attorney General got up, and said of his own accord, that "the petition was so constitutional, that if he had himself been requested to present it, he could not have refused to do so."

"To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled.

"The respectful petition of William Villiers Sankey, Master of Arts, residing at No. 30, Harwood Street, Camden Town, in the borough of Marylebone, respectfully sheweth,—

"That your Petitioner has seen, with deep pain and sorrow, the systematic attempts that have been lately made to alter the institutions of this country, and gradually assimilate them to those of foreign countries, tending to destroy the individuality of the national character, by substituting for the responsibility of local government the irresponsible controul of centralized authority.

"That your Petitioner had early perceived the symptoms of this line of conduct, in the introduction of a registration of births, deaths, and marriages, borrowed from France; in the incipency of the Government system of education, formed avowedly on the model of that adopted by the arbitrary Government of Prussia; and, above all, in the endeavour to extend and centralize the Police, dependent on the House Office, throughout the land.

"That your Petitioner, having carefully watched the progress of this last measure, is fully convinced, that the Right Honourable John Russell, commonly called Lord John Russell, when Secretary of State for the Home Department, abused the powers entrusted to him in that office, with a view to carry out this most unconstitutional measure, so utterly destructive of the liberties of the country, introducing a system of espionage, that would be most especially dangerous, should ecclesiastical tyranny ever again become dominant in the land.

"That your Petitioner, during a lengthened residence in different parts of France, has perceived that the *Gend'armerie* has not that tendency to repress crime which is generally imagined in this country, while its situation offers to itself too often the temptation to become the perpetrators, under the hope of evading detection and punishment, at the same time that it has been always found the willing tool of every arbitrary government.

"That your Petitioner therefore respectfully appeals to the patriotism of your Honourable House, and prays, that whereas the said Right Honourable John Russell, commonly called Lord John Russell, has, on his own avowal, long since had in view the centralization of such unconstitutional force, which he himself admits to be repugnant to the national feeling; and whereas, for the carrying out this anti-national object, he has taken advantage of the excited state of the country, through the agency of the Police at Birmingham and elsewhere, using his influence over them as Secretary of State for the Home Department, your Honourable House would be pleased to impeach the said Right Honourable John Russell, commonly called Lord John Russell, of high crimes and misdemeanours, as having immediately in view to sap and undermine the free institutions of this country, and introduce in their stead foreign customs, repugnant to the feelings, and destructive of the habits which form the peculiar excellency of the national character of Britons; and to that end having abused the powers entrusted to him as Secretary of State for the Home Department, in order to introduce a centralized *Gend'armerie*, totally independent of that Parliamentary control which the Mutiny Act affords in the case of the Standing Army.

"And your Petitioner will ever pray.

"WILLIAM VILLIERS SANKEY."

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From Dr. Cummings, Lecturer on Medical Jurisprudence of the Aldersgate School of Medicine.

Dr. Cummings presents his compliments to Mr. Paul, and begs to inform him, that his Every Man's Friend has entirely taken away his corns, and he has recommended it to several of his friends and patients, and in no instance has it failed in entirely eradicating both corns and bunions.

From Dr. H. Ley, Midwifery Lecturer at St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

Dr. H. Ley presents his compliments to Mr. Paul, and begs to inform him that his Corn Plaster has entirely taken away both the corns that he has been troubled with.

From Dr. Walshman, fifth year Physician at Kennington.

Dr. Walshman presents his compliments to Mr. Paul, and begs to inform him that he has recommended his Every Man's Friend to several of his friends and patients, and that in no instance has it failed in entirely eradicating both corns and bunions.

H. Williams, Esq., Surgeon, Halberton Lodge, near Tiverton, Devon.

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THE
FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY

JOHN PAVEY, 47, HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND,

AND

BENJAMIN STEILL, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW.

On the 26th of June, 1841, will be published,

PRICE TWOPENCE,

No. 26, of the **FLEET PAPERS,**

WHICH WILL CONTAIN A PORTRAIT OF

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.,

OF RIDDLESWORTH, IN THE COUNTY OF NORFOLK.

Orders received by the Publishers, Mr. PAVEY, 47, Holywell Street, Strand,
 and Mr. STEILL, 20, Paternoster Row, London.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

astler is "At Home" on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

JULIA.—Her lines to Her Majesty, on Lieutenant Edwards, next week.

WILLIAM DODD, the Factory Cripple, returns thanks to a Yorkshire Lady for her kind present of two shillings.

Some complaints are made respecting the folding of the *Fleet Papers*. As soon as it is possible to procure paper of a different size, the folding will be altered.

Many persons, in different towns, have written to ask "how they can obtain the *Fleet Papers*?"—The *Fleet Papers* may be had of any bookseller in the kingdom, who has an agent in London, by ordering them as all other periodicals are ordered. If persons are told, as many persons have asserted, that "they cannot be obtained," the publishers assure those parties, that the statement is not true. Several editions of the early numbers have been printed, and all orders can be regularly supplied, by application to Mr. Pavey, 47, Holywell Street, Strand; or Mr. Steill, 20, Paternoster Row.

If it should so happen that these Papers should be noticed *pro*. or *con*. by any organ of public opinion, R. O. will be grateful to any friend who will send him a copy thereof to the Fleet, London.

Anonymous writers may be saved much trouble, by being informed, that without reading them, their papers will be burned.

All communications must be post-paid.

NOTICES OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

The FLEET PAPERS.—"It would seem as if Ministers are resolved to stupefy the people by the voluminous stream of perplexed and contradictory fallacies which their speakers and their press are instructed to pour out day after day, and week after week; and this no doubt is one of their purposes; but they have another—they gain *time* to get up an agitation by their old resource, 'enormous lying'—a resource never employed with more unsparing energy than in the anti-corn-law agitation, as will appear by the following extracts from the last number of Mr. Oastler's *Fleet Papers*. Mr. Oastler ought to be an unexceptionable witness in such a case, for the landed aristocracy leave him at this moment to pine, and, for all they care, to die of hunger, in a debtor's prison, at the suit of one of their order, whose resentment he has provoked by his efforts to save that order from the consequences of their own selfish folly. Thankful indeed ought the landed aristocracy to be that there are men whose love of truth no contemptuous treatment, no neglect, no ingratitude, or even injustice, can extinguish. Were it not for such men, their position would now be hopeless. We make no apology for this digression. If ever men wanted warning of their duty and their danger, the landed aristocracy, who suffer such a friend as Mr. Oastler to pine in a debtor's prison, are the men. 'My father,' said the son of the conceited and selfish James I., 'is the only king in Europe who would keep such a bird in a cage.' The landed aristocracy, who will readily squander thousands and tens of thousands in thrusting one of '*their own order*' into the House of Commons, are, we firmly believe, the only class of Englishmen—we will say, the only class in the world—who would allow Mr. Oastler to remain a week the prisoner of Mr. Thornhill. But we must return to 'the excessive lying' of the ministerial anti-corn-law-lecturers. The following is an abridgment of Mr. Oastler's report:—

• • • • •

This is the stuff with which the populace are drenched, and with which Her Majesty's ministers wish to drench them a little longer, while the discussion in Parliament is protracted. But is Mr. Sidney Smith's idiotic, but pestilent drivell, at all more absurd and venomous than what was talked last night in the House of Commons by Messrs. Brotherton and Hume, and others of their party? Take away the abuse of the ministers, who in April, 1840, had not committed themselves to the *anti-corn* sedition, and you really have, in the notes of Mr. Sidney Smith's speech, all that has been said by Messrs. Brotherton, Hume, and the rest of them—an irrefragable proof of the fidelity of Mr. Oastler's report."—*Standard*, May 14.

"The FLEET PAPERS (J. Pavey) continue to occupy their share of public attention. In a late number Mr. Oastler made some revelations of a compact between Ministers and the Anti-Corn-Law-Leaguers, which after-events at least appear to confirm. In the number for Saturday last he gives us some revelations of what is going on within the Fleet, enough to touch the heart and shock the feelings."—*Birmingham Advertiser*, May 13, 1841.

The following letters from Operatives have given pleasure to Mr. Oastler: his friends will be pleased to know that he still lives in the hearts of those kind people—

"Dear Oastler,

Alverthorpe, near Wakefield, Yorkshire, May 6, 1841.

"The innumerable convincing proofs of public attention and sympathy towards you, have convinced me that your labours have been acknowledged and appreciated at least by those who have the common interests of mankind at heart. Such manifestations of public feeling towards you, is to me a source of the greatest comfort and consolation, to know that the poor man's greatest friend and benefactor has the satisfaction to know that he is beloved by persons of all stations in life, from the greatest statesman to the poorest cottager in the land. The first time that I heard of you was in the year 1830—that was the first time that I heard of the voice of the trumpet-tongued Oastler being raised in defence of suffering innocence against grasping tyranny, virtue against vice, and God against Mammon. From that day to this, your conduct has been uniform with your profession, the unflinching patriot and undaunted philanthropist. I was at that time myself a factory boy, working from five in the morning until eight at night, with little intermission. I was proving by sad experience the dreadful effects of factory labour, though young in years. I saw the great responsibility of your situation—I saw the whole army of millocrats and money-mongers arrayed against you—I saw with admiration your bold, fearless, undaunted spirit, in the midst of the most powerful and determined opposition. You were neither elated by success, nor dejected by defeat—onward was your course, bearing down before you every man that stood in the way of infantile emancipation. That memorable agitation taught many useful lessons—the duty of parents to children, the relationship which ought to exist between them, which before was grossly violated. The common usages of society had taught the parents to look upon their offspring as the intended slaves of their masters, and not as free-born Britons; but the masters were by you given to understand their duty towards the children entrusted to their care, and their accountability to God how they performed that duty; the government was also taught their duty to protect, by legislative enactments, the helpless babes who were not able to protect themselves. These were, indeed, useful lessons, calculated to civilize and Christianize the whole community, if properly applied. These considerations will doubtless make your prison a paradise. I am exceedingly sorry that the reward of your meritorious labours should be a prison in your old age. I am only sorry that it is not in my power to strike off the fetters which bind you, and set so noble a prisoner free; but I hope this letter, coming from one who has enjoyed the benefits of your labours, will add another gem to the lustre of your glory, honour, and renown. Such is the language of one who has followed you through good and evil report, and will follow you until death. And may that God who has blest your labours in this world, finally take you to his everlasting kingdom, as a reward for your labours, is the sincere wish of your devoted friend,

"J. M."

Fearing that my friend might suffer from the Factory Masters for his friendship to me, I am compelled to hide his name.—R.O.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

“The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage.”—“Property has its duties, as well as its rights.”

“The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits.”

“He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.”

VOL. I.—No. 21.

LONDON, SATURDAY, MAY 22, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—I am not aware that there can be a political question which, under the circumstances of this country, can be of more importance than that of the Corn Laws. Do not misunderstand me. I do not allude to its present effect upon political parties, or on a mere section of the community: the former are about to be dissolved, or amalgamated, or recast; and, as to the latter, it is indubitably true that no one section can be *permanently* benefited by any act of injustice to the remainder.

It must then be the interest, as well as the duty, of every man who takes a part in the discussion of this vital question, to resolve that in the argument prejudice and party or sectional feeling shall give place to truth.

And what, Sir, is the real question? If I understand it rightly, it is this:—Shall we hereafter determine to supply ourselves with food, or will it nationally be more profitable to turn our attention to the manufacture of other articles, and trust for a supply of our food to foreign nations? I think that I have stated the question fairly, because it is avowed by those who maintain the free trade principle, that “GOD NEVER DESIGNED THAT ENGLAND SHOULD BE AN AGRICULTURAL NATION!”—OR, in other words, that “ENGLAND WOULD NOT BE POORER IF SHE DID NOT GROW ONE GRAIN OF CORN!” I am justified in admitting that the effect of the adoption of this principle will be, as it is asserted by one who is paid by the Anti-Corn-Law-League, to instruct the nation in that theory. On the authority, then, of Mr. Sidney Smith, it is shown, that “if the Corn Laws were repealed, the Duke of Buckingham would not be worth one farthing—he would be reduced to a labourer at 9s. a week—his estates are the worst land in England, fit only to grow thistle-down; the whole would be worth nothing—nobody would even have his land at a gift.” The admission of these facts by an apostle of the free trade school, saves me much trouble in the argument. That being the avowed intention of the promoters, and the acknowledged result of the principle of free trade, the next question must be, what is offered to the nation in atonement for this acknowledged grievance? Of course, the Duke of Buckingham’s estates will not be singular, although his are declared to be “the worst land in England”; other estates must partake of the same effects when similarly operated upon. I

will leave the Duke entirely out of the question ; but I hope I may be permitted to ask, on behalf of the labourers, farmers, shopkeepers, and professional gentlemen who now reside upon those estates—nay, of the capitalists as well, for it is stated by Mr. Sidney Smith that “ *the Duke’s estates are deeply mortgaged* ”—what have the promoters of free trade to offer in exchange for the annihilation of so much wealth ? I take “ the worst land in England ” as the field of argument, in order that the friends of free trade may not complain. They all agree that these lands must be entirely sacrificed ;—the best lands, they say, will only be reduced in value by their system from 100*l.* to 34*l.*, or 25*l.*, or 20*l.* per annum.

Now, Sir, I do not misrepresent the professors of these new-fangled principles, when I answer that the boon offered to the nation as an equivalent for this wholesale destruction of property is an increase in our manufacture ; for, as says Mr. Sidney Smith, “ Manufacture would increase, and dragging after the plough would decrease.” Admitting the result of the free trade system to be stated correctly, which, only for the sake of argument, I am disposed to do, (I can never believe that the decrease of agriculture can *increase manufacture*,) then the next question must be—will the religion, the morals, the health, and the strength of the nation be improved by the transfer of its energies from agriculture to manufacture ? It must be borne in mind, when this question is answered, that the same principle which demands free trade in corn, requires free trade in labour, and refuses any legal protection to the labourers. The mere shadow of protection which is afforded by the New Poor Law and the Factories’ Regulation Act, are, it must never be forgotten, infractions on the *principle* of free trade. The step from the old Poor Law to the New Poor Law is avowedly towards “ no Poor Law at all.” The result then of the adoption of free trade would destroy the property and the influence of the owners of land, by making their estates worthless ; it would also remove every protection from the labourers ; it would drive the families now residing in agricultural districts into those of manufacture (the New Poor Law was adopted for that purpose), and it will place the population, the wealth, and the influence of the nation, in the hands and entirely under the controul of the manufacturers, who, Mr. Sidney Smith says, are “ good and patriotic,” but whom the official, national, and authentic documents *prove* to be cruel, covetous, and remorseless. The effect too of the increase of capital by manufacture, as conducted on the free trade principle, cannot be denied to be an entire destruction of every individual interest—such as domestic manufacturers, wool-staplers, dry-salters, dyers, bleachers, grocers, ironmongers, drapers, butchers, and every description of small traders. Those who know anything of the effect of the new system of manufacture, need not be told, that, *for the purpose of obtaining profits on low prices*, it is needful that every intermediate interest must yield to the requirements of the large factory masters—aye, that a small capitalist, with a small factory, cannot hope to prosper in competition with the large capitalist and his large factory. I know, Sir, that no friend of free trade can truly charge me with error when I state this fact. Well, then, the result of the free trade principle will be, on the showing of Mr. Sidney Smith, a very large increase in the exports—the home trade must disappear, when property is annihilated after the manner described by that gentleman. We must not forget that he admits that “ large exports are a proof of

the distress and poverty of the people of England." It is evident, then, if there is any soundness in Mr. Sidney Smith's theory, that the result of free trade would be the destruction of the aristocracy and the middle classes, or their absorption into the ranks of the labouring classes; and that the labourer would then be placed under the controul of a few very large capitalists or mill-owners. I say *under their controul*, because it must never be forgotten, that the principle of free trade rejects every attempt to legislate between capital and labour, and between the employer and the employed. The state of England would then be exactly as it was described some years ago by an operative, my friend John Hanson, who, at pp. 17 and 18 of his excellent little work, entitled, 'Humanity against Tyranny,' thus addresses the factory masters:—

"With the assistance of machinery you were not content, but have dared to drive the parents out of the market of labour; you have hired the infants for your workmen! and have been so cruel as to work them twice as long per day as the adult negro slaves are worked in the West Indies! Yes, yes, there's misery enough, we all assert. You have not only taken the only property the labouring man possesses from him, and hired and worked to death his babes! but you have dragged in your hateful car of carnage the late domestic manufacturer—the little respectable and happy shopkeeper—nay, you are going on in your horrid conquest, and are now absolutely destroying yourselves! 'A little factory man' can no longer stand against the system; and, very shortly, the 'big ones' themselves will invade each other, and one 'woolsey lord' will ruin the property of you all! and then he will, with as much truth and justice as you do now, point to the surrounding waste, wide as the empire, and tell the Parliament of the advantage of his system, though he has succeeded in sinking even yourselves into that incongruous mass of 'surplus population!' Was ever infatuation like your own!—as sure as you have ruined the labourer, the domestic manufacturer, the little tradesman, and shopkeeper, so sure will your own favourite system feast on yourselves, and then charge you with being 'redundant!' Some of you have boasted you have broken up the 'domestic system,' and have bragged over the falling 'little mill-owners.' But, recollect, your time of adversity will follow, and there may be 'none to pity!'"

Such, then, will be the awful result of the adoption of the free trade system, if Mr. Sidney Smith's representations are not erroneous!

If the religion, morals, health, and strength of the nation will be increased by destroying the different grades of society, and accumulating the people *en masse*, under the tyrannical authority of a very few in mills, then, Sir, there can be no doubt that the free-trade-theory is founded on Truth—the New Poor Law (preparatory to "no Poor Law at all") is, then, a wise measure, and the Corn Laws ought to be repealed.

You have not dwelt in a manufacturing district—you have not spent much time in Factories—mayhap you have never been in one. I have dwelt in the midst of the ravages of the factory system—I have witnessed its destruction of the human frame, its dreadful havoc on the moral faculties, its smothering and withering of all domestic ties, its ruinous effects on the religious principles both of its victims and its priests. After having witnessed its soul-sickening results, I can conceive of no greater curse to any nation, than to be delivered up to the unlimited, unrestrained power of the Factory-free-trade-principle! If such is to be the fate of England, her annihilation would be a mercy!

I have not thought it worth while to dwell on the ridiculous nonsense of Mr. Sidney Smith—the subject is much too serious to be dealt with in a light mood; else it would have been easy to have laughed at the folly of the Anti-Corn-Law-Leaguers, when they caught themselves in their own craftiness, and miscalculated

the intellect of Englishmen, by hiring and paying such "honest lecturers" to persuade Englishmen that those who "have all the money" "are forced to mortgage their estates!"—that "the aristocracy have robbed the country of 75,000,000*l.* a year by the Corn Laws," when, "in 1835, the whole cost of wheat was only 31,400,000*l.*, and, even in 1839, 56,533,000*l.*"—that "if the Corn Laws were repealed, wages would rise"—that "Irish labourers, who only earn 5*d.* or 6*d.* a day for nine months, and who are the three remaining months beggars, are not worse off than the Devonshire labourers, who can earn 9*s.* a week"—remembering, at the same time, that "Ireland is the dearest country in the world!"—that "millions upon millions of woollen pieces are rotting in the warehouses!"—that "if the Corn Laws were repealed, there would be no need for the women and children to go into the factories!"—that "the agricultural population is only one-fourth, compared with the manufacturing population!"—that "Lancashire does not grow 1,000 quarters of grain!" &c. &c.

If the factory masters had not been excessively impudent, as well as ignorant, before they had commissioned their agent to offer, under any circumstances, "to pay all the poor-rates," they would have relieved the landlords of the burden which has already been thrown upon them by the thousands of cripples and worn-out children who have been "worked up" in the factories!

The question is too grave to require any notice of the ribald abuse by the "honest lecturer" regarding the Aristocracy and the Clergy, Lord Melbourne, the Bishops of London and Exeter, Lords Stanhope, Darlington, and Ashley, Peel, O'Connor, Stephens, and myself. I may, however, be allowed to observe, that I have lived in England a long life, and I never saw one of "the 14,000 parsons going about in their parishes, with their ink-horns buttoned to their waistcoats, with petitions in their hands, seeking up the labourers in the lanes and fields, and forcing them to sign for dear bread." I say, Sir, that I have never seen one "parson" thus employed. I have, however, seen many "parsons" employed in visiting and relieving those who had been brought to sickness, deformity, poverty, and distress by the excruciating labour which was demanded from them by the free trade Factory masters.

But, Sir, it is all of a piece;—religion, the Christian religion, stands in the way of the ravages of free-trade-philosophy: the priests of the latter must make war upon the priests of the former:—hence the instructions to "the four paid Anti-Corn-Law-Lecturers" wherever they go to abuse "the 14,000 parsons!"

I say, Sir, the subject is too serious to waste time in discussing the nonsense and proving the falsehood of Mr. Sidney Smith: his admissions on the result of the adoption of free trade principles are, however, so important, that I make no apology for having detained you thereon at so great length. True, I owe the aristocracy nothing; but, Sir, I owe the labourers everything; and, knowing that both must eventually sink or swim together, it is my duty, at this most critical moment, to take such steps as I see are necessary to save *your ESTATES* and *their LABOUR* from the gripe of the covetous, unfeeling, remorseless Factory free traders!

Let me not, however, be misunderstood;—the present Corn Law, in my opinion, does not afford an adequate protection; *if it did, agricultural labourers would not be INSULTED by the offer of 9*s.* a week for wages!* Why, Sir, your revered father gave his labourers 6*s.* a week in 1770, and *your rental* is more

than five times the amount of *his!* This injustice can no longer be tolerated. It is thus manifested that the present Corn Law does not afford sufficient protection to the labourers—it actually makes corn an article for gamblers to speculate with. Now, Sir, the staff of a nation's life can never be trusted safely in the hands of gamblers. The imposition of the proposed duty will be no protection—it will only render corn an article of taxation, which no wise statesmen can ever sanction. Something different from either is required before British agriculture and British labour can be protected.

When the Corn question is under discussion in the House of Commons, I shall be prohibited from saying one word about it. I have therefore resolved to have "my say" before the parliamentary debate begins; and, Sir, I request that you, and I hope that your order, and the labourers and shopkeepers of England, will do me the favour attentively to read, and seriously to ponder over the remarks which I am now about to offer. They will be nothing new to you; but circumstances now demand, that the right course should be pursued, or the landlords, shopkeepers, and labourers will all become the abject slaves of the Free-Trade-Manchester-Anti-Corn-Law-League! That national curse I deprecate.

Sir, I believe not in the dogma of the Free-Trade-Anti-Corn-Law-Factory-Leaguers, that "God never designed that England should be an agricultural nation." I utterly reject the insane notion of the same school, that "England would not be poorer if she did not grow one grain of corn." I believe that England was designed for agriculture; and I am sure that she could not maintain her independence one day if she were to cease growing corn. Seeing then that my *faith* differs so widely from theirs, you cannot be surprised that my *works* should differ also. I know of no greater fallacy than to suppose that wisdom would dictate the neglect of agriculture. Manufacture and commerce are both very well in their places; but the well-being of England depends upon the prosperity of her agriculture first, and then, *as a consequence*, her manufactures will prosper.

So long as we have a single acre of land uncultivated, and a single pair of hands unemployed, if we import the corn which those hands and that land might have created, whatever price we give for that corn, as a nation, we lose the whole amount. It is because our governors have for many years imbibed the doctrines of free trade, that our labourers are reduced to such an abject state of misery. Were three times more labour employed in agricultural pursuits, instead of talking about importing corn, we should be an exporting nation—instead of mourning over a losing trade, we should command a profitable one. It is the fallacy of free trade which has separated the labourers from the aristocracy, and which has imbued the latter with the unchristian notion that *the labourers have no right to live upon and out of the soil!* Hence your accursed New Poor Law! The system of free trade has already made large strides; it has robbed labour to its rags; it has starved it to the bones; it has, by law, disinherited it!—it can do no more harm to the labourers, death would be preferable to their life!—to them it has indeed done its very worst!—and you, the landlords, have aided the cruel monster! Now it is your turn, it demands *your RENTS*, it envies you, and covets *your ESTATES!* and, if you will not relent, and once more take the labourers by the hand, it must overcome—it will destroy you!

It should never be forgotten that this country is in an artificial situation,

and that the institutions cannot be upheld, or the taxes paid, except by *protective* measures; *native industry and skill must be protected* by law, and all her internal and domestic resources must be fostered by the Government. If the free traders are allowed any longer the ascendancy in the councils of the nation, they will ruin *you*, as they have ruined the labourers, and are now ruining the middle classes; nay, Sir, they will, if allowed to proceed in their blind and mad career, eventually ruin themselves! I have, on several occasions, stated my views on this most important subject. At this moment it is very desirable that there should be no delusion on the Corn question. I will, therefore, at the risk of wearying you, copy my former sayings on that subject. You will then know if they accord, as I think they will, with what I have said above. In a letter to the Duke of Wellington, dated July 24th, 1832, I wrote to His Grace thus:—

“The Corn Laws, as at present instituted, yield very little, if any profit to the British agriculturist. The *Capitalist* is enabled to manage the markets, by lowering the price of corn, when he knows the needy English grower must sell, and thus he pockets the profit which the British farmer ought to receive. The *Forcigner* and the *Capitalist* are the great gainers by these laws.

“What then shall be done? Oh, says the *Factory master* and the *Fund-holder*, ‘Let us have a free trade in corn, and then all our evils will be redressed.’ Now, what would be the consequence, supposing we had a free trade in corn?—In the first instance, corn would be materially reduced in price,—hundreds of thousands of acres would be thrown out of cultivation,—tens of thousands of agricultural labourers would be deprived of employment.—These would naturally flock to the manufacturing districts,—they would of course cease to be customers to the manufacturers,—they would compete in the market of labour with the present superabundant stock of hands; and even if the foreigner could be induced to take our goods in exchange for his corn, we should still be overstocked with manufactured goods, by the *additional* production. We should look in vain for our best customer *at home*.—Corn would then rise on the Continent, and the foreigner would get the benefit. We should still be an over-worked, and a starved nation,—clothing the world, yet going in rags and tatters ourselves!—dependent on the foreigner for every mouthful of bread, though blessed by Providence with hands, soil, and climate capable of producing much more corn at home than we could possibly consume.

“What then must be done? Will your Grace allow me plainly to tell you what I think ought to be done?—Prohibit (so long as we have any unemployed labourers) the introduction into this country of *any* article or commodity which can be grown or made here in sufficient quantity for our consumption. We shall thereby bring together the *idle* hands and the *unproductive* soil or commodity, and *CREATE* that which we now *BUY*. No one can deny, that so long as we have the means of *creating* any article within ourselves, and idle hands kept for doing nothing which might be employed therein, however cheap we may *seem* to purchase the article, we do in fact lose the whole amount we give for it.—Allow no article to be exported from this country upon which more labour is required to make it useful, so long as we have any unemployed hands at home.”

On the 12th of December, 1832, I received a requisition to offer myself as a candidate to represent the West Riding of Yorkshire in Parliament. In my address to the electors, I find the following opinions are stated:—

“I am an Enemy to all Monopolies, but most of all to that *Monopoly of Misery* which, under the present Laws and the present System of Trade, is the lot of the industrious Poor. I would recommend the encouragement of *Home* labour, *Home* growth, and *Home* trade, and be content with such a share of *Foreign* Trade as would leave a profit to the British Artisan, rejecting the present system of *starving* the British Peasant and Artisan to feed and enrich the Foreign Nabob. If the Foreigner would not buy our Manufactures at a *profitable* price, I would leave him to be at the trouble of making his own; being well assured, that if encouragement were given to *British Labour*, we might defy all the world to make us poor. When I hear the British Labourer, shouting ‘Cheap *Foreign* Corn,’ I am always reminded of ‘Heavy Poor Rates,’—‘No Profits,’—‘Low Wages,’ and ‘Long Labour.’

"I would support every measure calculated to feed and clothe Britons with *British Corn* and with *British Manufactures*. I would encourage the growth of '*Cheap English Corn*' by protecting the Agricultural Labourer, and enabling him not only to provide '*Cheap Bread*' for his Brother, the Manufacturing Labourer, but to be a good customer for manufactured goods in return. I would take nothing from the *Forseigner* which Britons could grow or make at home, (so long as we have unproductive British Soil and unemployed British Hands); and what we could not produce, which is useful and necessary to ourselves, I would introduce without Tax or Duty. I would endeavour to employ the thousands of unemployed Labourers in tilling and improving the millions of acres of Waste Land which now disgrace the face of our common country, and thus enable them to be producers of British Corn and consumers of British Manufactures, instead of being, as they are now *unwillingly* compelled to be, consumers of the wages of their Brother Workmen—and if by such a plan we could not grow more Corn at Home than we could consume, I would allow the free importation of Foreign Corn. No article should be exported in an *unfinished* state; we should reserve to the *British Artisan* the Labour required in *finishing* British Manufactures.

"The Visionary Schemes of our '*Philosophic Political Economists*,' as developed in '*Free Trade and Emigration*,' instead of benefiting the British Empire, have already succeeded in destroying the best Customer of the Manufacturer, the Farmer, and the Shopkeeper—the *British Labourer*. Should these Politicians succeed in their favourite Scheme—a Free Trade in Foreign Corn, the Labourer, the Domestic Manufacturer, the Farmer, and the Shopkeeper, must be involved in one common ruin; a very large proportion of agricultural Labourers must be sent into the Factories; the overgrown Capitalist would thus for a season augment his store of wealth, by getting his work done for still lower wages, but, surrounded by a Nation's Poverty and Misery, he must, in the end, relinquish his firm, his fast, though hopeless grasp on gold."

In a speech which I delivered at the West Riding Election at Wakefield, December 20, 1832, I said:—

"Whenever I hear a British artisan shout '*cheap foreign corn*,' I always fancy I see his wife pulling his coat, and hear her crying out '*low wages*,' '*long labour*,' '*no profits*.' Is not that the case? I am sure I am right: is it not so? And when I hear a large mill-owner coaxing his work-people with a promise of '*cheap foreign corn*,' I fancy I see him shrugging his shoulders and saying, '*more work for less money*, that's all.' Very well, then, my principle of legislation is this—to encourage home growth, home labour, home trade, and home consumption. Gentlemen, why should we bother ourselves so much about cheap foreign corn? Bless your lives, there are millions of acres of land in our own country that never yet, in the memory of man, grew an ear of corn, and there are hundreds of thousands of human beings, our fellow subjects—Englishmen, Scotchmen, and Irishmen—who are living upon the poor-rates and the wages of others. Put these useless acres and useless men together, there's work enough for them all in the land; we now keep them in idleness—they would much rather work. We now keep them in rags; they would much rather earn some money, by growing corn for you, and then be able to buy a piece of cloth, or cotton, or linen, and clothe themselves, than be decked with your *given* rags; they would rather be your customers, than your pensioners—then why throw them out of work, to feed and enrich a few capitalists here, and a few nabobs abroad? It is absolute madness and folly. If you will but employ them in growing corn, we shall then get plenty of home corn, and those paupers who cannot afford to buy a new coat or a new shirt in seven years, will be able to get one or two in every year, and be rare good customers for our manufactures. But if you will suffer the poor to famish, you will drive an immense number of agricultural labourers into your own looms, and your own mills—they will lower the price of your labour, and you will have the extreme felicity of furnishing a foreign nabob with cheaper goods than ever you yet did, you will still give him more of your labour for less of his money, and get laughed at by him into the bargain. I have many a time seen foreigners laugh at us for selling our goods at so low a price. As long as we are willing to cut our own throats, they will hold the bowl and catch our life's blood and laugh. I am sure that I am correct. The nation which is able to make and to grow what it wants, having unemployed men and lands, and still determines to seek a foreign supply, absolutely loses every farthing which it gives for that foreign supply, however low the nominal price may seem to be. That is the principle upon which I stand, so long as you have uncultivated soil and unemployed labour."

Thus far my former opinions are in exact unison with my present thoughts;—a few years' experience has only served to establish these truths. In my next letter, I will select a few extracts on this subject from other published documents. In this age of inconsistency, I am pleased to find that I have not changed.

It is indeed gratifying, that having had occasion during a series of years, to speak upon the Corn question as your Steward, I find myself, as your Prisoner, still retaining the same opinions, with a stronger conviction of their truth, occasioned by the experience of years. But when will the landlords of England see that every step which is taken on the free trade principle is a discouragement of our agriculture, under the *false* notion of benefiting our manufacture? I say *false* notion, because nothing is more true than that the *real* interest of our manufacture is bound up in the prosperity of our agriculture. Most men are disposed to admit this truth, excepting those who assert that "England would be no poorer if she did not grow one grain of corn"; yet we perpetually witness the leaders of *every* government, Whig or Conservative, prattling about the excellency of free trade, and adopting one measure after another for the purpose of establishing that ruinous principle. They never seem to think that *principles* will, and *must*, find their level. On this important subject, Sir, there is no difference between Russell and Peel. No doubt they would both start at the monstrous result aimed at by the ultra-free-trade-liberalists; but neither of these persons has the courage to resist the march of free trade principles. The great question is, *will this country be happier, stronger, and more prosperous under a system of protection, or one of free import and export?* That question being decided, all the rest is mere matter of detail.

I have, in this letter, candidly stated my opinions on the most important question of the day. I have however abstained from dwelling upon the madness (for assuredly it is madness) of placing England in a state of dependence upon foreign nations for a supply of corn—I prefer to confine myself entirely to the operation of the question on our own population, even supposing that every corn-growing nation on earth would be willing freely to exchange corn for goods. For the same reason, I do not say one word upon the effect which opening the ports for corn will have upon the currency. I have stated the question on the most favourable assumptions of its supporters of the free-trade-school, and then I have argued on the admissions of the Manchester quacks. If the landlords despise my opinions and advice, I am sorry for them—if the labourers reject my counsel, I shall grieve also for them. Nothing shall, however, deter me from endeavouring to save my country, by delivering her from the chains which liberal enlightened philosophy has forged for her.

Before I conclude, allow me once more to assure you and your order, that the very principle of the accursed New Poor Law, by which you have consented to deliver up the agricultural population to the Factory Monster, demands (and, if persisted in, will obtain) the entire freedom of the trade in corn!—Yes, Sir, nothing is more true, than that Parliament must either repeal the Corn Law or the New Poor Law! All the cunning of man cannot save them from that dilemma.

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—Tell me, Sir, in what age or nation was a Capitalist known to be a Patriot?—I have heard of none! May be the Anti-Corn-Law-Leaguers wish to take their capital abroad to grow corn *cheaper*—aye, that is the word—*cheaper* for England than she can grow it for herself.

Some day, I will give you my views on the use and abuse of machinery. I wonder that our statesmen do not turn their attention to that most important subject. The *spindles* are pilfering the *parcements*! Let that hint suffice at present.—R.O.

P.S. second.—One word with the men of the West Riding of Yorkshire. They say we are to have a general election shortly—what say you? Some of you will retort, what say you 'King?' I will tell you. The Hon. William Duncombe is *my* friend and he is *your* friend. I should like him to be our member, for three reasons—*first*, he is from first to last opposed to the New Poor Law; *second*, he has always been kind and faithful to me; and *third*, you remember, and I shall never forget, that during the reform mania the Huddersfield Whigs hired a band of ruffians to throw him over the bridge! Yes, I should like the Hon. William Duncombe to be our member.—R.O.

"Honoured Sir,

"April 22nd, 1841.

"Your very kind reception of my former letter has encouraged me to trouble you again with some remarks on the *Fleet Papers*. Believe me, Sir, that my wife and self take the highest interest in them, and we read each succeeding number with, if possible, increasing feelings, and anxious wishes for their success and effect on the hearts of all who have the power to work good for their unfortunate and oppressed fellow-creatures. Whatever may be the opinions of your persecutors on the *Fleet Papers*, be assured, Sir, that they are sharp thorns in the sides of those 'who grind the faces of the poor.' The evidences given in the 'Papers' of the impression made by your exertions in behalf of the ill-used poor on the hearts of all true Christians, must be most cheering to yourself—I know they are so to those who were condemned to suffer unmitigated until a 'King' arose to protect them. Oh! Sir, What a fine scene must your interview with J. Habershham have been. I have tried to paint it in my own mind; but my imagination fails me. I cannot fancy anything of a higher nature than the overflowing of a grateful heart. Then, again, what a lamentable amount of unmerited suffering is contained in the history of the poor victim Dodd. It is almost incredible that the Christian authors of and profites by all this misery and woe do not offer the slightest attempt to mitigate the sufferings of their victim! How the great Mr. Marshall, must have winced, if not writhed, under your castigation of him from the evidence of his own slaves. Well, to hear such persons, at their Anti-Slavery and Bible meetings, deliver speeches loaded with religion and charity, and then to turn and look at the beaten bodies, crippled and wasted forms of the producers of their wealth, the heart involuntarily beats strongly with indignation at such hypocrisy and cruelty. But 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, and I will repay.' Aye, and praised be His name, so He will. It is gratifying to see the clergy arousing themselves to the duty inseparable from their office—the protection of the poor. I pray Heaven that they may have sufficient influence with the aristocracy to induce them to act justly to the hard-treated victims of philosophy. They were alarmed, by the base falsehood of their estates being in danger, to perpetrate an act of injustice and cruelty on those who were entitled to far different treatment. I should wish to ask the misled aristocracy, whether their estates are more in danger from a God-fearing, contented people, or from a mass of discontent, impelled to desperation by want of food and oppression, and utterly devoid of God, and resting confidently on the atheistic precept, that 'Death is an eternal sleep!' They ought to consider this matter well, for it may probably be brought before them practically, when, with whom will the gain be? They may depend upon it, that the poor are not to be trampled on with impunity for the pleasure of capitalists and Jews; therefore, let them open their eyes before it is too late. The Nottingham election promises well. The Whigs are already biting the file. My wife begs that you will accept her respects. And hoping that God is blessing you with health, I beg leave to subscribe myself,

"Your most obliged and humble servant,

"10, Enoch's Court, Goodman's Yard, Minories."

"JOHN JONES."

"TO RICHARD OASTLER.

I.

"Health to thee, Oastler, guardian of the young;
 Defender of the helpless and the poor!
 Accept this tribute from a stranger's tongue,
 Who feels for worth that suffering must endure:
 Health to thee, Patriot! though a bitter doom
 Awards thy virtues with a prison's gloom,
 Though round thy head its dingy vapours float,
 And heaven's free air's den'd to thee confin'd,
 This be thy trust to cheer thy sadd'ned mind—
 Though men may glory in their factious plot,
 Yet, with 'thy people,' thou art not forgot!—
 Thee, and their miseries are still combin'd;
 Link'd are their hearts with thee, and with thy fate,
 Firmer than fetters bind, or fears abate.

II.

"Hail, virtuous victim to inhuman laws,
 Unstained with crime, unstained is thy heart;
 Let calm reflection, freshen'd hope impart
 Strength to thy virtues, comfort in thy cause;
 And while 'thy people's' hearts accord applause,
 Maintain the *Christian's* and the *Patriot's* part:
 Truth yet shall brighten, unbedimm'd by those
 Who mock her claims, and mercy still oppose,
 And thou, bold champion of the toil oppress'd,
 Thou, too, shalt triumph, and 'thy children' sing
 The honest worth, the virtues of their 'King!'
 And tender sweetly calm, life's evening rest;
 Thy 'white slaves' freed shall weave a flowery wreath
 To grace thy brows, and bloom unscathed by death.

"T. F."

"Sir.—Perhaps you will pardon the presumption of the writer in sending these few lines, for although of a country that law considers different from yours, common sense, Sir, emphatically tells us—we are all the sons and daughters of one who makes no distinction betwixt

climate and complexion; and though a stranger, yet I can feel for suffering virtue, and sympathize with afflictions that have originated in your strenuous and indefatigable exertions in behalf of suffering humanity. And I hope I can, in some degree, appreciate your enlightened benevolence; and though the writer is young, he, too, Sir, can perceive that it is

“ Man’s inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn.”

“ So sings my country’s sweetest poet; and because your philanthropic mind, impelled you to endeavour to overthrow this civilized barbarity, you are now the inhabitant of a ‘prison-house.’ The world, Sir, can perceive that this has been the first cause that led to the imprisonment of the ardent friend of the poor, and the protector of the helpless; and, as one of the *working* millions, I beg respectfully to subscribe myself your sincere admirer, and of honest upright patriotism wherever I find it; and, while differing on many subjects, I am, Sir,

“ Your most obedient servant,

“ Leeds, May 1st, 1841.

“ THOMAS FRASER.”

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THE FLEET PAPERS.

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JOHN PAVEY, 47, HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND,

AND

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

My Oastler is "At Home" on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

FREDERICK BRYNARD.—Thanks for his interesting letter. It will be useful. We are about to "test" the Poor Law Commissioners, and their *factotum*, "the man-without-a-heart."

Some complaints are made respecting the folding of the *Fleet Papers*. As soon as it is possible to procure paper of a different size, the folding will be altered.

NOTICE OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

THE FLEET PAPERS.—"Lord Clarendon denied last night in the House of Lords, that Oastler on the Corn and New Poor Law questions, mixed up, however, with some notions regarding the free trade principle, to which we must refuse our assent. But he clearly demonstrates the grievous oppression which the free trade principle has worked, and is destined to work still more hereafter, when applied in the New Poor Law and to the extinction of the Poor Laws altogether, which is the final consummation avowedly aimed at by those who first constructed and introduced the New Poor Law, and the economical theorists who, in or out of office, influence the action of the present Government. Mr. Oastler observes, that: the same principle which demands free trade in corn, requires free trade in labour, and refuses any legal protection to the labourers. The mere shadow of protection which is afforded by the New Poor Law and the Factories' Regulation Act, &c. it must never be forgotten, infractions on the principle of free trade. The step from the Old Poor Law to the New Poor Law is avowedly towards 'no Poor Law at all.' The result, then, of the adoption of free trade would destroy the property and the influence of the owners of land, by making their estates worthless; it would also remove every protection from the labourers; it would drive the families now residing in agricultural districts into those of manufacture (the New Poor Law was adopted for that purpose), and it will place the population, the wealth, and the influence of the nation, in the hands and entirely under the controul of the manufacturers. There would clearly be no stopping short of this, if the free trade dogmas were rigorously pushed to their practical and inevitable consequences. We are quite persuaded that the bulk of the manufacturing interests are much too sound at heart to contemplate or desire such a consummation, even when labouring under the visionary delusions propagated by the zealous apostles of the free trade motto. But it is not the less certain that after Corn Law repeal would follow, in the natural order of like effects from like causes, New Poor Law repeal, or 'no Poor Law at all,' as Mr. Oastler has it. So it would be, and it behoves all classes, therefore, who have the good of their common country at heart, to join in one general cry for Corn Laws and Poor Laws, for one no less than the other, and both equally are questions of life and death for commerce as for agriculture; and, above all, for the labouring classes of the whole empire."—*Courier*, May 21, 1841.

"THE FLEET PAPERS.—Although we have not alluded to him for several weeks, we have not forgotten our Fleet prisoner, whose little silent messengers are doing so much good amongst all classes. He goes on bravely, combatting with the monster of Poor Law and Factory tyranny; and exulting at the 'heavy blows and great discouragements' which it receives from the noble-hearted people of England. What a triumph the election of his friend Walter must have been to him! We would have given something to have been with him in his Cell when he received the news. It would have been a mutual gratification of the highest order. He bears his imprisonment cheerfully; and the following short extract, from the answer to an address which was sent to him from Bradford, will show what are his feelings under his confinement."* *—*Hull Packet*, May 21, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS, No. 21.—We earnestly recommend the attention of the working classes particularly, upon whose credulity and comparative want of sound information regarding the Corn Laws our patriotic Whigs are about to impose for their own selfish purposes, to No. 21 of the *Fleet Papers*, by the venerable Oastler. It is exceedingly well-timed, and calculated, if extensively read, to destroy all the sophistry in which the Whigs are so great adepts, and all the machinations which they will resort to at the approaching election to perpetuate their power, and enslave the free people of Britain. So convincing a paper on the subject of the Corn Laws we have seldom read, and at this juncture, therefore, we deem ourselves justified in copying a considerable portion of it into our columns. We confidently hope that this venerable asserter of the rights, the liberties, and the interests of the country, will be encouraged, by those who have ample means at their disposal, to proceed in his excellent work, by their ordering thousands upon thousands of this number for circulation amongst the poorer classes, when the Whigs are again seeking to hoodwink and mislead."—*Liverpool Mail*, May 22, 1841.

Speech delivered by Mr. James Spencer, on seconding the adoption of the Address to Mr. Oastler, at the Festival for his benefit, at Bradford, on Easter Tuesday, the 13th of April, 1841.

"Mr. Chairman, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

"It is with a degree of pride that I rise to second the adoption of an address to one who has done so much for us—I say, done so much for us, because though the end to which his labours are directed be not accomplished, still he has done much for us, and with our approval, not against our will, but with some assistance from us. Though we are in a worse state than we were when he commenced his career of agitation, though our wages be considerably lower, and the necessaries of life perhaps somewhat higher, the genius of Oastler has done much for us. The principles which he propagated relative to the discipline of factories, led to the inquiries which were made into the working effects of that system. But those seated in power only made use of the power they were intrusted with to cross and thwart the benevolent intentions of those good men, many of whom spent their talent and their all in the cause of suffering humanity. It was said by wicked, mercenary men, that Bull and Oastler had done more mischief than they could easily atone for; because they had been the occasion of such laws being enacted as hindered children from working in factories till they were of a certain age, so hindering drunken wreckless parents from enjoying the slavish earnings of those children till they were nearer the dawn of youth. There are parents who love to drink their offspring's blood;—no, I cannot use softer language in this case: do not children destroy their limbs, break their constitutions, and bring themselves down to a premature grave, while engaged in this unremitting labour. And do not many of the parents drink the earnings of the children in ale, porter, and drops of gin? Well then, do they not, in fact, drink the blood of their children? I say, they do; and I believe only such have blamed Oastler and Bull, and the other advocates in the cause of the infants. I trust no sober man will allow himself to be deluded by such intemperate men. The present Factories' Regulation Act was not made with any intent to ameliorate the condition of the children. Oastler and Bull, with all other sensible men, foresaw and foretold that the measure was only framed to sicken and perplex the advocates of the Factory operatives. But they had raised such a stir out of the 'House,' that the gentlemen who from time to time went to the 'House,' were obliged to pledge themselves to force the question upon the consideration of the 'House'; the 'House,' being at that time sadly weighed down by the influence of mammon worshippers, made a law to suit the avaricious inclinations of those persons. You know, my friends, when good men buckle on their armour, evil-doers always commence preparing bitter pills for them to swallow. Those narrow-minded, short-sighted worms, who have spent all their days in the steady pursuit of wealth, leaving all the powers and beauties of the mind to be smothered in the spirit of avarice, which blights every feeling of generosity, and closes up the heart in a strong case of adamant hardness, never relinquish their undue and unholty hold upon God's creatures, until they are driven from their prey. The exertions of the friends of the infants compelled them to acknowledge the necessity of shortening the hours of infant labour in factories. And, if they have once legislated upon the question their own way directed by avarice, they must now legislate upon it again; and unless in their next attempt at factory legislation they allow humanity and Christianity to direct them in their proceedings, we must take up the question once more, and make the land from east to west, from north to south, ring with its echo! On these bread and life questions, they will at last be obliged to legislate as justice directs, and not as they will. The Ten Hours' Bill will be adopted—its benign and happy workings will make all acknowledge, that it was a principal remedy to cure many of our social ills.

"I stand here, Sir, to say, that what was done between the years 1830 and 1835, will neither be lost nor forgotten; and to tell all who have been willing to believe that the Ten Hours' Bill and its supporters were thrown aside into the political lumber-room, no more to rest in hollow repose on what will prove to be a precipice covered with a thin bed of flowers, that the advocates of the hand-loom weavers will be again called out; that the opponents of the New Poor Law Amendment Act will be rebalanced as the friends of Justice, Truth, and the Constitution, when they again combine for the serious conflict.

"The great man, who is the occasion of our coming together this night, has been an active champion in the cause of the poor, whenever the questions, or the measures, or the laws referred to have been made a subject of consideration. I accuse the working class (and that is my own class) of thinking too lightly of these important questions, behaving, as they have of late years, as if these questions of the Factories, the Loom, and the Poor Rates, having laws founded upon justice, did not vitally affect their interests—did not, as the law happened to be made for or against the working man, determine whether he should have a house to live in, or a bastille to starve in—did not determine whether he should be at liberty to go to church, and hear the word faithfully expounded

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk :

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

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THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—If there be one class of Englishmen more unreasonable and selfish than another, or, indeed, one tribe of the human race more ignorant of their position than the rest—if there ever was a class of men given up to "judicial blindness," it is that portion of the landed aristocracy of Britain who, entirely forgetting the patriotic spirit of their forefathers, are, at this moment, resolved to war against principle by retaining the Corn Laws and the New Poor Law, and, in order to compel the people to submit to such unnatural oppression, have determined to break up the Constitution, and thus eventually destroy their own influence by the establishment of a Rural Police! Infatuation never before forced its victims on such a mad crusade!

Pride, pleasure, ease, and riches have bewildered you and those of your order!—Instead of being the patrons and protectors of the people, you have become their foes and their oppressors, and have laid the axe to the root of your own existence. You think that the labourers are ignorant and weak, and that they will tamely submit to be robbed and mauled like idiots; and that you can retain your independence when you have destroyed theirs! You mistake! The ignorance and weakness is with yourselves!—the constitution of England rejects your injustice and tyranny! It is the innate love of order and of peace, and the recollection of the goodness of your forefathers, joined to the hope that their noble and generous spirits might awaken you from the deep lethargic slumber into which Covetousness has lulled you, which has quieted the people till now. But, Sir, if all hope is to be abandoned—if the New Poor Law and the Corn Laws are both insisted upon by the owners of land, it will very soon be demonstrated that that portion of the landed aristocracy are none other than banditti, resolved on plunder! In that day, the people will teach their oppressors a sad, although a constitutional lesson. Again I solemnly warn you to relent! else your selfishness will be your ruin!

The argument that I am now maintaining in favour of protection for the soil and labour of Britain, demands, that upon this subject there shall be no mistake between you, your order, the people, and myself. You may believe me or not,

it is enough that I know it, if your order makes a mistake on that point at this moment—if you resolve by physical force to maintain and enforce the New Poor Law, and, at the same time, refuse to repeal the Corn Laws, you will unite conflicting forces against yourselves, who will laugh you to scorn, and crush you in derision!

From this cell — to which your pride, injustice, and ingratitude has doomed me — I once more urge you, by the memory of your father, I urge your order, by the spirit of their sires, to ponder ere you doom yourselves to perdition, by madly resisting the constitutional demand of justice.

There may be differences of opinion as to which of these laws must be repealed—there is, there can be none, on the fact *that both cannot be retained*.

Philosophy demands that your estates shall be protected by the refusal of the *right* of the labourers to relief; and that manufacture and commerce shall be promoted by a system of free trade. Cruel as that code is, it does not award that the labourers of England shall be deprived of their birthright in their native soil, and then be refused to purchase the untaxed produce of the soil and labour of foreigners. That monstrous double-edged sword of tyranny is wielded only by yourselves, the Landed Aristocracy of Britain! See that justice does not sheathe it in your bosoms! Christianity demands, first, protection for the labourers, and, as a natural consequence, protection for yourselves: she is never one-sided in her decrees.

Believe me, Sir, the insane attempt which is now made by some of the landed gentry to uphold the system of *double* protection to themselves, and *no* protection for the labourers, will compel the people to forget all other grievances, and will lead to an union of strength amongst every other class, which must issue in the destruction of such unnatural and unconstitutional tyranny. You will force your natural allies to coalesce with their tormentors, your enemies, the Cotton Lords. In the conflict which must ensue, the principles of free trade may be established, although that triumph should be the ruin of your order.

I would, if possible, awaken the aristocracy to their danger, by urging them to reflect that the New Poor Law is the offspring of the free trade policy, whilst the Corn Law is of the protective school; and that consequently it is sheer madness to hope that the truncheons and cutlasses of the police can enforce them both upon a nation of free men.

Having thus solemnly warned you, I proceed with the consideration of the anticipated debate on the Corn Laws. In my last, I quoted some former observations of my own on that most important question. Wishing to be distinctly understood by you, the labourers, and the manufacturers, I will not apologise for quoting still further from my former sayings, to show that my present opinions are not new; and that, however you have changed your conduct towards me, I am the consistent and uncompromising friend of you and your order. It is my sincere affection for the aristocracy which forces me, at this moment, to urge my advice and opinions upon your consideration. I am quite sure that the existence of your order depends upon their present resolve.

On the 8th of October, 1834, I addressed a letter to the editor of the *Agricultural and Industrial Magazine*, in which I find the following paragraph:—

" Nothing can be more certain, than that the *real* interest of the agriculturist IS the *real* interest of the manufacturer;—Nothing more clear, than that the destruction of the one must inevitably be followed by the destruction of the other. It is equally true, that to buy corn when we can grow corn, is just as mad a policy as to tax corn when we cannot grow it. Our *very best* customer is, at all times, our *home* customer; the more he is nourished and protected, the more useful will he be to us, and the more prosperous will be our manufacturers. *We shall always have as much Foreign trade as will do us good, if we will only take care to keep a good trade at home; every bushel of corn grown at home, is a creation of so much wealth to the nation; every bushel of corn bought from the Foreigner, is an abstraction of so much wealth from the nation.*"

The last time that I published my opinion on the Corn question was, I think, in my reply to the second requisition which I received from the electors of Huddersfield. To that *manufacturing* constituency I thus addressed myself:—

" On the subject of Trade, which to the Electors of Huddersfield must always be a very important question, you have a right to demand a full and a candid avowal of my sentiments. I am opposed, entirely opposed, to that system of impoverishing this country which embroiders itself with the name of 'FREE TRADE.' It is none other than a drain, laid under the wealth of England, to convey it into the hands of Foreigners. The climax of this destroying system is, that we have the honour to work our Operatives to death, and to kill our Merchants, Manufacturers, and Shopkeepers with anxiety, in order that we may favour our Foreign customer with our Manufactures, at *one-half* of their real value; whilst, at the same time, our own artisans are clothed in rags, and are reduced to a scanty share of food, and our merchants and our manufacturers are the subjects of anxiety and despondency; and when the Foreigners find it to be their *interest* to concoct a provincial or a national Bankruptcy, then our richest merchants are plundered of all their wealth, and are, at one fell-swoop, hurled from the pinnacle of splendour to a state of abject pauperism!!

" The prosperity of the merchants, manufacturers, and shopkeepers of England can only be secured by the development of our internal and national resources.

" The Almighty has blest us with HANDS and with LANDS—*nature* points to the union—but *delusion* veils them from our sight, and, muttering the magic spell, 'FREE TRADE,' she points to foreign climes!—our governors have encouraged our merchants there to follow the Will-o'-th-wisp—the result is, that they are now floundering in bogs and quicksands;—their wealth is vanished, and they find that all their labour and toil has been for less than nought.

" If a good and a certain customer at home is better for a tradesman than a doubtful customer abroad, it is the duty of government, as it is the interest of merchants, manufacturers, shopkeepers, and labourers, to avail themselves of those sources of domestic wealth which nature has placed within our reach, but which the delusions of sophists and theorists have so long hidden from our sight. If, when you have thus transformed England into a garden, you cannot find food and raiment for her inhabitants, (*i. e.* when they have multiplied four-fold,) then, *but not till then*, it will be needful to consider whether it will be wiser to spend the national wealth in transporting the surplus people, or importing food and raiment from foreign climes.

" Are you afraid that by pursuing this plan you would lose your foreign trade?—Believe me, Gentlemen, your fears are groundless. Under the wholesome *domestic* system, you would retain *all* that is *good* and *profitable* of your foreign connexions, and you would only lose the *bad* or the *unprofitable*. The foreigners would still buy of you *all that they wanted*; and you would be saved the loss occasioned to yourselves by glutting their markets, and thus reducing the value of your own commodities. England and Ireland would *then* consume an immense increase of your manufactures."

I am well aware that every word which I advance on this subject will be objected to by the free-trade-philosophers. They never descend to *patriotism*—theirs is, as they assert, a scheme of *universal* benevolence! They would unite all the nations of the earth in one, and thus *un-Babelize* mankind. They forget the *artificial* state of finance and civilization here—they laugh at the strongest prejudices of Englishmen, and, under the name of *Universal* Philanthropy, they

stamp remorselessly on the poor man's rights, and propound a scheme which, if successful, would place society in this country mid-way between our own and that of wild uncivilized savages.

I have, however, a right to expect that the aristocracy of England will listen to me. I claim not their attention for any respect which they are in the habit of showing to their friends, but surely self-interest will induce them to attend to the call of one whom they all know to be their unbought supporter. Yes, Sir, I know, my conscience tells me, that although pride, urged on by "envy, hatred, and malice," has befooled you, by tempting you to place me here, still I know that you believe me to be your friend;—so must it be with the rest of your order. If, however, you will none of you listen to me, you must "pass on and be punished" for your pride and folly.

I dare say that some of my expressions in this letter and my last may have startled and offended many of my friends. I know no mid-way course of policy—I have not learned to cloud and mystify my meaning by useless and cumbersome expressions. It is my wont to travel straight to a point, and lead my readers there. Some may think me rude and uncourteous—none can ever blame me for tempting them out of the way to truth.

Free trade is the point to which our governors (whether Whig or Tory) are marching. Many hindrances beset them—they never go straightforward; as, in the New Poor Law, they are intending "no Poor Law at all," so, in the law for a duty on corn, they mean "no Corn Law at all," though cowardice in both cases prevents their saying so. I object altogether to budge one inch with them on the path to free trade, because I see the road thereto covered with broken pieces of the sceptre, the mitre, the coronet, the plough, and the shuttle;—and so, Sir, because I wish to preserve all unbroken, I will not, cannot, travel on that path. I observe, also, in that track the tatters of scrip and title-deeds—let the owners thereof keep a sharp look out.

Who was it that first bewildered the Tories, and induced them madly to join the Whigs in England's downward course towards free trade? It was the late Mr. Huskisson. After having opened the flood-gates to free trade, he discovered his error; but his nerve forsook him, and he could not close the gates. He contented himself with confessing his mistake; but he had not the boldness to retrace his steps. That want of nerve afterwards cost him his life.

The following quotation from Mr. Huskisson's speech, on a motion for the revision of the Corn Laws, on the 28th of April, 1825, proves that he had, even then, begun to doubt the soundness of his former views, he says:—

"Some difficulty might arise if we proceeded too far in such a system, [the free trade system]; and it was therefore prudent to wait awhile where we now were, to see whether such difficulty would arise; and, if it did arise, how it might be obviated."

Again, on the 18th of April, 1826, on Mr. Whitmore's motion for an inquiry into the state of the Corn Laws, we find the increasing doubts of the free trade Minister thus expressed:—

"If there be any great question which more than another it is desirable not to agitate and set afloat in the country, unless you are thoroughly prepared and think the time peculiarly adapted to its satisfactory adjustment, it is this most momentous and most difficult question of the system of our Corn Laws;—momentous, because it concerns the subsistence on the one hand, and on the

other the well-being and prosperity of the most important class of that population—those who by right of property, or by their capital and industry, are connected with and dependent upon the cultivation of the soil.

“Let no one attempt to deceive himself or others as to the effect which any sudden alteration of that system must have upon the state of things which has grown out of it and along with it. We must look not only to the peculiar burthens affecting the land, but to all existing agreements, to leases and fixed insurances, to pecuniary contracts of every description. For, Sir, I will venture to say, that if we were to make any rapid and material change, by which the situation of the persons liable to those engagements were to be greatly affected, not only should we do injustice to them, but we should greatly aggravate the difficulties under which other classes of the community now labour.”

Time, reflection, and experience seem to have opened the eyes of the free trader to the folly and danger of his former theory and practice; for, on Sir Henry Parnell's motion on the state of the Corn Laws, ~~in May, 1841~~, Mr. Huskisson, having discovered the unsoundness of the free trade principle, established the truth of my views, by the following memorable declaration:—

“If no foreign corn had been imported, the nation would have saved sixty millions sterling. It might be said, that without this importation sixty millions' worth of our manufactures would have remained unsold; but then it is not recollected what those sixty millions would have effected, if they had been expended in the improvement of our agriculture; or what increased means of purchasing our manufactures they would have given to the agriculturists. If, on being laid out at home, they had produced these natural effects, then the country would have added to her means of independence, and have created a market, of which no external relations could have deprived her.”

Thus did he assert the principle, that it is madness to import that which we can grow or make. Thus did Mr. Huskisson himself prove, that poverty and ruin must be the result of his former free trade principles.

I am indebted to my kind friend Mr. William Atkinson for these extracts from Mr. Huskisson's speeches. I take them from his pamphlet entitled, “*Mr. Huskisson Free Trade and the Corn Laws.*”—(Pelham Richardson, 23, Cornhill.) I recommend you and all of the free trade school to read that little book.

If there be any meaning in the last quotation, it is a conclusive argument in favour of a restrictive or protective system—it accords with all that I have written on the subject. Backed by such a high repentant authority, it is surely unnecessary that I should solemnly call upon our legislators seriously to weigh every part of the argument, before they attempt annually to rob the country of the amount of our harvest!

It should never be forgotten, that if the free trade system must be adopted, no protection can be given to our domestic “trades.” I rejoice to find that this part of the subject has attracted the attention of “the Convention of the Industrious Classes,” who, on the 18th inst., issued an address “to the Members of the National Charter Association of Great Britain,” from which I extract the following:—

“Your subtle and designing enemies also intend to introduce manufactured goods, and thereby destroy the trades of cork-cutters, brass-founders, potters, watch and clock makers, embroidery and needle-workers, glass-blowers, glovers and silk manufacturers (already starving), and a host of other trades, who will be overrun by the introduction of goods manufactured by the low taxed operatives of the continent. Do you not see, therefore, the reason why the capitalists have erected silk and manufactories in Belgium and parts of France, and likewise, why they have vested their capital in speculations in Saxony, Switzerland, and Germany.”

I am delighted to find that the representative body of the working classes have thus addressed their constituents. It is well that they should be warned of the intentions of their "subtle and designing enemies," Free trade demands the abandonment of all protection to the English labourers and artisans, although its apostles pretend to be the only friends to the industrious!

Will you, Sir, and your order still support the New Poor Law, and thus force the sons of toil, in the spirit of desperation, to join the Free-trade "Leaguers," and aid in your own destruction? If you will be so mad and reckless, you will seal your own doom, and you will deserve your melancholy fate!

It may not be amiss to inform you somewhat of the conduct and the results which follow the practice of those *universal* philanthopists, called "free-traders"; free-booters would be a more significant and appropriate name. They have been the death of hundreds, and the ruin of thousands—they have wantonly sported with and sacrificed the high character of the English merchants, and some half score of them have become rich by practices which, in England's best days, would have ranked them with felons.

There was a time—I am old enough to remember it—when an English merchant was a honest, honourable man, incapable of fraud. He was then too high-minded to take advantage of the poverty or ignorance of those with whom he dealt. Now, the case is quite reversed, and nothing is so common as to hear persons engaged in trade declare—"It is impossible to gain a livelihood, if we do as we would be done by."

And who are the persons who have thus changed the character of our merchants? Look over the list of your free-traders, and at the very top you will read their names! Judge then of their motives by their actions. It is they who, not content with one branch of trade, usurp the whole. They are like birds of prey hovering over the carcasses of our ruined manufacturers in every market. They think it no dishonour to buy of sinking men as cheap as they can, knowing full well that they are thus robbing their creditors, and are "greedily gaining of their neighbours by extortion, having forgotten God and his Commandment,—to do unto others as we would they should do unto us;" entirely forgetting that "He will smite His hand at their dishonest gain." These men employ their harpies to seek up those who are in difficulties, and, taking advantage of their necessities, they buy their "stocks" at half their value. They then sell these *stolen* goods to the shopkeepers at a very low price, compared with their real value; and thus they reduce the price of every article, and compel the respectable shopkeepers and manufacturers to lower their prices and their wages, until it is impossible to allow the artisans such remunerations for their excessive labour as will enable them to live. The manufacturer is then driven to make deceptive goods;—hence the reason why *now* it is next to impossible to buy any article, even down to a skein of silk or thread, which is worth using. Next follows the bankruptcy of the shopkeepers. Many will read this letter, who from sad experience know that all this is true, but who did not before know that the free-trade-principle was the cause of it.

I remember once hearing, from the lips of one of the most respectable manufacturers in Yorkshire, the following anecdote, showing how these *thieves*

commenced their operations some five and twenty years ago. He told me that he was then in London, when an acquaintance of his said, "Mr. —, you understand the quality of woollen goods, and can spare 5,000*l.* out of your concern; I will put 5,000*l.* to yours, and I will show you how to make money by wholesale." My informant asked his plan, and he was answered — "You shall go with me into the city to-night, and I will show you how it is to be done." They went in the dark to one of the streets running from Cheapside—(in those days the harpies were ashamed of their trade: now, they win in the face of day, and boast of their prosperity in Parliament!) they entered a warehouse—there was the poor manufacturer with his bale of goods—my friend examined them, and declared that they were cheap at the invoice price. The poor manufacturer was in distress—the bale of goods was worth 145*l.*;—70*l.* must be had next morning, or a prison would have been his home. The "wholesale money-maker," satisfied himself of the just charge. He took his pen, and wrote at the foot of the invoice, "By 50 per cent. discount for cash, 72*l.* 10*s.*" Then, handing the document to the trembling manufacturer, he said, "I don't want the goods—you want the money—you can have the amount in the morning—I shall give no more." The result was, that the offer of one-half the value was taken; and these goods were afterwards sold to the shops, and were shown to other manufacturers, in order to reduce the prices of their goods. My friend said, as he went away, "Is this the way you would teach me to make money by wholesale? I would rather take a pistol and turn highwayman; his business is honourable and gentlemanly, in comparison with such cowardice, meanness, and cold-blooded cheating as I have seen to-night." I need not say that my informant resisted the luring bait. The other followed the unholy gain, got rich, and now calls himself an English merchant! My friend, who told me this fact, was then worth at least 40,000*l.*! Honesty, industry, and capital were unable to stand against this free trade monster—he lost all—took refuge in the Gazette,—and since then, a broken heart has lodged him in an untimely grave! But the wholesale robber has been in Parliament!

I have known these slaughter-house masters (that is the name that they are best known by) pilfer from a needy manufacturer 1,000 pieces of cloth, avowedly cheap at 6*s.* a yard, for 3*s.* 9*d.* a yard! and then call it honest dealing! If such cheating cannot be prevented by law, your estates will not long remain your own, for see what is the consequence to society of such fraud and robbery.—Thirty years ago, Saddleworth was the most prosperous and thriving clothing district in the Empire. The weavers then worked eight or nine hours a day, and were comfortable and happy, and earned very good wages. "In the last twenty years," says a friend of mine, who is your tenant, "I can count at least eighty respectable Saddleworth domestic manufacturers, who would now be glad to obtain a day's wages for a day's work, and many of them are reduced to pauperism!!—Then, it was so uncommon thing to see the miller's pony conveying to the weaver's cottage a pack of flour and of meal—then, you saw a cart load of coals, every now and then, delivered at the weaver's door. Now, an ass can carry all the coals they buy; and a little child conveys a stone or half a stone of flour or meal on her head in a pillow-case—this small quantity being all that they can procure; and this, trifling as it is, is too often procured on credit." My friend adds, "If you would seek for the names of the mass of the old, respectable, and for-

merly wealthy manufacturers of Saddleworth, and their children, you must search for them amongst the mill operatives, the paupers, or the emigrants!" In the neighbourhood of your Yorkshire estates, on the moor edges, hand-loom weavers are happy to obtain carrion—yes, Sir, *carrion* for their food, after working fourteen hours a day!

This is not all; the domestic manufacturers and weavers are not the only sufferers by this ravenous system of free trade. A few years ago a large mill-owner, who knew all about it, assured me, boastingly, "It is astonishing how many of the estates of Lancashire and Cheshire have their title-deeds lodged in Manchester."

It is well to know that the authors of so much misery—the producers of so much poverty—the perpetrators of such wrongs, are the noisy brawlers for the liberal-free-trade-principle.

Surely, Sir, I have said enough to convince you of your danger. In some future letter I may continue the painful subject.

You will drop a tear, if your heart is not callous, when you read the following heart-touching lines on the *murdered Edwards*!

TO QUEEN VICTORIA.

Edwards of the Fleet,

I.

"Here lies the Godson of a King!

Where did he fall? what battle-field
Beheld him die? what falchion's swing
Made him beneath its tempest yield?
What millions pressed him to the ground?
Where did the gallant hosting meet?—
No! elsewhere far he met his wound!
HE DIED OF HUNGER IN THE FLEET!

II.

"Here lies the Godson of a King!

William the Fourth has past and gone,
And honoured be the crowning ring
Which girds our lady on the throne!
She knew not that her regal deed
Should by its force the act complete,
Which sent poor Edwards' heart to bleed,
DYING OF HUNGER IN THE FLEET!

III.

"Here lies the Godson of a King!

And here the 'King' himself would die,
Had he not else on which to cling
Than what law's mercy will supply.
Lady! they say that tender woes
Make your cheek pale, your bosom beat—
Think then of moments doomed to close
DYING OF HUNGER IN THE FLEET."

JULIA.—(T.G.F.)"

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—The most "pious" lie which has been told this century, is that by the Rev. Mr. Burnett, minister of an independent congregation at Camberwell, who, at a meeting of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, held at Exeter Hall on the 14th inst., told his hearers, that they (the Anti-Slavery Society) were the people who had exerted themselves in the cause of the Factory Children!! Daniel O'Connell is for once outdone!! Why, Sir, our most savage opponents "in the cause of the Factory Children" were members of the Anti-Slavery Society!! How the father of lies must have laughed when he persuaded the Rev. Mr. Burnett thus to do his dirtiest work!! This lie of Burnett tells me that we are gaining ground.

I advise the Constituencies to be prepared with Anti-Poor Law Candidates everywhere; for "I guess," that when Ministers have surprised their enemies by their impudence in *proroguing Parliament*, and trying to "raise the steam" meanwhile, and have afterwards had all their "say"—and when they find that neither their indoor nor outdoor efforts to "raise the steam" can excite the people in their favour, (*i. e.* when they have learned what I have long known, *that the days of humbug are passed and gone*, then Her Majesty will be advised to send for a few "middle men" of the *Richmond and Spencer school*), that a few weeks of parleying will take place, that the rough edges of certain opposites will be filed down, and an amalgamation of leaders will be managed under Royal patronage; and then "I guess" that, after all, John Bull will be too cunning for them, that he will stick to his principles and the Constitution, and reject every overture which includes the accursed and atrocious New Poor Law and the Rural Police. The fact is, Englishmen are too fond of Royalty to submit to be commissioned, and centralized, and policed, and bastiled. Time will prove, Sir, whether the late Earl Eldon and myself, or you and Russell and Peel, are the fools!—R.O.

these, or he should be shut up in a gloomy cell, and have his ears taxed with Malthusian expatiations of the sacred organelle—whenever he should be inserted near the walls of the Church of his country, or his mortal remains should be delivered up to the dissection! You know, you feel that the questions relating to Factoryism done teach you in the very core. The health of the nation, the strength, vigour, the athletic make of the English is gone, and we are already become a nation of crippled dwarfs, and shall one day be dispossessed of this fair island, and its facilities for health and comfort, if we thus persist in destroying each other with the very means and instruments which a favouring God has so abundantly provided to make us, as far as man can temporarily be, happy—superlatively so. The question of weaving, of hand-loom weaving, of power-loom weaving, is no less busy at work upon us. We are oppressed with the perpetual rattle of spindles and shafts; and the amount of the produce of the looms is such, that the merchants, though they are a multitude, are by an means sufficient to swallow the incessant stream of merchandise that is ever pouring forth from the never-tiring machinery. It is like a river which is continually rolling on, from which you may take a million tons of water, and the emptying place will be supplied as soon as the quantity is gone. So now with cotton and stuff goods, they may take a thousand waggon loads away on one market-day, and there will be a thousand more to take away on the next.

"This is the unbounded operation of machinery; it has called all the country to its assistance—it would encompass the entire female population to its aid, and throw out almost all the males! But then, the long hours that it works, the confinement that it imposes upon the victims, the deadly atmosphere that they breathe, renders it the imperative duty of every man, and especially of every Christian, to call without ceasing upon the legislature to enact and enforce such binding laws as shall make it a blessing, which it ought to be, instead of the curse which it is and has been. The prohibitions of this wonderful power, as its admirers call it, instead of being scattered amongst our own population, are sold, or rather given, to foreigners, for a trifle, which reduces the wages of the children to 1s. 6d. for tiling, logging, and turning from half-past four o'clock in the morning to nine o'clock at night. Yes, I say from half-past four o'clock in the morning to nine o'clock at night. There are multitudes that have to go three or four miles to their work, whose walk, or rather run, will occupy an hour; then half an hour is needed previous to that for dressing, refreshing, and lighting the fire; so you see that an hour and a half must be gained before six o'clock. And then there are all the chances to hazard of nature saying to the weary limbs of the jaded factory girl, 'Sleep on, take your repose a little longer, and you may do so with safety.' The apprehensive and pectorated soid of the gal is excited by a dream of the strap, or of having her wages 'quartered,' for being a few minutes too late at the machine. Starting with horror, and looking with fearful surprise at the clock, she replies, 'No nature, weary expended nature, the hour is come, and I must shake off all inclination to repose, or the distance that intervenes betwixt me and the post of labour will compel me to run blind to water (a home phrase), and that without morning refreshment, taking a morsel as my hurried thoughts and steps, and my exhausted breath, will permit me.'

"It is this universal throng of labour that reduces wages—the extension of trade, and the avidity with which wealth is sought in all quarters, make men thus overreach it. A curb put upon the great operation of mechanical power would prove a certain remedy for many of the ills under which the operative groans. Why, I thought machinery was to be our great assistant, instead of which we are all become its assistants. It was to aid us to our ease and leisure—but, alas! we are aiding it to our destruction. It should have been our servant, but we are become its most obedient slaves. It calls at five, and we rise, young and old, mother and babe, father and boy—it drags us, not from our sleep, but from our timid slumber! Poor children, that dare not sleep for it, but ask, 'is it time—is it time for me to go and help the machine which should be helping me. I must go, a trembling slave, and stand under its murderous rattle, till my wasting legs refuse to bear me up any longer.'

"It is frequently shown how it happens that the whole community heaves under the weight, and especially the whole manufacturing community, masters as well as workmen. An over production is sure to produce an overstock market. The merchant walks through the rooms which they see stowed full of the goods which they pretend they want not, knowing well that the manufacturer's whole concern must stop if some considerable sale be not effected; so he straight complains of the scarcity of money and the dulness of trade, saying, that it is of no great consequence to him whether he buys or not. If he can strike a cheap bargain, there will not be much lost, though there may be much hazard in it. Having frightened the manufacturer into compliance with his low offers, and employed his cautious policy to bring him, with his fraternity, to believe that he wants nothing at all to do with the hazardous and ruinous speculations, which are not worth the name of trade, he lays his hands on all the goods his means will allow him, knowing well if he can get them at half price, that he can turn them to good account in the foreign market. But would this be the case were we to work a moderate length of time every day? No, we should not then overstock the markets, and warehouses, but should have that quantity of business we could better wield at all times; in fact, such is the only way to avoid bad times. A ten hours' bill was asked for; but machinery has been increased at such a rate since the time that this question was agitated, that nothing short of an eight hours' bill will now benefit us in that respect.

"Those and other useful topics were and are made familiar to us by the startling eloquence of Mr. Oastler, both in his speeches and writings. I am sure you feel grateful that he should forward so minutely to press to you, by frequently discussing these questions, which touch us thus vitally, by enlightening us in the various bearings of those systems which were and are industriously, openly, and clearly exposed by him; that he is worthy of our unbounded confidence and substantial support, and of our most sincere thanks. Yes, my friends, though the subject laboured for was not obtained, the necessity for it was clearly shown. Such a picture of glaring evidence was produced, that the impression will never be effaced—no, not to the tenth generation. The fathers who attended these meetings will tell their children what they saw and heard there. And I was going to tell those of your representations exhibited to the meeting in the Castle Yard, at York, in the year 1832, and of the other public scenes of that Factory campaign; but time and other circumstances which are to follow, forbid me—so I recorded the adoption of the Address."

CORNS AND BUNIONS.



Patronised by the Royal Family and Nobility.

PAUL'S EVERY MAN'S FRIEND,

Is a speedy and sure cure for those painful annoyances, without cutting or pain. Unlike all other remedies for Corns, its operation is such as to render the cutting of the corns altogether unnecessary, and being prepared on the softest kid leather, it adheres with the most gentle pressure, produces an instant and delightful relief from torture, and, with perseverance in its application, entirely eradicates the most inveterate corns and bunions.

TESTIMONIALS EXTRAORDINARY.

From Dr. Cummings, Lecturer on Medical Jurisprudence of the Aldersgate School of Medicine.

Dr. Cummings presents his compliments to Mr. Paul, and begs to inform him, that his Every Man's Friend has entirely taken away his corns, and he has recommended it to several of his friends and patients, and in no instance has it failed in entirely eradicating both corns and bunions.

From Dr. H. Ley, Midwifery Lecturer at St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

Dr. H. Ley presents his compliments to Mr. Paul, and begs to inform him that his Corn Plaister has entirely taken away both the corns that he has been troubled with.

From Dr. Walshman, 5th year Physician at Kennington.

Dr. Walshman presents his compliments to Mr. Paul, and begs to inform him that he has recommended his Every Man's Friend to several of his friends and patients, and that in no instance has it failed in entirely eradicating both corns and bunions.

H. Williams, Esq., Surgeon, Halberton Lodge, near Tiverton, Devon.

Had been, for a long time, troubled with several painful corns, which nearly rendered him lame, neither could he obtain any benefit until he persevered in the use of the Every Man's Friend, which entirely cured his corns without pain, after every other application had failed.

Similar testimonials have been received from upwards of one hundred of the most eminent Physicians and Surgeons in London.

Prepared only by Jons Fox, in boxes at 1s. 1½d., or three in one for 2s. 9d. And to be had of C. King, 232, Blackfriars Road; Barclay and Sons, Farringdon Street; Butler, Edwards, Newbery, St. Paul's Churchyard; Sutton & Co., Bow Churchyard; Hannay, 63, Sanger, 150, Oxford Street, London.

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•• Ask for **PAUL'S Every Man's Friend.**

On the 20th of June, 1841, will be published,

PRICE TWOPENCE,

No. 26, of the FLEET PAPERS,

WHICH WILL CONTAIN A PORTRAIT OF

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.,

OF RIDDLESWORTH, IN THE COUNTY OF NORFOLK.

Orders received by the Publishers, Mr. PAVEY, 47, Holywell Street, Strand, and Mr. STEILL, 20, Paternoster Row, London.

THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY

JOHN PAVEY, 47, HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND,

AND

BENJAMIN STEILL, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW.

THESE Papers are principally intended for the perusal of the friends of Christianity and the Constitution; particularly the Clergy and the Aristocracy, and of all persons who are possessed of Property. The object of the writer will be to explain the reason for the present alarming state of English society, and the consequent insecurity of life and property; also, to offer some remarks upon the folly and wickedness of attempting to uphold our Institutions, particularly that of Private Property, by the unconstitutional means of Centralization, Commissioning, Espionage, and Force; and finally, to state his own views on the best mode of restoring Peace, Contentment, Security, and Prosperity, to every rank of the people of England.

The author is perfectly aware of the fact, that every Parliamentary leader is now only attempting to legislate for the present moment—putting off the evil day—making laws “from hand to mouth,” in the hope that some unforeseen, fortunate event may enable succeeding Statesmen to legislate for permanency. He is also convinced that there is a mode of successfully re-establishing our Institutions upon their original foundation—Christianity;—and that that is the only way to preserve them from the encroachments of political partisans, who are now only paving the way to universal Ruin, Anarchy, and Despotism.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. Oastler is “At Home” on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

EDWARD DAVIES, M.P.—His second letter is received. On receipt of his first, Mr. Oastler addressed a letter to “Dr. Edward Davies, Charles Street, West,” (his letter was posted there,) in reply thereto. Mr. Oastler has no doubt that the Doctor is a sincere friend of the poor; that he is a mistaken friend, is evident, when he assumes that “the Ten Hours’ Bill would reduce the wages of the Factory Children! and that a free trade in corn would *at once* enable the people to obtain plenty of food!”—The reverse, Mr. Oastler believes to be the truth. Mr. Oastler will be happy to see the Doctor, and more fully explain his views on these subjects. Mr. Oastler’s surprise is equal to that of the Doctor.

JOHN GOODWIN, Norwich, will be made acquainted with all the particulars he requires in No. 26. Mr. Oastler is wishful, just now, “to say his say” on the New Poor Law and the Corn Laws. His affairs with Mr. Thornhill are of minor import; still, however, they shall not be lost sight of. In No. 26, with which the portrait of Mr. Thornhill will be given, the facts which Mr. Goodwin wishes to have stated will be all communicated.

WILLIAM DODD, the Factory Cripple, returns thanks to a London Tradesman for his kind present of five shillings.

In reply to a numerous list of kind inquirers—“How can we best serve your interest?” Mr. Oastler begs to say—by encouraging the circulation of the *Fleet Papers*, and by procuring advertisements for their covers. Mr. Oastler may be allowed to add, that few better mediums for advertising can be found than the *Fleet Papers*; they circulate in every district, and amongst every rank. In the Palace and the Cottage, readers of the *Fleet Papers* are to be found. Clergymen, Landlords, and Farmers, Ministers of State, Ploughboys, Factory Children, and Weavers, patronize these little *Flecters*.

Some complaints are made respecting the folding of the *Fleet Papers*. As soon as it is possible to procure paper of a different size, the folding will be altered.

"LIFE IN THE 'FLEET.'"

"A friend, who lately visited Mr. Oastler in the Fleet Prison, thus describes the manner in which 'King Richard' reigns in his new dominions:—I found Mr. Oastler in good health and high spirits, but he looks thin, for, what with his 'Fleet Papers,' his correspondence, his hard reading, and constant succession of visitors, 'from early morn to dewy eve,' he sadly overleaps his favourite and salutary doctrine of 'ten hours a-day.' I met in his room, all in the short compass of a few hours, a Member of Parliament; the son of a Peer, not a public man; an LL.D. of great literary renown; a Polish Count, eminent as a linguist, and an author in various walks of literature; another Polish Count, who greatly distinguished himself in the recent attempt to liberate his country from the grasp of Russia, and whose father served with distinction in the armies of Napoleon; the Author of one of the best books ever published on the social economy and true policy of the British Empire; the Editor of a Daily Journal; the Editor of a London Weekly Journal; a gallant and most amiable French Captain of Horse, who left his country on account of his attachment to Charles the Tenth; the Editors of several country Journals; several distinguished mechanists; and a long train of casual and almost daily callers, ladies included, who all crowd around the imprisoned Champion of Humanity, attracted by his fame, or led thither by personal attachment. Men of all parties flock hither. On Monday morning I breakfasted with his 'Majesty.' The party consisted of eight, namely, the two Polish Counts, the French Captain, an Author, two Editors of Public Journals, a Gentleman from Huddersfield, and your humble servant. Though the beverage consisted of Tea and Coffee, there was so much sprightliness and bonhomie that one might have supposed that care finds no entrance within the walls (not 'wooden') of the 'Fleet.' The apartment is not large. The Monarch, for once, made his bed his throne; I was honoured with the chair of state; the Friend from Huddersfield attended to the teakettle and the tea and coffee pots; the Gallant Captain took the command of the egg department; and there was an appointed purveyor of ham and bread and butter, all of the best quality. I have seen many a 'public breakfast'; but none wherein I found more enjoyment, nor near so much intellect or animation of conversation. Oh that Mr. Thornhill could have witnessed the scene; he would then have perceived that if his object in sending Oastler to a prison was the King's dethronement as a public man, he has most signally failed, for at no point of his career was Richard's influence greater, or the regards of his friends more decidedly called into action. To use his own words, he was never so happy; never so free from distress of mind; never in possession of more mental or corporeal vigour; never so thoroughly pleased with mankind; never had so much reason to be satisfied with the effects of his labours. If Mr. Thornhill had desired to *exalt* his old servant, he could not have adopted a more effectual method. The 'Fleet Papers' increase in circulation, and are read by high and low, rich and poor; I know, for certain, that they find their way into the closets of Ministers of State, and are often seen upon Queen Victoria's breakfast table. The last number treats of the Corn Laws; and I would, Mr. Intelligencer, direct your *particular* attention to it, inasmuch as it contains that which should be treasured up in the memory at a crisis like the present. From what I saw and heard in the Fleet, I am not sure that 'King Richard' would not regard his removal from it, just now, as a calamity.' Such is 'Life in the Fleet'—such is Richard Oastler; and yet he is held in durance for a debt which, though legal, in reality involves no moral obligation. We are persuaded that Mr. Thornhill cannot be fully acquainted with the merits of the case, or that 'some enemy' has infused gall into his feelings, which were wont to belong to an altogether different 'order.'—*Leeds Intelligencer, May 22, 1841.*

This Letter from my faithful friend, Mr. Hulke, will please many of my Yorkshire friends.

"Huddersfield, Thursday, May 26th, 1841.

"Well, my dear Mr. Oastler, how is Mrs. Oastler, and Maria? and how are you, my dear Sir,—how is your health? I need not ask how are your spirits; knowing your temperament, I doubt not they are as buoyant as ever. How are your finances, not be-Whigged, I hope?—how do your *Flecters* get on? Here is a whole string of questions for you, which you can reply when convenience suits you. However, I most heartily wish everything is going on with you 'as well as can be expected.' Indeed the Squire made a sad mistake when he issued his mandate for your incarceration—he little knew the spirit he had to contend with, and that from the walls of the Fleet prison should issue a voice that should be heard through the length and breadth of the land, denouncing oppression in every shape it can possibly assume. Yes, yes, he mistook his forte entirely when he thought to impose the *silent system* on Richard Oastler, or to break that spirit, or unhinge that mind, which have braved worse storms than any he can conjure up. Does he read your Papers?—can he read them, and not hear the 'still small voice' of conscience whispering to his soul, 'You have acted wrong, tyrannically wrong?—can the victory of his race-horses console him for one moment, when he reflects on the inhumanity of his conduct towards you?—will it soothe his soul in his dying moments (for *DIE HE MUST*) to reflect, that after so many years of faithful services of father and son, all gratitude has been obliterated from his heart, and that the son's reward for all his fidelity is imprisonment for life? Well, let his horses win—let him add a few more hundreds or thousands to his already enormous wealth, at his period of life what will it advantage him? Richard Oastler can, aye is, and will be happier in prison's cell than Thomas Thornhill in a palace drawing-room, surrounded with all the luxuries of life. Let his horses win for him, say I.

'Yet more true joy imprisoned Oastler feels
Than Thornhill with his racers at his heels.'

Will you excuse my alteration of Pope?

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 23.

LONDON, SATURDAY, JUNE 5, 1844.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—How long shall every national institution shake, and every private interest be invaded? When will the people of England be released from the thralldom of political quacks and knives? Will the day never dawn of England's restoration? Shall knavery and tyranny, under the garb of patriotism and liberality, still feast and fatten on her vitals, until her altar is demolished—her throne is levelled—her hearths are dismantled—her fields are desolate, and all her sons are factory slaves? Is the sun of her prosperity set for ever? and is there now no hope of returning happiness for the natives of this land?

Thousands and tens of thousands of Victoria's subjects are now solemnly asking these questions,—their fears check their hopes, and despair enthrones itself where hope so long has lingered,—even in our manufacturing districts.

Was it ever known before, since England was a bee-hive and a workshop, that her manufacturers had pawned their "household plate," (not with bankers, but with pawnbrokers,) to obtain money to enable them to pay their wages? Yet such is now the case. To use the words of a highly intelligent and influential gentleman from Birmingham, who called on me the other day—"Poverty is rising upwards,—our artizans have no longer the means to pawn,—the middle classes are now the pawnbrokers' customers, and many of the upper tradesmen are forced to pawn their plate for wages!"

You have heard of the misery and wretchedness of the "lower orders" for many years. I have not failed to inform you truly; but now the disease is rising in society, and the middle classes feel that they are the victims of a system, which will, which must inevitably, if not restrained, lead all to destitution and despair! One cause of all this distress and despondency is the gradual growth of the principles of free trade—the insane attempt to engraft them on our artificial circumstances.

Look, Sir, with the eye of a statesman for a moment, at our position, and say, did ever folly equal that of striving to destroy protection to our soil and industry, attempting to level all our conditions to that of other nations? Nay, has not the system of free trade, which has been gradually introducing for many years, robbed our cottages of every comfort, our houses of their luxuries, and our castles of

security! Has it not transformed trade into gambling, and banking into speculation? until gaunt hunger and palid destitution wildly stare out at every window and doorway, and the allusion to our domestic circumstances, (and of course distresses,) ceases to impress our statesmen with thoughtfulness, and only produces the following common-place remarks from the hope of his party, Sir Robert Peel:—

“No man can have heard them with greater pain and affliction than myself, or more cordially wish that some measure could be devised for their alleviation; but, at the same time, I am bound to say, that at all times, and under all the circumstances, similar details are narrated, and that we never can expect, in the complicated state of society in which we lived, and with the extensive manufacturing concerns in which we are engaged, to see the day when such appeals to our sympathies, and such attempts to influence our reason and judgment, by harrowing up our feelings, may not be made. I admit the severe pressure of the manufacturing distress.”

So that we have arrived, at last, by our improvements and science, our ingenuity and industry, at such a “complicated state of society,” and have established such “extensive manufacturing concerns,” that we must no longer hope “to devise measures for the alleviation” of the most extreme misery! Statesmen were not wont to treat a nation’s malady so carelessly.

If such really be our desperate condition, then, Sir, it is proved that our present system is *worked-up*, and that, at all hazards, society must be remodelled. If I could believe, with Sir Robert Peel, that the miseries and sufferings to which he was alluding were the natural result of our “complicated state of society,” I should never again attempt to improve the condition of Englishmen by the application of the principles of our constitution; but I would at once recommend the entire re-organization of the social edifice upon better principles. I should think it very unwise to waste our time and energy in propping, by most expensive means, a cranky, rotten, and complicated mass of idleness and luxury—of industry and want!

I do not, however, partake of the fears of Sir Robert Peel,—I do not believe that such universal, heart-rending, soul-harassing miseries are consequences necessary in our own or in any state of society. Their cause appears to me quite evident, namely, an entire departure from the mind and will of God, as revealed in His own most Holy Word. The philosophers of our day seem resolved, in defiance of God and nature, to establish the existence of the trinity of *industry, skill, and wretchedness*. Whereas God has ordained that the labourer shall be the first partaker of the fruits of his toil, and that plenty shall be the invariable reward of industry, nothing is so natural, and nothing so certain, as that an infraction of that law must produce discontent, heart-burnings, and revolt.

And yet our wisest statesmen of every party have resolved to attempt by physical force to compel a Christian people to be quiet and submissive under the iron rule of injustice and infidelity! But, Sir, they will in the end find the folly and vanity of their attempts to oppose the law and will of God; and it will be a mercy if they yield to His Commandments before utter ruin shall overwhelm them.

It is quite clear, from the confession of all parties, that the present mode of proceeding cannot release us from our national troubles. Not one of our leaders even pretends to prove how England is to be saved from wretchedness—how her industrious sons may be ensured that their labour shall shield them from poverty

and want. True, just now, our philosophers prognosticate prosperity from an entire system of free trade with foreigners, forgetting that every advance towards that goal has hitherto only added to our poverty and destitution.

Take the following undeniable proof of the truth of my astounding assertion. The authentic returns of the exports of the proceeds of our skill and industry reveal this most alarming fact, viz. that in comparing our present profits with those of 1798, we last year lost 110,029,641*l.* by our foreign trade!! It is true also that the amount of our annual losses gradually increased *with our adoption of free trade measures!!!*

A statement so appalling, drawn from official documents, should convince the most sanguine theorists, that there is nothing but national bankruptcy to be expected from free trade principles being engrafted on our institutions; that if we will madly suffer that system to obtain, we must eventually expect the abstraction of *all* our wealth, and the waste of *all* our labour.

Just attend seriously to the following authentic facts. In 1798, the *official or old standard value* of our exports was 19,772,603*l.* The *declared value* given by the merchants at the Custom House that year amounted to 33,142,182*l.* In 1840, the *official value* was 97,402,726*l.*, whilst the *declared value* was then only 53,233,580*l.*! Now, if our foreign trade had been comparatively as profitable to England in 1840 as it was in 1798, the declared value would have been 163,263,221*l.* instead of being only 53,233,580*l.* Thus, an annual loss to this country is manifest on the new and enlightened system of commerce called free trading, of no less a sum than 110,029,641*l.* Why, Sir, the bare announcement of such a fact should awaken the slumbering energies of Englishmen, and make them resolve that the nightmare of free trade should no longer oppress them, that their skill and industry should not be drained into the lap of foreigners, for the profit of a few cold-blooded free-booters!! One would suppose that a fact so awful, and yet so plain and demonstrative, would convince our philosophers that there must be something exceedingly unsatisfactory in such a result; but no, they are always ready with an excuse. In this case they tell us, that improvements in science and machinery enable us to bear this loss without injury! If there be any validity in their argument, they establish the fact, that we give to the foreigners the benefit of our machinery and skill, and we destroy the health and lives and morals of hundreds of thousands of our children, women, and men, for the sake of enriching foreign nations! "But," rejoin these Solons, "do you not perceive, that if we reduce the prices of our goods to the foreigners, we are enabled to supply additional low-priced comforts to our own labourers and artizans!" It would be easy to prove, by the soundest arguments, that under such a system, the labourers, *without legal protection, must* lose in wages much more than they gain in cheapness, inasmuch as they create more than they consume. There is, however, no need to argue *now*—the admission of all parties demonstrates, that as we progress towards free trade, our labourers are pauperized. Do you doubt it, Sir? Then go to Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, and such like places, and there learn that misery and wretchedness, and want and despair, are enthroned in their cottages!

I view the case as one most awful: no other facts are necessary to convince me that the whole theory, which in practice produces such terrible results, must be

entirely founded in error! Why, Sir, it is evident, that under the operation of the free trade system our foreign trade is a far heavier loss to us than twice the amount of our taxation! It should never be forgotten, also, that the taxes are generally spent at home, whilst these 110,029,641*l.* are entirely devoted to the use of foreigners!

Well may our factory children, our weavers, and our labourers be worked and starved and pined to death! Well may our shop-keepers feel the pressure of such a weight. Well may our merchants crowd the Gazette, and our bankers weep over their ledgers! I require no other cause to account for all our misery—a drain like that, an annual withdrawal of wealth of many millions more than double the amount of revenue, must impoverish any nation and ruin any people. Such, however, is the result of the increasing developement of the free trade principles; and it is to augment this ruinous foreign trade that the people of England are now required to strengthen the hands of Ministers, by returning what are to be called cheap-sugar, cheap-timber, cheap-bread members! May Almighty God in His mercy save my country from thus rushing down the ruinous precipice, to the very brink of which Her Majesty's government have driven us! Surely the people of England have had enough of this liberal monster! May they no longer be deluded by party names or party colours, but let the question be, at every election, to every candidate, "Are you a free-trading-Malthusian?"—and if so, may the people everywhere reject that man. Yes, Sir, whether he be Whig, Tory, Radical, or Chartist, I sincerely hope, that in every such case he will be rejected; for such a one must of necessity support the accursed New Poor Law, and the unconstitutional Rural Police!

The question to be put to the country, is, free trade and bastilles, poverty and slavery, or, protection by law for the rights of labour. Oh that God may inspire the people to make a righteous choice.

In my last, I copied a few extracts from the great oracle of free trade, Mr. Huskisson. Now, Sir, as I perceive that the promoters of free trade still quote Mr. Huskisson as an authority for their measures, I have been at the trouble to copy a few more extracts from his speeches, to prove to you and to my readers how thoroughly he eschewed his own free trade nostrums, when he found how disastrous were the results of his free trade laws. In June 1825, on the introduction of the Customs Consolidation Bill, Mr. Huskisson had inserted in his own schedule a lower rate of duty for Irish linens, when he begged leave to withdraw it, his reasons for doing so being entirely adverse to the free trade principle. From his observations I will only select the following, though the whole deserves an attentive perusal:—

"The Committee must see the difficulty in which any person must stand who was in his situation. If, in the calculation of a certain revenue, a slight error happened to be committed in the original statement, and the produce was discovered to be proportionably affected or altered, nothing in the world would be more easy than to correct such an error; and the public service would be sensible of little or no inconvenience from the occurrence of such a mistake. *But if, in the apportionment of duties, or the regulations of trade, wherein the interests of so many thousands are involved, such errors should happen to creep into the measures of the government, the country would long have to brood over the serious consequences that must ensue.*"

Do not the melancholy exhibition of our tables of export afford abundant proof of that truth? In May 1827, on Mr. Whitmore's motion on the Indian

trade, Mr. Huskisson again used his influence for the purpose of restraining the free trade principle. In his speech, the following passages occur:—

“It was a duty to be cautious not to sanction any measure which might endanger or destroy established interests and rising institutions, more especially institutions of our own creation, connected with our interests, and especially entitled to our protection.”

“All extensive changes of this description were attended with great difficulty, and should be proceeded in with circumspection, and with due regard to other general interests already widely established; and that, therefore, whatever new measures or new systems were introduced, they should be regulated in such a manner as that, *endeavouring to effect benefits for one class, they did not more than counterbalance the advantages, by inflicting an injury on some other.*”

Near the close of Mr. Huskisson's career in the session of 1828, and when he had, in a great measure, retired from the active duties of public life, he delivered the following argument on the Corn Law which is at present in force. This is his latest judgment upon the very question which is supposed to be approved by him, viz. a free trade in Corn. Hear him:—

“The question now before the House was, not whether the price at which that scale had been fixed should be changed, but whether the protection thereby afforded was found to be a sufficient protection to the British corn-grower. In deciding that question, they should look at what had happened since the bill of last year. They would find, that a quantity of corn, amounting to 500,000 quarters, had been admitted into the market. Without adverting even to the circumstances under which this corn had been admitted, when they found that such a quantity as 500,000 quarters had been admitted in one month, *it must appear evident to them, that the scale of duties proposed in the bill of last year did not afford a sufficient protection to the agricultural interest.*” * * * “The object of the plan was to impose duties sufficient to prevent foreign corn from being imported in larger and overwhelming quantities.” * * * “He had applied the test of experience to the two scales, that of last year and the present one; and he preferred that which was now proposed. The scale under the present bill was calculated to afford a better protection to the agriculturist. Though he, as well as others, had agreed to the measure of last year, he could not think it a safe one to continue, as it had not proved adequate to the intended object.”

“*He repeated, that he supported the present bill, because it would afford a more efficient protection.* When the price of corn was from 60s. to 65s. under the proposed duty, the importation of foreign corn would be checked; when the price was above 65s., the corn from our colonies would come in free; and when the prices were higher, the duties would operate to prevent the importation of an overwhelming quantity of foreign corn. An honourable gentleman opposite had spoken in favour of a fixed duty; abstractedly, that might look well enough, but when they regarded the circumstances of the country, and the wants of the people, they would see the impossibility of adopting such a principle. If a high permanent duty were imposed, then, in periods of scarcity, the poor would be exposed to sufferings and miseries, the infliction of which no claims for protection on the part of the home grower could ever justify. For the advantages, then, which the grower foregoes when corn is high, by the admission of foreign grain, he receives compensation by the imposition of a high rate of duties when corn is at a low price. He receives, in fact, only that remuneration to which he is justly entitled. *When legislating upon this subject, they were bound to look to the different and varying circumstances of the country, and to the wants and necessities of its inhabitants.* A permanent fixed duty was therefore out of the question.”

Such, Sir, were the opinions of him to whom the free traders are perpetually referring as their oracle. Am I not justified in asserting that he recanted?

The fact is, Mr. Huskisson had been caught in the net of Malthus. He was followed by the majority of the leaders of his party (Tories); but a section of that party have steadily resisted the gilded bait, and it is satisfactory to know that Mr. Huskisson discovered and confessed his errors;—oh, that all whom he has misled would like him repent, and take shelter under the protective principles of truth.

There is one circumstance which leads me to hope that some day Her Majesty's Ministers will see and forsake their free trade errors; for when distress overwhelms that unhappy portion of free trade victims, the Spitalfields' weavers, the Ministers abandon the principles of free trade which have ruined those poor industrious people, and set about promoting an anti-free-trade-Spitalfields'-ball for their benefit, which Her Majesty has been advised to sanction, and even to patronize with her presence. All persons being enjoined by Her Majesty, that is, by Her Majesty's Ministers, in defiance of the theory of free trade, to encourage *for a few days* the poor starving English manufacturers. Her Majesty's wish being stated to be, that on that occasion all should wear dresses composed of home manufactured materials.

If there were any soundness in the free trade principle, why should the people who intend to meet at the Spitalfields' Ball be advised to go there in British manufactured goods? Let the free trade philosophers answer me, if they can, without destroying their own theories.

Every man of common sense must now see through the horrible cheat which is attempting to be palmed upon the nation under the name of free trade. Here then we have proof that the free traders who now rule *know very well what conduces to the good of the home trade*, as in the instance of the Spitalfields' ball they proclaim it; but their own free trade schemes must be worked out at all hazards, and, backed by too many Tories, they say in deeds, if not in words—"Let the people be hurled into more and more competition, and consequently greater poverty and misery; for we have framed beforehand a Poor Law which shall stop the encroachments of the destitute, and for ever stifle the cries of them and their children!"

The awful fact proved by our export returns should suffice to warn us, that we are in the wrong road to prosperity. The condition of our population proves the same thing; and the attempt to force the people to be content whilst their pockets are being picked, by the erection of Bastiles, the formation of divisions of Rural Police, the breaking up of the old local, domestic, family system of self-government, by unionizing and centralizing society, must, if persisted in, add to that woeful waste of our resources by our foreign trade, and thus hurry us faster and faster into domestic confusion and civil war; for, Sir, it is absolutely impossible that the people can endure much more privation.

Is it not then high time that our people and our governors should arouse from their lethargy, and adopt such measures as are calculated to distribute the reward of industry and skill amongst our own people? There is such a way, Sir, a path to prosperity and peace, without bloodshed, without violence, without wrong. Shortly, I will point out that road—it lies in the very opposite direction to free trade.—So much just now on that subject.

From what has happened in Parliament since I last mentioned the subject, I must say a few words respecting the Anatomy Act. It is pleasing to find that the subject has been noticed in the House of Commons. Nothing can be better, at the present moment, than an exposure of the villainy and inconsistency of the philosophers, whether their trade be in English paupers' bones, or in foreign corn. I hope hereafter to witness more resolution on the part of their assailants. One thing is always certain, when papers are withheld by the Government, there

is a cause. In the case of the paper which was refused, (a return of the number of bodies dissected under the provisions of the act,) the reason is obvious—that document would have proved the case against the Government or their officer.

Every discussion on such subjects does good, if it were only to prove how little the feelings of the poor, when drenching out their miserable existence in an union workhouse, are disregarded by our legislators, and how very desirous the Government are not to let the public into the secret of the amount of traffic carried on in the flesh and bones of dead paupers!—I am thankful that there is one man who is resolved to look into this matter.

It is too true that the Government refused a motion made by Mr. Maclean, M.P. for Oxford, to supply information to the House of Commons of the number of human bodies sent to Schools of Anatomy for dissection.

It may fairly be asked why they resisted a motion to ascertain how an act of their own operated for the benefit of the public? The answer is painfully true—the Government induced the Houses of Parliament to pass this cruel act, under the plea that it would aid Anatomical Science, when in truth they wanted it for patronage, and to replenish the empty coffers of University College. Provision was made in the Act to prevent the traffic in dead bodies;—that was merely to lull suspicion, for as soon as they had thus duped the Parliament, they set to work to cheat the public by contravening every protection guaranteed to them. They have unblushingly, under the nose of the inspector, been selling some thousands of pauper bodies to medical pupils at 500 or 1000 per cent. profit; and by other overt acts, they have been illegally pocketing, for the aid of their pet college, from 70,000*l.* to 100,000*l.* since 1832.

You, Sir, may ask how this fraud could be accomplished. I will tell you.—When Mr. Warburton brought the Bill into Parliament, it was arranged *that for the protection of the public, the Government should have the control of the Act, to take care that no fraud should be practised.* Lord John Russell, and nine other Members of the Government, having shares in University College, they appointed an Inspector (paid by the public), who, instead of protecting the interest of the public by enforcing the law, only attended to the profit of his patrons, and studied how he could deceive the public by inventing methods for breaking the law which he is paid to enforce.

This monstrous procedure is fully set forth and explained in a series of letters published by Mr. Roberts in the *Courier* and *Medical Times*. Mr. Warburton and others may swear “that the act works well,” till they are black in the face, but until the facts asserted by Mr. Roberts are disproved by evidence, the petitions which were recently presented to the House of Commons—amongst the rest, one signed by about 200 medical men, praying for an improvement of the Anatomy Act—demand attention. A charge so serious cannot be got rid of by the declaration of one who is more than suspected to be a party to the fraud. As to the assertion made by the Government, that the Anatomy Act has destroyed the illegal trade in dead bodies, they must be very ignorant if they do not know that that assertion is untrue. It is only a week or two ago that a man was convicted at the Old Bailey of robbing a grave in Woodford Parish.

The Government have, by assisting to break the Anatomy Act, encouraged the resurrectionists; and thus, those men can and do afford to run all risks when

they obtain 3*l.* per subject. True enough, theirs' is not so good a trade as the one carried on by and for the benefit of certain members of the Government, who obtain their supply at a few shillings per subject, *free from all risk of prosecution*, and afterwards sell them at 4*l.* 12*s.* 6*d.* each.

The Government is well aware that it is not now necessary, nor has there been for many years past any occasion, *for the benefit of science*, to dissect one-fifth of the bodies which have been dissected. Not one pauper-body is, in fact, now required—the criminal prisons could have amply supplied all the wants of the profession; the only reason why thousands of human bodies have been taken from workhouses and sold for dissection, has been, to enable Her Majesty's Ministers to fill the coffers of University College, and themselves to take a share of the profits.

The Government obtained from Mr. Roberts, in 1836, the secret of his process to prevent decomposition of animal bodies; that invention is acknowledged by the Government and the most distinguished Anatomists in London to be an invaluable acquisition to advance Anatomical Science, and protect the lives of pupils in the course of their studies; and also to make a few bodies far more serviceable than hundreds now are when subject to putrefaction. Mr. Roberts entrusted his invention into the hands of Government under the impression that he was dealing with honorable men.

I am glad to see that numerous petitions have been presented to Parliament complaining of the infraction of the Anatomy Act. If Ministers were not quite certain that investigation would prove their guilt, they would not allow this foul stain to be cast upon their characters, having the power as they must have, if it is not true, to disprove all that Mr. Roberts has charged against them.

And now, Sir, I fancy that you may be asking, Why all this noise about the dead bodies of paupers? I will tell you. I can remember witnessing the agony of those poor creatures who are shut up in the workhouses. The lives of those subjects are made more miserable by the thought, that after death society requires that their bodies should be trafficked for the profit of their oppressors! and mangled, and cut, and slashed, and then left to rot in masses!

Tell me not that they may prevent it, by calling witnesses to evidence their refusal: I know, if you know not, the discipline of the Bastiles! Sir, it is cruel cowardice thus to trample on the weak and powerless! But there is a higher reason why the poor should have their sacred feelings revered—call them *prejudices* if you will—destroy them, and you will infidelize the man. I have mixed with the poor and with the rich, and I have perceived that it is infidels who make sport of such hallowed prejudices! No wise Christian Government will dare to legislate for the removal of such *whims*! It is a subject of the deepest importance—it lies at the bottom of patriotism and of Christianity. Show me the man who laughs at the respect which nature and Christianity award to the bodies of the dead, and I will show you an infidel.

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—The law will not allow me, until next week, to say one word *about the reason assigned* by Lord John Russell for *postponing* the consideration of the New Poor Law. Thereby hangs a tale which I must tell.—R.O.

Erratum—In a part of the impression of No. 22, p. 173, 14th line, the words "*in May, 1832,*" should have been left out.

"There are but two sentiments on your case here (always excepting the Whigs, you know)—indignation for your persecution mingled with contempt; and sorrow mingled with admiration for yourself. Should you be in want, let me or some friend here know, and we will again set something afloat for your assistance—you shall not follow poor Edwards.

"I almost forgot to mention, that my sale of your *Fleeters* continues pretty steady as yet—five dozen weekly. There would have been more, but for my dangerous illness. Perhaps it will please you to know that your portrait, which you so kindly presented me with when at Chelsea last year, is framed and glazed, and hung up in my bed-room; and it reminds me, never to lay my head down to rest till I have offered some petitions to the throne of Grace for the original. How complacently it seems to look at me at this moment while writing to you. May the God of all mercy bless you, my dear friend, and turn the hearts of your enemies towards you.

"Should a dissolution or resignation take place, have you the power to send me a *Times* or *Standard*, according to the time of day, announcing the event, so as to let me have the earliest intelligence?

"I had proposed to myself to have attended one of your *lectures* this summer, but my finances will not admit of it; and long ere the year revolves do I hope to see you once more among us in Yorkshire.

"Well, God bless and preserve you and yours; and, when you write to Mrs. O., pray do not omit to give mine and Mrs. Hulke and son's best and most cordial respects to her and Maria. With every wish for your health and happiness, I remain, dear Sir, yours, ever faithfully,

"W. HULKE."

The following eloquent petition is copied from the *Standard* of May 27, 1841:—

"FACTORY CRIPPLES.

"To the Nobility, Gentry, and Clergy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

"May it please you, my Lords, Rev. Sirs, and Gentlemen—The humble petition of William Dodd, of No. 23, Little Gray's Inn Lane, Gray's Inn Lane, in the parish of St. Andrew's, Holborn, in the County of Middlesex, sheweth—

"That your petitioner has had great experience, and long felt deeply interested in the factory question, he having been put to work in the factories at the early age of six years (in 1810), a strong, hardy boy, and continued to work in them, in almost every department, from the lowest to the highest, in the manufacture of woollen cloth, till the close of the year 1836, at which time he was an infirm, worn-out cripple.

"That it is the opinion of your humble petitioner, after long experience, mature and deliberate consideration, that a system of cruelty and oppression has existed in the factories of the United Kingdom of Great Britain since the commencement of the present century, equal in atrocity to that practised in the slave colonies of the West Indies.

"That independent of many thousands of deaths, by machinery and otherwise, there are great numbers of Her Majesty's subjects who have been maimed, mutilated, and crippled for life, in various ways, by the loss of legs and arms, by the dislocation, contraction, and other deformities of the joints and limbs, by curvature and distortion of the spine, &c., and rendered utterly incapable of earning their living in the line of life in which they have been brought up, or of turning their attention with any hopes of success to any other line of industry.

"That after a period of twenty-five years' uninterrupted labour in the factories, and therein having sacrificed my health, strength, and constitution, being stunted in my growth, crippled in both legs and knees, and having lost a great part of my right arm, in consequence of injuries received, nothing awaits me but to drag on the remainder of my days, and terminate my miserable existence in a workhouse; and that there are at this time, in this enlightened and Christian country, hundreds of individuals, of all ages, and both sexes, who owe their miseries to the same cause, and whose cases are equally deplorable.

"That in consequence of the low rate of wages, which are barely sufficient to provide the necessaries of life, my earnings (which, taking into account my having been employed for some time as a confidential servant, may be safely considered above the average) did not amount in all, for a period of upwards of a quarter of a century, to more than 8s. a-week on the average; during all that time I received about 350*l.* for wages. These unhappy creatures have not been able to save anything for their future support, and, consequently, as soon as they are rendered unable to work in the factories they become a burden to their friends or the parish.

"That during the time these unhappy cripples have been toiling, and wearing out their constitutions for the bare necessities of life, the manufacturers, who have reaped the benefit of their labour, have been amassing immense wealth, and are now surrounded by every luxury that this world can give; it is well known that some of them are worth a million sterling.

"That out of all this wealth, which has been obtained at the expense of the lives, limbs, and constitutions of thousands of Her Majesty's subjects, nothing has yet been expended in ameliorating the condition of their worn-out cripples, or in making reparation to those whom the factories have deprived of every earthly comfort.

"That although it must be admitted that, owing to the spread of knowledge, and the exertions of several benevolent enlightened statesmen, who have of late years interested themselves, and been unceasing in their endeavours, on behalf, and for the welfare, of the people employed in factories, who have at great labour and expense obtained in parliament some wise and salutary laws, whereby the hours of labour have been reduced, and the condition of the work people, generally, improved, yet nothing has ever been done, or, as far as I am able to learn, ever thought of, to mitigate the sufferings of those unhappy cripples who have sacrificed everything for the benefit of their country.

"That it is the opinion of your humble petitioner, that any person who compares the present price of manufactured goods, whether of silk, cotton, or woollen, with the prices of the same sort of goods 20 or 30 years ago, must be astonished at the difference, and be led to inquire the cause of the great reduction.

"That if the question was put to a manufacturer as to the cause of this great reduction in the price of goods, and why we have been enabled to outstrip and undersell every country in the world, the weight of his answer would rest upon our improved machinery, but no allusion would be made to the lives and limbs which have been lost, the broken constitutions and blasted prospects of those who attended that machinery; and it must be borne in mind, that previous to the introduction of improved machinery no lives were lost nor cripples made.

"That it is the opinion of your humble petitioner that the factory cripples in this country would far exceed in number and present a more awful spectacle for the contemplation of the philanthropist than the weather-beaten heroes of Greenwich or Chelsea Hospital; and a great many of them are young, helpless females who, had it not been for the factories, might at this time have been the pride and ornament of the age and country in which they live.

"And that having no hopes the parliament will interfere in our behalf, and considering that we are justly entitled to the protection of that country for which we have sacrificed everything valuable in life, your humble petitioner, by and with the advice of many of his fellow-sufferers, with every becoming feeling of profound humility and respectful deference, thinks it his duty to beg that you will be graciously pleased to take such measures as may lead to the formation of a committee, to institute an inquiry into the extent of the suffering of this hitherto useful class of operatives, and devise, arrange, and adopt such measures as to you may seem conducive to our future comfort, in ameliorating our present unhappy condition, and to enable us (who are humbled and bowed down by a deep sense of the awful situation in which we are placed, by the wickedness generally prevailing in the factories), to spend the remainder of our days in preparation for that important change we must soon undergo, and of which, from the nature of the circumstances we have, from infancy, been surrounded by, and the ignorance of such people, we cannot generally be supposed to be fully aware; and that you may in health, peace, and happiness, enjoy the Divine favour and protection, your petitioner, as in humble duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

"WILLIAM DODD."

ADVERTISEMENT.

On the 20th of June, 1841, will be published,

PRICE TWOPENCE,

No. 26, of the FLEET PAPERS,

WHICH WILL CONTAIN A PORTRAIT OF

THOMAS THORNHILL, ESQ.,

OF RIDDLESWORTH, IN THE COUNTY OF NORFOLK.

Orders received by the Publishers, Mr. PAVEY, 47, Holywell Street, Strand,
and Mr. STEILL, 20, Paternoster Row, London.

THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY

JOHN PAVEY, 47, HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND,

AND

BENJAMIN STEILL, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW.

THESE Papers are principally intended for the perusal of the friends of Christianity and the Constitution; particularly the Clergy and the Aristocracy, and of all persons who are possessed of Property. The object of the writer will be to explain the reason for the present alarming state of English society, and the consequent insecurity of life and property; also, to offer some remarks upon the folly and wickedness of attempting to uphold our Institutions, particularly that of Private Property, by the unconstitutional means of Centralization, Commissioning, Espionage, and Force; finally, to state his own views on the best mode of restoring Peace, Contentment, Security, and Prosperity, to every rank of the people of England.

The author is perfectly aware of the fact, that every Parliamentary leader is now only attempting to legislate for the present moment—putting off the evil day—making laws “from hand to mouth,” in the hope that some unforeseen, fortunate event may enable succeeding Statesmen to legislate for permanency. He is also convinced that there is a mode of successfully re-establishing our Institutions upon their original foundation—Christianity;—and that that is the only way to preserve them from the encroachments of political partisans, who are now only paving the way to universal Ruin, Anarchy, and Despotism.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr Oastler is “At Home” on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

SIDNEY SMITH.—Mr. Oastler is informed that this “honest” Anti-Corn-Law-Lecturer has published a very angry and abusive letter in the *Morning Chronicle*, in which Mr. Sidney Smith calls Mr. Oastler many ugly names. Mr. O. has hitherto in vain attempted to procure a copy of that letter. He is assured by the news-woman that soon one will be obtained. Meantime, he slumbers as comfortably as he may, under the inflictions of the best abusing man in England. Mr. Sidney Smith has said, that “Lord Melbourne is the greatest fool in England; that he has no more sense than a dried ass’s head;” that “he never, in his life, saw such a fool, such an ass, as Lord Melbourne;” that “Peel is the greatest rogue, villain, rascal, liar, and thief in England;” that “the Bishops of London and Exeter are hypocrites;” that “Stanhope and Ashley are saints, hypocrites, rascals, villains, and infidels;” that “the Earl of Darlington is a fit subject for the treadmill;” and that “the Duke of Sutherland is a robber.” Mr. Oastler cannot desire the good opinion of such a savage man. He waits with patience the boilings over of Mr. Sidney Smith’s wrath; for he is told, that “Smith is very angry, and very, very abusive.” If the letter contains any argument, an answer will, in due time, be ready; if only abuse, Smith will be left sole champion of the blacking-brush.

WILLIAM DODD, the Factory Cripple, returns thanks to Lord ——— for one sovereign; to Sir ———, Bart., for five shillings and some articles of dress; to Mr. ——— for one shilling; and to Mr. ——— for five shillings.

H. J. H. BROOK, Ashton-under-Lyne.—Oh, yes, it is well known that “the mill-owners are taking their anti-Corn Law petitions through their mills, and are making their ‘hands’ (boys and girls) sign them.”

In reply to a numerous list of kind inquirers—“How can we best serve your interest?” Mr. Oastler begs to say—by encouraging the circulation of the *Fleet Papers*, and by procuring advertisements for their covers. Mr. Oastler may be allowed to add, that few better mediums for advertising can be found than the *Fleet Papers*; they circulate in every district, and amongst every rank. In the Palace and the Cottage, readers of the *Fleet Papers* are to be found. Clergymen, Landlords, and Farmers, Ministers of State, Ploughboys, Factory Children, and Weavers, patronize these little *Fleeters*.

Some complaints are made respecting the folding of the *Fleet Papers*. As soon as it is possible to procure paper of a different size, the folding will be altered.

NOTICES OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

"THE FLEET.

"Among the many wonderful sights in London, there cannot be found one more extraordinary than that daily witnessed in Her Majesty's prison, the Fleet. Within those massive walls are enclosed, at this moment, some of the most remarkable men of our age; men distinguished by rank, talent and honours, men of almost every nation and every profession—from the expatriated Polish nobleman, whose every pulse throbs with indignation at the wrongs of his country, to the master mind over whose pages the scholar and the poet have eagerly pored in delighted attention. And yet one cell requires more especial notice; it is that which contains the imprisoned Oastler, the friend of the poor, the conservator of the rights of all, the 'King of the Factory Children.' Never did name fastened in scorn upon another, as 'king' was upon him, prove so true an index of his real position. As a king he holds his levees, and, as a king ought to do, receives rich and poor. Here meet the proud senator and the humble factory labourer, men of every shade of politics, all anxious to testify their respect for Mr. Oastler, and their sympathy for the cause in which he suffers. Never did malice so outwit itself as did Mr. Thornhill, in removing Mr. Oastler's trial from York to London, and thus making his imprisonment a triumph, and his cause one of general interest. The respect and regard in which Mr. Oastler is held by the various inmates of the Fleet is most striking, and proves how highly he is esteemed by all grades of society.

"MR. OASTLER.—We perceive that several friends of this worthy patriot intend giving a concert and ball in his honour, on Monday next, at the Carpenter's Hall. The vocal strength for the concert is large, consisting of Miss Penketh, Messrs. Penny, Goodal, Travis, &c.; and the programme contains a rich selection of favourite popular glees and songs. At the conclusion of the concert the ball will commence. The greatest care will be taken to preserve the respectability of the attendance, and we feel confident, from our knowledge of those who will conduct the hall, that the greatest propriety will be observed. We do hope and trust that every admirer of the character and opinions of Mr. Oastler will aid in this excellent endeavour to assist him in his present situation.

"THE FLEET PAPERS, Nos. 20, 21, 22.—These three 'Papers' are occupied with matter of the most pressing importance—the contemplated change in the Corn Laws, and the effects likely to be produced by such change. In proof of the soundness of the writer's views on this subject, and that they are no hasty conceptions formed from the impulse of the present time, Mr. Oastler gives extracts from his recorded speeches and writings years ago. We cannot but observe, however, that his remedial measures are as Utopian as, did circumstances permit, they would be desirable. But retrogradation is impossible, and it is totally out of any man's power now 'to prohibit the introduction into this country of any article or commodity which can be grown or made here; nor can any legislative enactment prevent articles being exported upon which more labour is still required.' However desirable such a plan might be,

"Over the past not God himself has power."

It must, therefore, be for the future that we must legislate, and to devise suitable plans for ameliorating the evils, for our mistakes have produced the test of ability, in politicians and statesmen."—*Manchester and Salford Advertiser*, May 29, 1841.

"THE FLEET PAPERS.—We have received some of the 'Fleet Papers,' from the pen of Mr. Oastler; they are deserving of the serious attention of all parties in the State, more particularly those engaged in discussions on the Poor Law and the Corn Duty scheme. Mr. Oastler always expressed himself forcibly, but in his present position, unfortunate as it is for his own immediate comfort, he seems to have concentrated his thoughts more intensely than ever to one point, and they shine out with uncommon vigour.

"Mr. Oastler is not alone in this example. Cervantes, Sir W. Raleigh, &c. gave full scope to their genius, during their imprisonment, and enriched the world with their labours.

"Confinement then does not cramp the mind, but judging from known facts, adds, contradictory as it may seem, rather to its powers.

"Of a truth it is that Mr. Oastler never wrote better nor more to the purpose. We now present our readers with an extract from his last number (22), and it will be there seen how he deals with free trade and the Poor Laws.

"This letter (as are the others) is addressed to Thomas Thornhill, Esq., and after some preface remarks on the New Poor Law and Corn Laws, and Free Trade policy, he thus proceeds:

"Anything more appropriate to the present state of things was never penned; and amongst the free-trading societies, they would give a rich argosie to buy up all Oastler's letters; but they will be read and will make their way; thousands now, after reflection (and who among the English population does not reflect?) agree implicitly to Mr. Oastler's words in the last part of his letter: 'Free trade demands the abandonment of all protection to the English labourers and artisans, although its apostles pretend to be the only friends to the industrious!'"—*Chester Courant*, June 1, 1841.

"THE FLEET PAPERS.—We take the above very graphic sketch of a class, the 'Free Trade' gentry, from No. 22 of the 'Fleet Papers,' now in course of publication by Mr. Richard Oastler, so well known for his humane exertions in favour of the Factory Children. He is now in the Fleet Prison, for debt, but publishes his 'Papers' weekly. They contain a vast fund of valuable information, and we are glad to hear that their circulation and influence is extensive."—*Salopian Journal*, June 2, 1841.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

“The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage.”—“Property has its duties, as well as its rights.”

“The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits.”

“He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.”

VOL. I.—No. 24.

LONDON, SATURDAY, JUNE 12, 1841.

Price 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—How very strange it must have sounded in the House of Commons the other night, to have heard the name of your cast-off, imprisoned Steward once more mentioned by one of the Cabinet Ministers of the Crown! It seems that Sir Robert Peel had accused the whole ministerial corps of certain crimes and misdemeanours, and had placed them on their trial—one of his charges being “an attempt to agitate the country,” when, in a fright, at the very mention of agitation, up jumped my old friend Mr. Thomas Babington Macaulay, and at the tip of his voice vociferated, “A-g-i-t-a-t-i-o-n, is a d-i-s-l-o-g-i-s-t-i-c word. The word ‘agitation’ might apply to the proceedings of Mr. Oastler very well!” And then, rubbing his eyes as if recovering from a dream, he tremblingly proceeded with his oration.

The members of the House must have stared in amazement, wondering what Mr. Oastler had to do in a quarrel between Sir Robert Peel and Her Majesty’s Ministers. I will tell you all about it.—It is really true that my name haunts the Right Honourable Mr. Thomas Babington Macaulay everywhere. It matters not, whether he is in India, regulating the laws of conflicting Pagan and Mahomedan principalities at 10,000*l.* a year—or presiding over the War Department at home for 4,000*l.* a year—or sitting in the House of Commons for nothing, as the representative of our modern Athens—or writing letters to the wisemen, his constituents, from Windsor Castle;—wherever Macaulay is, and whatever he is doing, “Oastler” is always present to his mental vision—as I was to his distracted eyesight, on Friday, June 15th, 1832, in the White Cloth Hall Yard, Leeds, at the moment that I stormed the “Invincible,” and mounted the quarter-deck;—when, in the same instant, the Right Honourable—no, he was not then Right Honourable, but plain Mr. Thomas Babington Macaulay—took to his heels, and, in a hurry, fled! He was, as his friends owned, defended by 30,000. I conquered with only 200! We shall neither of us, Sir, forget that day “while memory holds her seat.”

I remember that you were delighted with your steward on that occasion. I have not forgotten that his Grace the Duke of Wellington was much amused

with the account thereof; and, as a little light reading must be preferable to such a continuous strain of heavy-work as the free trade discussion has imposed upon us, I will, to explain the ejaculation of the Secretary of War, just remind you of that most extraordinary event. Its recital will serve to establish the falsehood of the Rev. Mr. Burnett, who, at Exeter Hall, asserted that "the Anti-Slavery Society were those who had befriended the Factory Children." Mr. Thomas Babington Macaulay is a noted Anti-Slavery man. The history of that day will prove how anxiously he then *supported* "the friends of the Factory Children." There is a most strange inconsistency in the aforesaid gentlemen of the Anti-Slavery Society. I have been called to witness their strenuous efforts to keep the late Mr. Wilberforce out of Parliament. I have been pelted for supporting *him*, by *their* hired ruffians; and I have lived to hear them boast that they were his friends. I have seen them offer every insult to the late Michael Thomas Sadler—I have been assaulted and bruised by *their* hired bludgeon men for defending *him*—and I have lived to hear them boast that "they are the friends of the Factory Children!" But I am forgetting "the dislogistic word, Agitation," and the logical deduction therefrom, in the mind of the Right Honourable Thomas Babington Macaulay, late of Windsor Castle—"Agitation" being always in *his* mind confounded for "Oastler." I will now tell you why.

I had been on your business, to your estate at Calverley, on the 15th of June, 1832, and, having heard that the Reformers were that day to dine together in the Coloured Cloth Hall Yard, Leeds, and that their two candidates, Mr. John Marshall and Mr. Thomas Babington Macaulay, were to address them, I thought it would be a good opportunity to test "their friendship to the Factory Children," (as Mr. Burnett has it,) by an inquiry, if, in the event of their being elected, they would support Mr. Sadler's 'Ten Hours' Factory Bill? Mr. Sadler was the candidate in the 'Tory interest. With this view I resolved to ride round by Leeds, in my way home to Fixby Hall. As soon as I arrived in Leeds, I waited upon the Short Time or Ten Hours' Bill Committee. I was delighted to find that they had anticipated my wishes, and had already appointed a deputation to make the necessary inquiry of the Reform candidates.

My friends of the Short Time Committee insisted on my accompanying the Deputation, and furnished me with their written order, to represent them on that occasion. We, being desirous to perform our duty without any annoyance to the guzzling Reformers, (of whom, they said, some thousands were feasting in the Coloured Cloth Hall Yard,) repaired to the gate, and inquired of the "guard" there, "when it would be convenient to ask the candidates a question?"—Reference was immediately made to the Chairman, who sent us word, that "after dinner, between four and half-past, the candidates and their friends would attend a public meeting in the White Cloth Hall Yard, when any *elector* would be *permitted* to ask them any question." From the stress which was laid on the words "elector" and "permitted," I felt sure that I, who was only a native, and a freeholder of the borough, should be refused, that is, *if it were possible by force to hinder me*.

At the time appointed, I attended at the gates of the White Cloth Hall Yard.

They were closed. In a little while we entered. The candidates and their friends, the liberal gentry, were not then arrived, but many thousands of their party had been let into the yard by a private entrance. These men surrounded the hustings (or steps and landing-place) on the south side of the yard. The yells with which they greeted myself and friends, spoke all languages: I saw in a moment that we were to be opposed. I directed my friends to take up their ground under their white banner, inscribed "Operatives demand a pledge for the Ten Hours' Factory Bill," at the north-east corner of the yard. With two friends I made my way to the hustings, and was most royally hissed, hooted, and groaned at. The confusion, the oaths, curses, and imprecations which these Reformers indulged in, baffles all description. The crowd rapidly increased. The noise, the language of the lower regions, raged still more furiously. When I tried to speak, my efforts were all vain. I smiled, bowed, and retired. Remember, Sir, these were all liberal, enlightened, anti-slavery "friends of the Factory Children." The *sin* which I was attempting to perpetrate, was civilly to ask their chosen candidates, "if they would support the 'Ten Hours' Factory Bill?" That was all, Sir, which caused this rage and fury! In a little while, the candidates and their well-fed companions, from the dinner, arrived. They formed on the north side of the yard, and elevated their chairman on a tub,—why or wherefore, I never heard. The confusion in that yard, at that moment, was complete. Whilst the orators in the reform interest were doing their best at speechifying, a coach, called the "Invincible," was dragged into the yard. Its top was soon occupied by the Whig candidates and the Whig *elite* of Leeds, and, thus manned, it was dragged as near to the proper stone hustings, on the south, as possible. Confusion was now still more confounded. Not a word from any speaker could be heard—it was all dumb show on their part, and boisterous but confused brimstonic din on that of the beerified audience. It was of no use remaining any longer on the stone hustings. I was determined to meet the candidates on the quarter-deck of the "Invincible," and there, in the presence of all, to ask the question. I had much difficulty in forcing my way through the pressing, opposing, angry crowd, to my small, but faithful band of ten hours' men, whom I found arranged, as I had left them, around their banner. I addressed them in language suited to the occasion—told them that I must be on the "Invincible"; and, if they were afraid, I urged them to leave me. We were 200,—they (the reformers) were, they said, 30,000. We marched steadily towards the mass—we entered it, forming a triangle. I was the point—my trusty friends arranged themselves compactly behind me. When we were fairly in the body of the crowd, *their* pressure forced *us* forward. It was urged, from the hustings, that "I was not an elector," and, consequently, had no right to be there. I asserted the freedom of my birth, and, smiling, marched onwards. We were observed by Mr. Thomas Babington Macaulay, who *wore* was "agitated," and wished that I would ask him any question; but my resolve was made to mount the coach, and be on equal terms, in presence of the crowd, with the candidates. He shook, turned pale, and was silent. At length we reach the coach, and my friends, as I had previously arranged, formed four deep in front thereof. We had then the hustings in our power. I mounted—was resisted for a while—my coat was torn in two equal parts to the cape. When I landed on

the quarter-deck, oh, what a shout! I never heard one like it! My foes, in front, were turned to friends, and thousands of Reformers shouted—"Well done, Oastler! thou deserves to be a King." But poor Mr. Thomas Babington Macaulay, Captain of the *Invincible*, since then of Asia, and afterwards of Windsor Castle, being a-g-i-t-a-t-e-d by Oastler's presence, fled! As I mounted on one side, he dismounted on the other, and, very much to my surprise, I found myself in command of the "*Invincible*." Well may Macaulay ever after logically derive from the word "agitation"—"Oastler." Hence, did he exclaim in the House of Commons, when none in the House thought of Oastler, save Macaulay, "the word agitation might apply to the proceedings of Mr. Oastler very well." I had forgotten to tell you, that these two anti-slavery candidates would not pledge "their friendship to the Factory Children." That fact, and similar facts, which will come out in due course in these Papers, prove how Mr. Burnett misrepresented truth, when he said, that "the Anti-Slavery Society were the friends of the Factory Children."

I must not forget another fact which occurred that day. As I was returning from the "*Invincible*," after having questioned the liberal candidates,—a poor little Factory boy, who had watched my proceedings, said to a friend of mine—"Poor Mr. Oastler! how they have ill-used him! I wish I could get to him to pin his coat." He had a pin ready. My friend brought it, with the lad's observations, and pinned my coat with it. That pin I have in this cell—that pin I will keep till death—that pin shall be buried with me. Oh! Sir, I do value *that pin!* It was the grateful tribute of infancy to its protector!—it was the first reward which I received for public services! Thousands cannot buy that pin! With it I will, blessed by Almighty God, I will, with that pin, nail the 'Ten Hours' Factory Bill to the Constitution of England!

I wonder if that boy still lives.—So much, Sir, for this digression.

A word to those unfortunates who may be gulled by their leaders in the forthcoming new movement.—I urge them to remember Bristol; Nottingham Castle, and Newport. The victims *there* were once, as they, the favourites and pets of the "Liberal" Government!—Where are they now? I would remind the honest dupes, who think that they shall have better days when no corn is grown in England, that if they proceed one step farther than the *Interest* of the "Liberals" requires, they will only form another batch of victims, to be tortured, or banished, or hanged, for the amusement of their betrayers!

The strongest appeals are now made to the hungry operative; he is told that those who wish that his food should be grown in England are his bitterest foes; that if he were allowed to feed on foreign corn it would only cost half the price of English corn, and that then also his wages would be raised! Some few may, perhaps, be so foolish as to believe such falsehoods—they may, perhaps, be driven to desperation under such excitement. But the great body of thinking artisans will not be thus deluded—they know that the great apostle of this new science, Mr. Ricardo, said, in his Chapter on Foreign Trade, "that profits can never be increased, excepting by a reduction of wages." The people have listened to those charmers too long, and under their guiding have found their way to misery and wretchedness, unparalleled. It is well, however, to caution the "agitators," that

although they now bask under the sunshine of the Ministers, if it should hereafter suit the purposes of their present patrons, they will be treated with as little ceremony as former tribes of ministerial dupes have been.

But, Sir, leaving the Secretary at War's Agitation, and the remembrance of this conqueror, and bidding adieu to the tools of the new ministerial agitation, how shall I restrain my indignation and disgust, when I find a nobleman of Lord Teignmouth's rank and character—a Conservative!—in the debate on “the want of confidence in Ministers,” not contenting himself with passing unnoticed their crawling-sin, or satisfying his conscience by luke-warm praise, but going out of his way, and, with reference to “the execrable and atrocious New Poor Law,” (for such the late Earl of Eldon, who was a wiser man than Lord Teignmouth, said it was,) thus addressing the House of Commons! His Lordship is reported to have said, “I do not deny that the greatest possible praise is due to the Ministers for some of their measures. The noble Lord (Lord John Russell) has acquired immortal honour by the measure which he has adopted for the alteration of the Poor Laws! For that measure the noble Lord deserves the highest praise!”

Horror seized hold on me when I read *that* sentence from *that* man!—To hear such adulation of a foe, from one who calls himself a Conservative, and, as such, a Christian and a friend of the Church!—such praise of an infernal law, respecting which a Bishop in his place in the House of Lords, declared, that “as Christians, Englishmen *ought* not to submit to it!”—a law which tramples on the most sacred offices of religion, outrages the best and finest feelings of our nature, and tears in tatters that very Constitution of which the Conservatives are said to be so proud!—I say, Sir, to hear such a law selected by a Conservative, an enemy to the Ministry, and by him, placed as a crown of *immortal* glory on their heads, is a sign of the times which well nigh makes me despair, and almost proves to demonstration, that God has given us up to judicial blindness, and waits only till we have filled up the measure of our iniquity, before he pours out His fury upon us.

Under that law, which Lord Teignmouth says is “an immortal honour” to the Minister, our land is turned into a house of mourning, lamentation, and woe! By that law, men are trained, and yoked, and used to horses' work. The poor have been poisoned by scores in our bastiles;—husbands and wives, parents and children, have, for poverty, been imprisoned and separated; shivering they have been dragged very many miles to meet the guardians for relief, and, after having waited the life-long day, hoping for their right, they have, cursing their plunderers, paced, empty handed, their weary way homeward, through frost and snow, and have soon after died of want—some in their homes, and some by the wayside; coffins have been refused in which to bury the dead; the hungered and enfeebled Englishman, not being able to move, has laid on the green-sward, and has eaten the grass, as far as he could reach, and then died! Mothers and fathers have, *in mercy*, killed their children—wives, in distraction, have committed suicide, when, by that law, they have been torn from their aged husbands—widows have, under its horrors, drowned themselves!—young women have been exposed and flogged—yes, Mr. Thornhill, flogged on their naked bodies,

by a monster of a man! an officer under the law of devils!—and still a Conservative!—a Churchman!—dares travel out of his way to laud the Ministers for passing such an Act!—an Act by which society has been disorganized. The rich having, under its operation, become the legal oppressors of the poor, enmity between the two “orders” is thus engrafted in the hearts of each; so that man now meets in man a foe to oppress or to revenge! Thousands of facts press on me to prove the cruelty, the horrors of that law; take the following, selected at random. I have not room for more. I need not name the numerous well authenticated legal murders in Bridgewater, Coventry, and other workhouses—they will keep to a future day.

Extract of a letter from my friend Mr. G. R. Wythen Baxter to the Hereford Guardians, which appeared in the *Hereford Journal*, March 24, 1841.

“I cannot conclude this communication without relating an instance, a barbarous, brutal instance, illustrative of the way in which these savings of *relief* expenditure, so boasted of, are effected under the New Poor Law. This evening (Saturday, March the 20th, 1841), a respectable young woman, Caroline Garstone, wife of Thomas Garstone, a turner and carpenter, lodging in a house in St. Martin’s Street, four doors from my own residence, called upon me in great distress, and almost broken-hearted, and told me that her infant child had died three days ago, and that her husband having unfortunately been ten weeks out of work, and they having been almost without food for some days past, they could not bury it. She said, in the morning she had been to the Board of Guardians, and requested them to allow her a trifle to bury the child. This they refused her. She then, to use her own piteous words, ‘implored of them, only as a mother can implore, to give her a *bit of ground only*, and she and her husband would try to bury it themselves.’ This also was refused her; and she was told, she and her husband must come into the ‘House,’ and then the child would be buried, otherwise she might go about her business, as they *would not* assist her. The Chairman, the Rev. Mr. Thornton, she said, had asked her what her husband’s trade was, and, after being informed that he was a carpenter, he declared that he was the very man *they wanted in the ‘House,’* as he would be *very useful*, (*i. e.* to make the coffins.) The poor young woman protested she and her husband could not come into the ‘House,’—indeed, that she had not asked relief for themselves, but only for a small trifle to bury their dead babe.

“The conclusion was, she obtained no assistance, and was ultimately obliged to solicit subscriptions from door to door of the charitable neighbours; and she was driven (in a city, in which there is a cathedral and three churches, mark!) to the necessity of begging an *old orange box*, with which the father, the sad tears trickling down his cheeks, late on Saturday night, *actually made a coffin for his own child!!!*

“So much for the means by which savings are achieved, under the administration of the New Poor Law Amendment Act! I blush for its supporters, and am proud to be numbered among its active opponents.”

And so am I, friend Baxter, and shall while I live! Nay, in the blessed world of happy spirits, I shall rejoice that “I was numbered amongst the active opponents of that unjust, oppressing, and atrocious law!”

See also how the poor are deprived of what the law *pretends* to award to them in sickness. If these officers infringe upon the law, why are they not punished who thus murder the poor?

“London, 19th May, 1841.

“To Mr. Richard Oastler.

“Sir,—I was a medical apprentice, in Berkshire, in 1637. I remember visiting, in that capacity, a man named Angliss—he belonged to a parish which my master attended. The man had been in Winchester Goal for a trespass—he was a broom-maker, having a wife and four young children. The greater part of the parish he lived in was uncultivated, and broom-making

would at times scarcely support the number of poor families whose only resource it was—they were sometimes in a very wretched condition. The man Angles, on coming from gaol, was attacked with a diarrhoea, which became quite intractable, and was daily draining the powers of life. In my capacity of medical assistant, I, under the authority of my master, sent in a weekly account of the sick paupers to the Board, and, by his advice, recommended 2lbs. of mutton per week, and a pint of Port wine. I think 14lb. were once granted, but the wine was never allowed. I, for three or four successive weeks, urged in *strong terms* the necessity of the allowance being made, but without any effect.* He gradually became exhausted, and finally expired. The curate of the parish, however, with that feeling which I trust characterises all clergymen, did, I believe of his own charity, administer some nourishment to him, for which the poor fellow was very thankful, and received benefit. He was allowed during his sickness, for himself, wife, and four children, only four shillings and sixpence per week!!

"I am, Sir, your's obediently,

"FREDERICK REYNARD."

Thus are the *innocent* neglected even to death! But it is sworn by the Governor of the Millbank Penitentiary, that the felons there "who are sick, are allowed wine, or any other nourishment which the medical officer may deem necessary."

Compare the dietary of that prison with a dietary table before me, which is signed "Edwin Chadwick." My blood freezes as I write that name!—

"Dietary at the Penitentiary.

"The average daily allowance to each prisoner is a pint of gruel for breakfast, a pint of broth for supper, one pound and a half of bread, and five ounces of meat without bone, to be weighed after cooking, and potatoes or other vegetables."

Thus swears the Governor;—yet thus does the heartless "Edwin Chadwick" order for England's industrious, honest poor!

		Men.		Women.	
"For able bodied.					
" Breakfast and supper.....	}	Bread	6 oz.	5 oz.	
		Cheese or butter.....	1 oz.	1 oz.	
Dinner, 2 days	}	Suet pudding and vegetables	1 lb.	10 oz.	
		Meat do. do.	1 lb.	10 oz.	
—— 1 do.	}	Bread	7 oz.	7 oz.	
—— 4 do.		Cheese.....	1 oz.	1 oz.	

(Signed) "EDWIN CHADWICK."

So that, under the accursed New Poor Law, poverty is in England punished with greater severity than crime! Within a few months, the following, out of many other cases, have passed before Magistrates and Coroners:—

"Two young men, having been refused relief, were driven to steal beef and pork to save their lives.

"Four young men, all but naked and perishing, stole a twopenny loaf.

"Three persons, without food or lodging, were refused even the shelter of the Workhouse.

"Great numbers have died from starvation. The spirit thus to lie down and die, rather than submit to be Bastiled, is frightfully prevalent.

"Two young men, almost naked and nearly dead of hunger, begged to be sent to prison.

"A starving youth actually broke a window, in order to be sent to prison instead of the Workhouse.

"A poor woman was threatened with imprisonment by a New Poor Law officer, for giving a poor creature, who was poorer than herself, food and shelter.

"Harriet Langley, aged twenty, gave the following heart-rending account of her sufferings:—

"Some weeks before her confinement she was committed to gaol on the charge of being destitute. She was confined there; and she and her child, a fortnight after her accouchement, were sent from the prison without a home to shelter them or a mouthful to eat. She wandered about, maddened

* The Schedule which the medical man fills up for inspection by the Board contains a column headed "Wine and other necessaries to be given to the patient."

by starvation, and implored assistance at various workhouses, but was refused relief at all!—the Marylebone Workhouse being the last. From fatigue and starvation combined, her milk dried up; and as she sat on the bank of the New River, the piercing cries of her helpless infant for food reduced her to that state of frenzy, that she plunged it into the water to put an end to its agonies! The infant was quite dead when taken out of the water!”

I can no more. My heart bleeds—my head is bewildered. These sins of England make me tremble for my native land! Under the operation of the New Poor Law, England is reduced to a state of horrid barbarism! Covetousness has thus hurried her to her ruin, and her nobles are glorying in her shame!! for the Christian, Conservative, noble Lord Teignmouth says, that “Lord John Russell deserves the greatest possible, the highest praise, immortal honour for the measure which he has adopted for the alteration of the Poor Laws!” I cannot understand why such persons do not at once unite with the Government. If the New Poor Law is just, the whole policy of Her Majesty’s Government must be right. Oh! Sir, how I wish that such Conservatives would leave the position which they thus disgrace, and pass over to the Whigs.

It is impossible that this nation can be saved, so long as we are taught by our aristocracy to bless whom God has cursed! The poor do cry unto Him. He does hear them; and if we repent not, He will pour out His fury upon us, and utterly destroy us from the face of the earth. Truly,

“Our iniquities have separated between us and our God; and our sins have hid His face from us, that He will not hear. For our hands are defiled with blood, and our fingers with iniquity; our lips have spoken lies; our tongue hath muttered perverseness; our feet run to evil, and we make haste to shed innocent blood; our thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in our paths. Therefore is judgment far from us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. For our transgressions are multiplied before Him, and our sins testify against us; and as for our iniquities we know them; in transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil, maketh himself a prey. According to our deeds, accordingly He will repay, fury to His adversaries.”

Seeing then that God is justly angry with us, because we have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, and broken the everlasting covenant between Him and the poor, and that because of our haughtiness He hath made this land to mourn and languish, “Let us return unto the Lord, for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up.” May we remember that “to obey is better than sacrifice;” and at length learn to practice the plain and positive duties of Christianity, by “doing justly and by loving mercy.” “Then shall our granaries be full, affording all manner of store; then shall our sheep bring forth thousands and tens of thousands in our streets; then shall our oxen be strong to labour; there will then be no breaking in or going out; and there will be no complaining in our streets.” Then will all the nations bless us and say—“Happy is that people that is in such a case. Yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord.”

Such are the earnest breathings of my soul for you, and for my country, although

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—Till this moment I had forgotten Lord John Russell’s last postponement of the consideration of the New Poor Law. I had intended to remark on his cunning, in preferring an agitation on the Corn Laws to an agitation on the Poor Laws. Macanlay and Teignmouth, for the moment, shadowed his Lordship.—Never mind, he will keep till next week.—R.O.

"The FLEET PAPERS.—All who wish well to the best interests of their country, will derive much pleasure from a perusal of the following admirable remarks of Mr. Oastler upon Free Trade. We have not been unmindful of the 'Fleet Papers,' although this is the first time we have called the attention of our readers to their contents. There is a self-devotion to the interests of the poor evidenced in the writings of Mr. Oastler, which, combined with solemn warnings to the middle and upper classes of society on the downward and destructive tendency of philosophical liberalism and modern legislation, cannot fail of interesting all readers. Mr. Oastler's 'Fleet Papers' have already effected great good in the manufacturing districts. They have opened the eyes of thousands as to who are their true friends, and the great capitalists and *fleshmongers* who have grown rich upon the miseries of their fellow beings are beginning to feel that their power is shaken. We are sure it would serve the cause of truth and tender an essential service to the interests of the clergy and landholders, were the 'Fleet Papers' to be distributed largely throughout the agricultural districts. It has been the fashion for liberal writers to denounce Mr. Oastler as a madman. If he be so, he has more 'method in his madness' than any of his accusers ever displayed. Saint Paul was called a madman by the liberals of his day, and that, too, at the very time that he was speaking 'the words of truth and soberness.' It will be well for Englishmen if they attend to the counsel of Mr. Oastler, and weigh well what he says, whilst he reasons 'of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.'"
—*Bury and Suffolk Herald*, June 2, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS, No. 22.—We should advise all who have borne a hand in assisting the unwise conceits of the free trade speculators, whether in corn or manufactured fabrics, to read this number, which is one of the best we have received at the hands of the venerable Oastler; we can afford to give a few extracts, for they are to the purpose. He says:—"
—*Berrow's Worcester Journal*, June 3, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS. London, Patry, 47, Holywell Street, Strand, Nos. 19, 20, 21, 22.—For some weeks past we have made no allusion to the *Fleet Papers*. It does not follow from hence that they have escaped our notice, for we have perused them with pleasure. Whether attacking Poor Law atrocities, exposing the hideous abominations of the Factory system, or laying bare the flimsy sophistries and cold-blooded speculations of Anti-Corn-Law-Leaguers, Mr. Oastler is equally at home with his powerful and eloquent pen. His sympathies with the labouring classes generally and the factory children, are as broad and deep as are his antipathies towards the grasping millionaire and the selfish aristocrat.

"No. 19, although an old one, we cannot pass over, for it contains a most pathetic and touching narrative respecting poor Lieutenant Edwards, who died in the Fleet, and it is turned to a good purpose, which will be best explained by a perusal of it:—

The statements put forth by the 'Plague,'† respecting the money pocketed by the landlords in consequence of the Corn Laws, are thus summarily refuted:—

The assertion about England not being an agricultural country, is dealt with after the following fashion:—

Protection to the soil and labour forms the text of the 22nd number. This description of the sort of commercial condition to which the free traders tempt the country will be read with painful interest, and carry some lamentable truths home to the bosoms of many of our readers:—

Who can read such recitals without deeply and sincerely trusting that the day when England shall be made a manufacturing nation, subject to the tyranny and influence of the capitalists in the manner above described, may never, never come? If it do come, farewell to the hearty old English character, farewell to old England's green fields, farewell to all old English customs and feelings, and welcome to the duplicity of the commercialists, welcome to smoky districts and dingy towns, and welcome to all the vices, all the deteriorating influences of 'trades' unfeeling train.'"
—*Northern Star*, June 5, 1841.

The following "Leader," from the pen of my Reverend friend Gathercole, contains so much truth and pith, that I need not apologize for its insertion.

"ANTI-SLAVERY HYPOCRISY."

"If evidence had been wanted to prove that the whole motley crew of Liberals, whether in detail they pass under the designation of Papists, Whigs, Independents, Baptists, Methodists, or Quakers, are the most fraudulent hypocrites in existence, that evidence would have been abundantly supplied by the meeting of what is called 'The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society,' just held in Exeter Hall. By a fundamental rule of this Society, politics and all political matters and allusions are entirely excluded and prohibited; but the moment we saw the pretences put forth, and the names of the parties connected with them, we laughed at the impudent knavery of the whole business, and said—what is now clearly the truth—that they never intended to abide by their own principles, but only meant to deceive, and obtain the money and influence of certain parties, who, if the naked truth were told, they knew would have nothing at all to do with them. The Society, however, under its false pretences, succeeded in gulling some and in getting their money; but the whole cheat is now as evident as the light of the sun at noon-day. The speeches and the entire bias and tenor of the meeting of the Society was decidedly political, in utter defiance of its own professed principles and rules. Indeed, how could it be otherwise, when the chief speakers were the great Irish Papist and another Irish demagogue of the name of Burnett, a teacher of dissent and republicanism at Camberwell? A Mr. Ashworth too, a Lancashire factory lord, indulged in puny hits at the 'miscreant Tories,' and prated about 'the great political influence' of the Society which pretended to have nothing political about it. The chairman did

† The Anti-Corn-Law-League.

certainly call one or two of the speakers to order, but he was himself clearly enough of the same political feeling with the meeting, which was directly in favour of Liberalism, tyranny, and slavery. Oddly as it may sound to a plain unsophisticated man, not initiated into the hypocrisies and frauds of political and religious liberalism, it is unquestionably true that this Society, pretendedly against slavery, and instituted for the avowed purpose of destroying it, is really the friend and promoter of slavery in its most inhuman, degrading, and horrible forms. It is acknowledged on all hands that slavery in the Brazils, from whence much of our sugar would have been derived, if the project of the infamous Whigs, supported by this fraudulent Society, had succeeded, is far more heartless and cruel than it ever was in the West Indies. The idea, too, of Lancashire factory lords, whose machinery is worked, and whose gold is produced, by the sweat and sinews, and often at the expense of the blood and the lives of white slaves, getting up to talk against black slavery, is disgusting to every humane mind, and insulting to the religious principles and feelings of the community. The audacious hypocrites! let them wipe off from the walls of their own factories, and from the tablets of their own no less callous consciences, the blood stains of the poor little innocent white slaves, whom they are daily offering up as victims to appease the horse-leech cravings of the god Mammon, whom they so ardently worship. Is there no tyranny, no slavery either in the Poor Law Union-houses, to excite the commiseration and move the sympathies of Whig-Radical and dissenting liberalism? Oh, dear no, not a morsel! All the charities, and benevolencies, and loving kindnesses, and tender-heartedness of these *liberals* are reserved for foreign objects, and expended upon any persons if they happen not to bear the name of Englishmen, and have not the misfortune to possess a white skin. But why and wherefore is all this? There is a reason for everything, and there is, consequently, a reason for such conduct on the part of our political and sectarian *liberals*. The whole history and course of these people prove, that while prating about liberty and liberty of conscience they hate that any one besides themselves should possess a grain of either; and their present object is evidently to fix attention upon foreign and distant objects, while they knavishly rivet the fetters of slavery the more securely about the necks of the people at home. In proof of this, let any thinking man ask himself whether, after reform and economy, and all the other clap-traps of the Whigs, the people of England do not possess less constitutional and real freedom now than they possessed when the Whigs took office? The New Poor Law alone, by which poverty is made a crime, and poor persons have been driven to steal that they might get into a prison rather than go to a union workhouse, will supply an ample answer. And instead of economy and lighter burdens for the people, the taxes are increasing year by year. And now, forsooth, another fraud is to be practised upon the people, under the lying pretence of giving them cheap bread, whereas every sensible man knows that a repeal of the Corn Laws would throw thousands out of employment, and ruin the country. The agitation of the factory lords for cheap bread is really to enable them to get work done for cheaper wages; and as much land would be thrown out of cultivation, so many agricultural labourers would be thrown out of employment; and these would flock into the manufacturing districts, and cause a greater competition of labour, and a greater depression of wages. All this the Corn Law repealers clearly foresee; but what care they for the people, provided they have only to pay lower wages and pocket greater profits? We trust, however, that the people will be no more cheated by the frauds of the Whigs and their liberal supporters, and that they will all unite, heart and soul, in opposition to their enemies, and that they will only promote and sign such petitions as shall have for their object the ejection of their inveterate enemies from power to do mischief, and be the means of thrusting them down to those depths of degradation with which their grovelling principles and conduct will be quite in character, and from which they never again ought to be permitted to arise. In all conscience let us have no more of the anti-slavery hypocrisy and cant of these Polish, Dissenting, and Whig tyrants and oppressors of the people! The country is heartily sick of it already."—*Conservative Journal*, May 22, 1841.

ADVERTISEMENT.

On the 26th of June, 1841, will be published,

PRICE TWOPENCE,

No. 26, of the FLEET PAPERS,

WHICH WILL CONTAIN A PORTRAIT OF

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.,

OF RIDDLESWORTH, IN THE COUNTY OF NORFOLK.

Orders received by the Publishers, Mr. PAVEY, 47, Holywell Street, Strand,
and Mr. STEILL, 20, Paternoster Row, London.

THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY

JOHN PAVEY, 47, HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND,

AND

BENJAMIN STEILL, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW.

THESE Papers are principally intended for the perusal of the friends of Christianity and the Constitution; particularly the Clergy and the Aristocracy, and of all persons who are possessed of Property. The object of the writer will be to explain the reason for the present alarming state of English society, and the consequent insecurity of life and property; also, to offer some remarks upon the folly and wickedness of attempting to uphold our Institutions, particularly that of Private Property, by the unconstitutional means of Centralization, Commissioning, Espionage, and Force; finally, to state his own views on the best mode of restoring Peace, Contentment, Security, and Prosperity, to every rank of the people of England.

The author is perfectly aware of the fact, that every Parliamentary leader is now only attempting to legislate for the present moment—putting off the evil day—making laws “from hand to mouth,” in the hope that some unforeseen, fortunate event may enable succeeding Statesmen to legislate for permanency. He is also convinced that there is a mode of successfully re-establishing our Institutions upon their original foundation—Christianity;—and that that is the only way to preserve them from the encroachments of political partisans, who are now only paving the way to universal Ruin, Anarchy, and Despotism.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr Oastler is “At Home” on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

JULIA.—Her lines on “The Pin,” shortly.

A FLEETER.—As soon as possible.

JOHN PERSIVAL.—Relating to Kensington Union, next week. On Universal Suffrage, as soon as space will admit.

JAMES SMITHSON, Leeds, is thanked for his kind communication relative to the Tory Candidates for Leeds. If William Beckett is not returned, the Electors of Leeds are an ungrateful race, as Mr. Oastler will prove if needs be.

A TRADESMAN.—His valuable communication on Free Trade, *alias* the Slaughter-House system will be inserted as soon as possible.

MR. OASTLER has received one sovereign from the Honourable William Duncombe, M.P., for the Factory Cripple William Dodd.

CAN any one furnish Mr. Oastler with a copy of the *Morning Chronicle* of May 28, in which Mr. Sidney Smith's abusive letter appeared?

IN reply to a numerous list of kind inquirers—“How can we best serve your interest?” Mr. Oastler begs to say—by promoting the circulation of the *Fleet Papers*, and by procuring advertisements for their covers. Mr. Oastler may be allowed to add, that few better mediums for advertising can be found than the *Fleet Papers*; they circulate in every district, and amongst every rank. In the Palace and the Cottage, readers of the *Fleet Papers* are to be found. Clergymen, Landlords, and Farmers, Ministers of State, Ploughboys, Factory Children, and Weavers, patronise these little *Fleeters*.

SOME complaints are made respecting the folding of the *Fleet Papers*. As soon as it is possible to procure paper of a different size, the folding will be altered.

MANY persons, in different towns, have written to ask “how they can obtain the *Fleet Papers*?”—The *Fleet Papers* may be had of any bookseller in the Kingdom, who has an agent in London, by ordering them as all other periodicals are ordered. If persons are told, as many persons have asserted, that “they cannot be obtained,” the publishers assure those parties, that the statement is not true. Second editions of the early numbers have been printed, and all orders can be regularly supplied, by application to Mr. Pavey, 47, Holywell Street, Strand; or Mr. Steill, 20, Paternoster Row.

The following Speech, delivered by my friend Mr. William Atkinson, at the Corn Law Meeting of the Parish of St. Botolph, Aldersgate, will be read with interest by the patrons of the *Fleet Papers*.—R.O.

“ Mr. ATKINSON said he had lived a great many years in the parish, but had never before come forward to address a meeting of his fellow-parishioners, but having been connected for many years, both in a private and a public capacity, with an examination of this most important question—a question upon which they had that evening to pass their judgment—it appeared to him he would not be doing his duty to his fellow-parishioners if he did not come before them and state that which he had known to have been passing relative to the momentous subject—(hear, hear). About four years ago, a vote was come to in the House of Commons for an inquiry into the cause of distress among a very numerous class of the community—he meant the hand-loom weavers. The meeting must be aware that the weavers of Spitalfields were an important portion of that body, and it was to this portion that he would more particularly allude. Having been intimately connected, previously to the appointment of the commission alluded to, with the discussion of questions relative to trade, he was requested by the member for Lancashire (who asked for the inquiry in question) to take up the case of the hand-loom weavers generally. His (Mr. A’s) views becoming known to the weavers of Spitalfields, he was requested by them to attend a public meeting which they convened in that district. He did so, and stated his views to them upon the question of free-trade. They fully concurred in his line of policy, and unanimously called upon him to attend the board of commissioners, and submit their (the Spitalfields weavers’) case to them. It would afford him great satisfaction if it were possible for him to submit to the judgment of the meeting the whole of the case as gone into on that occasion. The meeting would see it was impossible to do more than submit to them the statement and result of the investigation. The question was taken up as the full question of free-trade, and they came to this result—that the free-trade principle was wrong, as opposed to a regulated principle of commerce. They said this: suppose any two of them should happen to be cast away on an uninhabited island, the first thing they would want would be food. They went to seek, and procured. Very soon A and B procure more food than they required for themselves. A found that his surplus was enough for B, and that his surplus was enough for A. The consequence is that a division of labour takes place. A produces sufficient food for himself and also for B, and B produces sufficient of an article, clothing for instance, for himself, and also for A. Here was a social compact. This was an important principle, for they (Mr. Atkinson and his associates) contended that, upon the right working of this principle, the whole of the good of the state depended. We (continued Mr. Atkinson) work in conjunction, and not in competition, and in working upon the system for which we contend, we must regard the good of each other, and it is the departing from this point in which the whole error has occurred. As to the application of our principle in a complicated state of society, we contend that the agricultural interest has no more right to protection than any other interest of the country—(hear, hear). The principle, if good for one, is good for all—(hear, hear). If bad for one, it is bad for all. We say it is a good principle, and good for all; but what we contend for is, the just application of it. We here come into collision with the antagonist principle of the free-trader. He says—‘I will have no conjunction of interests. That is monopoly. We will have free competition all over the world.’ We say we owe all our miseries to this principle of competition carried to excess. ‘I beg to call your attention to a sentiment expressed the other day at the City meeting. It was, that ‘HEAVEN would protect those who protected themselves.’ Now, I would ask every gentleman in this room to pen down that sentiment when he goes home; examine it closely, and see what it is worth, and I think he will find that it would lead, if applied to a system, to the dissolution of every bond of social life. It means, ‘We will consider ourselves, and ourselves only.’ Having stated thus much, as to the principle for which we contend, I will now allude to the manner in which this principle has been received amongst us. A very great authority upon whom the free-trade party rely is Mr. Ricardo; but it appears to me that they have kept back one main feature of Mr. Ricardo’s argument, viz. that which relates to wages. ‘It has been my endeavour,’ says Mr. Ricardo in his ‘*Principles of Political Economy*,’ chap. vii. p. 141, ‘to show throughout this work, that the rate of profits can never be increased but by a fall in wages, and that there can be no permanent fall of wages but in consequence of a fall of the necessaries on which wages are expended. If, therefore, by the extension of foreign trade, or by improvements in machinery, the food and necessaries of the labourer can be brought to market at a reduced price, profits will rise. If, instead of growing our own corn, or manufacturing the clothing and other necessaries of the labourer, we discover a new market from which we can supply ourselves with these commodities at a cheaper price, wages will fall and profits rise.’ I am sure no gentleman here, let him advocate what principle he may, would like to see realised that which is here put forward by Mr. Ricardo. I am sure that no gentleman present would wish to increase his profits by means of a reduction of wages. The question with us is this, ‘Is this statement of Mr. Ricardo’s true?’ We have contended that it is impossible but wages must fall with the undue extension of foreign trade. As to the working of the Corn Laws, suppose we destroyed the income derived from the agricultural interest—the effects of such destruction would be immediately felt in all parts of the country. We will turn our attention more particularly to that which is close under our observation—for instance the west end of this metropolis. The first consequence of diminishing the incomes of the landed proprietors would be a cessation of demand on their parts for commodities consumed by them. Amongst those by whom this diminution would be felt would be the butcher, the baker, the tallow chandler, the tailor, upholsterer, cabinet-maker, house-painter, glazier, livery-stable keeper, and others. I will allude to what the effect would be in the neighbouring district of Clerkenwell, where some of the workmen are receiving very high wages, particularly in the manufacture of jewellery and watch-making. The men would go to the west end of the town; and, upon inquiry for work, find trade getting

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Alar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboreth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

Vol. I.—No. 25.

LONDON, SATURDAY, JUNE 19, 1841.

Price 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

Sir,—The enemy of England has been again let loose upon the north!—once more he has failed to create a revolution!—The efforts of the well paid, but "honest," Anti-Corn-Law-Lecturers were not esteemed sufficient to excite the people of England to madness; hence the master of the ministry, "the member for all Ireland," was dispatched to throw his fire-brands amongst the starving, industrious, and excitable *Irish* population of Manchester! Lord John Russell was not willing that the New Poor Law should be discussed even in the House of Commons, on the eve of a dissolution, but he consented that Mr. O'Connell should try his hand with reference to the Corn Laws, on the most combustible mass of Her Majesty's subjects—the poor, oppressed, and famished *Irish* slaves of the cotton Lords! The object of Ministers was, if possible, to save themselves, by producing such a scene in Manchester, just before the fatal vote—"the want of confidence"—as would have frightened many timorous Conservatives to vote, through fear, against their consciences. They hoped to have thrown the manufacturing districts into a state of rebellion, and by that means to have escaped the condemnation of the House of Commons!—No thanks to the Government that their plot has been unsuccessful.

But what could induce Lord John Russell to muzzle the condemned Parliament on the subject of the New Poor Law? On that point there shall be no mistake. The Government and the friends of that law have ever boasted, "that the New Poor Law was founded in wisdom, that it was a benevolent measure, calculated to restore peace, prosperity, and happiness; to reduce the poor rates, raise wages, improve the condition and character of the working classes, and unite in the strongest bonds of friendship, the landlords and labourers—the employers and employed"—Such has always been their boast. They have uniformly declared that "it was really a popular measure, and that it was only Stephens, O'Connor, Oastler, and a few such mad agitators, who, for *interested* motives, were striving to excite the people against the wisest and best measure of modern legislature." I appeal to you, Sir, to Lord John Russell, and to the Poor Law Commissioners, if this is not the manner in which Ministers have invariably addressed both Houses of Parliament on that subject? Well then, is

it not very odd, that, after five years experience of the New Poor Law, Lord Morpeth is forced to acknowledge that "a deficiency exists, industry languishes, and great distress prevails?" and that, although backed by all the power and influence of both the Government and the opposition, and when the plaguy, *interested* agitators have all been imprisoned—still, Lord John Russell dared not allow that wise, beneficent, and popular law to be discussed on the eve of a dissolution? Sir, that fact proves, beyond the power of contradiction, that the people and the constituency hate, abhor, and detest that infernal law; it proves more, it establishes the fact that Lord John Russell knows that the people hate it, and that the constituencies would reject any man who had declared his friendship to that law—else, he never would have said, as he did say, in the House of Commons, with reference to the abandonment of the New Poor Law Bill:—

"In the first place, there would have been a protracted discussion without any final result; and, in the next place, with the expectation which every hon. member seemed to have, that he was to account for his conduct at the hustings, there would have been a great many motions and a great many speeches, intended rather for the hustings than for any useful purposes of legislation."

Now, Sir, that declaration of Lord John Russell proves that if he were in error formerly, he is now undeceived; that he knows well, that the constituents and the people hate that law; otherwise, why should he be afraid of the speeches of honourable members, and of their having to account for them "at the hustings?" He has resolved to carry the measure in defiance of the will of the people and the principles of the Constitution; if he should succeed, it will cost you all your estates, and many of you your heads. It is not true that Lord John Russell disliked discussion or agitation. No, no; had that been the case, he would, at the same time, have abandoned the Corn Law as well as the New Poor Law. For the sake of office, he courted the former; whilst, for the same reason, he abandoned the latter. I leave you, Sir, and the rest of your order, to describe such conduct, if you can. No language that I can use, can express the loathing and abhorrence which I feel.

But this cunning trick of the noble Lord, this base attempt to smother the truth will not avail him. It will recoil upon his own head, that head which always seems destined to lead its owner to the block. It was possible to "commission" away the character of the labourers of England—to deprive them of their constitutional rights—to surround them with spies and police; but it is out of the power of philosophy to hide the cruel workings of the New Poor Law from its victims! They feel its iron piercing to their souls! They pant for that day when they shall be enabled to reckon with their tormentors.

It was the pride, as well as the wisdom, of your ancestors inviolably to maintain the rights of the poor; it has been the disgrace and folly of this liberal age entirely to overlook them; nay, in too many instances to deprive the poor in order to enrich the aristocracy. Hence your present state of alarm and disquietude; it is the natural, the inevitable consequence of injustice. May be, you suppose, because the Government Commissioners have told you so, that the artisans and labourers are ignorant, thoughtless, idle, and desolate; that their complaints are unprovoked, and that their sufferings are attributable only to their own follies and vices—nay, that they are men of blood, that they pant for plunder, and are now hoping and preparing to enrich themselves by robbing you.

With such erroneous views it is no wonder that you hope to allay the present excitement and to silence the murmurings of the people by troops and police. You will, however, I am sure, admit, that if you should be mistaken in the character of the people, you must also err in the application of a remedy. It is because I know their real character, and that the proposed remedy will only eventually increase the evil, that I respectfully claim your attention.

I have mixed unreservedly for many years with the working men of England. I know that they are well informed, thoughtful, industrious, moral, and that they are lovers of peace. I know that they are at present enduring privations which none but the most patient class of human beings could submit to. I know that they are honest and loyal; that plunder and murder are abhorrent to their feelings; but I know also that they cannot much longer suffer themselves to be defrauded, first of their character, and next of their liberty and the just reward, the equitable value of their skill and labour. If I am correct in these views, and I know that I am, you will readily perceive that coercion by troops, and espionage by police and spies, cannot allay their excitement—nay, that such means, by increasing the national expenses, must eventually add to the miseries of the people, and thus give additional force to their just complaints. It is possible to force them to revenge; but, it is no less your duty than your interest to make friends of the working people of England; for, Sir,—you may believe it or not—you may sneer at the suggestion if you will; but you cannot shake the force or the truth of my observation—the day is fast approaching, when the Crown, the Church, the gentry, and the Aristocracy must fall, if you much longer persist in depriving the poor of their rights. It was the pride and the self-confidence of the Protestant nobles of Poland, which, in 1573, induced them to cast off the friendship of their working classes, which afterwards cost them the loss of the Protestant Religion, the Crown, and the Aristocracy, and which laid the foundation of their present abject condition. This fact I gather from the “Historical Sketch of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of the Reformation in Poland, by A. Valerian Krasinski,” (Murray, Albemarle Street, Nisbett, Berners Street,) a work which, at this crisis, when Popery is making such rapid strides, it would be well that all who love protestantism and independence should read! You did not send me here to be idle; I am lodged in prison—that I may enrich my mind, calmly examine events as they pass, and then warn you of your danger. I can assure you that the Count’s book is one of no common quality; in it, if I mistake not, our legislators will find matter of serious present concernment. I am proud that its noble author is my friend. That is no small tribute to the excellence of those volumes which I received from Dr. Maginn. It is but just to the Count that the Doctor should speak for him in my little *Fleetors*, which are intended, if possible, to save my country from the melancholy fate of *his*. I received the following on the day of its date:—

“Dear Mr. Oastler,—I have most carefully perused Count Krasinski’s work on the History of the Reformation in Poland, and have no hesitation in declaring to you what I shall I hope ere long declare to the public, that for learning and research it has never been surpassed in ecclesiastical history, while the rarity of the sources from which it is derived renders it a literary curiosity of singular eminence. It is a most valuable addition to our literature—its style is remarkable for a purity of English scarcely ever attained by any foreigner. This appears on the slightest and most

casual inspection—it is of far greater importance that the views which it adopts, and the principles which it inculcates, are soundly Protestant and sincerely Christian, both in their matter and manner. I am sure that the work is admirably calculated to do the Protestant cause eminent service; and I wish that the Count may be induced to follow up a design which he imparted to me in conversation, of pursuing his researches into the history of other continental churches.

“ This letter is written hastily, but its opinions have been formed after careful consideration, and will, I believe, be found to be accurate. As I know you have enough to do without reading long letters, I conclude this without further remarks by saying, that

“ I am, dear Mr. Oasler,

“ Faithfully yours,

“ June 5, 1841.”

“ WILLIAM MAGINN.”

It is a scandal to our nation that *such* a work—written by a foreigner in our own language, on the most interesting, and most important subject, the calm and learned review of the causes of *his* nation's fall, a lesson from experience, which England, at this moment, most needs—should be almost neglected. Had the Count been a plebeian foreign singer or dancer, he would have been flattered and enriched by your order; but, because he is a scholar, a patriot, and a Christian, he is neglected, and his labours are neither noticed nor required; still we profess to be an enlightened, intelligent, Christian people!

Well, well, the time will surely come, when patriotism, talent, and piety will no longer be despised. Do you ask why I allude to this subject? There is a cause. The power of Rome has been felt ere this on the question nearest my heart—the Factory question. Yes, Sir, when I first “ agitated ” the north on behalf of the Factory slaves, wherever I went, I was sure to find a helper in a Roman Catholic Priest. But soon after O'Connell received 1,000*l.* from Manchester, an order came from their Bishop to his Clergy, that “ they were no longer to interfere in the Factory question.” That fact was communicated to me by a Roman Catholic Priest, who regretted that, for that reason, he could not aid me. And now, Sir, when I find, after the Anti-Corn-Law-Leaguers have failed in deluding the English, that the influence of O'Connell is exerted over the poor Irish in different towns, (whom our injustice to their country has driven to seek employment amongst ourselves,) to get up an agitation against the working men of England, for the purpose of supporting the enemies of both England and Ireland, and to impoverish the empire, by forcing us to feed on foreign corn, surely, Sir, at such a time, I, who have never bowed the knee to this modern Baal, may be excused, if I urge upon my countrymen the perusal of a work which contains that instruction, which, at this moment, they so much need.

It is quite possible that some of my readers may be offended at the course which I am pursuing—my object is not popularity, it is usefulness—and when I see the giant of Popery resolved to ally himself with the most cruel and tyrannical scourgers of the human race, I must and I will speak out. True, I owe you—I owe your order—I owe the Tories nothing—but I do love my country, and her foes are yours. You will some day open your eyes, if not while I live, when I am gone. And who are those unnatural and inhuman beings, to whom *the* monster has now allied himself? Who? the Anti-Corn-Law-Leaguers? the Millicrats? “ By their works ye shall know them.” I have watched them in all their windings—they may cant, and whine, and pray, and preach, to everlasting—I *know* *them*—they can never deceive me. Their characters are written in my native coun-

ty in smoke and in blood. They are, they say, liberal and enlightened! Judge, Sir, judge for yourself.—Read the following pages, they contain a record of some of their doings copied from the authentic records of Parliament. Yet, if no one else will, I will carry the war into the enemy's camp, and grapple with the monster, hand to hand—foot to foot. He may grin and growl at me, he cannot scare me. He is cowardly as he is cruel. You have found me leisure here, I will use it, if I can, to save you and your order from perdition.—One of the victims of the Factory tyrants, Hannah Brown, says:—

“I am twenty-three years old. I went to work at Mr. William Ackroyd's worsted mill, at Odey. I began work at six o'clock in the morning, and wrought till eight o'clock at night (fourteen hours) in ordinary times. *No time was allowed for meals, either for breakfast, dinner, or drinking!* When business was very brisk we began sometimes at half-past five in the morning, and wrought till nine o'clock at night, (fifteen and a half hours!!!); sometimes longer. I remember beginning at five and working till ten at night, (seventeen hours!!!) *We had no time at all allowed for meals, even then!* I was often poorly with such a system of labour. It affected my limbs; I felt a great deal of pain very often in my legs; it produced deformity. I wrought there about eleven years. *That length of labour could not be got out of children without punishment.* Mr. Ackroyd has chastised me himself; he has took hold of my hair and my ear, and pulled me, more than once. *I have seen him pull a relation of mine about by the hair of her head!* At that mill, I repeat again, *there was no time at all allowed for meals or refreshment!*”

And yet, Sir, this same Mr. William Ackroyd who worked children seventeen hours a day, without giving them one minute for meals or recreation, and who pulled them about by the hair of the head—was a very liberal, enlightened, anti-slavery kind of man!—a patriot, christian, and all that sort of thing; and the “honest” lecturers would make us believe that it is only the Corn Laws which make him so cruel! The Irish may believe that—the English cannot. Hear another victim's tale. See how the tyrants crush poor orphans. Their “honest” lecturers say that they are kind, humane, and generous! Let William Hebden speak:—

“I live at Leeds. I shall be twenty years old 24th next July, (1832). My father and mother are both dead. I began to work in mills when I was six years old! I worked at Messrs. Tatley, Tatham, and Walker's flax-mill. I stopped there three years and a half. There we used to start at half-past five and work till half-past nine o'clock at night (16 hours). We had *four minutes* for dinner, but no time for other meals. During the latter part of the day, in order to keep us to our work, the overlooker used to come with a strap, and give us a rap or two; or if they caught us asleep, they would give us a pinch of snuff till we sneezed; they would give us a slap if we did not mind our work—it was a heavy strap, with a small handle to it; they generally struck us in the small of our back, or over the head. They struck the young children with the strap, as well as the older ones, and the females as well as the males—it was an universal system at the latter end of the day. These long hours of labour produced a weakness in my knees, I was made crooked with standing the long hours. (The witness exhibited his limbs to the Committee, which appeared exceedingly crooked.) I was perfectly straight and well-formed as a child. I recollect that I was about eight years and a half old when my limbs began to fail me!! One of my sisters is crippled, with working in a mill, nearly as bad as I am; she was originally perfectly straight and well-formed, till she was about nine years old. Then her limbs began to fail, and they are now nearly as crooked as mine. My brother and sister were also chastised, as I have described. I had my leg broken, and I was taken to the Leeds Infirmary. The way it was broken was this: the overlooker whistled with a dog whistle, he was up at the top end of the room, and we were at the bottom, and he whistled for us; and we were all running, and some of the boys could run faster than me, and they gave me a push, and the strap caught my leg and broke it. It is a common thing to whistle us up to the other end of the room, when we are wanted there. There should be

more room for the straps and machinery, then there would not be so much danger of accidents. By my leg being broken, I had to lie in bed (they let us lie in bed, when our legs are broken) four weeks. I have also had my arm almost torn off in the mill. It was when I was about thirteen or fourteen years of age. It was at the drawing rollers machinery, between the wheels of the drawing rollers: this part of the machinery might have been well guarded, but it was not. I had to go to the Leeds Infirmary to be cured at the public cost. Once, my knee was caught in the wheels, whilst I was cleaning the machinery. It was on a Saturday afternoon, and I went home. On Monday went to work till Thursday, and then it got so bad I was obliged to stay at home a week. It was a bad accident, and might have cost me my limb. It is dangerous, but it is common to clean the machinery when it is in motion."

A little more space in these mills, and a little expense in boxing off the machinery would prevent accidents. I have known many *lives* lost for the sake of saving a few shillings in fencing the straps and wheels!—But how humane to let the poor wretches "lie in bed when their legs are broken!" Mark too, the charitable institution—not the tyrant's purse, pays for the cure!—But I must not dwell—I take the cases indiscriminately, and here turns up one of the slaves of a man whom you know—he once rented a field of you—John Varley is the tyrant—Robert Colton is the slave:—

"I live at Bradford. I am sixteen years old. I began to work in a mill when I was seven years old. When I was eleven years old, I went to work at John Varley's worsted mill, at Staningly, as a piecer. In summer time, when we were busy, during the whole summer, we worked from half-past three o'clock in the morning to half-past nine o'clock at night, with only thirty minutes off for drinking. [Eighteen hours a day for a whole summer!!] I felt exceedingly fatigued at that labour. When I was at my work I kept nodding, and could not keep my eyes open, and then the other children pieced up for me, and then I was obliged to lie down on the floor, and then the man came and beat me up with a strap. I consider it a very great hardship and cruelty to be so used. *It was the usual practice at that mill.* I begged of my father, when he moved us again, *to put us to a place where they never gave over at all,* for I thought it was to little purpose going to bed for that short time. *When our young master died, they let us go and see the funeral, and they deducted us three-half-pence a piece for it! They told us to go and see it themselves, and we went two and two!!* When the children have laid them down asleep, they have gone and fetched them a cut with a big strap, and made them get up. *We were beaten constantly to our work, but most towards night. All day on Sundays we lay in bed, we were so tired.* They would have discharged me, if I had not worked the long hours. *I should have been glad to have had the privileges of a little education.* My father would rather we had not worked those long hours, nor himself either. My father wanted Mr. Varley to give him some work; Mr. Varley asked my father if he had some young children, because he would not take him unless he had some children. Mr. Varley would not have employed my father if he had not sent us to the mill. The children were all 'knocked up' by this work—they were very often badly at home—I was, also. Mr. Varley did not send for the doctor; my father did. *The doctor said it was with working too long hours, and standing too long.* Our food was brought to the mill from home; it was often spoiled with dust and dirt by standing in the mill: when it was cold and spoiled with dirt I could not eat it. *We had no wages when we were ill."*

I know these monsters well!—Aye, Sir, although they enrich themselves by such cruelties, they can be as saintly as the very elect! I have seen this same John Varley collecting at the chapel for Sunday schools, although he worked his little Factory Children eighteen hours a day!! Oh! what sights I have seen amongst *his* Factory Children! Did you ever before hear of a father wishing to have a fine long procession at a son's funeral, and then charging his slaves three-half-pence each for the time lost in attending? Parental affection and covetousness were never so blended before! I knew the "young master"—I remember

that funeral! Well may the "honest" lecturers eulogise the Factory masters! The next witness I will introduce to you is Samuel Coulson, the father of a batch of female Factory slaves; his tale is very affecting:—

"I live at Stanningley, near Leeds. I am a tailor by trade. I have three daughters who have worked in mills. The elder was going twelve, and the middle-most going eleven, and the youngest going eight, when they worked in the mill first. *In the brisk time, for six weeks together, they have gone to the worsted mill at three o'clock in the morning, and ended at ten or half-past ten at night!!—(nineteen and a half hours!!!)* The intervals for rest and refreshment were only fifteen minutes for breakfast, thirty minutes for dinner, and fifteen minutes for drinking!! During those short intervals they generally had to do what they call 'dry down' (cleaning the machinery). Sometimes this took the whole of the time at breakfast or drinking, and they were to get their breakfast or drinking as they could—if not, it was brought home. Sometimes they could not get their breakfast at all. I had great difficulty in awaking them; we had to take them up asleep, and shake them when we got them on the floor to dress them, before we could get them off to their work. *If they were five minutes too late in the longest hours, the same as in the shortest hours, they had a quarter of their day's wages taken off.* In general me or my wife got up at two o'clock to dress them!—so sometimes my wife used to stop up all night, for fear that we could not get them ready for the time!! The children were excessively fatigued; we have cried often when we have given them the little victualling we had to give them. We had to shake them; and they have fallen to sleep with the victuals in their mouths many a time! The cog caught my eldest daughter's fore-finger nail, and screwed it off below the knuckle, and she was five weeks in Leeds Infirmary: the finger is cut off at the second joint. As soon as the accident happened the wages were totally stopped; indeed, I did not know which way to get her cured, and I do not know how it would have been cured but for the Infirmary. *It was done about four o'clock, and she was stopped wages to the minute, a quarter of a day!!* She had no assistance from her employer during all that time—I had no present made on the occasion—not a farthing from any one. This excessive labour occasioned much cruelty also; with being so very much fatigued, the strap was very frequently used. Every one of my children has been strapped. I was once from home a fortnight, and when I got home I saw my eldest daughter's shoulder, and I said, 'Ann, what is the matter?' She said, 'The overlooker has strapped me; but (she said) do not go to the overlooker,' for if you do we shall lose our work.' I said, 'I will not, if thou wilt tell me the truth as to what caused it.' 'Well,' said she, 'I will tell you, father.' She said, 'I was fettleing the "waste," and the girl I had learning had got so perfect, she could keep the "side" up till I could fettle the waste; the overlooker came round, and said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I am fettleing, while the other girl keeps the other end up;" he said, "drop it this minute;" I said, "no, I must go on with this;" and because I did not give over, he took up a strap and strapped me between the shoulders.' My wife was out at the time, and when she came in, she said her back was beat nearly to a jelly; and the rest of the girls encouraged her to go to Mrs. Varley (her master's wife,) and she went to her, and she rubbed it with part of a glass of rum, and gave her a silk handkerchief to cover the place with, till it got well. Those marks had been inflicted a fortnight when I observed them. *We could not afterwards get rum to dress it with. We washed it with milk and water till it was completely well. I could not afford to employ a medical person. They were expected to lay out part of their wages under the truck system. They dealt in meat and flour, and all the other vegetables and such like, and wearing apparel. The children sometimes said, 'if we do not bring some little from the shop, we are afraid we shall lose our work.'*"

One of your tenants once told me, that John Varley threatened to discharge any of his work people who frequented his house. John having an Inn of his own.

"The children had no opportunity of sitting; during their long hours of labour they were moving backwards or forwards. I only know of one mill where they have seats, Mr. John Wood's, at Bradford."

The mention of those seats reminds me of their origin. I once told Mr. John Wood, "that without interfering with their work, the children would be much relieved if projecting seats were fixed at each end of their frames." He instantly ordered them to be provided. The Factory Children called those

little Factory seats, "Oastler's." Do you know, Sir, I have often felt pleased that my name will go down to posterity associated with that amelioration to the condition of the Factory Children.—Coulson continues:—

"At Mr. Varley's they are not allowed to talk to one another. Of course my children have no opportunity of attending a day or night school. When they went at three o'clock in the morning, my wife had to go with the breakfast about seven; then she had to go again with a little of something about ten; then the poor things were let loose half-an-hour at dinner; then she had to go again at four in the afternoon; I thought, as they were so numerically used, they must have something to eat, if we had nothing. We often pinched ourselves that they might have food: many a time a pipe of tobacco and a draught of water has been a meal for us."

Sir, I will not apologise for detaining you so long with the recital of such cruelties. Conceive anything more terribly and disgustingly cruel if you can—and remember that Charity is required to enable the monster to keep his pelf! The funds of our Infirmaries are constantly drained to save the purses of these wretches! These tyrants have forced themselves upon the notice of the nation—they have leagued themselves with England's foe—the Irish monster. Too many of your order have been seduced or enslaved by these foes to God and man!—but I know them, and they know that I fear them not. If my native country is to fall for their advancement—she *shall* know her betrayers!—if she will barter her independence for their service, she *shall* know what that service means! Once more, and, for the present, I have done. Benjamin Bradshaw, whom I well know, says:—

"I reside at the bottom of Holbeck Moor, near Leeds. I am a cloth dresser. Some of my children work in mills. I have known them, for years together, to go at five o'clock in the morning, and work till nine at night, in the woollen department, and sometimes longer than that. When my oldest boy went to work in the mill, he was a little turned seven years of age, and he got a blow with the Billy-roller, upon his loins, so that he has never been able to retain his urine for any length of time since. When I was working for Mr. Rosin, in the room underneath where I worked, frequently from seven to eight o'clock at night, you might have heard the cries of children that would have touched a heart of stone. The beating was going on so constantly. They beat them with a sirap, a sort of leathern bell. It is capable of inflicting a very serious hurt, the children are much hurt, and sometimes injured by it. *I have had my own children come home, beat with those things so severely that it was hardly possible to tell the original colour of their backs.* They beat the girls in the same manner as the boys, and for very trifling offences. When I remonstrated against this abuse of my daughter, the overlooker was not discharged; but the Saturday night following, my children were all discharged. I have witnessed, scores of times, that they have been so fatigued when they came home, that they have let the vessel, that they have been holding in their hands, fall to the floor; they could not hold it in their hands, nature has been weary and exhausted. They are subject to beating, if they are not at the mill punctually at the time; *if they be five minutes too late, they have a quarter of a day to work for nothing.* *I have known a girl of mine very severely beaten for going to the privy. In some establishments they are limited as to the number of times they may be absent for the purposes of nature, and if they exceed those times, they are severely beaten.*"

Ah! Sir, you must excuse the recital of this indecency! The audacious monster seeks to destroy the liberty and independence of my native land, and to make my countrymen his slaves! He shall be thus far known—though certain crimes of his defy rehearsal!—I have been assured by an eminent surgeon in Leeds, "that he has had several cases of death, caused by this intolerable mill practice! The children had resisted the calls of nature, to avoid the flogging; the bowels or bladder were of course severely injured, and the children died in consequence!" Such is the monster against which I war. Such is the power which has entrapped and which seeks now to destroy you.

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—Many friends wish for the particulars of why I was imprisoned by you, and why I remain your prisoner? The next number will contain your Portrait, and some account of our affairs. I fear one letter will not contain the whole—if not, I must occupy two numbers about ourselves.—R.O.

very stark, and that they would be able to procure only two or three days' employment instead of six. Upon applying again for work, they would find there were no orders; they would offer to work cheaper. Their neighbours finding the same dearth of employment, would offer to work on the same terms. So the competition of one would induce the competition of the other. This must occur throughout the country, if the farmers could not keep up the demand they had hitherto done. The answer of the political economists to this is, 'We admit it; but there will be compensations made to the country; for there will be a vast increase in our manufactures.' If that can be shown, I say they prove their case; but I can assure you, on the word of a man of honour, that there is not one of them can prove it. They admit they cannot. When I come to trace out this proposition, on which the whole question rests, I find that Adam Smith, M'Colloch, Ricardo, and Malthus say that the question admits of no satisfactory solution. What do you think that means? Clearly, that they cannot fully understand the question. It is evident, therefore, that we are called on to make this immense change, without any solid evidence being afforded us to the effect resulting to us from the change proposed. But we prove our case, and show that a general decrease must take place. I will now allude to another important point. The free-trade principle was first taken up by Mr. Huskisson. In tracing through the House of Commons this free-trade policy, I find a most extraordinary fact which is this, that Mr. Huskisson in a short time discovered the disastrous consequences of the free-trade policy and retracted—(hear, hear.) I hear a gentleman say 'hear, hear'; that gentleman may think I am not stating what is correct, but I will prove the fact by Mr. Huskisson's own words. Mr. Huskisson had proceeded with his free-trade policy up to the year 1825, when symptoms of great commercial derangement appeared. He had intended to lower the rate of duty to which Irish linen was to be subjected, and this lower rate was at last inserted by himself in his schedule of duties. The bill was in committee when he went down and asked permission to withdraw the new law which he had proposed, and uphold the value and the stability of the trade by the preservation of the existing regulation. On that occasion he gave the following reasons for this abandonment of the free principle:

"There were several circumstances connected with this particular manufacture that were necessary to be taken into consideration. In Ireland, for instance, it was conducted by manual labour alone, he might say without the intervention of any machinery. In respect of linens, therefore, it might be described as a competition between labour and labour, that most subtle between those made at home and those made abroad. But again, with regard to Ireland, the interests of which country, every gentleman must look to with peculiar anxiety and favour, it was to be observed, a great change was affecting in her linen manufacture; for machinery was now rapidly introducing itself into that branch of her trade, and a great portion of capital was coming gradually into circulation in that country; and had the foreign manufactures been admitted at the lower duty he had originally proposed, it was feared that many impediments might have opposed themselves in the progress of the improving commerce, the consequences of which would probably have been that, losing its present advantages, the Irish linen trade might never have been able to meet its foreign competitors—that this manufacture would not only not have arrived upon any favourable terms to our markets, but might have been lost to Ireland altogether. The committee must see the difficulty in which any person must stand who was in his situation. If, in the calculation of a certain revenue, a slight error happened to be committed in the original statement, and the produce was discovered to be proportionably affected or altered, nothing in the world could be more easy than to correct such an error, and the public service would be sensible of little or no inconvenience from the occurrence of such a mistake. But if, in the apportionment of duties, or the regulations of trade, wherein the interests of so many thousands were involved, such errors should happen to creep into the measures of the Government, the country would long have to brood over the serious consequences that must ensue."

"I now ask you, gentlemen, whether I am not correct in stating that Mr. Huskisson stopped short in his free policy, by withdrawing from the schedule of duties his proposed rate. I find, on examining his policy, that it was from the period to the end of his career, the same throughout, whether as regarded the India or any other trade. He appealed to the House of Commons on every occasion. I could quote from Mr. Huskisson's speeches many proofs of this fact; but I will read only one to you, and that has reference to the Corn Laws:—

"I am the first to declare my conviction, that, if from any circumstances the price of wheat were at this moment to be reduced materially below what it now is, there is nothing which could more contribute to aggravate the existing distress, and to take away the best chance of early relief."

"Sir, I say this advisedly. I say that the present average price of wheat is one which could not, in my opinion, be lowered, without producing more of suffering than of relief to all classes of the community. If the house could suddenly and materially reduce the prices of all the necessaries of life, so far from relieving, it would only aggravate the general distress, and postpone the hope of its termination. In the actual state of the foreign markets, the stagnation of trade, and the difficulties which exist universally, the effect of an increased consumption produced by such means, would be worse than useless. And here I cannot help observing, that among the difficulties of the question are the misconceptions of the consumers, on the one hand, and on the other the exaggerated fears of the growers of corn, when they compare the price of it in this country and in Poland."

"Before I sit down, Sir, I must say that some of the doctrines of my honourable friend, on the subject of free trade, are not quite just, nor well-founded; at least they are not doctrines which I have ever entertained; certainly, they are very different from those which I have expressed in this house, and they are equally distinct from the principles upon which His Majesty's Government have been guided in their recent measures, with reference to our foreign policy. My honourable friend has argued the question of free trade as if it were the absolute removal of all restrictions thrown in the way of the supply of foreign productions to the people of this country. Now this, Sir, is not my view of the question."

"Mr. Huskisson repudiated the free trade principle; he was for trying it only as an experiment, and when he saw the distress and injury it had produced, he strenuously urged the placing

every interest under due and equal regulations. I will now give to the meeting an important practical result of the free trade principle. In Doctor Bowring's speech, in the House of Commons, during the hand-loom weavers' debate, in 1825, are the following passages:—

“No one can shut his eyes to the great changes which the improvements of machinery have introduced into the whole field of manufacturing industry; improvements which, by superseding manual labour more and more, infallibly bring with them in the transition much of temporary suffering. The condition of the man who has to compete with a cheaper, better, or more rapid mode of production must be deteriorated. The national good cannot be purchased but at the expense of some individual evil. No advance was ever made in manufactures, but at some cost to those who were in the arrear; and of all discoveries, the power-loom is that which most directly bears on the condition of the hand-loom weaver. He is already beaten out of the field in many articles, he will be infallibly compelled to surrender many more.”

“I hold, Sir, in my hand, the correspondence which has taken place between the Governor-General of India and the East India Company, on the subject of the Dacca hand-loom weavers. It is a melancholy story of misery, as far as they are concerned, and as striking an evidence of the wonderful progress of manufacturing industry in this country. Some years ago, the East India Company annually received of the produce of the looms of India to the amount of from 6,000,000 to 8,000,000 of pieces of cotton goods. The demand gradually fell to somewhat more than 1,000,000, and has now nearly ceased altogether. In 1800, the United States took from India nearly 800,000 pieces of cotton; in 1830, not 400. In 1800, 1,000,000 of pieces were shipped to Portugal; in 1830, only 20,000. Terrible are the accounts of the wretchedness of the poor Indian weavers, reduced to absolute starvation. And what was the sole cause? The presence of the cheaper English manufacture, the production by the power-loom of the article which these unhappy Hindoos had been used for ages to make by their unimproved and hand directed shuttles. Sir, it was impossible that they could go on weaving what no one would buy or wear. Numbers of them died of hunger; the remainder were, for the most part, transferred to other occupations, principally agricultural. Not to have changed their trade was inevitable starvation. And at this movement, Sir, that Dacca district is supplied with yarn and cotton cloth from the power-looms of England. The language of the Governor-General is,—European skill and machinery have superseded the produce of India. The court declare, that they are at last obliged to abandon the only remaining portion of the trade in cotton manufactures, both in Bengal and Madras, because, through the intervention of power-looms, the British goods have a decided advantage in quality and price. Cotton piece goods, for so many ages the staple manufacture of India, seems thus for ever lost. The Dacca muslins, celebrated over the whole world for their beauty and fineness, are also annihilated, from the same cause.—And the present suffering to numerous classes in India, is scarcely to be paralleled in the history of commerce.—*Mirror of Parliament*, July, 1825.

“Now I appeal to every person in this room whether they in their conscience can say whether such a change as that which is here described can be required under the beneficent law of the Almighty,—whether this is a law to which we should be subjected? Here, it will be observed, that there had been no difficulty in the poor Hindoo acquiring a sufficiency of food. It follows, therefore, that the evil arose out of want of demand, his power of purchasing his food having been destroyed by this new and fatal arrangement of commerce. It was only a day or two ago that we heard of a meeting taking place for the purpose of inquiring into the cause of periodical famines in India. Without going further here is a clear and sufficient cause at once exposed. Mr. Atkinson then moved, ‘That, in the opinion of this meeting, the present state of the trade of the country, and also the wages of labour, is such as requires a searching investigation to be made into the nature of our trade regulations, in order that a just principle of protection may be applied equally to the agricultural, manufacturing, and general commercial interests of the empire.’”

ADVERTISEMENT.

On Saturday next, the 26th of June, 1841, will be published,

PRICE TWOPENCE,

No. 26, of the FLEET PAPERS,

WHICH WILL CONTAIN A PORTRAIT OF

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.,

OF RIDDLESWORTH, IN THE COUNTY OF NORFOLK.

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WITH THIS NUMBER IS GIVEN

A PORTRAIT OF

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OF RIDDLESWORTH, IN THE COUNTY OF NORFOLK.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. Oastler is "At Home" on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.

FRIEND IN THE SOUTH—His interesting communication is received. What a cruel system this *New Poor Law* has established! A poor man murdered in a workhouse! (yes, although the treatment was ordered by the board, the man was murdered,) and his widow and children silenced, fearing that complaint would ensure the revenge of the guardians and the friends of the *New Poor Law*! What will England come to next? The fact shall be published—the murder of the pauper shall be recorded in the *Fleet Papers*, although the vengeance of the triple-headed head may be the author's reward. Let them look to it—he fears them not.

L.B.C., Manchester.—Is it indeed come to this?—and in England too? What next? If this be true, it is a subject for the Parliament. An Irish Secret Society—a large body of the police being members of that Secret Society—these all Irish, and Roman Catholics, and all in league with the Cotton-Lords-Parliament; and this Irish Roman Catholic Secret Society, set upon the English operatives, led on by Cotton-Lord-Leaguers, and supported by the Police!! Is this all true! If so, the end is coming, and the question is, will the English gentry stand tamely by, to see the Anti-Corn-Law-Leaguers, the Irish Secret Society, and the Police, truss the English operatives! We shall see. Any authentic information on this subject will be thankfully received by the author of the *Fleet Papers*. Though it may be laughed at by the Secretary for the Home Department, England shall not be thus delivered up into O'Connell's hands without a murmur in the *Fleet Papers*. Surely this Manchester fact will open the eyes of the Aristocracy! We must know all about it, and tell our tale. Irish Police, Irish Secret Societies, O'Connell, Cotton-Lord-Leaguers, all now in one league against the people of England! We shall deserve it, if we tamely submit to it.

JOHN JONES, on Free Trade, shortly.

MR. OASTLER has received from Fitz Roy Kelly, Esq., Q.C., M.P., one sovereign for William Dudd, the Factory Cripple.

WILLIAM DADD, the Factory Cripple, has received from a friend, by Lord ———, one sovereign, for which he desires to return thanks.

In reply to a numerous list of kind inquirers—"How can we best serve your interest?" Mr. Oastler begs to say—by promoting the circulation of the *Fleet Papers*, and by procuring advertisements for their covers. Mr. Oastler may be allowed to add, that few better mediums for advertising can be found than the *Fleet Papers*; they circulate in every district, and amongst every rank. In the Palace and the Cottage, readers of the *Fleet Papers* are to be found. Georgians, Landlords, and Farmers, Ministers of State, Ploughboys, Factory Children, and Weavers, patronize these little *Fleeters*.

Many persons, in different towns, have written to ask "how they can obtain the *Fleet Papers*?"—The *Fleet Papers* may be had of any bookseller in the kingdom, who has an agent in London, by ordering them as all other periodicals are ordered. If persons are told, as many persons have asserted, that "they cannot be obtained," the publishers assure those parties, that the statement is not true. Second editions of the early numbers have been printed, and all orders can be regularly supplied, by application to Mr. Pavey, 47, Holywell Street, Strand; or Mr. Smill, 20, Paternoster Row.

NOTICES OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

"The FLEET PAPERS.—There are few of our readers, we apprehend, who have not heard of the name of Richard Oastler, a man as distinguished for his exertions in the cause of humanity as he is conspicuous for his patriotism and fearless advocacy of his country's rights. All who know Mr. Oastler, too, likewise know that he is at this time suffering incarceration in the Fleet Prison, at the instance of Thomas Thornhill, Esq., of Riddlesworth, in Norfolk, whom he served for many years in the capacity of steward or land agent.

"Since Mr. Oastler became a prisoner, he has found employment for his indefatigable and ever-active mind, by issuing weekly, in numbers, price two-pence each, a small publication, entitled, 'The Fleet Papers.' These papers are written and edited by himself, with the exception of occasional contributions sent to him by friends who have known him in happier hours, and whose attachment to him in his adversity is as strong as the principles which called it forth are likely to be lasting. In this publication, which consists of letters addressed by Mr. Oastler to Mr. Thornhill, the former gentleman descants with his accustomed force and freedom on the principal popular topics of the day—social, moral, and political.

"The factory system, which Mr. Oastler has invariably opposed with a zeal and perseverance peculiarly his own—the New Poor Law, towards which he has ever expressed the most determined and lasting hatred—the millocracy free-trade system, to which he has proved himself a most inveterate foe—and the Anti-Corn-Law League, whose machinations he has laid bare, and whose deceptions and attempts at humbug he has exposed, and rendered despicable in the eyes of the English operatives—are all discussed by Mr. Oastler in that fearless style for which he is so remarkable. His deep penetration, original cast of thought, and great experience on all the subjects introduced into the letters, invest them with a peculiar interest, and render them alike interesting and instructive to the general reader.

"At this moment, for instance, the doctrine of free-trade, and, as a matter of course, the repeal of the Corn Laws, are exciting universal attention,—in short, they have become objects of deep national interest; as such, they have not escaped the watchful attention of Mr. Oastler, who is ever alive to all that concerns his country's welfare. In order to give our readers an opportunity of judging of the merit of Mr. O's periodical, we copy the following extract from the 'Fleet Papers;' and as free trade and the corn laws are the subjects mooted, the reader will find them, we doubt not, both instructive and interesting:—

"Mr. Oastler goes on to state his former opinions on the corn laws, which, published at the time, have undergone no change, and congratulates himself that he has been "amongst the faithless faithful found." To prove his consistency on this subject he publishes various letters written by himself on this important subject several years ago.

"Such are the opinions of this truly philanthropic and patriotic man on the all-engrossing subjects of free trade and the corn laws; they are opinions which have prevailed in the senate, and which will, despite the millocracy and the anti-corn law league, ultimately prevail through the country as triumphantly as they have done in the Commons House of Parliament.

"We sincerely hope so active, intelligent, and indefatigable a member of society as Mr. Oastler will soon be again restored to freedom and to public usefulness. When in the possession of his liberty, this active philanthropist devoted a large portion of time in promoting the freedom and enjoyments of others, and consequently we regret, in common with many, to see him now deprived of those blessings which he sought to secure for those who were, through the harshness of bad laws and worse employers, altogether deprived of them. This grateful country can never forget Mr. O's exertions in behalf of the poor factory children—these exertions would form a bright page in his biography, and will shed a radiant halo round his name, which will exist when every earthly distinction by which we may be honoured will be disremembered and forgotten. Philanthropy, like virtue, blossoms in the dust—the lily may be crushed, but it preserves its fragrance in its fall."—*Cumberland Packet*, June 1, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS increase in value as the series go on. The New Poor Law and the Factory System are lashed by Mr. Oastler in good English style."—*Birmingham Advertiser*, June 3, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS for May, by Richard Oastler. London, Pavey, Holywell Street, Strand.—Matters of much interest are discussed in the *Fleet Papers* for May. The death of Lieut. Edwards, who perished from want in the prison, is the subject of one of them; and though the language is strong, it is not too much so for the subject. It is, indeed, a cruel thing, that, for debt, a man should have power to imprison his fellow-man till he is starved to death, as was the case with poor Edwards, who was of an old and wealthy family, a godson of the late king, and, when a child, had been a royal favourite. In his case, too, his family, even his mother, were wealthy, and yet he was suffered to perish in a prison. We cannot, however, agree with Mr. Oastler in his general censure of the aristocracy, because this worthy and unfortunate man was allowed to perish in gaol. With all our respect for our excellent friend, and our general acquiescence in his opinions, we think that when he exclaims, 'Shame, Sir, I say, eternal shame, to your order!' he is guilty of as great an injustice to the rich, as those commit against the poor, who say that they have 'no natural affection.'—The remaining numbers of the *Fleet Papers* for May are employed in discussing the free trade and corn law questions. Mr. Oastler's opinions on these questions are marked by his usual strong sense and acute perception. We fully agree with him in all he says; and the following extract, though long, is so important, that we make no apology for inserting it. We have always contended, that to the free-trading philosophers, to the monied 'har-

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."
"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."
"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break
in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 26.

LONDON, SATURDAY, JUNE 26, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—Many have been the inquiries from those who have honoured the *Fleet Papers* with their patronage—why is Mr. Oastler the Prisoner of Mr. Thornhill?—and why does not Mr. Oastler avail himself of the Insolvent Debtors Act? I had thought that the questions relating to our private matters had already been so fully and so freely discussed in the public press, at public meetings, and finally settled in the Court of Common Pleas, that it would not have been necessary that I should now trouble you with their repetition. It seems, however, that my name and principles have, in consequence of these *Fleeters*, become known to many persons who had formerly taken no notice of our affairs. In answer to their inquiries, I am bound, in this number, to leave the discussion of public questions, and to enter upon the very dry and uninteresting subject of our private matters. It shall be my care to state every fact as concisely as possible, and to divest my letter of any word that may by possibility be offensive to you. My object is not to obtain sympathy, but to give the required information. I shall venture no opinion on your conduct or my own, but simply state the case, contenting myself with a mere narration of facts. Your friends and my friends will then know why I am here, and why I remain your Prisoner.

You have not forgotten my father—he was your steward nearly twenty years. You know, and you are ever ready to acknowledge, how anxiously, disinterestedly, and faithfully he served you. At his death, without solicitation, you instantly offered me the stewardship. I was then in poverty, having lost a fortune which, by industry, I had acquired. I was of course deeply impressed with gratitude to one who, under such circumstances, provided me with a home, and entrusted me with the care and management of his large estates. The manner, too, in which you conferred that appointment, can never be forgotten by me. Even in this Cell, where I am enduring, as I believe, the undeserved punishment which your anger awards, the recollection of *that* scene is sweet to me, and forces me, in despite of all that has since occurred, still to revere the man who was *then* so noble, kind, and generous.—I loved my mother with an affection allied to worship; and when I arrived at Riddlesworth, you asked me, "Has your father left your mother in comfortable circumstances?" when I answered, "Yes, Sir, he

has." You said that which told me why you had asked. Now, Sir, life is not long enough to wear out the recollection of *that* moment. Many persons have wondered how it is possible that I should, in this Cell, retain any regard for you. Let *that*, and other instances of your friendship to me, answer. Your altered conduct may make me mourn for you; it cannot erase the recollection of such kindness. No, Sir; my father's and my mother's memory, forbid. Strange that the feeling of gratitude then implanted should have been the seed of that plant which is now bearing fruit in the Fleet! My readers will understand me as I proceed.

After you had assured me of the irreparable loss which you had sustained by my father's death, and your great regard and esteem for him, you added, "The only comfort I have is, that I have it in my power to serve his son. I never rejoiced at a man's misfortunes, but I am glad that your losses have furnished me with an opportunity of proving my regard for your father, by offering you, his son, a situation which, under all the circumstances, will be worth your acceptance." Before I returned into Yorkshire, you said to me, "Mr. Oastler, your situation will be a very important one. I am in some measure compelled to leave *my name* as well as my property in the hands of my Yorkshire steward." It is very possible that *you* may have forgotten all these expressions. I never can forget them.

With a heart full of gratitude to God and to you, I entered upon the work of my stewardship. I soon found that such an estate as yours, containing 999 tenants, many of them very, very small tenures, (but requiring no less care on that account,) situated in the very heart of the manufacturing districts—and 170 miles from the landlord—(and you know, Sir, that during the whole nineteen years when I was your steward, and for many years before, you never, for one moment, visited that property)—I say, Sir, I soon found, that such an estate, thus circumstanced, must suffer from the absence of the steward. I therefore proposed to you, that I should remove from Leeds, (in which town my father and myself had resided,) and take up my abode in Fixby Hall. Besides, in the outset, I found it necessary, in order to protect your interest, and do justice to your tenants, that my time should not be wasted by travelling to and fro. Every moment of my time was, for about two years, until I had *routinized* your business, required to be devoted to the management of your affairs.

I arrived at that lovely spot, Fixby, on the 5th of January, 1821, resolved to devote my time and talents entirely to the service of my beloved master and his tenants. The impetuous ardour of my youth had vanished. Fortune was no longer the object of my ambition. I felt myself placed in a position of great responsibility, with the power of doing much good or evil. I knew that you had then strong domestic reasons for drawing as much as possible from your entailed estates. Those circumstances no longer exist. Your kindness to me had sealed my gratitude, and I resolved, small as my salary was, (it was 300*l.* a year—I asked no more—without one perquisite; every mouthful of meat, every glass of ale or of wine, every blade of grass, and every single corn, which hospitality demanded for all who came on your affairs,—and they were very many,—I had to pay for,) by my hospitality to make up as much as possible for your absence. In one word, I determined to sacrifice all, in order that you might be saved

expense, and that *your name* should, by every one, be honoured. How I succeeded, let those of every rank who know your property answer. My first duty was to know your estate and your tenants—their hopes, and fears, and wishes: that done, to guard your interest and theirs. I succeeded to my heart's content. Never was a man more honoured, although personally unknown, than was Thomas Thornhill, Esq.—never was one more beloved than Richard Oastler. If I mistake, there are thousands who can correct me. The legal annual expenses prove the excellency of my management:—on that vast estate, for many years, they averaged less than five pounds! Yes, Sir, although I resolved that the revenues should be, as largely as possible, conveyed to you, I determined also, that *your name* should not be disgraced in your *absence* by your *resident* steward. Throughout I acted upon the principle, that “Property has its duties as well as its rights;” and, whilst you securely enjoyed your *rights*, I proudly performed your *duties*. For myself I had no care. I believed that I was settled for life; and I felt assured, if I left a widow, that you would provide for her. This I kept no secret from yourself;—what sums of money I had left to me, and what I acquired by my skill and industry, (these sums were by no means small,) I freely spent in *duties* which were yours. I felt an union to your name and family, which I thought death only could interrupt. I seemed to be one of you; and I had not forgotten what Fixby was in the days of my boyhood, before it had been deserted by its landlord. The anecdotes of the hospitality and munificence of the old Thornhills, for many generations, were also remembered by me; and, although I could not hope to revive the ancient reputation of the place, I did resolve that, so far as it was possible, the name of Thornhill should regain somewhat of its former renown *in its own district*, and that Fixby Hall should, if I had the power to accomplish it, be once more recognized as the mansion of “a fine old English gentleman.” I had heard of those of your ancestors,

“ Who kept up the old mansion
At a bountiful old rate—
And who plac'd a good old porter
To relieve the good old poor at the gate.”

And who—

“ When winter old brought frost and cold,
They open'd house to all!
Nor was the houseless wanderer
E'er driven from their hall;—
For while they feasted all the great,
They ne'er forgot the small.”

That good old song had often cheered and warmed my right true English heart, and had animated me to proceed in my resolve, come what might; and, Sir, although the end is in the Fleet, (no, not *the end*, you will some day do justice to yourself and your old steward,) but although I am, as a reward for my long and anxious services, now deprived of my liberty, and have become, at your suit, the inhabitant of a cell in a prison, I do not regret my conduct—my recollections are sweet. I know that I am beloved where most I love—amongst your tenants and their neighbours. I know also that you cannot hate me.

It was my pride to refuse every pecuniary reward offered for services which are usually charged by stewards: every one believed that my salary was 1,000*l.* a year, and I was proud that they should honour you by thinking so.

Those who live at a distance must guess — those who know the estate are fully aware, that the necessary expenses of conducting the stewardship must have been much more than 300*l.* a year. At any cost, it mattered not, I was resolved that in all things — aye, even in politics and elections — the name of Thornhill should not be forgotten. For them *you* never subscribed one farthing — in them, *I* spent, for *your name* and honour, many hundreds of pounds. I then believed that you would one day repay me — I believe so now. You knew all these things; and although you might, and did think me foolish, (for you told me so,) thus to waste my substance in your service, still you refused to accept my resignation, even when I found the expenses more than I could sustain. Until we differed about the New Poor Law, you seemed pleased with my political notions, for you caused me to be introduced to the Duke of Wellington, and you often spoke highly of my political views — nay, you once wrote thus to me:—

“Your letter, from the beginning to the end, contains exactly my sentiments and opinions both of the times and the only mode of palliating the evil. I do not mean it as any compliment to you, but I think it right to tell you, I never read so good a letter, upon so difficult a subject to discuss.”

How often were you wont to inform me, that “you perfectly agreed with my ideas, my views of things, and my thoughts about the times,” &c.

It was not until Mr. Frankland Lewis, the Poor Law Commissioner, requested “your assistance in enforcing the New Poor Law in the township of Fixby,” that you found fault with my political opinions.

I will barely allude to those unpleasant circumstances which occurred in consequence of a clergyman (as I was afterwards informed), who is closely connected with the Factory Lords, becoming your Yorkshire correspondent, and interfering in our affairs, for the purpose of undermining my influence with you. As was natural, I expostulated against such proceedings, and resigned my stewardship. It is only necessary, however, that I should here copy a part of a letter, which, after finding the perpetual annoyance of such a system of espionage, I wrote to you on that occasion, (the whole would occupy too much space); by which it will be seen that I informed you of all my difficulties, and of their causes; being willing to leave your service, rather than alter my mode of proceedings, or abandon my principles. That letter is dated Fixby Hall, June 5, 1834, and contains the following observations:—

“I have never failed to feel thankful to Providence and to you for the situation I have held under you so many years. I have exerted every power of my mind and body to act in such a way as to deserve the esteem of my master and his tenants, and I flattered myself that I had succeeded.

“When I had the honour to receive this appointment at your hands, you stated, that ‘you not only put your property under my care, but that in some measure your character would be judged by my conduct.’ I felt the responsibility, and have ever endeavoured to act to all persons in such a way as to raise the character of my master in the estimation of every one; and I do know that it has not suffered in consequence of my conduct. I never intended to mention certain facts which follow; but really, after so many communications have been made to you, I do think you will excuse my stating what I had always intended, should die with me.

“Within the last year I have received several anonymous letters, purporting to be from *your*

personal friends, dated from club-houses in London, such as 'United Services Club,' 'Brooker's,' &c., pretending to be written with the most friendly feeling towards myself—containing me against 'interfering with the mill-owners,' &c., and assuring me that 'you had often expressed to them how very much dissatisfied you were at my conduct,' &c. I only laughed at these letters, and returned them to the post office, for postage to be allowed. I knew full well, that if you had any fault to find with me, you would soon let me know, and not trouble your friends with such matters. I have no doubt these letters form a part of a plot, which is now in active operation to deprive me of my character and livelihood. I was very much gratified by the receipt of your kind letter of the 17th of April, in which you noticed my interference in politics. The reasons why I have thus interfered, were simply, because I could not witness oppression, cruelty, tyranny, and knavery, carried on under the name of Liberality; and a system of delusions, cant, and humbug practised under the sacred name of Religion. I could not bear to see the characters and property of the nobles and aristocrats attacked and plundered by a set of the greatest tyrants and knaves in existence, under the mask of Patriotism; and I was determined, if I were ruined in the conflict, to tear off the mask from those hypocrites; and from their own lives and actions, convict them of the very crimes which they falsely charged upon a class of men who I believe, as a body, are, after all, in every sense of the word, the best men in Britain. It might be my business, or it might not. I felt it to be my duty. I saw the effect that the factory system had produced, even upon your estate, and, feeling that I had the nerve, and ability, and power, I was determined to expose them. I did so—I proved to the nation what they were; and, if the aristocracy had seen their true position, and had taken advantage of the movement which I then effected, they would, by this time, have regained the hearts of the people, and would have been enabled to have carried every useful plan to restore the prosperity of the country. They would not now have been engaged in destroying the Church, and in confiscating the property of the poor, and shifting about from pillar to post, not knowing what to do, 'being at their wits-end.'

"Whatever the consequence may be to me, I shall always rejoice that I did my best to crush these hypocritical wretches. Of course they hate me, and are, I have no doubt, secretly doing what they can to injure me; but if I must die for it, I will, as far as in me lies, expose their villainy and oppose their robbery. * * * On an estate like this, where the population is so vast, and where the landlord never comes, and with the constant impression of the succession to this property on his mind, I have found much anxiety, labour, and expense, which, under other circumstances, would not have been required of me, and which I should not have felt it to be my duty to have incurred. * * * The servant of a gentleman of your rank and influence will ever find, on an estate like yours, which his master never visits, and where he has no establishment, where there is so much poverty, and in the very heart of a most dissatisfied population, many, very many requirements, which would not be expected from a steward under more favourable circumstances.

"I cannot, on any consideration, consent that *Fixby Hall* should become proverbial for meanness to strangers and callers, which it would be, if I were to allow gentlemen, tenants, &c. who come here on business to leave without asking them to take refreshments. I ever have, and I ever must treat them with civility and hospitality, according to their station in life. What the expense has been, I cannot tell; but I do know that it is many, very many pounds a year. I may be wrong in acting thus, but I could not bear to walk about as your steward, if I did not use common hospitality. Then again, it is impossible that I can live here as your steward, and shut my eyes and ears against the poor and distressed. I must and do endeavour to relieve them with money, food, and medicines, (the latter item not unfrequently costs me 25*l.* a year,) because I would rather be myself a pauper, than live here as your steward, and entirely withdraw the eyes of the poor from the ancient residence of the Thornhills. The education of the poor children, too, I dare not neglect. I have for many years maintained, at my own cost and charge, a day school for all the children of the poor who choose to come, in which they are taught reading, writing, sewing, knitting, and useful domestic occupations; and, above all, they are trained, as good Christians, to venerate the church, to honour the clergy and their superiors; and I have lived already long enough to see the good effects of this education. In fact, I do, in everything that I am able, endeavour to attach every one to *Fixby*; and, as much as is in my power, I try to make up for this neighbourhood the great loss it must experience by your non-residence. I may be wrong, but I cannot think it right for the inhabitants of this district to forget entirely that this place still belongs to a Thornhill. * *

"As to my own mode of living, I have no parties, except such as happen to come on business. One dish is all I eat from; and, whether it be warm or cold, is indifferent to me. I know that certain poverty awaits me for all this; but I always felt assured, if I died first, that you would not see my widow want, and so I cared not for money and riches.

"I had never intended to have named these things; but when I know that I am assailed by the basest and meanest characters, I must speak—I care not for poverty, but I will not suffer *disgrace*, unless I deserve it. I do really feel pain in mentioning these things; but, under all the circumstances, I feel sure you cannot but excuse me. I know that I cannot make you understand all—my poverty, my peculiar position amongst a population of dissatisfied men, a non-resident landlord, the peculiar distress of the times, all weigh against me, and compel me to suffer anxieties which I cannot explain, and which, if I could, you could not possibly fully enter into.

"As to my exertions in your business, I fear no comparison: I know that I am not idle. The mere routine of paying and taking money from so many hundreds of persons, has its labour and its risk, even if all went on smoothly; but the times have more than doubled that labour and that risk; and the death of Hamerton (my clerk and under-steward), sudden as gun-shot, has added much to my anxiety, and now the case of ——— still makes the labour, risk, and anxiety for me greater.

"But the ordinary business of the stewardship is not all: I cannot help entering into the troubles and anxieties of the tenants, who generally consult me when they are in difficulties. My object in coming here was not to make money, but to do all the good I could.

"My exertions in the Halifax vicarial tithe business cost me my health (for life) and some hundreds of pounds, which I never dared to mention to you, but without which I knew that we should be beaten. I do know, that if it had not been for my exertions in that affair, this estate, at *this* moment, would have been worth less by twenty thousand pounds than it is at present. Recovering from the illness, which was entirely occasioned by my excessive anxiety and my great exertions in your behalf in that matter, cost me, in money, more than 100*l.*; and since then I have been obliged to keep a horse, because I could not bear the walking; which horse is regularly more than half employed in leading for your work, but which I never have charged you a farthing for.

"On every occasion have I done my very best, and never rejoiced more than when I have been successful in finding property which had been lost, which I have done on three occasions to considerable amount;—and in improvements and rebuilding, I am sure that I have saved you some thousands.

"I can truly say, I never charged you one-half of my actual expenses in travelling; and at elections, I have always paid every farthing myself, though I should not have spent a farthing if I had not been your steward. I have no perquisites—no, not one single farthing. While every other steward in the neighbourhood is getting rich, I am as poor as Lazarus. I never charged a tenant a single farthing. While other stewards regularly charge for everything they do for them in the way of looking after alterations, visiting and examining premises, and arranging with the landlord, I never would receive a farthing for those things; and, as for bribes, I never had one offered, so I never had a chance to refuse one. My only pride has been to be esteemed by you and your tenants, and to do all the good I had it in my power to do. If I have not succeeded, I never can. I would rather live in a cottage, and be a labourer, than in Fixby Hall, to be despised by the tenantry, and suspected by you. The repairs of *Fixby Hall* cost me some hundreds of pounds besides what you allowed me; and if they had not been done, it would now have been in ruins.

"You must, Sir, excuse me when I write in this plain way; I have none to appeal to but yourself; and I am sure if you would for one moment place yourself in my situation, you would not blame me. I have the care of an estate, so peculiarly situated in every respect—the district, the great number of the tenants, the times, the entire absence of the owner, the unprecedented difficulties of the last ten years, the peculiar circumstances of the last twelve months, the succession, all combining to make my situation anxious and difficult. * * *

"When I look back at all I have had to go through since I came here, I only wonder that I am alive. * * * I am sure I can fearlessly assert, that no nobleman stands higher in the respect of the gentry of this neighbourhood than Thomas Thornhill, Esq.,—no place is more respected than Fixby—no tenants (after all their troubles) are more attached to a landlord, than yours on this estate, and, I will add, (because I know it to be true,) no steward is more beloved and respected than I am by the tenantry on this estate. But all this has not been produced without very great anxiety, added to much labour and expense. *My object has not been to make money.*

I have always spent much more than my salary, and hoped to have realized on my Leeds purchase before now. I have always had to borrow, to enable me to get on.—To live here, and squeeze as much money as possible out of the tenants, would not suit my feelings, and I should think you would not wish me to do so. I am satisfied that, in *the long run*, such mode of management would not be so profitable for the landlord. Be that as it may, I could not live to be a simple money-getting, money-scraping, money-hoarding earth-worm. * * *

"To leave Fixby will of course be my greatest trial. Here I have indeed been happy, and, I hope, useful. I have no place, no friend to fly to, no situation to enter on, no property to maintain me; but I can trust in Providence, and would much rather be a pauper, with a consciousness that I had tried to do my duty to you and the tenants, than go from Fixby a rich man, having cheated the tenantry, and deserved their hatred. I have now endeavoured to explain my position; but so different is this county to Norfolk, and so different also to what it was when you lived here, I fear, after all, that you will not be able to enter into my feelings. The fact is, I have to defend myself, when I feel that I rather deserve commendation.

"Perhaps, however, my whole system may be wrong. If so, I hope you will excuse it. I meant all for the best.

"I have the honour to remain, Sir,

"Your most obliged, obedient servant,

"To Thomas Thornhill, Esq.,

"RICHARD OASTLER."

49, Berkeley Square, London."

If that letter (which was forced from me, by circumstances of a very painful nature, caused by the meddling correspondent whom you encouraged,) had contained anything which was untrue, you would, no doubt, have informed me. If you had really disapproved of my conduct—nay, if you had not resolved that, at some period, you would reward me for my sacrifices—being a gentleman, as I am sure you are—you would, at that time, have accepted my resignation. Instead of which, you assured me that you could not think of our parting—and you were for years after more kind to me than ever. I may as well observe, to satisfy my readers, that there is no breach of confidence in publishing these private communications, because our letters were required to be produced by *your* attorney on *our* trial; otherwise, I should not have dared to publish one word from our correspondence. Many of our letters were read on the trial, and they were, as you will recollect, and as I thought very foolishly, published some weeks afterwards, (at the instance of your new steward,) in the *Leeds Mercury*.

You know that we were in the regular habit of balancing our accounts once every year. On the 13th of December, 1834, I met you at Riddlesworth, when, on closing the yearly accounts, I owed you 2,700*l.* 11*s.* 4½*d.*;—proving, that after fourteen years' services, I had not only spent all the money which I had received in legacies, and by profits on purchases of land, and money earned by valuations and arbitrations, but that I had also run into your debt nearly 3,000*l.* ! If I had acted dishonestly, *that* was the time you would have said so, and you would, of course, have discharged me: there can be no doubt of that. Instead of which, you refused my resignation, behaved to me in a more friendly manner than ever, and added 200*l.* a year to my salary! You then raised my salary to 500*l.* a year!! This you did with the express understanding, that the expenses of the stewardship had caused my deficiency. On December 19, 1835, we balanced again, when I owed you 2,405*l.* 8*s.* 7*d.* For this sum, you required and obtained my "note of hand." In consequence of my illness, we did not settle again, until March 4, 1837, when my debt was reduced to 2,264*l.* 3*s.* 10*d.*, and the difference between that sum and the former balance was entered as received

by you on the back of the note. On July 7, 1837, we balanced again, when I owed you 1,741l. 13s. 3d., the difference between this balance and the last being again indorsed, as before, upon the note.

I do not know that anything could be more plain and straightforward than these settlements. On each separate occasion we managed our own business, as we had always been accustomed to do, and, so far as I could discern, we were friends. I believed you to be—that which you had a thousand times assured me that you were—my “sincere friend.”

In all our subsequent correspondence, not one word passed with reference to the last balance. Nothing unpleasant occurred between us, excepting on the subject of the New Poor Law. I could not yield my conscience to your keeping—and so, without ceremony, you discharged me, in the most extraordinary manner that ever a gentleman cut off an old connexion. This was your letter:—

“To Mr. Oastler.

“49, Berkeley Square, May 28, 1839.

“Sir,—I am sorry to hear you still continue unwell. I trust your illness will not last long, as I wish you to bring the accounts to London as soon as you conveniently are able. I wish to come to a *final settlement*, as I am sorry to say that I cannot employ you any longer as my steward. I do not consider it worth while entering into the number of objections that I have; but suffice it to say, when I was induced to permit your residence at Fixby, you explained to me that no person could properly attend to my property, and do me justice, unless he gave up his *whole time* to it, and lived upon the spot. I am certain, from what I see of my various concerns, that you have not attended to them as I wish: therefore we must part. I wish you well for your own sake, and doubly so for that of your father.

“I have written to a person this day to find a steward for me, and I shall *reside myself* at Fixby as soon as you move out.

“I remain, your well-wisher,

“Fixby Hall, near Huddersfield.”

“THOMAS THORNHILL.”

Now, Sir, you know, that during the whole period of my stewardship I never neglected any part of your business—never was absent at any appointment—never left one letter unanswered.—It is odd that the balance of our accounts, the debt, is not even mentioned in this summary discharge of an old and faithful steward. Well, I received that letter, and felt relieved from a burden, the weight of which I had borne for many years—but I have never felt it since:—the anxious care of the Fixby estates. You will remember, that I immediately replied to you as follows:

“Thomas Thornhill, Esq.

“Fixby Hall, May 30, 1838.

“Sir,—I have this morning received your letter of the 28th inst. I am happy to inform you that I am fast recovering from my illness. I am, however, sorry to be obliged to say, that I am still unable to get into the office and arrange the accounts. They shall have my best attention, at the earliest time that my health will permit. I do indeed rejoice that Fixby is once more to become the residence of the Thornhills. I was yesterday informed that some person was valuing for you at Thornhill. I suppose you have made the arrangement.

“I have the honour to remain, Sir,

“Your obedient servant,

“49, Berkeley Square, London.”

“RICHARD OASTLER.”

Who could have supposed that after this cool, deliberate, and quiet arrangement, a law suit and imprisonment should have followed? I could not—I did not—no, Sir;—and I verily believe, nay, I am sure, that you did not. *Passion and misrepresentation*, have been at work, not *reason and truth*, since then.

I have no room in this number to answer those who ask, why was that the case? In a future number, I will. Till then, remember that it was gratitude for your kindnesses, and my strong old English feelings and prejudices, which have brought me here. Why I am bound to remain here, the sequel will disclose.

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—The Police, and the Irish Secret Society, and the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law-League, must, for the present, pass. I have no room.—R.O.

ques," who prey upon distress, and press misfortune still further into the earth, we owe most of the evils that are to be found in our trading and commercial systems.

"Mr. Oastler's coarse law papers should be read by everybody; they are an excellent antidote to the trash of the Sidney Smiths, Aclands, Clays, Thompsons, and others, who clamour for free trade and cheap bread, *alias* low wages."—*Hull Packet*, June 11, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS.—If the noble lord (Brougham) had been at the pains to read Mr. Oastler's *Fleet Papers*, or to ascertain that others had read them, he might have spared himself the trouble of those calculations, *ca. gr.* 'Oh, yes, it is well known that "the mill-owners are taking their anti-corn-law petitions through their mills, and are making their "hands" (boys and girls) sign them.'" So far Mr. Oastler.—*Standard*, June 9, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS.—We have received copies of several of the numbers of Mr. Oastler's 'Fleet Papers,' which treat on the Poor Law, Corn Law, Factory, and Free Trade questions with amazing clearness and vigour of thought, and with such strength of reasoning as must force his truly Christian, Constitutional, and English views and principles upon the minds of all who read his astonishing productions with the honest intention of listening in truth and reason. The 'Fleet Papers' cannot be too widely circulated at this eventful crisis; the Agricultural and Home Trade Associations should imitate the Anti-Corn-Law League, by causing millions of Oastler's papers on the Corn Laws to be circulated in all the towns in the kingdom."—*Woolmer's Rector and Plymouth Gazette*, June 12, 1841.

"To Mr. Oastler.

"7, Camden Ville, Kensington, May 20, 1841.

"My dear Sir,—I write to thank you for your last note, and to say, that I will endeavour to call upon you on Tuesday afternoon, when I shall be glad to hear your observations on my letter to you.

"We had a vestry meeting on Friday last, to oppose the building of a new union workhouse for our monstrous union of Paddington, Hammersmith, Fulham, and Kensington. The vestrymen were very much surprised to hear that a site of ground had already been advertised for, this being the first public information given to the rate-payers of the intentions of the board.

"Also, that whereas only two Kensington guardians were present, on account of a deficient election, and although the Poor Law Commissioners had ordered a new election to be made of four more guardians, to complete our complement of six, and although that election has been made, and at the time the meeting of the board was in progress, and although one of the guardians of Kensington present protested against the board coming to a decision, in the absence of the full complement of the Kensington guardians, the question was pressed and carried; and that by the votes of the guardians of Chelsea parish, who are shortly to be separated and to form a distinct union, although the same Kensington guardians protested against their votes being received in a matter that would no longer concern them."

"I was subsequently informed by a Chelsea guardian, that the act of parliament whereby Chelsea is to be formed into a separate union, was obtained on three conditions—first, that Chelsea should allow her local act to be modified, which she has allowed in such a manner as to throw herself completely under the three Somerset House Kings;—second, that the children of the different parishes should still continue united;—third, that an union-house should be built!!!—and the separation of Chelsea from the union is not provided from any particular day by the act of parliament, but it is to be dated from a day to be named by the Commissioners—with the supposed intent, that they may secure the consent of the Chelsea guardians to the erection of a new union workhouse, for a union in which it will have no further interest, and for which workhouse they will not have to contribute one penny.

"The Chelsea guardian informed me, 'that he had voted himself for the advertisement, in order to give the Kensington people and others information; but that he did not intend to give any vote, as far as he was concerned, upon the question whether the union-house should actually be built.'

"The contemplated cost of the new union workhouse is to be £0,000*l.*, of which Kensington would have to pay the greatest share, being the largest of the four remaining parishes; at present we have a very good workhouse, fully sufficient for all our poor—for which 350*l.* rent is paid yearly, and that rent is not lost to the parish, as it goes to a Public Charity belonging to the parish, on whose land the workhouse was built.

"Pro-Poor-Law and Anti-Poor-Law vestrymen all concur in deprecating this useless expenditure of our funds; but, nevertheless, the system is still upheld, by 'honest and intelligent men,' who reap, I suppose, some advantages from it which I cannot understand.

"It has struck me that a certain class of the middle order fancy they become great men by being elected as guardians to superintend the administration of the funds collected by the poor-rates for the relief of the poor.

"I remain, my dear Sir, yours truly,

"JOHN PERCEVAL.

"P.S.—My attention having been directed by this vestry meeting to the management of the union, I find that the guardians have formed themselves into committees, so that to each committee is allotted a certain number of Tuesdays in the year, which are the days on which inquiry is made into applications for relief.

"There being four committees, one Tuesday falls to each in every month.

"There are only two committees in which any guardian of Kensington parish sits on three Tuesdays.

"Therefore the interests of the poor of Kensington are unrepresented for half the year.

"To the Finance committee no Kensington guardian is attached at all.

"Certainly it may be said, that the fault lay in the parishioners of Kensington, who did not appoint a sufficient number of guardians, for it so happened, that no one took the trouble to nominate any guardian to the union; and it may be said, that the New Poor Law Commissioners have taken steps to remedy this by a new election, lately terminated.

"But if this is the sample of the system throughout the country, it must follow that in parishes where there are only two or three guardians—if there are any such, and I suppose there are.—The poor and the rate-payers of the parishes must be occasionally unrepresented on a board-day, except by the relieving officer, who has no vote. Now this could not be the case if every parish relieved its own poor. Also, though the Poor Law Commissioners have remedied the neglect of our rate-payers, it does not follow that they do so in all cases, and I question if they would have done so in this, if the two candidates had not been nominees of their favourites.—J.P."

The following letter, though published years ago, will be new to many readers, and interesting to all.

SLAVERY IN YORKSHIRE.

"To the Editor of the Leeds Intelligencer.

"Dear Sir,—I was lolling in my great arm chair, musing on the contents of a letter I had just received from my good friend Michael Thomas Sadler—it was descriptive of the strong concentrated opposition with which he is beset in his philanthropic cause of emancipating the poor little factory slaves. My blood was boiling to think that oppression was not yet satisfied with all the undeserved cruelties it had inflicted on defenceless infancy—with all the infants' blood it had turned to gold. 'In the name of justice,' I said, 'it shall not—cannot be.' I was listening, as I thought, to the responsive vow of every parent's heart—'IT SHALL NOT BE'—when I heard a gentle tapping at the door. On turning round I saw a little boy, just ten years old, who asked—'Is Mr. Oastler here?' I told him who I was: he said—'You want to see, me, Sir.'—'What is your name?' I asked. 'They call me Edwin Edwards; I live at Far Town,* Sir.'—'Oh yes, my boy,' I answered, 'I do want to see you, and to hear you also. I have heard of your great sufferings—do tell them yourself.' The little fellow then sat near me. Nature had given him laughing cheeks and smiling eyes, but cruelty had changed their aspect; his face was marred by the thong of oppression, for many stripes were there, caused by the factory strap. His back was chattered by heavy stripes, inflicted by the hand of the slubber; and he was 'a free born Briton,' too, but he was poor and helpless. Hear, Sir, his own artless tale.

"I work at Bradley Mills. A few days since I had three 'wretched cardings,'† about two inches long. The slubber, Joseph Riley, saw them, showed them to me, and asked me 'if this was good work.' I said, 'No.' He then, in the billy-gait, took a thick round leather thong, and 'wailed' me over the head and face, for, I think, a quarter of an hour, and for all my cheek and lips were bleeding, he 'wailed' me on, then sent me to my work again, and I worked till a quarter past 7. I went to the mill at half-past five in the morning—he 'wailed' me a bit past one in the afternoon. I worked in my blood—as I worked, the blood dropped all in the piecing gait! My right cheek was torn open, swelled very much, and was black. My lips were very much torn, and each of them as thick as three lips. He lashed me very hard over my back, too, in all directions; but the skin was not torn, because I had my clothes on—he has many a time strapped me before till I have been black—he has often struck me over the head with the billy-roller, and raised great lumps with it. At one time when I had 'little flyings,'‡ which I could not help, he took me out of the 'billy-gait,' lifted me into the window, tied a rope round my body, and hung me up to a long pole that was sticking out of the wall, and there he left me hanging about five feet from the floor. I cried very much, and so in about ten minutes he took me down.

"ENGLISHMEN! ENGLISHMEN! this child is Ten years old!—this child is poor! I make no comment, but ask you, Will you live amidst such infamous tyranny, nor raise your voices, nor subscribe, even from out of your poverty, to rescue from the hands of the destroyer such helpless babes as these? Look on your own sweet little ones, and tell me, would you call me 'mad,' were THEY thus slaves, and I resolved they should be free?

"If you can find room for the above in your next paper, you will much oblige, dear Sir, yours, sincerely,

"Fixby Hall, Huddersfield, May 20, 1832."

"RICHARD OASTLER."

* About a mile from Huddersfield.

† 'Cardings' are the small lengths of wool laid into the machine to be spun into yarn. When they are called 'wretched cardings,' they are stretched, and make the thread thinner, so that in this case, about six inches of yarn was injured, and this gentle punishment was the consequence.

‡ When a part of the wool sticks out from the yarn, it is called a 'flying,' this the child cannot always prevent.

Just Published, Price One Shilling.

A NARRATIVE OF THE EXPERIENCE AND SUFFERINGS OF WILLIAM DODD, a Factory Cripple. Written by himself. Giving an account of the hardships and sufferings he endured in early life, under what difficulties he acquired his education, the effects of Factory labour on his mind and person, the unsuccessful efforts made by him to obtain a livelihood in some other line of life, the comparison he draws between agricultural and manufacturing labourers, and other matters relating to the working classes.

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THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY
JOHN PAVEY, 47, HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND,
AND
BENJAMIN STEILL, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. OASTLER is "At Home" on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.—Mr. Oastler's health requires that he should entirely refrain from receiving the visits of his friends on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

WILL WATSON shortly.

WILLIAM DODD, the Factory Cripp'le, returns thanks to a Clergyman for five shillings, which he kindly sent to Mr. Dodd's lodgings; and to J. P., Esq., Kensington, for ten shillings, which he sent by Mr. Oastler.

"A KENTISH-TOWN CHARIOT" is thanked for the *Morning Chronicle* of May 28, 1841, in which the following letter is inserted:—

"To the Editor of the *MORNING CHRONICLE*.

"Sir,—In a free country it is the privilege of every class in society to have its public organ, and it is satisfactory to know that dulness and prejudice have their mouth-piece as well as truth, progress, and common sense. It is on this account that I have always regarded the *Standard* the representative of the ignorance and selfishness of the community, as a journal not only to be tolerated, but even respected. Every portion of our fellow subjects are entitled to a free and full expression of their opinions, or of their absence of any opinions at all; and in becoming the organ of the avarice and omniscience of society, your contemporary has the satisfaction of knowing that it is supporting, if not a very large, at least a very influential section of the community.

"But even ignorance itself—at least London ignorance—has been so often imposed upon, that experience has given it a quickness of vision in the detection of cheats which makes the practice of imposters by no means so successful as might have been anticipated, from the imbecility of their natural victims; and I had expected that even the *Standard* would have escaped becoming the dupes of one of Richard Oastler's 'begging letters.'

"For what is that man in gaol? He was entrusted by his master with the collection of his rents, and has put them into his own pocket. It is that steward whom the *Standard* proclaims as the champion of the aristocracy, and the great truth-speaker of the time. How I have attracted his notice I cannot say; but I could have wished he had chosen some time when I was more at liberty to attempt to make political capital out of my sayings, as the means of getting the Duke of Buckingham to pay his debts.

"I have only time to say that the two-penny *Fleet Paper* report of my lecture at Chelsea is a most egregious hoax, which I could not have believed would have gone down even the wide gullet of the *Standard*. As to the epithet which the *Standard* itself applies to me, I should blush to resort to language of which a man would be ashamed, and which can only be used by one who has no pretensions to the character of a gentleman.

"I am, Sir, your very obedient servant,

"SIDNEY SMITH."

OBSERVATIONS.—I had long been waiting for the sight of this letter. I had hoped to have found some argument in the "honest" lecturer's epistle in support of the slaughter-house mill and mercantile system, which dignifies itself by the name of "Free Trade," and fumes

and frets at every restraint which Mercy and Justice would attempt to interpose in defence of the honest, but humble artisans, and shop-keepers, and domestic manufacturers;—that system of fraud and plunder, which has dug the grave of the old respectable English merchants, and which has transformed English manufacturing into deception and blood-letting, and English trading into fraud and blood-sucking;—that monstrous system of tyranny, cheating, and monopoly, which is ever prating about “liberal and enlightened measures,” “free trade,” “free labour,” and I know not what, and which, after all, produces and nourishes such monopolizers as England never saw before, in the very persons of those braulers against monopoly!!!

My readers will agree with me, that Mr. Sidney Smith has not ventured one word in defence of his Chelsea speeches, or of the boasted system of free trade. I am, therefore, spared the labour of proving that it is wiser and safer to grow corn than to buy it. That so wise and disinterested a lecturer should have discovered that the editor of the Standard is “ignorant and selfish,” will surprise all who happen to have observed the productions of the accuser and the accused. That the “honest,” itinerant, and well-paid lecturer of the Anti-Corn-Law-League should assert that “Richard Oastler is in gaol for having put his master’s rents into his pocket,” will astonish none more than that master and his tenants. It can, however, surprise no one, that the paid agent of those who are aiming at the destruction of the aristocracy, the farmers, the domestic manufacturers, the shop-keepers, and the working classes, should level his poisoned arrows at one who is suffering for his attachment to all those “orders.” But wise as is this Mr. Sidney Smith about other people, it would seem that he is not at all aware of his own proceedings, for he declares, that “he does not know how he attracted my notice.” Now I have already said, that I was attracted to his lectures “by seeing a placard posted in all directions, giving notice that Mr. Sidney Smith would lecture on the Corn Law question on the evening of April 8, 1840, at the White Hart Inn, Chelsea.” He must have known that he had thus invited the inhabitants of Chelsea to hear his lectures. But Mr. Sidney Smith (being ashamed of his own falsehoods and blackguardisms when reduced to print) hopes to escape censure by saying, “that the twopenny Fleet Paper report of his lecture at Chelsea is a most egregious hoax.” Foolish man! there were many hearers besides myself. That his lecture was indeed “a most egregious hoax” upon the people of Chelsea, there can be no doubt. That my report is correct, to the very letter, I am certain. It is a report taken by myself at the time. I have read my notes to several persons who have listened to Mr. Sidney Smith’s ravings, and they affirm that the style and matter is such as they have heard him spout at different meetings. That Mr. Sidney Smith should be ashamed to see his “most egregious hoax” in print, proves that he has still remaining the remnant of a conscience. That he said every word reported by me, I am sure: let him, if he thinks it worth while, publish his two Chelsea speeches, he can have no difficulty, he was plentifully supplied with notes, letters, memoranda, &c., and was evidently repeating a tale a hundred times told. When those speeches are published, Mr. Sidney Smith will find therein every word which I have reported.

Until I read Mr. Sidney Smith’s letter, I had never thought about “the Duke of Buckingham paying my debt.” The Duke (whom I have not the honour to be acquainted with) has, I dare say, much better employment for his money—if not, he has only to consult me, and I will tell him how to dispose of his money to better advantage than “paying my debt.” But I really do think that I deserve a gold medal or a handsome piece of plate from the Agricultural Society, for having unkenelled a mischievous NAT, whilst he was nibbling a hole at Chelsea, under the ENGLISH CORN-CHEST, and was intending to dribble its contents into the pockets of foreigners. I hope some of the members of that Society will some day do me justice. I thank Mr. Sidney Smith for the hint.

I am glad, however, that the “honest” lecturer is ashamed of his own speeches; and I can assure him, that I rejoice to be evil spoken of by one who lives upon wicked, malignant, spiteful, and “most egregious hoaxes.”—R.O.

In reply to a numerous list of kind inquirers—“How can we best serve your interest?” Mr. Oastler begs to say—by promoting the circulation of the *Fleet Papers*, and by procuring advertisements for their covers. Mr. Oastler may be allowed to add, that few better mediums for advertising can be found than the *Fleet Papers*; they circulate in every district, and amongst every rank. In the Palace and the Cottage, readers of the *Fleet Papers* are to be found. Clergymen, Landlords, and Farmers, Ministers of State, Ploughboys, Factory Children, and Weavers, patronize these little *Fleeters*.

Many persons, in different towns, have written to ask “how they can obtain the *Fleet Papers*?”—The *Fleet Papers* may be had of any bookseller in the kingdom, who has an agent in London, by ordering them as all other periodicals are ordered. If persons are told, as many persons have asserted, that “they cannot be obtained,” the publishers assure those parties, that the statement is not true. Second editions of the early numbers have been printed, and all orders can be regularly supplied, by application to Mr. Pavey, 47, Holywell Street, Strand; or Mr. Steill, 20, Paternoster Row.

NOTICES OF THE “FLEET PAPERS.”

“The FLEET PAPERS.—We beg to refer our readers to the lengthened extract in our supplemental sheet, from one of the recent numbers of Oastler’s celebrated *Fleet Papers*. It is one of the finest exposures of the horrible iniquities of the factory system which has yet proceeded from the pen of the venerable and truly English-hearted author, and we hope will have due perusal.”—*Liverpool Mail*, June 22 1841.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboreth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people. He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

Vol. I.—No. 27.

LONDON, SATURDAY, JULY 3, 1841.

Price 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—In my last, I hinted that we had never any difference or politics, save on the New Poor Law. I was fully aware of the influences by which you were surrounded, and how they tended to annoy you, with regard to my proceedings in opposition to that accursed act. I knew how anxious the Poor Law Commissioners were to plant their standard in Fixby, and that they hoped, by your aid, to silence me. The direct influence of your old college friend and Poor Law Commissioner, Frankland Lewis, was well supported by many influential and distinguished individuals with whom you were on terms of intimacy. I was not ignorant that you had determined, "if I would not cease my opposition to the New Poor Law, that you would discharge me;" and that, at your table, bets were regularly made, as to whether I would yield or not—*i.e.* "whether, on such a day, I should continue to be your steward"—*discharge* having been declared, by you, to be the penalty of my refusal to obey the New Poor Law Commissioners, and to help them to enforce the New Poor Law in Fixby. All these things were well known to me. They were regularly communicated to me by your friends, who were anxious that I should yield, and retain the stewardship. But, so sure was I that justice and truth were on my side, I remained unmoved, dreading no consequences which might await a steady and unflinching adherence to principle. At length you, through me, sent an order to your tenants "to appoint a guardian under the New Poor Law." That order I delivered. I had never interfered to prevent your tenants acting according to your wishes; it would have been unjust to you and to them, to have intercepted your communication. You next discharged me, after the manner stated in my last—proving thereby, not the justice of your cause, but the power of an aristocrat, urged on by a Poor Law Commissioner.

It may not be improper here to state, that I always warned the tenants respecting the consequences which might follow their refusal to submit to the New Poor Law Commissioners, and I never wished them to risk your displeasure by opposing the three Kings.

Although your letter of May 29, 1838, might be expected to take me by

surprise, such was not the case. I was, as I have just stated, cognizant of your fixed determination to discharge me, if I continued to resist the New Poor Law Commissioners. I had weighed the matter coolly over, and had resolved, at all losses, to abide by my principles. I had made no secret of the matter, and had told the tenants and Mr. Chadwick (your under-steward) that "I expected every letter from you would contain a notice of your determination to part with me." I did, however, expect a little notice; but when I reflected that you were acting under the influence of the New Poor Law Commissioners, I was not surprised that you should waive the usual courtesy between master and servant.

Many persons who had opposed my views on the Factory and New Poor Law questions, were unwilling to believe that I was sincere in my professions. They were so foolish as to fancy that I was urged on by you, and that my proceedings were intended to serve the interests of a political party:—it was therefore necessary that I should give proof of my sincerity, by sacrifices of no ordinary nature. Those persons who suspected me, have long since been convinced that they were mistaken. I know that, whether my political views have been right or wrong, I have always embraced them honestly, and that I have pursued them disinterestedly. Nay, this cell testifies that profit and gain have not been my object. And yet, Sir, how is it? I never was so happy—never was I so sure that I am right—never had I so clear a prospect of usefulness—never was I so certain of victory. When you consider the cruelty, power, wealth, and influence of the monsters against whom I have maintained, for more than ten years, a stand-up fight, you cannot make a boast of "my capture." Remember, I am not slain—still I am in the field against them, till death or victory shall end the strife? The latter seems smiling on me—even in prison, almost within my reach!

Many persons thought that I was your slave, and that I dared not to tell you my mind—that I was a fawning sycophant, who was afraid to speak the truth. The following extract will prove if I were in the habit of hiding my sentiments from you;—it will show if I did not as boldly assert my principles, and maintain the rights of the poor, in presence of my master, as when I was addressing the public. You know that I never had two faces: my very enemies will some day be forced to give me credit for honest intention, and bold, energetic, persevering action. On the 16th of November, 1837, after writing a long letter to you on the business of the estate, I find myself concluding after the following manner. The publication of thus much will be sufficient, as a sample of my communications to you on public matters. May I request that you will attentively peruse my *then* sayings, *now*?—you will find them stamped by time with truth—you will perceive that my warnings, although despised, were not unnecessary: perhaps they may not yet be palatable. The time will come when "your order" must embrace my views, or they will fall. These were my remarks:—

* * * * *

"I have never yet known money so scarce as now—never was there so much poverty and misery. I do not care what the newspapers say about prosperity, the people are absolutely starving, and that is all about it. The numbers of poor, wretched, famishing creatures, who daily throng my door, for 'a piece of bread,' absolutely make me melancholy;—and yet we are told that 'all is

prosperity? The thing will end its level in the end, and then it will be seen if I have been a fool or not.

I am quite sure you have a strong 'feeling for the poor'—I am certain you would feel as *liberally* as I do, if *circumstances made you acquainted with the same facts*. You know what it is to *receive the rents*—I know the labours, the anxieties, the bewilderments, the torture of mind, endured by those who have to *pay* them. I know what it is to exert honest, industrious talents, both on your estates and on others, *forced to sell useful cattle, say, even to forestall their crops, and then to borrow (if they can), and if not, to be in arrears, and to be constantly afraid that orders may some time come to have them sold up, and then to be driven away*. I know all this—I live amongst it; and I have endeavoured to *sooth, and not to frighten*. But I do know, that where *industry is rewarded by poverty and want, very soon property will be worthless*. A better race of men never lived than the tenants of THOMAS THORNTON, Esq. It has been my duty and my delight to teach them to honour you; and I have succeeded: but if the damnable New Poor Law is to be *forced upon them*—a law which our forefathers would have spurned, with its twin-sister the Rural Police, (*alias universal spies*)—if the reception of that law is to be the *price of holding your land*, then I pray, that rather than this race of real Englishmen should be thus enslaved, may your land be untenanted. I do love and honour you—I have need to do so; but I love my country more—I value the constitutional rights and the true English character of the tenants more than my own private emolument. I have the opinion of the Earl of Eldon on that law, and I will die before I will submit to its horrible enactments.

If it be enforced in these districts, it will light a candle in England which will not easily be put out. You may depend upon it, if that law be attempted to be enforced, the question of 'the right of any man to receive rent' will follow, and then 'reform' will no longer delude the nation.

'The New Poor Law was intended to be a dagger for the poor, and a blight upon industry—if persisted in, it will prove the grave of property, and the ruin of the aristocracy! It is impossible that any man can honour another more than I honour you, but I cannot hide the truth from you—whatever risk I run, I will speak the truth; and it is true, that the sending of your agricultural labourers into the manufacturing districts, under the accursed Poor Law, has done more to revolutionize those districts, than could have been done, in an age, by any other means. You say, very properly, 'that your property is your own, and that no one has a right to dictate to you concerning it.' Agreed; I do not dispute the fact. But when I see your property endangered, it is my duty to say so, and to give my reasons for saying so. I have never disputed your right to act as you please; but I should be an unworthy servant, if I feared to tell you all I thought about the management of this estate. If you discharge those tenants because they hate the Poor Law Commissioners, in my opinion, you will do a very unwise act. You must excuse me. It is still true, 'the head cannot say to the feet, "I have no need of you."' I cannot hide the truth from you: we do hate most cordially the accursed law, and its officers.

'I cannot agree with you when you say, 'that if the tenant could get a better take elsewhere, he would not live under you.' That is altogether a mistake. I could give you many instances that the good old feeling has been cherished by your tenantry; we often sing the song of the 'Fine old English Gentleman,' and I have always tried to shadow him—that is, to remind them, as much as possible, of him. This is no joke;—the tenants are as proud of being under 'Squire Thornhill,' as if the land were their own—though most of them have never seen their 'Squire.' I have sacrificed everything to maintain this feeling upon the estate, and I rejoice that I have succeeded. Let what will happen to me, I will be proud of that. Thus, as to 'the lowest class,' you 'may employ a workman in the field for as little as you can in other counties.' Yes, I could now hire MEN to work in the field on a pittance that would starve them; but I cannot see either the wisdom or justice of doing so. The men who are thus robbed of their wages—for it is robbery, and nothing else—cannot be expected to work well; they cannot be trustworthy. The men I employ are, as it were, heirlooms on the estate. Generation after generation have they, and their wives, laboured on this soil; and shall I reduce them to the wages of their forefathers, when the rent is increased fivefold? I really cannot do this; and were you here, and knew them, I am sure you would not. Some of them, in better times, have had higher wages offered; but they would not leave here—it would be cruel now to lower them. I cannot see how a man can live here, and keep his family respectably, on less than 15s. a week; and to employ them to starve, is neither safe nor just. I know that some exist, they do not live, on four or five shillings a-week. But if this be the real value of labour, (four or

five shillings a-week,) how can the value of property be maintained? IT IS IMPOSSIBLE. * * * I am sure you wish people to live under you, and not to starve to death, in their labour.

"The real truth is, Sir, that the present system, patronized by O'CONNELL and Russell, and which is forced upon Her Majesty's Government, is to *establish Popery, to centralize Power, (and thus destroy for ever the local influence of the Aristocracy, Magistrates, and Landlords,) and to concentrate Wealth;* and thus to degrade the Aristocracy of birth and blood, and raise in their place a dung-hill brood of misers. Against all this I war, to my own ruin, in the very camp of the enemy, and under the frowns of my aristocratic master. I cannot, however, refrain—I am an Englishman.

"It is singular that I should be maintaining my views, in the very heart of the manufacturing districts, in the very soul of 'humbug and dissent,' and that I should grieve an aristocrat. But, so it is. If any man ought to be supported by the Aristocracy and the Landlords, I am that man. But they are fast asleep, and Sir ROBERT PEEL is, in reality, helping O'CONNELL to cut off their locks. That is all true, and some day you will believe it. I hope you will forgive me; I could not avoid making these remarks.

"I have the honour to remain, Sir,

"Your most obliged, obedient servant,

"Fixby Hall, Nov. 16, 1837."

"RICHARD OASTLER."

There are many things, after reading that letter, which I feel strongly tempted to enlarge upon—particularly the great relative difference between *rents* and *wages* now and formerly—the already exploded system of migration—the close connexion between centralization, (the destruction of all local influence and self-government,) and the establishment of Popery. The late proceedings of O'Connell, the Irish Secret Society, the Police, and the Anti-Corn-Law-Leaguers in Manchester, have read us a serious (God grant that it may prove a useful) lesson, on the latter subject. I say, Sir, I feel tempted to dilate on those and other points; but, wearisome as my present duty is, I must perform it. Many of my readers wish to know all about our affairs connected with my imprisonment, so I must do violence to my own feelings, and obey their will.

Finding myself so unceremoniously discharged from your service, I resolved to return what I conceived to be unkindness, by an endeavour on my part to render your new steward's duty as easy as possible. I offered him bed and board at my expense in Fixby Hall, and also to introduce him to all the tenants, and to give him every information. I assured him that he had entered the service of a good master, and that the Fixby tenants were the best race in England. Had he been my son, I could not have treated him with more cordiality. As soon as my health enabled me, I proceeded with the accounts, in the presence of Mr. Chadwick, being resolved that he should go through them, line by line, so that he might be as well acquainted with them as myself, and thus your affairs should not suffer by my absence.

Mr. Chadwick's illness and his other engagements delayed the preparing of the annual books for your auditing and settling. You and I exchanged several civil, nay, kind letters, during this interval: but, unhappily, our friendship was interrupted by an event as unexpected as it has since proved to be "untoward."

It so happened, that my friends, wishing to testify their attachment to me, resolved that I should not leave Fixby alone. They determined, that when I left that loved spot, they would accompany me. A procession was determined on; and at least one hundred thousand persons were engaged that day in

proving their attachment to me. Now such a procession could not be arranged without a committee—the committee issued a placard—in that placard some expressions, offensive to yourself, were inserted. When a few copies were sent to me, I returned them to the committee, stating, that “I could not distribute any document reflecting on you.” You received a copy of that placard—you believed that I was the author of it; and you caused a letter to be inserted in the Yorkshire newspapers on the 25th of August, 1838, (the day on which I left Fixby,) charging me with crimes of which I know that I was innocent; which letter entirely prevented any further intercourse of a friendly nature. I refrain from inserting that letter, and the one which you published along with it in the *Halifax Guardian*, or mine to you in consequence, because I do not wish to revive, in the *Fleet Papers*, feelings which caused me much pain, and from which I am, thank God, now entirely delivered.

Suffice it to say, that although I was proceeding with the arrangements and settlement of the books and accounts, and was preparing to pay you the balance, (if you had thought proper to accept it,) that letter of yours caused me to consult counsel, who advised me to take all the books and papers relating to my stewardship, to enable me to defend myself against your charge. I was advised, also, that I could not, after your letter, meet you to settle our accounts, unless you would withdraw your charge.

I give no opinion who was right or who was wrong—I merely state the facts. That letter was the only cause of our misunderstanding; and I know that I never gave you cause to write it.

I shall never forget the day on which I left Fixby Hall. The people loved me, (yes, Sir, and they love me still,) and demonstrated their love by sympathy, and such marks of affection as were never before given to a man under such circumstances. The following account of my retirement from your service, by an eye-witness, will gratify many readers. It is not unreasonable that such an event should occupy a little space in the *Fleet Papers*:—

“On the 25th of August, 1838, Mr. Oastler took his final leave of that ‘lovely spot (Fixby) which, to use his own words, must have been rendered twice dear to him from the memory of his father, and the recollection of his boyhood, where he used to spend his holidays.’ What must have been his feelings on the occasion, we will not attempt to describe; every one, however, must have perceived that he was deeply affected, whether from the circumstance of leaving an abode endeared to him by all his early associations, as well as by a long life of arduous exertion, or whether from the overwhelming manifestations of public kindness and attachment, it is impossible to say. During the greater part of the day previous to the time appointed for Mr. Oastler’s leaving Fixby, Handsworth exhibited an unusually busy appearance, and great numbers of persons were seen walking about the streets, evidently waiting with much anxiety till the hour should arrive when they should constitute a portion of that assembly which was not merely to show a passing mark of respect to a man, in every way worthy of being esteemed and loved, but to receive and adopt him for their own friend and father, and as their leader in that mighty struggle against oppression, in which he has already given such signal proofs of his constancy and valour. From three to five o’clock, (the time appointed for the procession to leave Fixby Park,) the several roads leading to the Hall were covered with people making the best of their way to the place of general meeting. During this time, the spacious lawn in front of the Hall was covered with the anxious, though sorrowful throng, many of whose faces betokened a degree of sorrow which perhaps could alone be excited by the recollection that they were (in a sense) about to lose a friend endeared to them by almost every tie that binds humanity—a friend in whose bosom they could always meet with the kindest sympathies

—whose kindness and frankness was such as almost to win every heart, and in whose loss they sustained a calamity which he alone, in all the manifestations of his undeviating friendship, could possibly avert. Early in the afternoon, several volunteer bands were in front of the Hall; and the airs which they played sometimes seemed to give a melancholy sadness to the scene, and to add a greater acuteness to the anxiety of the sorrowing multitude; while at other times their sweeping tones, rolling along the valley, and echoed from the hills, seemed to indicate the glorious triumph of honesty and freedom over tyranny and oppression. Before the bands a number of flags were carried, on which were imprinted inscriptions testifying the high esteem in which Mr. Oastler was held by the people: A small cannon was placed on the top of one of the eminences in the Park, which saluted the several bodies of men as they came into the park to swell the mighty throng. The scene at this time was peculiarly interesting. Men, women, and children were moving about in all directions; horses were prancing with their riders; flags, almost innumerable, were fluttering in the breeze; a great number of bands were playing in different parts of the Park; and the loud roar of the cannon now and then thundered on the ear. At last the moment arrived when Mr. Oastler made his appearance at the door of the Hall. A neat open carriage, to which were yoked four handsome greys, was drawn up to the door, but Mr. Oastler requested that the two leaders might be taken out. He shook hands with the servants, who had arranged themselves in the entrance Hall. At the door, his faithful dog (a fine St. Bernard) was waiting; as if by instinct, he solemnly raised his paw, which his master shook most heartily, and smiling mounted the carriage, accompanied by Mrs. Oastler, Miss Tatham (their adopted daughter), and Mr. William Stocks, jun., amidst the loudest and most enthusiastic cheers, which were several times repeated; and the clapping of hands which followed was literally astonishing. The procession was then formed, and proceeded through the Park to the Lodge. In the procession were observed a number of carriages, phaetons, gigs, and gentlemen on horseback. When Mr. Oastler arrived at the Lodge, he rose in the carriage, as if to take a last farewell of the beloved spot where he had spent so many of his early and his maturer years. He looked—he sighed—he wept, and thousands with him wept. For a few moments there was a solemn, silent pause. Scarcely a breath was heard. Then burst the loud ‘huzza,’ and the procession moved along, going down Lightridge Lane, amidst loud and continued bursts of applause. Rich and poor, young and old, came from their habitations to salute the unflinching advocate of constitutional liberty. Vast numbers were seen in the distance, advancing to meet and join the procession, which was now extended to a surprising length, and in which, we are proud to say, was a great many additional bands, all of whom volunteered their services free of charge. On arriving at Clough House, Mr. Oastler was saluted by the inhabitants, who came forth to meet him, and again the air was rent with cheers. Many of the cottagers, on both sides of the road, were either at their doors, or looking from their windows, whilst they ceased not to cheer the man for whom they entertained such an evident respect. Mr. Oastler received similar demonstrations of attachment from the inhabitants of Hill House, which he acknowledged in a suitable manner, as indeed he did all the other demonstrations of attachment. The view of the procession in Hill House Lane was truly imposing, the roads being thronged in every part with anxious and wondering spectators. On entering Huddersfield, which was about seven o’clock, the scene became truly affecting; the multitude cheered, the music played, and every spot, even the house-tops, was covered with people. As the procession entered the Cow Market, it was welcomed by a number of children, who were placed on an elevation, and who sung a sweet little piece, called ‘Oastler is the man.’ In Castlegate the cheering was tremendous; and the windows on all sides were thronged with spectators, who waved their handkerchiefs in token of sympathy and affection. The procession then moved along King Street and New Street amidst continued cheering. Many of the windows were occupied by ladies, who waved their handkerchiefs as Mr. Oastler passed. The procession then moved along High Street, Market Street, and Kirkgate, into Cross Church Street, and thence into a spacious plot of ground near to St. Paul’s Church, where a hustings was erected. For a considerable time before the procession arrived, great numbers of people were congregated in this place; and when the procession came up, the rush was tremendous.”

Then followed some speechifying from myself and friends, the presentation of several addresses to me from different towns, and the passing of resolutions declarative of the confidence of the people in your old cast-off steward. Indeed

I should be an ungrateful man, if I could ever forget that day. Its recollection cheers my prison hours. Nay, Sir, such feelings must be remembered in Heaven.

I afterwards wandered about, with Mrs. Ostler, to many places, in search of health. Everywhere we met with friendship and sympathy, which quite astonished us: even my political foes became my friends. In every company, the *chief seats* were assigned to us. I always informed your under-steward, Mr. Chadwick, of my movements, in order that, if it were needful, he might communicate with me. At last, we visited that sweet, lovely, enchanting spot, Rhyl, near St. Asaph, North Wales. I never breathed such air—I never met with kinder friends. On the 17th of October, 1838, I opened a letter from your attorney, demanding the balance of account, and adding—

"I lament to hear that you are disposed to resist so reasonable an application; and I must request you to inform me forthwith whether you are still determined to oppose the claim now made, *always bearing in mind, that Mr. Thornhill is most anxious to allow you any expense or other deduction that you may be fairly entitled to.* Waiting your early attention to the above request," &c.

Believing, as I did, that you had placed our dispute in such a position that it was impossible I could, with honour to myself, settle it in any other place than a court of justice, where you would have an opportunity of proving your charges against me, in my reply to your attorney, dated Rhyl, near St. Asaph, October 17, 1838, amongst other things, I said—

"If Mr. Thornhill claims the money directly, the best way will be to proceed by law. I shall not oppose the claim—I will take no measures to prevent him—I have no money now for lawyers—my body is at his service, any day, and my property also, as soon as I can turn it into money. But if indeed it be true, *as you say that it is, 'Mr. Thornhill is most anxious to allow any expense or other deduction that I may be FAIRLY entitled to,'* why then, my dear Sir, if this declaration of yours be truth, and not fiction, then, as we say in Yorkshire, 'the boot will be on t'other leg'—Mr. Thornhill himself (when his anger is over) being judge."

"Had I given Mr. Thornhill any reason for his attack upon me, it might, perhaps, have been *excused*; but I appeal to *himself*, to Mr. Ramsbottom (the new steward), to Mr. Chadwick, to every tenant, and to every gentleman in the neighbourhood, if I had not done all that I could do to conciliate Mr. Thornhill, and to exalt Mr. Thornhill and Mr. Ramsbottom in the estimation of the tenants. Mr. Ramsbottom also knows that I was anxious to give him every information, and to treat him with hospitality and kindness. Mr. Thornhill might, with as much reason, have quarrelled with you, as with me, about the placard."

I heard no more on the subject until, on the 25th of October, 1838, I was served with a copy of a writ in Rhyl, at your suit. Before you gave me a writ, your tenants had given me a most beautiful piece of plate, the inscription upon which I inserted in a former number.

Uninteresting as these circumstances may be to many persons, still, being urged by so many readers to narrate these dry facts, in my next I will trace the matter to this cell, where England's noblest and choicest sons and daughters are my constant visitors, although

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—The melancholy death of poor Edwards has made us prisoners ask, why should we be left here to be starved to death? The following letter is from the pen of a brother-prisoner and a scholar:—

" To Mr. Richard Oastler,

" Sir,—The parody of Dr. Johnson on the bombastic line—

" ' Who rules o'er freemen, should himself be free,' "

is well known. The Doctor pronounced, that

" ' Who slays fat oxen, should himself be fat.' "

Encouraged by such a precedent, I venture to say,

" ' Who lives with Fleeters, should himself talk Fleet; "

and in plain prose I wish to occupy, with your permission, a few lines of your Papers on one of the affairs of this little city of refuge, to which Mr. Thornhill has consigned you.

" The law of the land entitles every prisoner to three shillings and sixpence per week during his incarceration. This is commonly called, ' county money; ' and it is, I believe, but I am not sure, paid for the Fleet from the funds of the county of Middlesex. It is obtained by means of a prisoner taking his oath that he is not worth ten pounds in the world after his just debts are paid.

" There are two scruples against taking the oath:—the first, conscientious; the other arising from other motives.

" 1. For the former, every respect should be entertained. Some people (I am sorry to say, not many,) are confined in this prison, who are able to live in a handsome or plentiful manner—a few can afford to be expensive, perhaps extravagant—no small number exist in a style which, in ordinary life, would be considered to be at least sufficient. Those persons scruple to swear that they are not worth ten pounds in the world, when some of them spend half the money, or at least the tenth part of it, in a single day. I do not wish to be a casuist, but I think any person here may reconcile his conscience to swearing to the truth. The justice of a man's debts, however unjust he may consider them, (and in nine cases out of ten, truly so consider them,) is to be decided, not by himself, but by the law. The law having, therefore, pronounced that every one here is condemned to the punishment of imprisonment to terminate only by life, (for the law knows nothing of the private arrangements between creditor and debtor, the latter of whom it holds in inexorable grasp, ' till death us do part,') until he is worth as much money as settles his debts, debts by the law declared just, there is no perjury, or shadow of perjury, in swearing that you are not worth ten pounds, or ten pence, beyond the debts for which you are, or may be, detained in custody.

" Else wherefore live we in the land of Fleet? The perjury connected with the business has been committed by those who brought us here, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. I do not wish to be personal, but if you strictly and liberally analyze the affidavits of the persons to which we are indebted for your companionship, you will find them to be a collection of swearing to ' things which are not.' It would be both a wrong place, and a wrong opportunity, to go into the great question of the obligation of an oath. It is here enough to say, that any man, who possesses ten pounds above his just debts, ought to pay them—if he does not, he may safely swear that he has no possession to the amount. A man, who alleges scruples of conscience in such oath-taking, should first consult it as to the justice of satisfying his creditors.

" 2. The other consideration is that which weighs with more. It is *pride*. Even here we have pride. We are all exposed to the grossest of insults, offered to us by the basest of mankind, but we still are too proud to confess that three shillings and sixpence a week is of consequence to us. Observe by that, by the phrase, ' basest of mankind,' I do not mean in any degree to allude to anybody connected with the prison, where every officer, from the highest to the lowest, is fair, just, conciliatory, civil, and kind in their divers relations, but to those whose ministering functions have brought us here. And these are men whose very business is theft, false-swearing, lying, and extortion. Why, then, after having been exposed to such insult, need we be particularly nice? Why object to tell, which is the fact, we are not worth ten pounds above the demands made upon us, or else we should not be in the Fleet? Let us all take the ' county money,' and, trampling our pride under foot, distribute it as we like.

" The statistics of this prison are, that about 170 persons are here confined, of whom about sixteen take the allowance. Sixteen persons at 3s. 6d. a week, or something about 150l. a year; but 170 persons will be rather more than ten times that sum. But, say 1,500l. a year, will not that sum be felt on the county-rate? And is it not the duty of all of us, condemned under the pressure of a law in principle iniquitous, or rather contrary to all principle of civilized and Christian law, and in its details of oppression and prosecution utterly monstrous, to do what we can to render our condition to those who allow the existence of such a law as onerous as possible?

" I am, Sir, obediently yours,

" The Fleet, No. 6, Fair, June 6, 1841."

" A FLEETER."

Many thoughts upon imprisonment for debt have fixed themselves upon my mind of late. Methinks there is a mistake somewhere. In prison, or at large, I will try to find where that mistake is. Without doubt, our creditors should be forced to keep us alive, else imprisonment is murder.—R.O.

Errata.—In No. 25, page 194, fourth line from bottom, for "desolate," read "dissolute."—On cover No. 26, p. 4, line 3 from top, after "union," insert "but an Anti-Poor-Law rate-payer who nominated four, of whom two resigned."—Same page, line 11, for "had not been," read "had been."

"The FLEET PAPERS.—We have this week made several extracts from the *Fleet Papers*. The subjects are various, but the force and freedom with which they are discussed, and the exposures which they lead to, render them beyond anything of the kind interesting and instructive. No publication of modern date can equal the *Fleet Papers*; and being written in prison, they acquire a greater interest, more particularly so, as Mr. Queller's incarceration is to be attributed to the sacrifices he has made for his country's welfare. The papers which give us the most delight are those on the fallacy of the Free Trade system, the abolition of the New Poor Law, and the tricks of the Anti-Corn-Law-League." *Stockport Advertiser*, June 25, 1841.

The following extracts from the *Stockport Advertiser* will surely obtain the attention of the true friends of Her Majesty and her subjects. It is evident that the Free-Trade-Anti-Corn-Law-League has made a compact with O'Connell; and that even at the price of a bloody resolution they have resolved to obtain their two objects. The extracts require no farther remark.—Would that the aristocracy of England would read them, remembering that these poor deluded Irishmen who are now formed into a Secret Society throughout England have been driven from their homes, because their industry could not obtain them food and clothing of the coarsest kind in their native land.

"MURDEROUS ATTACK BY IRISHMEN.

"At our Police Court, on Saturday the 19th ultimo, (before the Mayor, Sir Ralph Pendlebury, Aldermen P. E. Marsland and Baker, and J. Newton, Esq.,) a warrant for a most aggravated assault upon Mr. Taylor, surgeon, Portwood, was exhibited against James Egan, alias 'Irish Jemmy,' arising out of the violent and brutal attack made by the Irish Cobdenites upon the inhabitants on the previous evening. The defendant was the same individual who a day or two before, being laden with liquor supplied by a Mr. Woolley, a partisan of Mr. Cobden, made a cowardly assault upon a child.

"Mr. Taylor, who appeared to have been unmercifully maltreated, stated, he and Mrs. Taylor were coming down the Churchgate, between eight and nine o'clock on Friday night, when they were met, near the Church, by a large body of Irishmen armed with bludgeons loaded with lead and lashed with iron. He was attacked by them in a most infuriated manner; and after six or eight of them had struck him, they asked, 'Who are you for?' Unable to account for the assault, he said, 'What's this for?' About sixty of them beat him with their bludgeons; and it was with great difficulty that Mrs. Taylor was guarded from the brutality of the ruffians; in doing which Mr. T's arms and body were frightfully bruised. His head was contused in various parts; his cheek was cut through by a blow from a ball of lead slung from a piece of cord; and two of his teeth were loosened. From the position in which his arms were, he was unable to identify any of the assailants.

"Samuel Preston said, he saw the defendant strike Mr. Taylor. He had a bludgeon about a yard long and half-an-inch thick.

"The defendant declared, that he never 'sthrick' a man in his life; nor did he ever see Mr. Taylor struck. He had fifty people to prove that he was beside Mr. Bramall's shop at the time.

"A witness named Newton strongly identified Jemmy. He saw him run from the middle of the road with his bludgeon to meet Mr. and Mrs. Taylor on the foot-path; and was the man who gave the first blow. Knew the defendant before, and could swear to him out of a thousand people. The blows were given with such force, that any one of them, in his opinion, was enough to have killed the stoutest man; they did their best to kill him. Was standing near the Ring-o'-Bells, and distinctly heard the defendant say, 'here's a Tory.' Went down to Mr. Taylor's house the next morning unassisted, and testified his evidence, identifying the defendant as the person who gave the first blow. Did not see Mrs. Taylor struck.

"The defendant was quite alarmed at this unquestionable evidence of identity, and replied, that he had plenty of witnesses, but they would not come forward. He said, he never saw Mr. Taylor struck, and it grieved him to see the Irish fighting.

"A third witness proved, that the defendant was very active in the affray.

"Longson, a policeman, saw him taking a prominent part in the disturbances in the Castle Yard; and Peter Chappell, moreover, observed him at the bottom of Park Street, 'quavering' his shillalah as if in defiance of everybody.

"Sir Ralph said, he had no doubt whatever of the man's guilt."

"Ever since O'Connell made his appearance in Manchester, under the auspices of the Anti-Corn-Law-League, in Whitson-week, the seed then sown has been springing up in every town and village in this neighbourhood. On Sunday morning last (the 29th ultimo), the hitherto peaceful locality of Hyde was made the theatre of one of the most sanguinary and daring riots we have had

to record for some time. On Thursday evening last, a person from Stalybridge delivered a lecture in the large room of the Pine Apple Inn, on the importance of an immediate Repeal of the Union. The lecture was delivered by a person named Trainer, who, in the most inflammatory language, denounced every Englishman as an enemy of the sister island, and urged the sons of Erin to be ready to die for the liberties of their country, which were to be achieved by their firm determination to support O'Connell in all his undertakings. The effect of this inflammatory harangue was not lost upon his hearers, which was almost entirely composed of the very lowest Irish residing in the neighbourhood, including the excavators employed on the Manchester and Sheffield Railway.

"The following Saturday being 'pay day,' the Irishmen assembled in groups in the streets, at an early period in the evening, and shortly retired to several public-houses in Hyde, where they soon became intoxicated, and in this state rushed into the streets, most of them armed with iron bars, spades, and bludgeons of every description. Thus armed they paraded the principal streets, and, with the most terrific yells and shoutings, accompanied with loud hurrahs for O'Connell, and cries of 'Down with the bloody English,' denounced every Englishman as a traitor to their country, and commenced bludgeoning every person they met. The principal ring-leader of this riotous mob was a man named Patrick Callaghan. They paraded the streets for some time, during which they cruelly beat many of the inhabitants whom they chanced to meet. Not satisfied with this, they began to break the windows, and otherwise damaging the houses, of every inhabitant who was known to be English.

"The populace, having become enraged, assembled in great numbers, rushed upon the Irish, and soon repulsed them. Finding themselves thus overpowered, they fled in all directions, taking refuge in their houses, and any other place where they could procure admission.

"The populace, having thus got the upper hand, resolved to revenge the injuries inflicted on their fellow-townsmen, and in the most furious manner rushed down the several streets where the Irish were known to reside, and indiscriminately demolished every door and window in most of the houses.

"The Irishmen being thus driven in their houses, and pursued even there, took refuge in the upper stories, and again attempted to repulse their pursuers, but in vain; they were followed up stairs, and well beaten. The whole town was in a state of considerable excitement, which was kept up till three o'clock on Monday morning, at which time thirty-four of the principal ring-leaders of the Irish were in the custody of the police. The principal streets in which the riots occurred were Platt Street, Lewis Street, Clarendon Street, and Mottram Road. Yesterday we walked through these streets. There is scarcely the vestige of a window left, and many of the doors were completely demolished, and some of the houses almost gutted, and the furniture destroyed. The extent of the damage cannot be less than from four to five hundred pounds, the whole of which will, of course, have to be made good by the county. During the whole of yesterday the town was in a state of considerable excitement, and in the evening a report was current that the Irish intended to make another attack during the night; but this we should think is not very probable, as the Englishmen engaged on the railway drove every Irishman off the line, some of whom they beat severely. It is impossible to state anything like the exact amount of persons wounded, but the number must have been very great, as the surgeons of the Dispensary were engaged the whole of the night dressing the wounds of the combatants, most of whom were Irish."

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THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY

JOHN PAVEY, 47, HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND,

AND

BENJAMIN STEILL, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW.

THESE Papers are principally intended for the perusal of the friends of Christianity and the Constitution; particularly the Clergy and the Aristocracy, and of all persons who are possessed of Property. The object of the writer will be to explain the reason for the present alarming state of English society, and the consequent insecurity of life and property; also, to offer some remarks upon the folly and wickedness of attempting to uphold our Institutions, particularly that of Private Property, by the unconstitutional means of Centralization, Commissioning, Espionage, and Force; finally, to state his own views on the best mode of restoring Peace, Contentment, Security, and Prosperity, to every rank of the people of England.

The author is perfectly aware of the fact, that every Parliamentary leader is now only attempting to legislate for the present moment—putting off the evil day—making laws “from hand to mouth,” in the hope that some unforeseen, fortunate event may enable succeeding Statesmen to legislate for permanency. He is also convinced that there is a mode of successfully re-establishing our Institutions upon their original foundation—Christianity;—and that that is the only way to preserve them from the encroachments of political partisans, who are now only paving the way to universal Ruin, Anarchy, and Despotism.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. OASTLER is “At Home” on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.—Mr. Oastler’s health requires that he should entirely refrain from receiving the visits of his friends on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

WILLIAM DODD, the Factory Cripple, returns thanks for one shilling, received through Mr. Oastler, being “a mite from an inmate of the Fleet Prison;” and 2s. 6d. from a Clergyman.

“The Register,” “The Protestant Herald,” “Sacred Philosophy,” and “The Living and the Dead,” are received, with thanks.

In reply to a numerous list of kind inquirers—“How can we best serve your interest?” Mr. Oastler begs to say—by promoting the circulation of the *Fleet Papers*, and by procuring advertisements for their covers. Mr. Oastler may be allowed to add, that few better mediums for advertising can be found than the *Fleet Papers*; they circulate in every district, and amongst every rank. In the Palace and the Cottage, readers of the *Fleet Papers* are to be found. Clergymen, Landlords, and Farmers, Ministers of State, Ploughboys, Factory Children, and Weavers, patronize these little *Fleeters*.

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NOTICES OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

"The FLEET PAPERS.—THE RESULTS OF FREE TRADE.—A WARNING TO THE LOWER CLASSES.—The fact that the trade of Britain is not in a perfectly natural state, seems to be wholly lost sight of by the advocates for free trade. They forget that the capital of the country has been directed from the cultivation of the soil to manufactures; that manufacturing capital is exempt from those heavy burdens which, since the reign of William the Third, have gradually pressed more heavily upon land; and that the owners of manufacturing capital have an interest in displacing manual labour, and in carrying on their operations by means of untaxed machinery. So that if there be manufacturing distress, as admittedly there is to a considerable extent, it does not arise from protection to native industry, as afforded by the Corn Laws, but rather from the false principles upon which our manufacturing and trading systems are founded. A repeal of the Corn Laws, therefore, so far from being a remedy for evils to which trade is subjected, would add to those which the operatives especially have to endure, by still further increasing the number of hands thrown upon manufactures for employment, and by that means reducing the amount and value of wages. Thus, repealers of the Corn Laws and advocates for free trade are striving rather for the benefit of a few than for the interest of the many. They demand 'the abandonment of all protection' to British labourers and artisans, although they pretend to be 'the only friends of the industrious.'

"Mr. Oastler, who is intimately versed in the systems we have just alluded to, from long residence in the manufacturing districts of Yorkshire, and from intimate intercourse with the manufacturing and agricultural population, describes graphically, and, we believe, most faithfully, some of the wretched results of the present artificial state of trade and manufactures. We make the following extract, in point, from the 22nd number of his *Fleet Papers*:—

"We leave, then, the agricultural population of these districts, the manufacturing operatives, the artisans, and the agricultural labourers, to judge what benefit they would reap by a repeal of the Corn Laws. We tell them, and they must see how true it is, that they must then swell the waddy over-stocked market of manufacturing labour—where 'the hand-loom weavers,' at least, 'are happy to obtain carrion—yes, carrion—for their food, after working fourteen hours a day!'"—*Berwick and Kelso Warder, June 26, 1841.*

"The FLEET PAPERS.—THE FACTORY SYSTEM.—In our fourth page will be found a copious extract from No. 25 of Mr. Oastler's *Fleet Papers*, respecting the Factory System, and disclosing cruelties that make the blood run chilly on the heart, with a mingled sensation of pity and horror, to think the children should have so suffered, and the Almighty God thus braved by exquisite cruelty exercised towards His creatures. The more we read the harrowing scenes so faithfully pictured by Mr. Oastler, the more we feel there is a cause for shame, a brand of deep infamy upon the legislature of this country, which, while professing to be the Home of the Free, is a very cradle for infant slavery, a lazar house for deformity, and a plague-spot upon the map of Europe. We have in England, 'tis true, societies of different denominations for the propagation of Christianity amongst the Heathens, for the diffusion of Christian knowledge at home, &c. &c.; and while thousands of pounds are charitably contributed for such purposes, we coolly permit the youth of our country to be treated worse than beasts of burden, and forget to attend to the wants, spiritually as well as physically, of those of whom the blessed Saviour said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.' What does all the excitement arising from discussions on the Corn question, or any other question, do for the benefit of the great human family, when the babes, young men and young women, of once merrie England, are blasted in their strength, and disfigured in their forms, at the spell of the great Factory Juggernaut? To think of the sufferings that the people (yes, the 'people,' as the Patriots, in their flattery, term them) endure, to pander to the lusts of mammon, is enough either to break the heart, or dry up every drop of feeling that has flown to our natures from the fountain of mercy and immortality. A newspaper may be deemed an unfit channel for entering upon subjects connected with religion, and we may be termed fanatical, or puritanical, for here alluding to the sacred name of the Almighty:—such may be the opinions of many, but we care not. No place, no medium for discussing, or rather touching, upon this great question, can be inappropriate, ill-judged, or out of keeping. The voice of truth must be heard, whether in the Palace or the Prison, whether at the rich man's dying couch, or the pauper's pallet of straw—and it is a truth, that England is a disgraced, an irreligious, a slavish country, so long as these scenes of oppression exist. There are Societies for the protection of all classes, all interests, but the poor. God help the poor! Cannot we have Anti-Factory Societies, to watch over children of tender years, and to agitate the Houses of Parliament, till the over-wearied toil and faintness is removed from our factory population? We feel heartily sick—nay, *disgusted*—with party names, when we reflect, and know that all parties are alike blamable for permitting such things to exist. The strength of a country must flow from its working population, from the tillers of the earth, and the craft of the artisan. If we cripple their energies, if we break their young spirits, where are we to look for lion hearts in the day of battle, and moral duties to smooth the decline of life? The unguarded oak sapling cannot bear the brunt of the hurricane, nor the eaglet breast the storm—nor can the youth of any country do honour to that country in their maturity and age, if they become enfeebled at the dawn of life, both in body and mind. Instead of stalwart yeomen, as of yore, we have emaciated artisans, squalid in form, and debased in character. It is not their fault—the fault, the *sin*, is at the door of those classes who live on their hard labour; and every member of the British legislature, both Peer and Commoner, has to answer to God for this. Unbelievers may laugh—worshippers of mammon may sneer—but *men* fear and tremble. Mr. Oastler richly deserves the name he has earned amongst the poor factory slaves, the 'King.' It is a more valuable title than that of descent from the loins

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

“The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage.”—“Property has its duties, as well as its rights.”

“The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits.”

“He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.”

VOL. I.—No. 28.

LONDON, SATURDAY, JULY 10, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—In my last, I mentioned having received a letter from you to your tenants, ordering them “to appoint a guardian for Fixby.” They had been expostulating with you against submitting to the accursed law, and had informed you of their determination not to appoint a guardian. In your letter to me, you said:—

“I am sorry to have received the determination of the Fixby tenants. What appointing a guardian has to do with the merits of the bill, I know not. You will forward the enclosed to them.”

That letter was dated April 11, 1837. Now, although I did not think my duty required that I should interfere between you and the tenants, (being well aware that you and they knew my opinions on the subject,) having before warned them of their danger, if they resisted your will, I now felt it to be my duty to deliver your letter to them, and once more strongly to state my feelings on the subject to you. I therefore wrote to you as follows:—

“I have this day received yours of the 11th inst., with your letter to the Fixby tenants. The letter I will deliver to-morrow. I have not, nor shall I read it, although it is unsealed. I know not what the tenants wrote to you, nor will I, in any way, interfere in knowing anything about it. I can only forfeit everything, even life, if needful, rather than, in any way, sanction the diabolical New Poor Law in any shape. The landlords may think it a good joke; but I know that it will, if enforced, put an end to rent days. I may be thought insane, but time will prove who are in their senses.

“I have this morning been with Mr. Gott, sen., of Leeds. If any man does know the true state of this country, he does. He is a most mild, religious man. He said to me, ‘Mr. Oastler, our misfortune is, that the Duke of Wellington knows nothing of these manufacturing districts. The fact is, that the New Poor Law will, inevitably, in time, produce a revolution.’ And then he said, ‘It is a damnable law.’ Now, Sir, Mr. Gott is not insane, if I am. I have done my best for years to inform you of the real state of these districts. You have *real* property here, and I conceive that the present measure is making it *nil*. As for my own cast in the die, I care not one rush; but I do care for the aristocracy and the institutions of this my native country. If this accursed law is to be countenanced, then away with rents—I am sure of it. The ‘appointing of guardians’ is sanctioning the law, and my determination is, to lose life before I will do that. I fancy that I see you smile—but I know what I say.

“What the tenants may do, I know not; but I shall indeed regret, if, after all, *their* landlord should *frighten* them into the surrender of their rights, to the base and hateful three Commissioners. But it is of no use my writing about these matters—you cannot understand me. My *living* is in *your* hands—my *conscience* is in *my* own.

“I know that I am right, because the Bible is true. What secrets are in the womb of futurity respecting myself I know not; but I do know, that I have acted faithfully, and that, after serving you, I am as poor as a church mouse can be, even after the church rates are abolished.

“Once more I tell you—and I tell you truly, that if the landlord of Fixby *forces* the tenants of Fixby ‘to appoint a guardian,’ and thus give their assent to the damnable New Poor Law, I shall no longer be proud to be the faithful servant of their landlord.

“My *conscience* is in this business, and my *living* is a straw.”

Many persons may think that I proceeded too far, in thus urging my objections on the unwilling ears of my master; but I loved Fixby. I knew the strong old English prejudices of the tenants, how dear to them was “Fixby law,” and how valuable to the owner such feelings were.—I knew how they loathed the dominion of the abhorred commissioned interlopers, and, although I wished *them* not to risk *your* displeasure, I was heedless of any consequences to *myself*. I knew also their manifold sufferings, and the destitution of that district, which was augmented by the influx of labourers from the agricultural districts, who were first beguiled by the false promises, and then sold by the guardians (!) of the poor to the factory masters, and many of whom were, afterwards, cheated of their food and clothing, and were actually starved and worked to death!!—Yes, I knew, that whilst you were listening with delight to the mad ravings of Dr. Kay, the Assistant Poor Law Commissioner for Norfolk, about “the prosperity of the manufacturing districts,” your tenants found it difficult, with industry and frugality, “to make ends meet.” I knew all this; and, knowing these things, I could not be silent, when I saw you determined to inflict the last degradation, that of *slavery*, on the best race of Britons—those of Fixby! Although I could not advise *them* to resist *you*, I resolved again and again to press *my* suit for *them*. I once more addressed you on the subject, in the following words:—

“Every candidate of every party, during the late election, declared, ‘that the New Poor Law could not be safely introduced into these districts.’ If it is your determination to punish those who *rebel* against that law, I hope I may be allowed the honour to fall *first*. So long as I am your servant, I must faithfully give you my opinion; and I am sure, that by assisting the Poor Law Commissioners, you are laying the foundation of the destruction of your estates, and are aiding that accursed party who are bent on the degradation of the aristocracy, and whose creed, as pronounced by their leader, Joseph Hume, is, ‘England would be no poorer if her soil were never more to bear a single blade of wheat, barley, rye, or oats!!!’ I could say a great deal on this subject, but I should perhaps offend by stating the truth. You will not of course expect me to be the instrument of punishing those men, who, in my opinion, deserve your praise.

“I feel quite sure that if you had resided here, you would not discharge those tenants. Nay, I am sure you would, in that case, defend them from the power of the Poor Law Commissioners, and *assist* them, rather than *trouble* them. I cannot help saying thus much.”

All was, however, in vain—you were inexorable, and Fixby was for ever disgraced, and its tenants branded with slavery, by submission to the accursed and atrocious New Poor Law Commissioners! And now the anti-English monster, having grown insolent by the power which the landlords thus gave him, is crying down yourselves in the ears of your slave-made-tenants, under the leadership of Daniel O’Connell and his Irish Secret Society, the Anti-Corn-Law-League and

the Police! The labourers and the tenants cannot save you—you have bound them hand and foot to the bloody car of your triple-headed masters!—At that time, it suited the philosophers to brag and boast about “prosperity,” “good trade,” &c., simply because they wanted your fresh agricultural blood to work up in their mills! I told you the real truth, when, in October, 1837, I said—

“I cannot help feeling that our difference of opinion on the New Poor Law is a source of unpleasantness to you. To me it is a matter of great regret; but no earthly consideration can induce me to support a measure so full of cruelty to the poor, and of mischief to the rich. You read a great deal about the ‘prosperity’ of these parts in the newspapers; I only wish we could see something of it in reality here. I never saw the manufacturers more bewildered!—I never saw the labourers more depressed! Every one asks his neighbour, ‘How is the winter to be got over?’”

To me, however, you turned a deaf ear;—you listened to the false spirit of philosophy which *then* deceived, in order that it may *now* betray you! Does any one ask why I publish these extracts? My answer is short. I have been charged with misrepresenting facts to you; these extracts will prove that you were the dupe of others, whilst you rejected the truth from me. They will prove also, that which is the fact, that I have always resisted the New Poor Law, because it laid the axe to the root of property, as well as because it warred most mercilessly against poverty. These are the reasons why I have judged it necessary here to introduce so much of my former communications to you.

The conclusion of my last letter left me at Rhyl, served with a copy of a writ at your suit! Never did I expect that the names of *Thornhill* and *Oastler* would be marshalled against each other in a court of law! But so it was! I could not blame myself, nor could I believe that you had read my last letter to your attorney.

I was in a strange place—the solicitor who served your writ on me is highly respectable. I requested him to do what was needful, until I could go to Manchester to consult my own counsel. He did so with the kindest attention.

I soon found that the *Venue* was laid in London. I then felt sure that you had been betrayed, because I knew that you were too noble-minded to shun an inquiry into our affairs before a *Yorkshire* special jury. I immediately returned to Rhyl for Mrs. Oastler, and took lodgings near Manchester, to be within call of my legal advisers.

Knowing that a trial in London, if I produced witnesses, would cost an immense sum, which I had it not in my power to raise—besides which, I believed that it was impossible to make a *London* jury understand the nature of a *rural* steward's position, under such circumstances as mine; whilst I felt sure that it was scarcely possible to select a *Yorkshire* special jury, of whom some would not be *au fait* at every part of the subject; I applied to the Judge to have the *Venue* removed to *Yorkshire*. I was defeated—your *London* attorney, who is an entire stranger to *Yorkshire*, having sworn as follows, on the 30th of January, 1839:

“And this deponent further saith, that he believes the defendant's object in wanting to change the *Venue* from London to York is, to have an opportunity of calumniating and declaiming against the plaintiff amongst his tenants in that county; and that if the said cause was to be tried at York, the plaintiff, from the excited state in which a considerable part of that county has been thrown into of late by the defendant's agitation, would not have a fair trial there.”

You know that Fixby is forty miles from York—you know also that Yorkshire *special* juries are composed of gentlemen of your own rank. I need say no more on those two points.—I was now sure that misrepresentation was somewhere at work. I cast my whole case on that faithful God who has never forsaken me, and I prepared for the day of trial. I had been served with notice for trial on the 23rd of January 1839: I was kept waiting, but, no trial came. On the 26th of June, 1839, I was again served with notice of trial, but, again, no trial came.

Being quite sure that much inconvenience would be felt by you and your tenants for want of the settlement of the last year's books — which settlement had been prevented by your letter which was published in the newspapers, as before alluded to—and knowing that, in the event of my death before that settlement, much serious evil might be the consequence to many; after all this delay, I resolved at length to propose to balance the books with your under-steward, and wait no longer, as far as that went, for the uncertainty of law. My offer was, after some demur, accepted; and on the 26th of November, 1839, Mr. Chadwick and I settled the books at Wakefield, finding a balance of 2,137l. 6s. 8½d. due to you—explaining why it was greater than the former settlement, and why subject to deductions for allowances, &c.

On December 6, 1839, I was once more served with notice of trial—still, no trial came; but on the 13th of the same month, I received notice that *you had withdrawn the Record!* It was natural I should then suppose that your kind, and generous, and natural feelings had returned, and that you were content with the anxiety, and expense, and loss which so much delay and so much law had occasioned me. I believed that to be the case, until, on the 16th of January, 1840, I again received notice of trial. We then settled in Brompton, finding it less expensive to be near London, than to be kept running backwards and forwards, in expectation of a conclusion to this excessively harassing and procrastinated proceeding. Still, the sittings after term passed, *and there was no trial again!*—This was cruel work for me. My wife's health was declining, notwithstanding the pains we had taken to restore it—my own was none of the best, anxiety and exertion in the defence of your property had undermined it—and I had been entirely precluded, for a year and a half, from doing anything for a living! To be again prevented meeting the question in court, seemed cruel work, and I felt it keenly. But I was sure it was not *your* fault. I proposed to refer the whole matter to the decision of your son and son-in-law, but I was refused. Had the *Venue* been removed to *Yorkshire*, the trial *must* have taken place in March 1839; but now, after four separate notices of trial, I was still at sea—prevented from earning my subsistence, and spending money daily! Our trust was still in God, and he did not forsake us—as our day was, so was our strength!—and so is it even now.

Well, on July 1, 1840, for the fifth time, I received notice of trial at the Guildhall, London! On the 10th of July, 1840, our cause was called. I will not detain you with an account of my feelings. I appeared and took my seat, attended by my two attornies, Faithfull and Cobbett. Before the trial was called, Mr. Serjeant Atcherley asked me, "Oastler, shall you be very long?"—

"That depends entirely upon the plaintiff—if he opens kindly, ten minutes will settle the business; if unkindly, we have two days' work, Serjeant," said I.—"Are you quite ready?" rejoined the Serjeant.—"Yes, quite ready, thank you; I never felt more collected, and better prepared for work," was my answer. As I answered, we were called into action.

The following report of the trial appeared in the *Times* of July 11, 1841:—

"COURT OF COMMON PLEAS, Friday, July 10.

"Sittings in London, before Lord Chief Justice Tindal and a Special Jury.

"THORNHILL v. OASTLER.

"This was an action on a promissory note, for money had and received, and for the detention of certain books alleged to belong to the plaintiff.

"Mr. Kelly, with whom was Mr. Peacock, stated, that the plaintiff was a gentleman of fortune, possessed of extensive estates in Yorkshire. The defendant, who was, no doubt, well known to the jury, and whose talents and abilities were such as to entitle him to their consideration, had been for many years land steward and agent to the plaintiff, which situation had been previously filled by his father, whom, on his death, his son, the present defendant, had succeeded. This action was brought to recover a sum of between 2,000*l.* and 3,000*l.*, due from him to the plaintiff; and also to compel him, by the verdict of a jury, to deliver up certain books of account connected with the estates of the plaintiff. In order to show beyond all doubt that the plaintiff was entitled to what he sought to recover, he would proceed to read some letters which had passed between the parties, from which it would appear, upon the defendant's own acknowledgment, that the balance in question was clearly due. The learned counsel then read some portion of the correspondence, which so far was couched in friendly terms on both sides; and he observed, that he would refrain from introducing any other matter not bearing on the precise question before the jury—a course of proceeding in which he hoped that he should be followed by the defendant, who appeared in person to defend the cause.

"Mr. Oastler interposed, and observed, that he had no wish to waste the time of the Court. If the plaintiff's counsel were sincere in the sentiments he expressed, and was now satisfied to acknowledge, on the part of his client, that he intended only to treat the sum here claimed as a debt, he would give him no further trouble, but submit to a verdict at once, and place himself in Mr. Thornhill's hands. He had merely resisted the action, because he understood that it had been imputed to him that he had fraudulently detained the money; whereas it now appeared to be acknowledged that it was a simple matter of debt.

"The Lord Chief Justice observed, that there was no imputation whatever upon Mr. Oastler's character here.

"Mr. Oastler said, that that was all that he had ever wished to be settled.

"Mr. Kelly had imputed or acknowledged nothing. He had merely, as far as he had gone, stated facts, and read some letters which were creditable to both parties.

"Here a conference took place between the learned counsel and the defendant, which resulted in an arrangement to the effect that a verdict was taken for the plaintiff for 2,000*l.*, without prejudice to a claim of the defendant's against the plaintiff for 500*l.*; the defendant to deliver up the books to the plaintiff, on receiving a release from him of all claims and demands whatsoever, except as to the amount of the verdict.

"Mr. Kelly, after stating to the learned Judge the terms of the arrangement, said he felt great pleasure at this unpleasant affair being thus satisfactorily settled.

"Lord Chief Justice Tindal.—I am very glad, Mr. Oastler, that this action is brought to such a satisfactory settlement.

"Mr. Oastler bowed to his Lordship.

"A verdict was then entered for the above sum, and the Court rose."

I had pleaded set-offs, or claims, to a much larger amount than your demand, which, if the trial had proceeded, I hoped to establish, to the satisfaction of the

jury, by cross-examining your witnesses; but from the speech of Mr. Kelly respecting yourself and me, I felt assured that anger was removed from your breast—I knew that it was from mine—and I rejoiced to leave the whole matter in *your* hands, being sure that “you wished me well for my own sake, and doubly so for that of my father;” and also, that “you were most anxious to allow any expense or other deduction that I might be fairly entitled to.” I left all the questions in dispute, as well as that of 500*l.* for the last year’s salary, which Mr. Kelly had reserved, to be disposed of by you, with that confidence which the honour of a Thornhill had deeply rooted in my breast. I was, once more, a happy man.

Immediately after the trial, I joined, at the door of the Court, several of my old neighbours—some of them had been my political opponents: they had heard the proceedings. We went to *the Yorkshire House, Philip Lane*. There we had a glass of wine, and some Yorkshire chat. I was asked for a toast. I gave, “*Thomas Thornhill, Esq.*” One of them, as he drank it, added, “I am glad I have heard all that Mr. Kelly has said about Mr. Thornhill and Mr. Oastler, and all that Mr. Oastler has said in Court. I hope we shall now hear no more about their disputes in our country, but that they will be as good friends as ever, and I hope that Mr. Thornhill will order Mr. Oastler to receive 100*l.* a quarter as long as he lives, for his father’s and his own sake.” That was the speech then made by a political opponent of mine, but an old neighbour.

In a little while I went in search of your under-steward, Mr. Chadwick. I wished to assure him, that “now I considered that every unpleasantness was removed, and that any information I could give him was at his service.” I found him, and told him so. I next went to 106, Chelsea, and wrote to my wife, who was then ill, in Yorkshire, and I immediately sent for the books and papers, in order that I might give them up. From that day to this, no word, to your prejudice, has passed my lips; and to every application to give information respecting your affairs, to your tenants who are not satisfied with the proceedings of your new steward, I have answered, “I can communicate information respecting Mr. Thornhill’s affairs to none but himself.”

I have faithfully endeavoured to act up to the spirit, as well as the letter, of the agreement which was made with Mr. Kelly in open Court, which arrangement was publicly approved of by my Lord Chief Justice Tindal. —————

Sir, my head is dizzy—fever has attacked my brain—its strength has yielded to the kind and perpetual visits of my sympathizing friends.—My physician warns me—this subject is too exciting.—My next, please God my health will permit, shall conclude this bewildering tale. I long to finish it. ————— Now, to another subject. ————— A friend of mine, who lives not far from you, watches the operation of the New Poor Law in the agricultural districts. There, you, its admirers, say, that it “works well.” We shall see. I know that my correspondent will keep his eyes open, and tell nothing but the truth. I know also, that he will not fear to tell me the whole truth. It is my intention, now and then, to inform you of what is passing near your own home. The following letter will enlighten you as to the mode adopted by your rich guardian neigh-

hours, under the operation of the "test and torture," in order to get *ten* shillings worth of work done for *five* shillings!

"NEW POOR LAW.

"My dear Sir,—Your little *Fleeters* are the delight of my heart, and of thousands of Englishmen as well as myself, who like me have long been gagged and muzzled, nearly in the same way, and have experienced something very like the treatment which the poor English boys have lately met with under the fostering care of M. de Bree, at Boulogne.

"My trade, or calling by which I get my living, is among the guardians and the poor of several unions in the country; and I am obliged to hear and see, and say nothing. But I could no longer resist the impulse I felt to send you some facts that have passed under my notice, as I find all the grown people, as well as the small, up to the Queen herself, read your little *Fleeters*, and I find you can say what we dare not. If I had not been gagged and muzzled, I should long ago have told my tale. I had seen enough to satisfy any man of common sense, that no man who supports this law can be a Liberal, a Conservative, or a Christian; yet I find that the Duke of Sussex, as one of the heads of the *Liberals*, has said, that this law was a 'boon to the labourers;' and Sir Robert Peel, calling himself the leader of the *Conservatives*, said, 'If the board of guardians was to say (as Mr. Wakley had said they could), "Let us not employ the test, but the torture, to compel the poor to accept our offer of emigration, migration, or lower wages, or the like," then there should be a tribunal for the poor to appeal to, with full confidence of protection.' Now, Sir, this is exactly what they do say, not in words, but in all their deeds and actions, as I will undertake to prove, if you, Sir, will allow me to do so, in a corner, either inside or outside of your little flying *Fleeters*, every week or two, as I can send you the information. Now, to begin with the Duke's 'boon' and Sir Robert's 'torture.' There is a little bit of practice under two guardians belonging to one laird—the one a proud, haughty, 'liberal,' rich man (nobleman or gentleman, I will not call him), lord of several manors, has church livings in his gift, and a numerous tenantry, a great promoter and supporter of this law, because he says 'it is a wise and humane law, as it raises the wages, and better the condition of the poor,' &c.; the other, his steward, is an acting guardian at the same board, a self-conceited, fawning, cringing fellow. The rich man, among his labourers, had a boy, in 1834, of 15, who had 2s. 6d. a week, at 17, 3s., at 19, 4s., at 21, 5s.; in fact, he had grown from a boy to a man under the New Poor Law, and had been some time working with the 10s. a week men, and had been doing the same work. Of course, he applied to the rich man and the steward for higher wages. Both the rich man and the steward inquired very minutely as to his being able, and several of the men proved, that for some time past he had done precisely the same work as they had. They both promised to take the case into their consideration—so they did, no doubt, as the sequel sheweth; for instead of advancing the wages of the young man, they 'wisely and humanely,' at the very first opportunity, for some trifling fault, discharged one of the 10s. a week men, taking care that the young strong man was kept on to do the same work for 5s. a week!—and the 10s. man wandered many a score of miles in search of work, but could not find any. At last, he was compelled to accept an order to walk with his wife and children into the union-workhouse, having endured all the imaginary 'torture' before they went in, and suffering the actual 'torture' after they got there. I call that proof of, not the 'test,' but the 'torture,' being applied.

"As 'the New Poor Law was to be the step to no Poor Law,' and 'as the New Corn Law,' as Lord Brougham said, 'was to be the step to no Corn Law,' so was the coarser food, or coarser bread, to be the step to no bread at all! but potatoes, &c., as in Ireland, Scotland, &c. where labour is from 6d. to 8d. a day, and where the rent is double what it is in England, with labour at 1s. 6d. to 2s. a day—and mind, this double rent! is the grand secret, after all. But to return to the Bastille;—the 10s. man is in prison, whilst the 5s. is doing the work! It may be said, this is only a solitary instance. But we can find many similar; and I know that the dread of this has gagged and muzzled all the poor around, who hear, see, and know that not only this one man! but that one hundred!! or one thousand!!! may, by the same process, be all brought to the 5s. instead of the 10s.—perhaps in less than another seven years of New Poor Law tyranny!—unless Sir Robert and his friends, instead of the present triumvirate to oppress, will, contrary to the present cruel system, actually establish a 'tribunal' for the protection of the poor!! And I hope they will bear in mind, that if rich landlords will stoop to such dirty actions, how much more

will poor tenants do in this way, in times when distress and misery come on them, as they have done before now? If they expect these men will, in their turn, continue to submit quietly to be gagged, muzzled, imprisoned, and robbed, for this new crime of poverty, they are, in my opinion, mistaken.

“ I am, my dear Sir, your sincere and grateful friend,

“ WILL. WATCH.

“ P.S.—I have heard and seen, and, with your leave, intend to show, that numbers of the poor, both men, women, and children, who are perfectly innocent, through the accursed secret proceedings of this law, have, without seeing a Justice, Judge, or Jury, or even knowing that they had been accused or suspected of any fault or crime, suffered, not the ‘test,’ but the ‘torture,’ of the most cruel nature! of imprisonment! and separation!! and death!!!—W.W.”

Now, Sir, it is a fact, these same rich landlord and steward guardians (!) are perpetually asserting, that the New Poor Law *raises* wages, and *improves* the character and condition of the labourers! What imposters these men are!

Do you think that such cowardly and cruel robbery and misrepresentation can prosper? Can the rural police uphold them, think you?—No, No. Rotten parchments, and tattered rent-rolls, lay underneath such barefaced plundering of the poor! Look to it, Sir, but be sure that God will avenge His poor!—“He will deliver the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him!”

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—You remember the Pin which the poor, but grateful factory child gave to me, of which I told you in a former number? Read the beautiful lines which my prison friend “Julia” wrote on that *Pin*.

“ON A PIN.

“ They may talk about party and place, or of pay,
They may wrangle to know who’s out or who’s in,
They may prate as they please, but I only can say,
I value those squabbles far less than a PIN.

“ The Queen, in due pomp, was bedecked with a crown—
May no care ever beat its rich circle within;
To my sovereign true faith, true allegiance I own,
But still for her crown I’d not give one poor PIN.

“ That PIN is a tribute of heart-swelling love—
It was given mid a noise raised by Mammon and Sin;
’Twas given when the friend of the factory slave strove
To prove, hollow profession’s not worth a poor PIN.

“ It was given by a child, the poor son of a slave,
To mend a coat rent in a mill-owner’s din;
’Twas a homage to him, be it mark’d on whose grave—
‘For the foes of the people he car’d not a PIN!’” “ JULIA.”

That Epitaph is worth a long, unjust imprisonment!

“ For the foes of the People he car’d not a PIN.”

R.O.

of princes, and an inheritance in store more glorious than the broad lands of England's richest nobles. We envy Mr. Oastler his prison, and his abilities, for he must have almost perfect happiness with such a cause before him, and himself the champion of that cause. Something must be done, ere it is too late, for the factory paupers—Justice demands it—Humanity implores it."—*Shropshire Conservative*, June 26, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS. London, Pavey.—'Out of evil cometh good.' The truth of this has been fully verified in Mr. Oastler's case; for, instead of the 'King's' imprisonment realizing the wishes and intentions of his persecutors—to effectually destroy the person who was so sternly opposing their schemes and machinations against the hard-working people of this country—they have been disappointed and defeated. The 'King' never was so powerful as he is at this time; and his enemies acknowledge it. The Fleet Prison and the *Fleet Papers* have placed the champion of the rights of the defenceless poor in a position that is most cheering to himself, and to those on whose account he is so effectively exerting his ability to do good. Mr. O.'s influence on his opponents was fully proved on a late occasion, in the person of the Right Honourable Thomas Babington Macaulay. This event is mentioned in the 24th number of the *Fleet Papers*; and it has given an opportunity for a most graphic account of a rencontre between Mr. Oastler and Mr. Baby Macaulay, when Mr. O. and two hundred advocates of the rights of the youthful victims of the Pastory Moloch defeated Mr. M. and 30,000 of his dupes. In this affair, the good old 'King' had his coat torn; and he most feelingly describes the present of a pin to him, to fasten the rent in his coat, by a factory child. To some this may seem a very small matter; but small matters, in some instances, are of importance; and it was in this, for it proved that the 'King's' exertions had made an impression on one of his subjects. We recollect this little anecdote perfectly well, and also the indignation of the honest Whigs, at what they were pleased to call an atrocious libel on the Factory System, by the display of a banner giving an illustration of the working of this accursed system, with the inscription, 'A Scene in Water Lane: time, five o'clock in the morning.' It was the representation of an English child, scarcely clad, proceeding through frost and snow to its unnatural toil. This, if we remember right, took place at an election in Leeds. Mr. O. is now turning his attention to the important subject of free trade; and he has given its advocates some nuts which they will find anything but easy in cracking. Now, notwithstanding all that can be said to the contrary, free trade will inevitably produce, and for this it was intended, a considerable reduction in wages—in some trades to the amount of one-half of the present rate: there are other trades which we know it will destroy. This is certainly a most important question to the working classes; but we cannot stop to discuss it here; still, we most strongly recommend, that wherever any member of the Whig government presents himself to the electors, to solicit their 'sweet voices' in the coming elections, he be interrogated as to whether he will carry out the results of free trade in his own person and office; that is to say, in the reduction of his salary by one-half. For instance, there is that personification of the infernal Poor Law Reform Bill, Lord John Russell; let him be called on to reduce his 5,000*l.* per annum to 2,500*l.* We opine that the noble lord (by courtesy) would slug rather small at such a proposition as this, and would not make any great rejoicing over the application of the principles of free trade to himself. The 'King' promises to take the little lord to task in his next number (the 35*th*), and we have no doubt he will give as good an account of him as he has of that disinterested and talented gentleman, Sidney Smith. We cannot close this notice without a remark on the assertion of the Corn Law agitators, that the interests of the great manufacturers, or factory masters, are identified with the interests of their hands; and, in reply to it, we will point to the series of articles in the *Gazette*, on 'The Factory Regulation Act,' and ask our readers whether the horrors therein detailed proclaim any community of interest between the Moloch, Capital, and his victims."—*Cleave's Penny Gazette*, July 3, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS.—In the last of his *Fleet Papers* (No. 26), Mr. Oastler publishes 'an account of his stewardship' to Mr. Thornhill, of Fixby; and we notice it because it clearly shows that Mr. Oastler's debt to his late master has not been the result of improvidence or dishonesty. It was his misfortune to think more and work more for the interest of his employer than his own."—*Salopian Journal*, June 30, 1841.

We must watch the proceedings of the Irish Secret Society Anti-Corn-Law-League Bludgeon-Men. The following is from the *Halifax Guardian*. If the O'Connell Government will not interfere to stop these disturbers of the peace, the English people must.

"ANTI-CORN-LAW-LEAGUE BLUDGEONING.

"The recent brutal attacks on the unoffending Chartists of Manchester, by a hired body of O'Connell's boys, was but the commencement of the 'wild revenge' of the Anti-Corn Law League. It has since been more extensively displayed, and still more fearful effects are apprehended. The connexion of O'Connell with the cotton lords of Manchester, we have formerly had occasion to denounce. He it was who sold, and they who basely bought, the cause of the oppressed factory slave. They were fit comrades to plan the present monstrous manœuvre to stifle and suppress the indignation of the operatives of England at those who have so cruelly deceived them.

"In Stockport, yesterday evening week, whilst a man named Easy was addressing a meeting of Corn Law repealers, he received some interruption from some Chartists present, when, on a signal being given, a large body of Irish present producing bludgeons, made an attack on the Chartists, beat them severely, and drove them from the ground. The crowd then marched into the Mar-

ket-place, and broke nearly all the stalls. On Monday evening, as the Chartists (many of whom had provided themselves with arms, in order to repel any attack which might be made on them) were proceeding along the streets, another attack was made on them, and a regular row was the consequence, but on this occasion the Chartists proved to be too strong for the agitators, beat their opponents, and then proceeded to that part of the town chiefly inhabited by the Irish, and broke a great number of windows. The ringleaders of the riot on Friday evening have been traced to be the same as those who were present in Stevenson's Square, Manchester. They acknowledge that arms are given to them, and THAT THEY ARE PAID FOUR SHILLINGS PER DAY.

"In Manchester, this system of 'physical force' intimidation is even carried still further. A meeting of the Anti-Corn Law party having been held, and 'exclusive dealing' resolved upon, circulars containing these resolutions have been forwarded to the shop-keepers. The following letter (enclosing one of these circulars) has been addressed to the *Manchester Chronicle*, and serves to show that there are other and more dreadful (because secret) influences at work:—

"Manchester, June 23rd, 1841.

"Sir,—This day, one Tim Mulberne and two other Irishmen, called at my shop with the enclosed paper for me to sign,—and they would call to-morrow for it,—signifying that if I signed, I should have lenity shown me on the day of election. I find, that one shop-keeper who refused to sign is told that *his days are numbered*—he is an Irish Protestant. Now, the police who are on duty in St. George's Road cannot be ignorant of this business, and, under the old state of things, the parties would be taken into custody when they call for the papers back. One of the three men is what is called a regular bludgeon-man, and privately boasted that he broke at least a dozen Chartists heads at the Stephenson's Square meeting. The man lives at a small cottage behind Saint George's Road.

"I am, Sir, respectfully yours,

"A SHOP-KEEPER."

ADVERTISEMENTS.

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THE REV. E. STRICKLAND, M.A., OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, purposes taking a steady youth or two, to educate with his brother-in-law, for the public schools or universities.

References are kindly permitted to the President and Tutor of his College, &c. The course of reading commences on the 2nd of August.

For particulars, apply to the Rev. E. S., Fox Holes Cottage, Warminster, Wilts.

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J. B. trusts that his pretensions to support are not of a slight nature, having had great experience and success in supplying the deficiencies of almost every possible form of amputation; and being for a considerable number of years one of the acting partners in the well-known firm of Thomas Mann & Co., Bradford, Yorkshire, and who, with his late partner, succeeded to the business of that concern.

Applications made personally, or by letter, to JOHN BRUNTON, No. 67, West Parade, HUDDERSFIELD, will have the most prompt attention; and numerous references of the greatest respectability will be given. One only will be here named—the MARQUIS OF ANGLESEA,—the mentioning of whose loss is honourable, having personally attended his Lordship at Bradford, and subsequently at London, and Uxbridge House.

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THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY

JOHN PAVEY, 47, HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND,

AND

BENJAMIN STEILL, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW.

THESE Papers are principally intended for the perusal of the friends of Christianity and the Constitution; particularly the Clergy and the Aristocracy, and of all persons who are possessed of Property. The object of the writer will be to explain the reason for the present alarming state of English society, and the consequent insecurity of life and property; also, to offer some remarks upon the folly and wickedness of attempting to uphold our Institutions, particularly that of Private Property, by the unconstitutional means of Centralization, Commissioning, Espionage, and Force; finally, to state his own views on the best mode of restoring Peace, Contentment, Security, and Prosperity, to every rank of the people of England.

The author is perfectly aware of the fact, that every Parliamentary leader is now only attempting to legislate for the present moment—putting off the evil day—making laws “from hand to mouth,” in the hope that some unforeseen, fortunate event may enable succeeding Statesmen to legislate for permanency. He is also convinced that there is a mode of successfully re-establishing our Institutions upon their original foundation—Christianity;—and that that is the only way to preserve them from the encroachments of political partisans, who are now only paving the way to universal Ruin, Anarchy, and Despotism.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. OASTLER is “At Home” on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.—Mr. Oastler’s health requires that he should entirely refrain from receiving the visits of his friends on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

W. on the Anatomy Bill, in an early number.

SAMUEL WELLS, Sergeant’s Inn, on the county allowance to prisoners in the Fleet, &c., at the earliest convenient opportunity.

In reply to several inquiries, is Mr. Oastler the author of “An appeal to the Tradesmen of the Metropolis?” Mr. Oastler answers, No; he has not seen the work. Mr. Oastler never publishes anonymously.

In reply to a numerous list of kind inquirers—“How can we best serve your interest?” Mr. Oastler begs to say—by promoting the circulation of the *Fleet Papers*, and by procuring advertisements for their covers. Mr. Oastler may be allowed to add, that few better mediums for advertising can be found than the *Fleet Papers*; they circulate in every district, and amongst every rank. In the Palace and the Cottage, readers of the *Fleet Papers* are to be found. Clergymen, Landlords, and Farmers, Ministers of State, Ploughboys, Factory Children, and Weavers, patronize these little *Flecters*.

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NOTICE OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

"The FLEET PAPERS.—THE FACTORY MONOPOLY—WORKING MEN, ATTEND!!—We earnestly submit to our readers generally, but to the industrious WORKING CLASSES especially, the subjoined account, from Mr. Richard Oastler's *Fleet Papers*, of the 'tender mercies' of the great Northern Mill Molochs, who are now 'leagued' against the protection of our NATIVE AGRICULTURE, and who, by the false cry of 'Cheap Bread,' hope, by further lowering wages and oppressing their poor defenceless infant slaves, to add to their overgrown wealth. Has Mr. Divett ever raised his voice against this crying 'Monopoly'—the monopoly of untaxed machinery against adult human labour?—He has not. Has Mr. Divett, or any of the supporters of the present degraded Ministry, ever raised his voice, in the senate or on the hustings, against the diabolical, monopolising, and oppressive FACTORY SYSTEM?—They have not. The ameliorations which have been effected in the system, by compelling the heartless factory owners to reduce the time of the labour of children, have been solely obtained by the exertions of Lord Ashley—immortal honour to his name—and the Christian and Constitutional Conservatives! But if Mr. Divett has not raised his voice against this 'Monopoly,' we can tell the electors of Exeter, that he has gone out of his usual course to serve that base and wicked betrayer of the poor factory children, Daniel O'Connell! We will not further comment upon Mr. Oastler's statements, which are founded upon official Parliamentary documents: they are enough to freeze the blood of any man of natural feeling, and to sicken the soul, by a knowledge that such iniquity should exist in liberal and enlightened England, and that Whig-Radicals should call upon the Working Classes to assist in extending such horrid cruelty and monopoly!

"Mr. Oastler quotes the evidence of other witnesses even more horrid than those we have given, and then indignantly says:— * * *"—*Woolmer's Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, June 26, 1841.

MR. OASTLER'S FAREWELL TO FIXBY.

(From the *Halifax Guardian*, September 1, 1838.)

"On Saturday last, the day appointed for Mr. and Mrs. Oastler's departure from Fixby Hall, the inhabitants of the neighbouring towns and villages assembled to accompany the discarded servant to Huddersfield. Long before the hour appointed (five o'clock), the roads and lanes leading to the Hall were studded with crowds of pedestrians, and in a short time the multitude was marshalled in order on the footpath leading from the front of the Hall to Huddersfield, and at intervals cannon were fired on a neighbouring eminence. But it was not till nearly half-past five o'clock, that the vast procession began to move. About that time, Mr. and Mrs. Oastler came out of the Hall, and along with their amiable adopted daughter, and Mr. W. Stocks, jun., entered an open barouche, drawn by a pair of greys, and having on the box-seat two youths, with each a small blue flag inscribed 'Oastler the children's friend.' Mrs. Oastler appeared much affected, whilst her husband bore the 'farewell,' with the air of a man who was determined to make all sacrifices, rather than forsake his principles. It is needless to say that they drove off, amidst the tears and blessings of all who surrounded them. He was received by the congregated thousands with loud and long-continued cheers, at the conclusion of which the procession started for Huddersfield. It was nearly a mile in length, and the route was enlivened by the various strains of ten bands of music. Banners, chiefly white and blue, closely succeeded each other, and consisted of the old Factory and Poor Law flags, and of some new ones appropriate to the occasion, bearing various mottoes, of which we noticed the following:—'Welcome, Oastler! we claim thee as our own.'—'The Squire's cast-off is the People's choice.'—'Oastler! O, God, be thou his counsellor.'—'Oastler for ever—No Bastiles.'—Two small flags were carried immediately before the barouche, in which were Mr. and Mrs. Oastler; one was a blue one and had on, in silver letters, 'Queen and Constitution'—the other was a white one, and bore the motto, 'Oastler, the factory child's friend.' The procession was headed by a number of gentlemen on horseback, with white wands; to them succeeded a band of music, which was followed by a large number of respectable individuals on foot and bearing white wands. Then came the body of the procession, the barouche containing the 'Squire's cast-off,' followed by several gigs, phaetons, &c., and the rear was brought up by upwards of fifty persons, each with a white wand. On gaining the point of the hill opposite Fixby Hall—where the last view of the Hall can be obtained within the Park—Mr. Oastler rose, and standing with his back to the horses, fixed his gaze on the home he was leaving; the crowd around participated in the feelings which pervaded Mr. O.'s breast, and moved on in silence. On leaving the Park, Mr. O. again rose, and took his hat off to the inhabitants of the lodge; and when the carriage-wheels passed the gates, a hearty cheer arose from all around. The cheering was again repeated in the turn of the high road from whence a view of Fixby Hall is gained; and at Cowcliffe, where there is a fine prospect of Huddersfield and the adjacent hamlets, the cheers were long and loud. Here the road along which the procession was to pass lay stretched from the foot of the hill, and Mr. Oastler had a prospect of the thousands of men, women, and children who occupied the walls and the windows along the whole line. From Clough House all the way to Huddersfield, Mr. Oastler was greeted with one continued series of cheers, from the operatives and others who lined the road, and also from the families that inhabit the different mansions contiguous. All who could afford it, sported a blue or white ribbon, to which was in many cases attached the Oastler medal. This had been struck at Birmingham for the occasion, and bore on one side a profile of Oastler, with the words 'The Oastler National Testimonial, 1838,' surrounding it; and on the reverse a representation of rural life, with the motto, 'Live and let live,' at the base, and round the top the words 'Competence is the just

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddleworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."
"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."
"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break
in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 29.

LONDON, SATURDAY, JULY 17, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—That was indeed a long interval during which you remained silent respecting your claim against me! From the day of trial, which was on the 10th of July, 1840, to the following 12th of November, you, apparently, suffered your anger to slumber. During that tedious period, I was left in uncertainty as to your intentions. Methought that it was possible your wrath had subsided—that your Counsel had faithfully represented the beatings of your heart towards your old steward—that we were now at peace! I could have fancied that you had resolved to let the matter rest for ever; and that, perhaps, you had repented of the injury which you had inflicted on one who had sacrificed all in your service, and were waiting for an opportunity to make restitution! Such thoughts as these beguiled the wearisome season of suspense. I dreamed of *your* father and of *my* father, and of the many ties which bound *our* names in amity, until I was awakened to the knowledge, that still your anger was not satisfied—that the lion of your wrath had but slumbered—that there were no relentings in your bosom! On the 12th of November, 1840, your solicitor wrote to mine, begging to know "when he could call upon him for the final settlement." And, after a verbal communication between those gentlemen, on the 19th of the same month, again your attorney wrote, making the following communication:—

"As I shall see Mr. Thornhill on Monday, I think it would be advisable for Mr. Oastler to furnish me, in the meantime, with some proposition to submit to Mr. Thornhill, or with a declaration of his ultimatum on the subject."

Mr. Faithfull (my solicitor) immediately sent those two letters of your solicitor (Mr. Thomas) to me, accompanied by certain friendly advice and observations, with which it is needless that I should now trouble you.

Thus was the airy altar of peace, which I had been fondly building, overthrown! I had, however, the consolation to reflect, that although I had possessed the power to annoy you, and that to no small extent, I had been preserved from saying or doing anything, since the trial, which could by possibility harm or vex you. Nay, I was conscious that I had done everything which was calculated to promote your interest, and to prove to you, and to all,

that malice and ill-will were banished from my breast. When you visited your Yorkshire estates last summer, I urged my friends to give you a kind reception; they did so, and you were gratified.

Of course, I regretted (as who would not, under such circumstances?) that my rich and powerful adversary was still unappeased; but I was not dismayed—my confidence in God was unabated; and, relying on the guidance of His Holy Spirit, and the strength of His Mighty Arm, I calmly surveyed the difficulties by which I found my path was once more beset.

I had become attached to my new abode; misfortune had not loosened the ties which united my heart to those under whose roof I sojourned; my wife and child were more firmly rivetted to my soul by affliction; yet I was enabled to survey all, and, if need be, to sacrifice all—aye, and liberty as well—rather than abandon my principles, and succumb to the remorseless power of anger and wealth, which now evidently panted to overwhelm and destroy me!

I immediately considered what was best, under all the circumstances of the case, to be done.

I remembered the pleasing manner in which the affair had been settled in Court, by referring every disputed point to yourself, and thus changing your position of Plaintiff, to that of Arbitrator. Of this, had you been in Court on the 10th of July, you would have been aware. You would then have perceived, that instead of demanding my "ultimatum," honour and justice would have required, that, if you were not satisfied with the reasons already given to you, for the allowances and deductions to which I felt myself "*fairly*" entitled, you should have asked what more I had to state on that head, in order that you might be prepared to make a just Award, upon a question in which *your* honour, as well as mine, was at stake. I say, Sir, had you been in Court, you must have perceived, that, after hearing and deliberately weighing all my reasons and arguments, the "ultimatum" must have been your own Award;—you could not, had you been acquainted with the nature of the settlement in Court, have asked for my "ultimatum."

But you were again deceived—the nature of our arrangement in Court must have been entirely hidden from you. Indeed, I was informed, that you were told—

"After Mr. Kelly got so far in his opening as to show the gross mismanagement of your property by Oastler; Oastler, seeing by the countenances of the jury that a verdict was sure against him, interposed, acknowledged the debt, &c., and then *sneaked* out of Court; that there were some Yorkshire manufacturers there, who were enemies of Oastler, in consequence of the disturbances he had made amongst them, who expressed their joy at Oastler's *defeat*," &c.

Those "manufacturers" were the same persons of whom I told you in my last. Mr. Kelly had not said one word about "mismanagement"—he had made no charge, no insinuation, against me.—Such, Sir, I was informed, was the report made to you of what happened in Court on our trial. I appeal to every person who heard and saw what passed, including the Lord Chief Justice, the jury, your own solicitor, and those "manufacturers," if such was not a *false* report.—I believed, that throughout this transaction you had acted under impulses created by misrepresentation. I was now resolved, if possible, to undeceive you, by giving you a true statement of what passed in Court, in order that, if again you should commit yourself, you should not have the excuse

of ignorance. I determined also to lay before you the exact position in which your proceedings against me had placed my affairs, and to offer you all that I had left, (over and above the proceeds of my building land in Leeds, which the "executions" had already vested in yourself and my other creditors,) the further profits of my talents and industry, until every farthing of your claim was liquidated. I resolved to tender all I had to offer—thus laying myself at your disposal. But you were inexorable! You demanded my liberty and my body—YOU HAVE THEM! They have been in your keeping more than seven months; they still remain your property; and will do, till you weary of their custody, or death shall end your cruelty!

In reply to the two letters of your attorney, I wrote to Mr. Faithfull as follows, a copy of which was immediately sent to Mr. Thomas.

"E. C. Faithfull, Esq.

"106, Sloane Street, Chelsea, Nov. 21, 1840.

"My dear Sir,—In reply to your letters of the 17th and yesterday, containing copies of two communications from Mr. Thomas to yourself, of the 12th and 19th inst., I beg to make the following observations, which you will be pleased to convey, if you think proper, to Mr. Thomas. I thank you for your remark, 'that as the question between us is now determined, no consideration should any longer stand in the way of an adjustment.' Of course I am, as you say, 'anxious to return to my native scenes, and to be amongst my friends and companions.' I am also very wishful 'to be doing something towards a livelihood,' &c. I am bound to believe Mr. Thomas, when he says, that 'Mr. Thornhill has had no other object than the attainment of justice;' and I rejoice to believe that I was mistaken, when I conceived that Mr. Thornhill's object was to punish me, for my supposed connexion with an offensive placard—a placard which was as repugnant to my feelings as it could be to Mr. Thornhill's.

"But it is no wonder that misconceptions should arise, when persons are excited and prejudiced. This I confess to have been my state of mind for a considerable period; and I believe I do not err in supposing that the same cause may have induced Mr. Thornhill and Mr. Thomas to put erroneous constructions on circumstances connected with this case. I will endeavour, if possible, to explain myself, so as to prevent any misconception now, and also so as to give no offence.

"You are aware that we went into Court with the determination, that if the 'opening' was friendly, I should immediately withdraw all opposition. You know also, that, by your instructions, I took all the letters and copies of letters into Court, being advised by you to be in such a situation as to be able to produce any and every letter that plaintiff might wish for, as you supposed they might, when they got into the case, wish for more letters than they had given notice for. When Mr. Kelly, in his 'opening,' said he should read a part of the correspondence, I rose, and suggested, that 'as he had put it to me, I wished all the letters to be read,' having them all ready for him, if he called for them. I was too busy taking notes, during Mr. Kelly's address, to observe the jury, but I remember remarking to you, previously, that they seemed to be very intelligent, respectable gentlemen, and I was only sorry that they were not Yorkshiresmen.

"You will remember that I told you, that 'Mr. Kelly's gentlemanly 'opening' had entirely removed every unfriendly feeling from my mind;' and that we agreed that I should at once rise, and inform the Judge, that 'if what Mr. Kelly had stated were the real sentiments of Mr. Thornhill, there was an end of all dispute on my part.'

"I afterwards settled and arranged everything, in the most pleasant manner, with Mr. Kelly, leaving myself entirely in the hands of Mr. Thornhill; and then left the Court, bowing to the Judge and Jury, which they very politely noticed; and I parted with Mr. Kelly in the most friendly manner, he having expressed to me his approval of my conduct, and especially of the manner in which I agreed, without any reference, to give up all the books. I also took leave of a young barrister on my left, who said to me, 'that my conduct was most honourable, and that he was sure the plaintiff must, if he were present, be perfectly satisfied.' I then went out, to join a few manufacturers from the neighbourhood of Huddersfield, who were there, and spent a few hours with them—they being very much pleased with the handsome manner in which Mr. Kelly had spoken of me, and at the readiness which I had evinced to forget all that had passed, and leave myself in Mr. Thorn-

hill's hands, &c. I then made a point to see Mr. Chadwick, and assured him that 'I should be happy to do all I could to remove any unpleasantness or bad feeling from the minds of all, and to give him information upon any and every subject required.' I wrote immediately to several persons in Yorkshire to the same effect.

"But why do I bother you with these particulars? Simply to remind you, that *from that moment* I ceased to have any unfriendly feeling on this matter, and to express my determination to retain the same state of mind, under all circumstances, to the end. I do not regret what I did in Court; I believe that Mr. Thornhill will think and determine coolly and deliberately, and I shall be content with his Award.

"When I agreed in Court 'to fall entirely into Mr. Thornhill's hands,' (those, I believe, were my words,) I did so with the full intention to leave *all* with him. I felt, from the kind expressions of Mr. Kelly, every unfriendly feeling removed from my mind; and, I am thankful, not one of them has ever returned. I have, from that moment, acted in every way so as to convince every one, that, so far as I was concerned, the dispute and unpleasantness were ended. I could appeal to very many persons in proof of this, if needful; in fact, I have determined that nothing shall revive the feelings of the last two years—feelings which are destructive of peace and happiness.

"When, therefore, Mr. Thomas wishes for a 'final settlement,' my only answer is this—in fact, it is the only reply I can make: I have left the whole matter with Mr. Thornhill, in the full conviction that 'he wishes me well, as well on my own account, as that of my father's'—that 'he is anxious to make any reasonable allowance'—and that 'he has no other object than the attainment of justice.' I need not run the risk of reviving any *past* feeling, by stating, under the circumstances, for what I think allowances and deductions ought to be made. Mr. Thornhill knows *all*, and I leave *all entirely* with him.

"I have no doubt that my land in Leeds will realize more than all the claims against me; but if not, I have health, and as much talent as formerly, and, if I am allowed, I shall work my way through, and, no doubt, soon be able to work up any deficiency. Of money, I have none. I am now in my third year of unprofitable and expensive wandering and legal proceedings; and I may tell you, that I do not know by whom I am supported. It is a fact, that the only money I have, comes by letters—sometimes a five pound note, sometimes a ten, sometimes a twenty—but from whom, except in two instances, I know *no more than you*.

"If it be Mr. Thornhill's will (which I cannot believe) to keep me in this state of unprofitable and expensive exile, of course I submit—if it be his will to send me to the Fleet, I am ready, but by no means wishful, to go.

"As to borrowing money, that is *now* UTTERLY IMPOSSIBLE. I have had no communication with any of my family connections, or with my old friend, Mr. Wood, since I left Yorkshire.

"This is a long letter—had I had the means, it would have been very short; simply inclosing a cheque for the amount, with the *real*, not TAXED costs, and a request that Mr. Thornhill would return what he thought proper, leaving the 500*l.* salary, and everything else, as I agreed in Court, to his own decision.

"If proof were wanted that I was *sincere* when I agreed 'to leave myself entirely in Mr. Thornhill's hands,' the following facts might be stated.

"When Mr. Kelly agreed, with regard to certain books included in the *action*, that there might be a doubt as to whether they were mine or not, and acceded to a reference respecting them, I said, 'that I would willingly give them up, as they would be useful to Mr. Thornhill, and they were of no use to me.' I also agreed 'to give up all other books and papers *not* included in the action;' and, when Mr. Kelly reserved my claim for 500*l.* in the verdict, I said, 'that he might please himself about that, but I should leave it, with everything else, to be settled by Mr. Thornhill.' I have, and I shall, act up to the letter and spirit of that arrangement, be the consequences what they may. I am persuaded, that if Mr. Thornhill had not believed that I had been the author and approver of that obnoxious placard, nothing unpleasant would have transpired between him and me. I know that he was entirely mistaken in that suspicion, and some day I am sure that he will believe me.

"Mr. Kelly's observations removed every disagreeable sensation from my mind; and I am resolved, come what may, *they shall not return*.

"I am, my dear Sir, yours, most truly,

RICHARD OASTLER.

"P.S.—One thing gives me comfort, amidst all my trouble and vexation—I know now that Mr. Thornhill is about to reside at Finsby, and that he will not be long there, before he discovers that I never taught the tenants to despise, but always to honour and respect their landlord.—R.O."

It was impossible that I could do more. I offered you all that I had, and the mortgage of my skill and future industry, in payment of a debt which was incurred in your own service, the benefit of which you are every day enjoying! But you were not satisfied—you demanded "security"! The "judgment" which you obtained by the verdict, gave you *security* on my property—to that I was willing to add the mortgage of my future earnings, until every farthing was paid; but, no, you required that I should involve others in troubles which were entirely caused for your own profit!—you demanded "security" from a man whose credit you had wantonly ruined!—This was your attorney's reply to mine:—

"Mr. Thornhill must have the debt and costs, or *security* for the payment of it, by instalments, at reasonable periods, or execution must issue forthwith against Mr. Oastler. This being Mr. Thornhill's *final* determination about the matter, I shall expect Mr. Oastler's *final* answer in the course of a few days."

No sooner said than done. My "*final* answer" was instantly forwarded to my solicitor, who lost no time in sending it to yours. This was my "*ultimatum*":—

"E. C. Faithfull, Esq.

"106, Sloane Street, Chelsea, Dec. 1, 1840.

"My dear Sir,—I have received your favour of yesterday, enclosing Mr. Thomas's letter to you of the 25th ultimo, with Mr. Thornhill's Award, which last letter I return herewith.

"Having agreed in Court to refer the matter to Mr. Thornhill, although I am far from thinking his Award just, I submit. *I have it not in my power* to add anything to the proposals which were contained in my letter to you of the 21st ultimo.

"Mr. Thornhill must not blame me, if, by the proceedings which he has been advised to adopt, I have been forced into more than two years' unprofitable and expensive idleness, with heavy law expenses, and the consequent loss of credit, and am thereby deprived of the power to give him the money, which, under other circumstances, I should have been prepared to pay him, if he had thought it right to have received it. I cannot help remarking upon Mr. Thornhill's Award, that the very wording of it shows that he has made it under great misapprehension. I have now only to add, that if Mr. Thomas will let you know the day and hour he wishes me to surrender, I will be punctually at the Fleet.

"I am, my dear Sir, yours, most truly,

"RICHARD OASTLER."

The rejoinder was short, full, and conclusive:—

"E. C. Faithfull, Esq.

"2, Finsbury Circus, Dec. 3, 1840.

"Dear Sir,—I beg to inform you, that the officer will be at your office at twelve o'clock on *Wednesday*, for the purpose of taking Mr. Oastler under the writ of execution.

"I am, dear Sir, yours obediently,

"HUGH THOMAS."

To a moment, I was punctual—not so the "officer." I waited his arrival, when "my body was taken under the writ of execution." Since then, it has been your property. Although *you* have not been careful to provide for its sustenance, *others* have. True, the law of man, in England, allows an angry, revengeful creditor, thus to seek his debtor's life. The law of God, by which, one day, we shall all be tried, commands, "Thou shalt do no murder!"

The trip from Mr. Faithfull's office, by way of the "sponging-house" in

Chancery Lane, to the Fleet, I have described in a former number. Here "my body" has safely lodged, since the 9th of December, 1840—being kept at your will, or so long as life remains, in safe custody, for your use. My mind, no locks and bolts can restrain—no "judgments" can curb its power. I will use it, Sir, for your emancipation. You are in closer confinement than myself: *your* mind is held in chains by pride and misrepresentation—*mine* is as free as the breezes of heaven.

I forgot to mention, that before your attorney seized my body for your use, his clerk called upon my solicitor, Mr. Faithfull, to inquire, "If Mr. Thornhill should resolve to send Mr. Oastler to prison, would Mr. Oastler take the benefit of the Insolvent Debtors' Act?—because, if so, it would not be worth Mr. Thornhill's while to take Mr. Oastler's body in execution." Mr. Faithfull knew, without consulting me, that I should remain your willing prisoner, and not evade your grasp, by any subterfuge provided by the law—and that, he told your messenger. Thus ends the tale, of why I am, and why I remain, your prisoner.

I cannot conclude this subject, without expressing my thanks to all the officers in this prison, for the unvaried kindness which they have shown to me since I have been under their charge—I am proud to acknowledge the civility and friendship of every inmate of this place with whom I have associated. To those kind "outside" friends who, by their visits and presents, have made this place more like a palace than a prison, I owe a debt of gratitude which life is too short for me to repay.

Towards yourself I feel no resentment—my prayer for you is—that before it is too late, your *conscience* may speak louder than your *pride*;—you will then *know* that you have treated one unkindly, who has sacrificed his all to serve you. You will then *feel* that you have been induced, by misrepresentation, to dishonour a name which was transmitted to you, through a long line of ancestors, unsullied as the driven snow!

Whilst I have endeavoured faithfully to detail the several facts which have brought me to this place, I have studiously avoided any expression of harshness towards yourself. I believe that you are the victim of others, who, knowing your disposition, have misrepresented every circumstance, and, by pandering to your pride, have made you believe that I am your enemy. But, Sir, although I am not disposed to utter one angry word, I am far from wishing that you should suppose I am incapable of feeling. I can feel as keenly as others the deprivation of liberty—the banishment from my own church. I can watch, as seriously as any man, the effects of this confinement on my bodily health. None can feel more poignantly than I do, the effects of your revenge on my wife and child; but still, the consciousness that I and they have not deserved such cruel treatment from you, enables me to bear up against oppression's power, and forces me to pity him who can only strike, but who cannot harm! I know that an inhuman law gives you the power to shut me up in this prison, and counts me unworthy of the society of free men; but whilst I feel, as acutely as any man, the punishment of imprisonment, I can and do rejoice at the recollection, that I deserve better of that society whose cruel laws, at your bidding, have deprived me of my liberty, my domestic felicities, and of my religious privileges, *than he does, who has sent me here.*

I know, however, that I came not to this prison by chance. No, Sir, there is no chance in God's creation! I had many lessons to learn—lessons not taught "outside." Here I am studying them. Truth seldom prospers in this wicked world ere it is persecuted. It was needful that my principles should be known, and that the mist of prejudice which hung over my name should be removed. The ways of God are not like ours—*you* sent me here to crush and to destroy me,—*He* brought me to this place to purify and elevate my name and principles. These little *Fleeters* are effecting His purposes—they never would have existed, had you not sent me here.

The poor oppressed factory children—the separated and broken-hearted inhabitants of English Bastiles—the famished artizans and labourers—nay, the defamed, insulted, and degraded aristocracy, trampled upon by the O'Connell ridden Infidels, who now bask in the sunshine of Royalty—all, all required that their friend should suffer persecution—that thus his principles might be tested, his name established, and his honour vindicated! All this, Sir, you have enabled me to do. If the price be a few years shorter life, and the sighings of two females' hearts, be it our privilege to gaze on the value of the purchase—the vindication of the truth—the liberation of the factory slaves—the emancipation of the labourers—and the deliverance of the aristocracy from a thralldom more degrading and unbearable than was that of Egypt's Tyrant Lord!

These *Fleet Papers* have, by the blessing of God, obtained a footing—they are read by rich and poor, by noble and plebeian; they are making some impression on the mind of the public. Blessed by the power of Omnipotence, the Spirit of Tyranny, Covetousness, and Infidelity shall flee before them. Till then, our God will enable us to bear the weight of your oppression, the cruel and unjust destruction of our domestic joys, and thankfully embrace the Cross which bears us to the Crown!

Some persons have doubted the truth of the narrative of my departure from Fixby Hall, as given by an eye-witness in No. 27. I would not willingly deceive you or any of my readers—there were many witnesses of that scene. The description already quoted was copied from the *Northern Star* of September 1, 1838. I have two other reports of the same event, one from the *Leeds Intelligencer*, the other from the *Halifax Guardian*. I cannot do better than close this letter by separately transcribing their reports.

"Saturday last was a day which will long be remembered by the inhabitants of Fixby and Huddersfield. It was the day on which Mr. Oastler left the scene of his stewardship which he had discharged for the last eighteen years, and which office his father had also fulfilled for many years before him.

"Early in the morning were seen the sorrowful countenances of great numbers of the friends of Mr. Oastler, all anxious to testify their respect, and to express their good wishes for his future prosperity. In the course of the day several pieces of cannon were stationed in different parts of Fixby Park, and fired at intervals. As the hour of Mr. Oastler's departure drew near, vast numbers had assembled in Fixby Park, with flags, banners, and music, and the scene became greatly animating. The music sent forth its enlivening strains to indicate Mr. Oastler's triumph, and the cannon roared, expressive of the people's displeasure at the enmity evinced towards him by his enemies. Five o'clock in the afternoon was the hour appointed for the departure of Mr. Oastler from the Hall, shortly after which time all was in readiness. It was proposed that Mr. Oastler should leave in a carriage and four, but he would not consent to it, and would only be drawn by two horses. The procession commenced its march saluted by frequent discharges of cannon, the bands

playing 'See the Conquering Hero comes.' The sight was indeed most splendid. Before was a long procession of the people almost as far as the eye could reach, with an immense number of flags and banners bearing appropriate inscriptions. Around was a fine view of the country, which appeared in excellent condition. The procession was headed by a number of gentlemen on horseback, with white wands, and decorated with Oastler's medal suspended from a white ribbon. These were followed by a numerous band of music, playing appropriate tunes, gentlemen on foot with wands, medals, &c. Then, in an open barouche, came the object of universal attraction, Richard Oastler, with Mrs. Oastler and their amiable 'adopted,' accompanied by Wm. Stocks, jun. Esq. Independent of those who formed the line, the procession was surrounded, and had to work its way through immense masses of people, and the walls, railings, and trees were covered with the living mass who had ascended them to catch a transient glimpse of the 'King.' There was also a number of carriages, phaetons, gigs, &c., and a select body of the people acted as constables, carrying long rods. Just as Mr. Oastler's carriage was about to pass through the lodge of Fixby Hall, Mr. Oastler rose to take a farewell view of the old mansion, and the people gave a loud huzza. On the procession going down Light-ridge Lane, many and loud were the bursts of applause with which the much-beloved gentleman was greeted by the vast concourse. Old and young, rich and poor, came from their dwellings to salute the champion of their rights, and the cannon continued at intervals to thunder on the ear. But one sentiment appeared to animate the whole. Gratification to behold one who has ever stood forward as their friend, mingled with regret that in their cause he has been sacrificed. In the distance vast numbers were seen coming forward to meet and join the procession, which now extended itself to an immense extent. The scene became animated beyond description, being of a truth a moving panorama. On arriving at Clough House, the inhabitants came forth to greet Mr. Oastler, who took off his hat in acknowledgment, and the people gave several rounds of applause. A party at Clough House, the residence of Mr. Rhodes, gave three cheers for Mr. Oastler, which he responded to by taking off his hat and bowing. The cottagers on both sides of the road looked out of their windows, and enthusiastically cheered their steadfast friend. At Hill House, Mr. Oastler received the same demonstrations of respect by the residents, which he acknowledged in a suitable manner. In Hill House Lane the view of the procession was most cheering; the roads were thronged in all quarters. On reaching North Gate, the entrance into Huddersfield, the sight became almost overwhelming—the people cheered, and the music played, while every spot was occupied by spectators. The house-tops were covered with people. The procession reached Huddersfield at seven o'clock, having been nearly two hours on the road. On entering the Cow Market, the procession was welcomed by a number of children placed on an elevation, who sung a piece entitled 'Oastler is the Man.' Turning up Castle Gate the most tremendous cheers were given by the crowd, and a ship, composed of blue paper, was exhibited. The windows on all sides were filled with spectators, who waved their handkerchiefs as the procession moved along. At the bottom of King Street, the people again gave loud cheers for their champion, and on turning up this large and spacious street, the sight was such as had never before been seen in Huddersfield, though the scene of many an enthusiastic popular movement. The spectators gave several rounds of applause. The procession then turned on New Street, and was greeted with tremendous cheering; the windows of the houses exhibited ladies wearing blue favours, and waving their handkerchiefs, which Mr. Oastler acknowledged by taking off his hat and bowing. The procession turned up High Street and along Market Street, and then going down Kirkgate, unbounded cheers still continuing, and on arriving at Mr. Wigney's, the George Hotel, several peals of enthusiastic applause were given. The immense mass then proceeded down Kirkgate, turned into Cross Church Street, and went to a spacious plot of ground near Saint Paul's Church, where hustings were erected. Mrs. Oastler and Miss Tatham alighted in Queen Street, at the residence of Mr. Tatham, and the procession moved on to the hustings, where it arrived about a quarter past seven o'clock. * * *

"The meeting separated as it commenced, with the greatest order; as a proof, we are happy to state that not a single act of disorder or accident occurred during the day. A great many came from Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Oldham, Manchester, Ashton, Stayley Bridge, Glossop, Saddleworth, and other places. There were about ten hands of music in the procession, and all the musicians volunteered their services. We repeat, that such a display was never before seen in the town of Huddersfield."—*Leeds Intelligencer*, Sept. 1, 1838.

I find that I have not space for the report from the *Halifax Guardian*; but, in order that I may finish this wearisome subject in this letter, I shall insert it on the Cover. I beg pardon for the repetition. In the mouth of three witnesses, truth is established.

In my next, some public question shall be discussed—may be, what should the new Parliament do? Meanwhile,

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—A very long list of the offerings of friendship to your prisoner awaits recital; at present, I must postpone that pleasing duty.—R.O.

ERRATA.—In the last number, page 222, line 25 from top, for "106, Chelsea," read "106, Siouac Street, Chelsea."

rights of industry,' whilst others had the motto, 'Dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.' Throughout the whole course of the route the procession seemed rather that of a loving people exerting their monarch to his coronation, than of the labouring poor removing from their ranks a man who was turned out of home and home. On every point of road, women as well as men seemed happy, if they could but catch the eye and receive the acknowledgments of the hero of the day; and mothers were thrice happy if they could attract the attention of Mr. Oastler to the fine infants which were on all sides held up before him; and many a female face was clouded, because it was in vain that she attempted to direct the wandering eyes of her offspring to the tall grey-headed gentleman in the carriage.

The procession entered Huddersfield along North Gate a little before seven o'clock, and proceeded along Castle Gate, up King Street, on New Street, up High Street, on Market Street, into West Gate, past the George Inn, down Kirk Gate, and through Cross Church Street, and Queen Street, to the house of Mr. Oastler's brother-in-law, Mr. Tatham, where the band struck up—'See, the Conquering Hero comes.' Here the carriage pulled up, and Mrs. Oastler and her lovely daughter got out. The procession then continued its course turning to the left, where bustings were carried, round which on all sides the thousands congregated.

Throughout the whole line of road, the windows and the house-tops were crowded, and every inch of standing room on the pavements and elsewhere was occupied. The weather, which threatened to be showery, was favourable until the commencement of the meeting, when there was a smart fall of rain.

After Mr. Oastler had concluded, the meeting was addressed by several individuals; and did not break up until a late hour. It is calculated that there could not have been much less than 150,000 persons in and around Huddersfield during the course of the triumphal procession. We believe that not the slightest accident, not the least attempt at a breach of the peace, occurred; all passed off quietly, without either the special constables being called out, or the military being called in."

The following affecting story, so well told by a poor operative, is copied from that excellent publication, *The People's Magazine*, for July, 1841, by the Rev. J. R. Stephens. I well remember poor Price telling me that tale; and when I desired him to versify the same, how readily he complied with his "King's" request. My readers will judge how well he performed the task.—R.O.

"THE DEATH OF THE FACTORY CHILD.

"Hear me! ye firm and uncorrupted few,
Followers of freedom! and of virtue too!
Ye, who are pleading with a noble zeal
For poor men's rights—rejoicing in their weal;
Friends of the parent—guardians of the child—
Whose frames are wasted, and whose souls de-
filed

Within those hells of tyranny that stand,
Glimmy and vast, o'er all the sinking land.
Too long, my harp hath breath'd of fancy's
dreams,

Too long responded to unworthy themes.
Farewell! ye once-lov'd fictions of my youth,
Its future tones shall harmonize with truth.
To rouse the Labourer in peril's hour;
To cheer the victims of a lawless pow'r;
To wake that slumbering energy of soul
Which brooks no wrong, and spurns unjust
control;

To add my feeble voice to that which rings
With awful thunder in the ear of kings:
This is my hourly hope, my daily aim;
If virtuous men approve, I seek no higher fame:

The long drear Winter night was 'gathering
fast;

The snow danced wildly on the stifol blast;
Within yon Bastille's suffocating walls,
(Whose very name my sickening soul appals.)
The gas which burns to light these living graves
Gleam'd on the faces of a thousand slaves.
I saw, and knew our gentle victims there:
The youngest of a widow'd mother's care:

Hard had he labour'd since the morning hour,—
But now his little hands relax'd their pow'r,—
Yet, urg'd by curses or severer blows,
Without one moment's brief, but sweet repose,
From frame to frame the exhausted sufferer crept,
Picc'd the frail threads, and, uncomplaining,
wept.

While yet the night was boisterous and chill—
While winds were loud, and snows were drifting
still,

The bell gave out its long expected sound,
The mighty engine ceased its weary round,
Forth rush'd the captives,—a degraded train—
Till worn should summon them to toil again.
Some to the maddening ale-cup rashly sped;
Some to the short oblivion of their bed;
But he whose tale is waven in my song—
The first to fall, of that devoted throng—
With mingl'd cold and pain his tears ran o'er,
As the keen lee-wind enter'd every pore.
I ask'd his ailment, but he did not speak;
His fate was written on his ghastly cheek—
I strove to help him with a friendly hand;
Alas! poor boy! he could not walk nor stand.
I clasp'd thy arms around his wasted form,
And bore him through the fury of the storm;
Up the dark street my eager footsteps bent,
Cursing the power that doom'd him, as I went;
His mother met me, with unfeign'd alarms,
And snatch'd the slaughter'd victim from my
arms,
Kiss'd his pale lips, and rail'd upon his name;
He murmur'd faintly, but no answer came.

I turn'd in grief from her imploring cries;
Unbidden tears were springing in my eyes;
Yet, breathing words of hope, I sought my home,
To ponder upon miseries to come.

The wond'rous wizard, Sleep, had now unfurl'd
His drowsy pennons over half the world;
The widow's children to their beds were gone,
And left her calm, yet mournfully, alone—
Alone with him, the idol of her heart,
Whose sinless soul was yearning to depart;
She, mute at length, with sorrow and dismay,
Wept, o'er his shatter'd frame, the night away.

Time was, ere Commerce seal'd his early doom;
Shut up in Moloch's life-destroying womb;
Ere yet the roses of his cheeks were pale,
He run uncurb'd o'er mountain, moor, and vale:
Lur'd by the hives of bees, the voice of birds,—
Sweet and familiar, as his mother's words,—
With buoyant step he sallied forth at morn,
And pluck'd his hasty dinner from the thorn;
He knew each sylvan and sequestered nook;
He watch'd the secret mazes of the brook;
Thread the dark forest; roam'd the laughing
fields,
Deck'd with each golden bud that summer yields,
The same, though changeful nature frown'd or
smil'd,
A healthful, innocent, and joyous child.

Thus, in the mourner's harass'd mind were
glass'd,
These sad, yet sweet, reflections of the past,
Until these thrilling words her vision broke:—
'Mother! dear mother!'—'twas her boy who
spoke.
With fever'd lips he ask'd the cooling draught,
And, long and deeply, from the cup he quaff'd;
But, scarcely had he turn'd his head to rest
Fondly secure upon his mother's breast,
A sound, which woke no feeling but of fear,
With well-known import smote his startled ear—
A sound, alas! which prov'd his dying knell,—
The horrid clangour of the Bastile bell!

Then, starting up, he gaz'd on vacant space,
Cried, as he listen'd with bewilder'd face,
'Oh! mother, mother, I can work no more,
My head is painful, and my feet are sore;
Forgive me, mother, if I thus complain—
I fear I never shall be well again;
And if I die, O! do not weep for me,
But make my grave beneath some pleasant tree,
Where Summer flowers around its roots may
spring,

And Summer birds within its branches sing;
And tell my loving sisters when they weep,
I saw my gentle father, in my sleep;
And, as he kindly looked and sweetly smil'd,
'I thought he call'd me his own happy child.'
'The sufferer spake his last—his eyes grew dim;
The cruel spoiler palsied ev'ry limb;
One sigh—before the victory was won,—
One gentle tremour—and the strife was done;—
Whilst the glad spirit, freed from chains of clay,
Soar'd to her native realms away, away.

My painful task is drawing to a close;
I would not dwell upon a parent's woes.
She mourned for him, as mothers always mourn,
Yet, did not seem to wish for his return.
She laid him in the earth with decent pride,
For poor men's charity the means supplied;
And one poor bard to whom the child was known,
Inscrib'd these lines upon his humble stone:—

EPITAPH.

Here sleep the relics of an orphan flower,
Crush'd by the brutal foot of lawless pow'r;
Another victim to the thousands slain
Within the mighty slaughter-house of gain.
O! come ye kind philanthropists, who feel
The noblest int'rests in the people's weal,
Pause on this infant-martyr's new turn'd grave,
Swear to emancipate the British slave;
Tell the oppressor, that the widow's God,
In justice, wields an all-avenging rod,
And if the pow'rs of human virtue fail,
The hand of heaven will certainly prevail.

JOHN CRITCHLEY PRINCE."

The bloody and brutal proceedings under the Revolutionary compact of the Irish Secret Roman Catholic Society, the Police, and the Anti-Corn-Law-Cotton-Lord-League, with reference to *bludgeoning the people of England*, cannot be too narrowly watched. "Coming events cast their shadows before them." I beg attention to the following extract from the *Manchester Chronicle*.—R.O.

"THE LEAGUE AND PHYSICAL FORCE,

"It is a noticeable feature in these elections, and one which will require grave and deliberate attention, when the bustle of the contest has subsided, that wherever the Anti-Corn-Law-League have had a candidate in the field, there has been formidable rioting. The only places in which the direct influence of the League is not traced, where any serious outrage has been perpetrated, are, we believe, Carlisle and Nottingham; and even there the Anti-Corn-Law agitation was the exciting cause of the tumult. In truth, under the guise and title of this League, there is organized a conspiracy for introducing into England all the worst features of Irish sedition. We already trace the outline of a systematic assault on all rights of property in land. Rent will be the next object of attack; and finally, the occupation and possession of the soil itself. With a view to an agrarian law it is, that the League are importing and drilling bludgeon-men, and organizing all the ruffianism of the kingdom into a grand confederacy, by means of emissaries called 'lecturers.' Their attempts to obtain a controul of the police are part of the same system. We have before mentioned the fact, that Mr. Cobden recommended the most desperate of the ruffians engaged in the electioneering riots here to a place in the police, from which he was discharged two days afterwards, for breaking his sergeant's head! What can we say to such a recommendation, and the prompt compliance with it? The League and their doings require closer watching than they have hitherto had. We have various facts in store, to which we shall recur anon."

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

Vol. I.—No. 30.

LONDON, SATURDAY, JULY 24, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—Thank God! the enemies of my country are *driven* from the representation of the West Riding of Yorkshire! The Infidel, who sneeringly demanded "What is truth?"—the Noble, who is ashamed of his patrician birth, and who apologized to a company of plebeians for his "accidental" connexion with the Howards!—the insolent defamer of English women!—the Apostle of Popery and Free Trade!—the willing tool of O'Connell!—no longer speaks for Yorkshiremen in Britain's Senate!—Morpeth is the last on the Poll! He was spurned at by the Tories—he was rejected, as far as he could be, by his own party! Let him again sneer at truth—apologize for his noble birth—attempt to blast the fair fame of English women—and crouch before O'Connell, where, when, and how he may—Yorkshire is now rid of him, and I am satisfied!

The disgust which Yorkshiremen felt at the audacity of Earl Fitzwilliam, in daring to shake his purse in their faces, and requiring them to take his foolish son, Lord Milton, as their representative, is recorded by themselves on the poll, in terms which will teach that proud Peer, that Yorkshire is not a cock-pit or a stable-yard!—that Yorkshiremen are not Fitzwilliam's serfs!

How the friends and supporters of Sir George Strickland may have felt, when he was forced, at the bidding of Fitzwilliam, to give place to Milton, they best know. Surely that scheme was not planned for the purpose of degrading Lord Morpeth, even by his own party, by giving them an opportunity of proving to his Lordship, that they preferred a noble jockey and cock-fighter to himself! Whether there was design in that infliction, I neither know nor care. But I do know, that, heap up insult as you may, sink degradation to the lowest pit, the Whigs themselves have made the name of "Morpeth," and that point of infamy, politically, synonymous. He had been the God of the Idolatry of a mean, arrogant, tyrannical faction—'twas needful that his votaries should thus become his executioners! Think not that there is chance in this event. Lord Morpeth's political sins had been outrageous—'twas needful that his punishment should be exemplary.

No, Sir, there is no chance in that transaction. Good seed had been long sown, well tilled and watered, for many years, in that soil. Death has snatched

away many of the early labourers — Sadler, the never-to-be-forgotten Sadler, with many of the excellent of the earth, were gathered to their fathers, before harvest time: but there is now no want of harvesters. True, you have hindered me from joining in this last glorious strife on the Yorkshire field of action. The sheaves have, however, been safely housed in my absence, and I am thankful! — Undismayed by Whig frowns and malice, in that field I had sown, and tilled, and watered many years, and though my body was, by you, cased up in this cell at harvest-home, my spirit was in Yorkshire, my prayers were for her emancipation from the thralldom of the tyrant Whigs; and oh! how I rejoiced, when I heard that my own banner, “The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage,” preceded the conquerors, animated the breasts of Yorkshire’s valiant hosts, and led the way to conquest! You could not curb the boundings of my heart, when, in this prison, I heard the glorious news of Yorkshire’s victory!

Thank God! the battle is fought, the victory is won. Tyranny and Infidelity, Popery and Humbug, have now lost their power in Yorkshire. Morpeth and Milton are driven—yes, Sir, they are *driven*—from my native county, as I hope, never, never, never to return! My heart overflows with thankfulness, it vibrates true to the heart-beatings of my countrymen; and in this cell the shout of triumph has been heard, and will often be repeated, for Yorkshire’s victory! — The *Fleet Papers* must and shall contain the final state of *that* Poll:—

Wortley.	Denison.	Milton.	Morpeth.
13,165	12,780	12,080	12,031
Wortley’s majority over		Milton.....	1,085
”	”	Morpeth... 	1,134
Denison’s majority over		Milton.....	700
”	”	Morpeth... 	749
Milton’s majority over		Morpeth... 	49!!

Well done, West-Ridingers!!

I am proud of Yorkshire now! Mayhap I shall never see her, but my bones *will* slumber there!

Oh, West Yorkshire! thou hast done thy duty well! In prison I have reaped the fruit of seeds which I so long have sown in thee! Sir, the patriotism of my countrymen cheers the heart, and warms the breast, and nerves the arms, and animates the hopes of your Yorkshire prisoner. Down, down, down with the arrogant, malignant, God-and-people-hating Whigs!!

Why do I thus rejoice?—why does your prisoner’s heart exult? There is a cause, and I will tell it.

I know the West Riding Whigs better than any other man. For thirty-four years I have maintained a stand-up fight against them—sometimes, single-handed; but on them I never turned my back. I have felt the whole weight of their malice—I am feeling it now: you are but their tool. Their lying and hypocritical spleen and revenge have often spent themselves upon me—their groans and hisses were wont to reply to my facts and arguments. I have felt their peltings with mud, and dung, and tiles, and stones, and brick-bats; once they have robbed me of a coat and hat—they rent one coat of mine in twain. Their murderous bludgeons, too, have broken my bones, and marred my body.

They hated none like me!—No one rejoices at their fall as I do! Down with “the base, bloody, and brutal” crew!

Were I in Yorkshire, I would perform their funeral rites, and chaunt their Requiem, and write their Epitaph! That honour is reserved for others, who may execute the pleasing task more worthily—none can more willingly.

The men with liberty-tongues and bludgeoned-fists are fallen! Bury them who may, Oastler shall toll the bell!

Oh! the tugs that I have had with these West Riding Whigs! In how many strifes have I met them since the grand fight of 1807! You were amongst them then, and so were many other good and honourable, but deluded men.

These West Riding Whigs I have known from my cradle. They were then a discontented, murmuring race; hating all law and order, panting to revolutionize the country.

In 1807, they traduced Wilberforce, representing him as the greatest knave and the basest hypocrite alive! They then moved earth and hell to keep him out of Parliament! Afterwards, when they found “black slavery” a good political watchword, they sainted him, and shouted in his praise till they were hoarse!—the hypocrites!

They professed to be the friends of the working classes—they urged them on to the gallows, and afterwards laughed at them! At another time, taxation was their aversion. The tax they then most railed against, was that on property. They then had the ear of the poor, and absolutely deluded them into the belief that that tax was most oppressive, and persuaded them to petition against it!—Just then, I was in company with the late Col. Dixon. He was a most honourable and excellent man. He said, “What fools the poor people are: I could not have believed that any influence could have induced them to petition against the Property Tax. True, I shall save some hundreds a year by its repeal; but the money must be raised, and now the poor will have to pay it instead of the rich!”—Such influence had the Whigs in those days, and thus did they use it.

They lived upon traducing the characters of true philanthropists. Sadler, they hunted to the death! Nothing was too base or cruel for them: they absolutely charged that best of men with being an assassin! There was scarcely a crime, to which they were addicted, of which they did not accuse that good man!

These West Riding Whigs were the great enemies of the factory children. Mighty black slave emancipators were they; but most cruel and dishonest task-masters. They left no stone unturned to keep their hold on infants’ blood! Liberal praters were they, but most tyrannical in practice! Their implacable hatred against me was such as never scorched the human breast before. My crime was, that I unfurled the flag of Factory emancipation, and boldly defied the rights of English slaves—denouncing, in the tyrants’ teeth, their cruelty and murder!—unmasking the sleek and canting hypocrites, whose politics consisted in abusing the holders of black slaves, the aristocracy, and the clergy, and their religion in amassing almost countless wealth, by cheating their work-people, and by the torturing and killing labour of poor white infant slaves! Oh! how I have seen those “liberal politicians,” those “pious and holy saints,” gnash their teeth at me. Let them rejoice, with you, at my imprisonment—I will glory, in this cell, at their defeat!

During the Reform mania, these liberal, republican tyrants promised mighty things to the poor deluded labourers and artizans. The hateful boroughmongers were all to be destroyed, the working people were all to be free men, well paid, well fed, well clothed, well housed, and well everything. At the bidding of this same traitor, Fitzwilliam, (surely that Noble (!) blushes, when he thinks of the imprisoned Chartists,) who has dared to thrust his worthless son upon the Riding, they resolved "to pay no more taxes!" Of their own will, they burned the Nobles and the Bishops in effigy—they hoisted the banner of "the King in petticoats, and the Queen in breeches, with the Crown and Sceptre falling"—they marched in procession, preceded by "the Cap of Liberty," and "an executioner, bearing a bloody axe, with his face covered with black crape," shouting the while, "if Billy will not give us the bill, he shall soon be the head lower." And then, to satisfy their vulgar, debased, and unmanly souls, they gave "three groans for the Queen of England!" and yelled and hooted like maniacs! Sir, I write but what I saw and heard. Thus did the West Riding Whigs carry the Reform Bill!—thus they disfranchised thousands upon thousands of the deluded work-people, striking, like cowards, at the poorest, and conferred the franchise on bricks and mortar!—making new nomination boroughs, such as Huddersfield, to please rich Whigs!

After having, by these means, mounted to power on the shoulders of the people, and enslaved them, they next insulted them, by openly declaring, as I have often heard them, "We will now kick down the ladder by which we rose—we have got our feet upon the necks of the Radicals, and we will keep them there!" Sir, I am a faithful chronicler; thousands can vouch for the truth of all I tell you.

These were the men who misrepresented all I said, who printed speeches for me which I never uttered, and thus made others think that I was a traitor and an incendiary—nay, in their rage and malice against me, they talked of "passing a bullet through my heart." But the cowards dared not enforce their threat!

When these "patriots" obtained the mastery, how did they fulfil their promises of liberty and plenty to the millions who had raised them into office? Again they aimed their blow at the weakest and the poorest:—they proposed and passed a law which was intended to force "the poor people of England to live upon a coarser sort of food!" They deprived them of their natural and constitutional rights, and placed them under the governance of three Commissioners, who are invested with the power of imprisonment, separation, and starvation! To enforce that unconstitutional statute, they passed another, at midnight, authorizing the introduction of the London Police into the provinces! That act, in England's best days, would have cost its proposer his head! For the purpose of aiding the Poor Law Commissioners and the London Police in their unbearable tyranny, they appointed for magistrates the most ignorant, servile, tyrannical, and hated individuals; at whose bidding, without the cognizance of the Lord Lieutenant, the West Riding was overrun with London spies, police, and troops of all descriptions! The towns of the West Riding became barrack stations—the whole district was governed by the sword. Justice could no longer be expected, when 1,000*l.* bail was demanded of a poor working man for begging! and when the Whig tyrants on the bench were backed by the Home Office. The Lord Lieutenant, the old magistracy, and the constitutional

new Whig batch, and the London Police spies! To crown all, and thus fill up the measure of their iniquity, these West Riding Whig magisterial tools endeavoured to establish the Rural Police! but, happily, they were defeated by a phalanx of constitutional Justices, headed, if I mistake not, by one of the parliamentary victors — Denison! Bless the man; I love him for his family, his principles, his deeds; and, more so, because the Whigs have insolently and arrogantly traduced him. The poll has, however, paid them off with interest.

Is it not very odd?—for years I have tried to bring William Beckett out for Leeds, and Edmund Beckett Denison for the West Riding—now they are both in the places I had so long assigned them, for which no men are better fitted. Somehow, I like that breed. I thank the men of my native town (Leeds) twice over—once for returning William Beckett, and again for rejecting black and white Joseph Hume, whose insane policy is, that England should grow no corn!

But I must not forget the rewards rendered by the Whigs to the masses, for the support so freely rendered in their time of need. The people were promised liberty, as I told you. The Whigs have imprisoned scores of their friends and leaders, for the mere crime of attending meetings to petition Parliament, and for begging for the expenses! And shame, eternal shame, upon the tyrants, they have mixed these political offenders with felons! and have placed them under that system which nature can never bear—the Silent System!! The horrors of that system, the invention of republicans, cannot be conceived; none but in-bred tyrants could ever have invented it!—in England, none but “liberals” could dare to inflict it!

Now mark, Sir, this is a new punishment in England's history, invented and perpetrated by men who are ever boasting of their love of liberty! Did ever hypocrisy, ingratitude, and cowardice, before, stand out in such bold relief! Fitzwilliam proudly sitting in the House of Lords, dictating to Yorkshire, and Feargus O'Connor solitarily lingering in the felon's cell!—Fitzwilliam's crime was advising the people “to pay no more taxes”—O'Connor's, so far as I can learn, was printing the foolish speeches of other men. How true is it, in these days of Whig rule, “one man may steal a horse, but another shall be hanged for looking at him over the hedge.”

As soon as the West Riding Whigs found that the deluded people had discovered their villany, to regain their popularity, they sent for the Irish bludgeoner, O'Connell, to kick up a row in the Riding about “reforming the House of Lords.” I was prepared to meet him, but it was “no go;” the betrayer of the Irish forty shillings freeholders had lost his charm in the West Riding, and he discovered, before he left Manchester, that it was no field for his game. So he passed over it, unheeded and unnoticed.

Morpeth was, however, still popular; and when, in 1835, on his appointment to be Irish Secretary, he contested the Riding with his present victor, Wortley, his Lordship truly said, when he took his seat amidst thundering acclamations, “my progress through all the districts was one continued triumphal march.” It was so, Sir; I witnessed it. But since then, the West Ridingers have found that his political speeches to them were one elongated lie; and they have rejected him. At the last election, in 1837, they were beginning to discover the hollowness of his professions, when, dreading to meet the people, and to avoid some searching

constabulary, were cast aside, to make way for the Poor Law Commissioners, the questions from Feargus O'Connor about Ireland, and from myself about the New Poor Law, (of which due notice had been given,) his Lordship's committee introduced to Yorkshire, for the first time, the Irish system of hired bludgeoned assassins, to murder me and others. This, Sir, is no mistake; all the facts were collected and published, proving beyond a doubt the truth of what I state. To cover their infamy, they got up a cry that the riot was caused by their intended victims! Four of those monsters attacked me at one time—they maimed and marred me, but I mastered them. That attempt at O'Connellizing the West Riding has now cost the Whigs its representation. Morpeth has thus discovered that O'Connell is a bad trainer for English candidates! Bludgeons and the defamation of English women may gain parliamentary seats in Ireland; the West Riding has, however, instructed Morpeth, that the English station for such "patriots" is the bottom of the poll, no more to rise.

O'Connell was, at last, prevailed upon to meet the West Riding Whigs at Leeds, to get up the cry of "cheap bread" for ministers, and to solemnize the compact between himself and the Anti-Corn-Law-Factory-League. He was too late for the great *public* meeting—the old stager was too cunning to be in time! I sent a few puzzlers for him; so did his countryman, O'Connor. It was convenient to arrive "a day *after* the fair," but just in time for the Whig feast. Poor Daniel could not get the steam up; so he scolded, and went away.

He held a secret council with a few choice ones—since then, bludgeons have been very common in our Yorkshire and Lancashire towns;—but more about that important subject in some following number. Another new feature in the Yorkshire election will afford future matter for remark in the *Fleet Papers*—I mean, the riding pell-mell of the Whig gentlemen (!) of Huddersfield amongst the unoffending people! Strange that those persons should play the tyrant on horseback! But they killed nobody, and it told well on the poll, so I am not sorry. How true it is, that "Pride goeth before a fall."

The deluding and betraying Whigs, finding that the people had lost all patience with them, and that even their own reformed House of Commons could no longer trust them, resolved to start the cuckoo cry of "cheap bread" to the multitudes whom they had reduced "to a coarser sort of food," and that of "free trade" amongst those who had been ruined by the great monopolists, (I mean such men as Morrison, Marshall, Brown, &c.) whom an approach to "free trade" had already raised up in the places of the old English manufacturers, merchants, and shop-keepers. Thus were the Whigs determined to risk the destruction of the agricultural, colonial, manufacturing, and commercial interests of this nation, and to drive the famished people to frenzy in search of their Will-o'-th'-wisp "cheap bread," rather than resign office! Then they dissolved Parliament, and absolutely wrote the first electioneering squib in the form of a Queen's speech!—Buckingham, and a host of "free trade" lecturers, were instantly dispatched into the provinces, "to get up the steam;" the Queen's name was made the electioneering war-hoop, and bludgeons were the weapons of Her Majesty's *Loyalists*! Thus they thought to bamboozle and frighten the people back to Whiggery! But, no! the people had drunk too deeply of their bitter, purging draughts!—Poor Whigs! all would not do!—so, at Huddersfield, the *gentlemen*

on horseback who accompanied Lord Milton and Lord Morpeth were so enraged, so cruel, and so cowardly, as to charge, full gallop, upon the unoffending masses who had innocently assembled to hear their Lordships' speeches! It was possible, however, for Whig perfidy to stretch still farther. They absolutely granted a ticket to the Chartist candidate, Mr. Pitkethley, (whom, next to me, they hate,) and when he assayed to approach their hustings, *they strove to murder him!* No wonder that such a perfidious faction should be defeated by the votes of honest Yorkshiremen. And so they were, most gallantly. Ten thousand thanks from your prisoner to the free men of his native county!

But, oh, how laughable it is to listen to the mournful strains of the defeated!—how strange is their astonishment! They think it odd, *forsooth*, that Yorkshiremen should reject the Whig “boon,” and refuse to enter, once more, into the Whig trap! Thus, in the *Morning Chronicle*, they express their sorrow and surprise:—

“Even these obvious modes of influencing voters, however, are by no means sufficient to account for the very unexpected manner in which this election has terminated. Unhappily for the credit of the manufacturing classes in the West Riding of Yorkshire, there is strong and irrefutable evidence that on this occasion they have been guilty of a double crime—they have betrayed their own cause, and violated their most sacred pledges. In the calculations that were made by the Liberals, a much greater number of voters in the agricultural interest was assigned to the Tory party than the number which has actually voted for them, and yet a successful issue to the cause of free trade and Liberal principles was confidently reckoned upon, from the number of promises that were made by the manufacturers to vote for Lords Morpeth and Milton. Whence this dereliction of duty, this gross breach of faith has sprung, it is now premature, perhaps, to conjecture. The time will assuredly come when not only will the real cause be known, but when those who have thus shamefully deserted their friends, and for a season have given their support to the enemies of all improvement in our commercial and social arrangements, will see good reason to lament the reckless course they have now pursued. There is no shadow of doubt, that if every voter had fulfilled his engagements, the cause of justice and of a liberal policy would have triumphed, and Lord Morpeth and Lord Milton would have had a large majority over their opponents. By the defection of friends, who have suffered a fit of caprice to cloud for a time their clearer judgments, a triumph has been given to the Tories. The Chartists, such as are voters, have almost to a man supported the Tories.”

The Whigs were not wont thus to abuse and insult “the manufacturers of the West Riding!” and why are they now thus traduced and held up to scorn and contempt by their former flatterers? I will tell you. Because they have tried the Whigs, and found them wanting!—they have trusted to their promises aforesaid, and have been deceived!—they have found, that under the management of the Whigs, their own purses and the coffers of the country have been emptied, and that the honest manufacturers, as well as the nation, have been brought, by Whig measures, to the brink of ruin and bankruptcy! The Yorkshire manufacturers are discerning men; and they have found that there can be no prosperity with Whig rule and Whig tyranny! but that, by the measures of the Whigs, the country has been brought to the eve of a revolution! And as for the Whig “cheap-bread free-trade” bellowing, they have learned to know that it means NO BREAD, NO TRADE AT ALL; but poverty and gambling, fraud and knavery, to fill the pockets of the

FREE TRADE MONOPOLISTS.

If you do not know, I do, and so do “the West Riding manufacturers,” that

those men who cry the loudest for "free trade," are themselves the greatest monopolists: that they are the men who create bankrupts and paupers, by running down wages, prices, and profits! In a word, "the West Riding manufacturers" have had enough of that Whig "PEACE" which embroils us in domestic, colonial, and foreign war!—of that Whig "ECONOMY" which adds scores of millions to the National Debt!—of that Whig "RETRENCHMENT" which adds millions to the annual expenditure!—of that Whig "LIBERTY" which manifests itself in tyranny and coercion!—and of that Whig "PROSPERITY" which leaves the Exchequer millions minus, and the purses of the people empty, while it crowds the jails and the workhouses! They have found out the Whigs—they can confide no longer in them—and so they, very naturally, cast them off! Now, Sir, that is all about it. I knew, and told you, that the "cheap-bread free trade" cry would fail.

Strange enough, I was talking with a very influential Leeds Whig, just after the West Riding election, when he expressed himself in these words:—"Well, Oastler, you have now paid us off. *I always said that that Huddersfield business would be the death of our party!* There never was such folly as to force the New Poor Law upon the people with London Police. You have never let that rest—you have fought your battle well—and you have, at last, gained the victory. *If the Whigs had left Huddersfield alone*, we should have still been in for the Riding."—So said the Leeds Whig!

One thing is certain—Corn Laws or no Corn Laws, Free Trade or no Free Trade, NO GOVERNMENT CAN RULE THIS COUNTRY UNDER THE NEW POOR LAW—NOT UNDER THE LAW EMPOWERING THE INTRODUCTION OF THE LONDON POLICE INTO THE PROVINCES—NOT UNDER THE SYSTEM OF RURAL POLICE! Now, Sir, I beg that you, Sir Robert Peel, and others concerned in this matter, will mark what I say—ENGLAND WILL NOT STAND CENTRALIZATION! I am as sure of what I now assert, as that

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—"The Chartists have supported the Tories;" have they? I am glad of it. No doubt they have good reasons. Methinks that I could guess what those reasons are. Let the Tories now mind what use they make of their victory. If they do not understand their true position, I do. They shall not err, if I can help it. In this letter, I had intended to have given a few hints as to what should be done; but all must agree that this glorious West Riding triumph demanded some notice from *my* pen.—Why, Sir, even the Yorkshire Whigs did not believe their own leaders! They said, "If the ministers are in earnest, why not have introduced their free trade scheme into the Queen's speech?" You know, Sir, that Yorkshiremen are rather shrewd. The two Whig Lords have found them so.—R.O.

P.S. second.—I have just read Lord Milton's and Lord Morpeth's retiring speeches at Wakefield. I am struck with the following expressions. Lord Milton said—"He was, however, glad to see that the Conservatives had at last been able to find, that in this realm *there was such a person as the Queen.*" Then, Lord Morpeth added—"I do not think I should reconcile myself, for the present, to occupy any other seat, or represent any other men." Does all this mean, "The Queen will dissolve, and I shall try again?" If so, England has not yet seen her worst days. Perhaps, after all, it only means that Lord Morpeth is to be "pitch-forked."—R.O.

THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY

JOHN PAVEY, 47, HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND,

AND

BENJAMIN STEILL, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. OASTLER is "At Home" on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.—Mr. Oastler's health requires that he should entirely refrain from receiving the visits of his friends on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

In reply to a numerous list of kind inquirers—"How can we best serve your interest?" Mr. Oastler begs to say—by promoting the circulation of the *Fleet Papers*, and by procuring advertisements for their covers. Mr. Oastler may be allowed to add, that few better mediums for advertising can be found than the *Fleet Papers*; they circulate in every district, and amongst every rank. In the Palace and the Cottage, readers of the *Fleet Papers* are to be found. Clergymen, Landlords, and Farmers, Ministers of State, Ploughboys, Factory Children, and Weavers, patronize these little *Fleeters*.

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Seven lines and under	0 7 6	Half a page	1 5 0
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The following letter, addressed to Mr. Oastler, contains so much common sense, and is withal upon a subject so interesting, that the readers of the *Fleet Papers* (differing from the writer as they may on some points) will be pleased with its contents. The author of the *Fleet Papers* does not feel himself bound to withhold such communications, because, in some particulars, they may not contain his views. Mr. Pritchard is evidently a lover of his country, a man of observation, and is, withal, endowed with no small portion of common sense. He thus speaks for himself:—let landlords attend.

"Chester, June 8, 1841.

"Honoured Sir,—Excuse the ignorance and imbecility of such an individual as myself in attempting to dictate or direct a man of so superior knowledge, learning, and nature-gifted talent as yourself. At the same time, I flatter myself, that your good sense will shield me from public scorn, and not expose my weakness. You see I can scarcely write at all, and my reading is equally as bad—you see I am very nervous, occasioned through excitement and agitation in the same cause as yourself. I had just concluded a letter intended for you, which shall follow this, when your last *Fleet Paper*, dated June 5, was put into my hand, when I gladly set my eyes on the following words:—'It is quite clear, from the confession of all parties, that the present mode of proceeding cannot release us from our national troubles. Not one of our leaders ever pretends to prove how England is to be saved from wretchedness—how her industrious sons may be ensured that their labour shall shield them from poverty and want.' Dear Sir, pardon me in telling you, that that is the very plan I have always expected from you, from yourself. From you I have been anxiously waiting to see that plan laid down, and have read your *Fleet Papers* with great delight and sorrow, because with you and your order, and your master, Thomas Thornhill, Esq., and his order, rests the whole disease and the remedy—between the landlord and the steward lies the evil and the cure; and I think none more fitted, more able, or more willing to lay that plan before the public, than yourself. You know, Sir, the great struggle for power and pelf is between the landlord and the cottier lord—one is just as void of feeling for the poor as the other; but I say, with you, 'the land, the land.' But what about 'the land?' Stop, let us see what God says about it. Why he says, 'Woe unto him that addeth house to house, and that layeth field to field, till there is no place left that he may abide in the midst of the earth;' and, Sir, I think, and I think you will agree with me, that that 'woe' alludes to those of your master's order who take down the country cottages, and small farm-houses, and out-buildings, and who leave the spots whereon they stand to become a green field. My good Sir, let us ask ourselves, what is become of those inhabitants that occupied those small farms and cottages? Why, reason answers for itself: they are swarming in the large towns and cities, eating each other up in trade and competition; some at public-houses, jerry-shops, and

houses, jagers or jobbing-carts, busters shops, and all kinds of small trading — trusting their goods, for the sake of sale, to poor creatures poorer than themselves, and never getting paid—in fact, I will maintain, that it is beyond all possibility of getting an honest living, without using all the cant, deceit, trickery, and fraud that they are masters of; while thousands of them and of their children are worked up in the stinking cotton-mills. At the same time, the spot of their birth, that once kept them comfortable, is added to the large farms, some two, three, four, five, six, seven or eight holdings added to one, while they are, as it were, growing over with thorns and bushes, for want of cultivation. For instance, there is a farm within five miles of the city of Chester, (its number of acres is 676,) that formerly, I am told, from good authority, was in fifteen farms. And that is not all: the occupier has another large farm; in fact, he holds the whole township, and he bears the name of keeping all the poor in the parish. Well he may, when he holds the whole of it. There are not fifteen families living in it now. Then why not break it into fifteen farms again, and then there will be no poor to keep. This is the way I would destroy the poor—I do not mean the poor, but their poverty. This great man gives his men 9s. a week, and boasts how well they are off.

"A countryman, a friend of mine, that holds three acres of land at a much higher price per acre than the farmer pays, keeps a cow, grows his own corn and potatoes, feeds his pig, and eats the bacon too, he keeps his family and pays his way, and he tells me, that if he had two acres more, he should not want a day's work of any man. He also told me, that he was talking with a farmer that holds 300 acres of land, and he told the farmer, that every poor man ought to have three acres of land, as he had. 'No,' said the farmer, 'it would make them independent.' To which my friend replied, 'if three acres will make a man independent, you ought, on 300 acres, to be a king.' Woe to the tyrant farmer that covets his neighbours bit—his 1, his 5, his 10, his 20, or any other number of acres—that is not content with 100 acres, when he sees his neighbour perishing for want of a bit—who would take more pleasure in swelling at a vestry or parish meeting, scheming which way to lower his 9s. a week to 8s., or to be called on a jury, and bring in his poor worn-out slave guilty of robbing his hen-roost, his cheese-room, or his granary, and bring his broken-hearted, disgraced wife and children to the bastille, and then have them to keep, than to let them have an acre or two of land, and live in comfort alongside of them. The great farmer, now-a-days, has two parlours—I remember the time when very few of them had one. Now they have gigs—then they came to market in the common cart. Now they separate themselves from their servants—then they sat at one table, and eat the good beef and pudding for their families and servants. Now their children receive a boarding-school education, and are instructed to despise the poor—then they went to a country school, and were instructed to work. Now they hold half or the whole of a township; and, as only one son can succeed them in farming, the others are apprenticed to all the respectable trades, even to lawyers and doctors—then they were taught to plough, sow, reap, mow, and follow the team; and that is the proper employment for a farmer, in my opinion. Now their daughters are learning French, and playing music in the best parlour—then they carried the fowls, butter, and eggs to market. Now they match themselves in marriage with the gentlemen tradesmen in the large towns and cities—then the farmers' sons and daughters matched themselves in the country, and had a choice of farms to go to, and each of their friends gave them a cow or two, a horse, a pig, and all useful articles to begin a marriage life. Farmers have no right to be gentlemen, we have tyrants enough without them—the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, and He has given it to man, to all men, to live on it. He says, 'Sweat, toil, eat, drink, and enjoy the fruits of your labour—multiply and replenish the earth.' If I was your old master, I would go to work immediately, and divide my land into at least three times the number of farms, and build scores, if not hundreds, of cottages, according to the extent of my estates; and I would put three acres of land, and not the worst of it, to each cottage—that is to say, to each labourer—at the average price per acre that the farmer pays for his hundreds of acres; and I would charge 5l. per cent. for the cost in building, say about 60l., which would be 3l. a year for rent, and three acres of land at 1l. 10s. per acre, which is about the price with us, when situated six or eight miles from a town—that would be 7l. 10s. a year, which is nearly 2s. 10d. per week. Now observe—the rent for his house, while the farmer has his large house and out-building for nothing included in his rent, is two-thirds the price of his land; but allowing it to be so, now let him work for the farmer at 9s. a week, and let him be subject to the farmer, and pay his rent to him, but on strict conditions not to abuse him, or turn him off his little holding, without a fair investigation before the landlord; and if they part through any disagreement, let the poor man stick to his holding, and work for any other farmer, although we know it would grieve them to part with three acres out of their 300; and we know also that they like to lord over the poor man. Now, Sir, let us see whether this will improve the condition of the poor man. He pays 2s. 10d. a week out of his wages, then he has 6s. 2d. a week left. He keeps his cow on two acres, one to graze for summer, and the other to mow for winter; she would give plenty of milk and butter for the family, and to spare; his half acre would produce at least 100 bushels of potatoes, which would do for the family, and feed a couple of pigs; the other half acre would produce twelve bushels of wheat at least, and, with a very little more, would keep the family the whole year; the straw would do for litter, the bit of bran for the cow, and the manure from cow and pig, with other scraps scraped together, would manure the potatoe ground very well. Aye, but what says the farmer? 'we shall never get our work done, he will always employ himself at home;' and what, say I? I ask the farmer, does he employ a man on every three acres, or on three times three acres? no, nor on every thirty acres; therefore, this shows clearly that the land is not half cultivated. Let the Corn Law lie still, and with our home produce we will keep it still; like a mill-wheel over-glutted with water, we will fill the land with our home-grown corn, and then let the cotton lords do as they please. But Sir, I am sorry to say, that the stewards stand in the way with all their might, because the poor tenant has no fat geese, turkeys, or a Cheshire-cheese to present them with—they have no parlour or decanters, no wine, or grand parties to entertain them at. The tenant had better offend the lord than the steward. They walk into the farmer's best parlour with as much impudence as if they had to pay the rent; they say to their masters, 'My Lord, let your land to respectable men; these poor drunken wretches will cheat you out of one half of your rent;' and the landlords, who are too often engaged with their horses, dogs, hunting, gambling, and all kinds of pleasure,

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk:

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Alist, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboreth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people. He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 31.

LONDON, SATURDAY, JULY 31, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—The elections are now ended. The Queen has received the undisguised answer from her people to her Royal appeal. It is impossible that any intrigue can shut the Royal ear to her People's verdict, "*We will not have the Whigs!*"

No truth is more demonstrable, than that the people of England have resolved to be governed on different principles than those adopted by Her Majesty's Whig Ministers. It is, however, not so clearly defined what principles are those on which the People have set their minds. Hence the need that those who have an opportunity of knowing somewhat of the wishes and hopes of Her Majesty's Subjects, should now state what they know.

It cannot be considered impertinent in one who has mixed so long and so constantly with every rank, and who has taken an active part, for so many years, in every political strife, should, at such a period as the present, offer to the public the result of his experience. That experience is not so much gathered from books, as from carefully marking the progress of events, and watching, most assiduously, the workings of those circumstances upon the condition, the minds, and the prejudices of the people.

Nothing is more certain, than that the governors of a nation should be intimately acquainted with the real feelings, circumstances, and prejudices of the governed. Nothing is, I fear, more true, than that the leaders of the two contending parties, Whig and Tory, are perfectly ignorant of the condition, mind, and prejudices of the working classes who form the masses of English society, and who have, beyond all contradiction, contributed to the result of the general election.

A change of Ministers, without a change of measures, will only create a state of greater disquietude, and remove prosperity to a longer distance.

The great cause of the failure of the Whigs to govern the nation acceptably, is, undeniably, *their entire ignorance of the character of the working classes.* That ignorance has been demonstrated by their failure to produce alarming commotions amongst the masses, by that most exciting of all cries, "cheap

bread." There can be no doubt that the hopes of the Whig Cabinet rested upon the efficacy of *that* cry, hoping, by it, to excite the people to frenzy, and thus, once more, to fix themselves in office by the thunders of popular fury.

No means were left untried by Her Majesty's Whig Ministers to produce that popular reaction in their favour. All the intrigue, cunning, power, and talent of the Manchester League was added to the influence of the Whig Government, in order to agitate the minds of the People—nay, even O'Connell was employed to aid the League with his influence, and the force of Irish bludgeon men. The Whig magistrates and the Irish Whig police contributed their quota to the revolutionizing Traitors. The Queen's name was bandied about from pillar to post—little loaves and great loaves were paraded amongst the populace—the People were told, that "the Whigs and the Queen were for the great loaf, and that a vote for a Tory was for dear bread, no work, and starvation!" In fact, every effort which deception, fraud, and malignity, aided by power and wealth, could accomplish, has been resorted to; but still the masses have resolved to aid the Tories, and, at all hazards, to get rid of the Whigs! Thus the election has proved, that no men were ever so much deceived in their estimate of the working people of England, so ignorant of the true condition and feelings of Englishmen, as were the Whig Ministers, who so lately advised Her Majesty to dissolve Parliament, under the hope that, aided by a cry for "cheap bread," a large accession of strength to their ranks would be the result! If there were no other reason for their dismissal, the utter ignorance which the Whigs have thus evinced of the true character and wishes of the people of England would, of itself, be sufficient. It must be manifest to every one, that such *ignorance* proves *incompetence*. I well knew that they would be disappointed; but when I said so, they only abused and traduced me, and exulted in my imprisonment. They have now paid the penalty of their ignorance, incompetence, and brutality.

But, Sir, if it be true—as I greatly fear it is—that the leader of the Tory party is also totally ignorant of the wants, the condition, and the prejudices of the working classes of England, it will be impossible that he can adopt measures calculated to meet the national emergency. In that case, he will fail in his efforts (as the Whigs have done in theirs) to set right the machine of state.

That he has hitherto kept himself entirely aloof from the working classes, is too true. To the nobles, the bankers, and the merchants, he has ever been easy of access—to a deputation from the Anti-Corn-Law-League, he has no objection to grant an interview; but, whenever a deputation from the working classes has waited upon the Right Honourable Baronet, his answer has hitherto been, "put down on paper your wishes, and I will consider them." Thus has he shut the door to free communication to a most important class of society, and he has forced them to believe that it is useless to apply to him—that he is too proud to mingle his thoughts with theirs. Such conduct is not only unjust to the working classes, it is also disloyal to Her Majesty, that any one who aspires to be Her Minister, should refuse to communicate freely with any important class of her subjects.

By such conduct, Sir Robert Peel has, I fear, kept himself in ignorance of the true character of the working men of England—nay, it is to be feared

that he has suffered himself to be prejudiced against them, by those parties who think that they have an interest in deceiving him, and to whom he has ever most readily given his ear.

I am not about to dispute the great talents of Sir Robert Peel. That he is a scholar, a most able debater, and a man well versed in all the technicality and machinery of the House of Commons, I am ready to admit. He may be a good financier, and an adept at diplomacy—nay, more, if he be, in addition to all these acquirements, a sincere patriot, still, if he mistakes the character of the working people—if he be in ignorance of their condition, their wants, their hopes, and their prejudices—if he thinks that they are irreligious, revolutionary, idle, and turbulent, when they are religious, loyal, industrious, and peaceable—if his opinion be, that they are the enemies of the institutions of the country, and dissatisfied with the principles of the Constitution, when, in fact, they are the strongest bulwarks of both—if, I say, Sir Robert Peel should thus mistake, as the Whigs have done, the true character of the working people of England, why then, Sir, all his learning, talent, ability, official and parliamentary experience, will be of no use either to him, his party, or his country. He may, for a few years, blunder on in Egyptian darkness, as his predecessors have done, but he will inevitably secure to himself, with them, execration, contempt, and defeat!

You are aware that I have frequently warned the Whigs! often have I told them, that the rock upon which they were splitting was a total ignorance of the true character of the working classes. The Whigs, however, believing that I was their enemy, always turned a deaf ear to my advice and expostulation, and denounced me as a fool, a madman, a disturber of their quiet, and an incendiary. Had they listened to my expostulation, had they taken my advice, they would not now be the laughing-stock of the civilized world—they would not be feeding on *rue*.

Perhaps the *Conservatives* may listen to me; I would not, however, be mistaken: I am not one of *that* body—I never yet saw reason to change my name. I am an old-fashioned ultra-Tory; I am devotedly attached to the constitutional principles and institutions of my country; I think that all the jobbing which has taken place under the name of Reform and Liberal Principles, has only been paving the way to destruction; I am sure that Tyranny and Infidelity have been the master-masons, and that all their alterations have but disfigured the noble edifice; and, until I am convinced that my opinions are founded in error, I shall retain the *old* name with the *old* principles.

Whether the *Conservatives* will listen to me or not, I cannot tell; but I do know, that if they now mistake their way, by misconceiving their duty, their fall will be a lasting one; then, Infidelity, Anarchy, and a disruption of the framework of society, will be the consequence! They may, perhaps, think, that the *movement* which has surprised them, as much as it has confounded the Whigs, is in favour of the policy hitherto adopted by Sir Robert Peel. *If they do, they never were so much mistaken.* If they act upon that conviction, they will very soon be undeceived by their speedy expulsion from power and office,—by a total overthrow and defeat.

Now, Sir, if there lives a man who knows the real character and condition of the working classes of England, I do. No man has mixed more unreservedly or more constantly with them, than I have done. It has been my business and my delight to study them, their habits, their wishes, and their prejudices. I have enjoyed their confidence—I *have never once been deceived by any of them*. And I know, that never were any people more maligned, traduced, misrepresented, insulted, and oppressed, than they have been, by those persons who have had the confidence of the Whig Government. They have been represented as the most idle, dissolute, profligate, disaffected, turbulent vagabonds. The Whigs believed those persons who thus described the working classes of England; and as such, the labourers and operatives have been legislated for, when, in reality, the very reverse is their true character. The Government believed that the working people desired to seize the property of the rich, that they were levellers; when all that they wished for, was, “a fair day’s wages for a fair day’s work.” And who dare say that that demand is unjust? or what Government can expect to maintain peace, law, and order, which refuses to make laws to secure that result to the industrious?

It was a mistake in the true knowledge of the people which cost the *Whigs* their characters and power, and will deprive them of their places. It shall not be my fault if the *Conservatives* fall into the same snare.

Perhaps I shall stagger you and many of my readers with what I am about to say. At all risks, I will speak the truth—truth which, as I before said, I have not learned from books, but from experience, for which I am now, at your bidding, paying very dearly.

I have studied the working people in their homes—in their workshops—in the factories—nay, I have followed them in their wanderings, to the hospitals, infirmaries, ale-houses, workhouses, and prisons. I have marked their miseries and their poverty—poverty, neglect, and want, in a Christian country, which is the reward of excessive industry!—and I have been astonished at their patience and forbearance, under oppression which would even drive some wise men mad!

I can bear testimony to their affection for their wives and children—their kind regard, and manly, fearless sacrifices for their neighbours, who are in greater want than themselves—their devoted attachment to those who rank higher than they do, and who show them any kindness—their considerate and touching benevolence to such, when reduced to poverty—their regard and affection to their employers who are just, and kind, and sympathizing—and their forbearance towards those who most cruelly oppress and shamefully defraud them—their love of their native spot, “the place where they drew their first breath, and where they hope to draw their last”—their attachment to the Church round which the ashes of their fathers slumber,—and, where the clergyman is found at his post a faithful watchman of Israel, their devotion and reverence towards him. In a word, their love of peace and order—their dislike of confusion and change—their fondness for old *local* habits, and their enmity to all innovations. Their attachment to the soil and rural pleasures, are manifest even in their cellars and garrets; there you often find birds and plants—nay, even in the factories I have seen flower-pots containing valuable plants and splendid specimens of cucumbers!

Such, Sir, are amongst the ruling virtues of the working classes of England, who are, in fact, as a body, a religious, affectionate, honest, industrious, patriotic, and loyal race!

“But,” say their enemies, “they are ignorant!” Indeed! Is Bible knowledge ignorance? Is the knowledge of the human heart ignorance? Is common sense ignorance?—Sir, the men who charge the working classes of England with ignorance, never mixed with them—never knew them. If they had done so, they would not prove their own ignorance by asserting such folly.

I once thought that the working people were ignorant; but, Sir, since then, I have sat under their tuition, and I am the wiser for their lessons. I would have their accusers to do the same, and, in the school of the labourers and operatives of England, to learn wisdom.

I am not a flatterer, neither am I afraid of the sneer of pride, conceit, and ignorance. Upon the subject on which I am now writing, I can make no mistake, because I write only the result of experience. I record facts which have come under my own notice, with respect to which it is impossible that I can err; but the truth is so very far from the commonly received notion, that I am prepared to meet the doubts of many sincere and excellent men. I respect those scruples; but knowing that they are erroneous, I am the more resolved, at this eventful epoch, to speak right out. A mistake, by Sir Robert Peel on this subject, will be irremediable. Allow me then, Sir, on this important question, to implore your most serious attention to the following observations.

I have told you, that the working classes have never once deceived me. Would that I could say so much for their traducers! The labourers and operatives are not sunshine, fair-weather friends; they are friends born for adversity! You have removed me far from them, but not from their gratitude!—not from their sympathy! My name was never cherished so near their hearts, as it is now! Proofs of their love, devotion, and gratitude are daily received by me! You have given me the opportunity of proving the *real* worth of *their* friendship, of which the frowns and hatred of an ungrateful Aristocrat cannot rob me.—To prove all this, is one reason why I came here.

I have told you the true character of the working millions of England. Now, how have the Whigs legislated for these virtuous and industrious men! and what is the result?

The records of Parliament prove that the laws made for their government, are laws of coercion and tyranny. The New Poor Law is a direct attack upon their constitutional rights. When they are able, the working classes pay into the Poor Law fund; when disabled, they have as clear a right to relief therefrom, without any degrading conditions, as you have to your rents! When their *rights* trampled upon by the aristocracy, you must not complain, if “tit for tat” be attempted by the poor. The Rural Police, and the transmission of the Metropolitan Police to the provinces, are direct attacks upon their liberty. They know that the Constitution never allows strangers to interfere with them, but that their well-known and respected neighbours are the legal guardians of their liberty, and the enforcers of order. The result of such un-English legislation is, the hatred and disgust of the

people towards the government which was once most popular, but which has now entirely lost the confidence of the people, by so grossly outraging the constitutional feelings of the working classes. That hatred and disgust has also exhibited itself on the poll, in language which must be understood as well by Her Majesty as by her Whig Ministers;—which proclaims, in a voice of thunder, that if there be no sympathy between the working classes and the leaders of the Whigs and Tories in Parliament, *there is sympathy between them and the electors of England!* Yes, Sir, there is, after all, a very large and most influential portion of our merchants, manufacturers, and shopkeepers, who feel that their interest is bound up with that of the working classes, and they have now proved that they are prepared to stand by the rights of their poorer neighbours.

It is a pleasing fact, and one which must have great weight with all right-minded Conservatives in the two Houses of Parliament, that those merchants, manufacturers, and shopkeepers, who have thus evinced their attachment to the rights of the working people, are that respectable and influential portion of our trading community, who have set their faces against the destruction of the agricultural interest;—they are those who pay the best wages, and who protest against the monopoly of the free-traders. These good men do not make so much noise as the Leaguers, but their influence is much greater. Let the aristocracy join these powerful and excellent men in ameliorating the condition of the working classes, and the din, and fume, and fury of O'Connell and his Manchester Tyrant-League will be powerless in England. The Anti-Corn-Law-Leaguers are notoriously the hardest task-masters; they are always foremost in lowering wages, and in making and selling deceptive goods. If, after the national feeling which has just been exhibited, Sir Robert Peel should determine to continue the New Poor Law, and the Police Laws, he will give the lie to the hustings professions of the majority of his friends, he will disappoint the hopes of their most influential supporters, and he will, in the end, find that the constitutional prejudices of the people are too strong for him.

The working people are not such dolts as some persons think they are—if they are not sound lawyers, they know who are. How often have I been asked by them, “Mr. Oastler, do you not think that Earl Eldon was a better lawyer than Sir Robert Peel is?” I have answered, “Yes.” “Then,” they have retorted, “why do not the Tories oppose the New Poor Law, when they know, that Earl Eldon said, ‘that it was unconstitutional, infamous, and atrocious?’” No answer, which is creditable to the Tories, could be given to that observation. Let us hope, however, that the election just ended will have convinced the Conservatives of their egregious error in joining the Whigs in the war against the poor. I wait with anxiety to see the result of the election on the Poor Law and the Police questions.

It may not be amiss, Sir, at this juncture, to say a word or two about the conduct of the Lords, with reference to their passing the New Poor Law, and those other tyrannical laws, which were required to force the People to submit to it. Whilst the Lords were passing those avowedly unconstitutional measures, which rob the poor of their liberty and rights, the people were resisting the outcry raised by O'Connell against the House of Lords! Thus were

the working people Conservatives, whilst the Lords were Destructives!—That fact has often struck me very forcibly. It should have some weight with their lordships. Let the Lords then now retrace their steps, and prove to the nation, that they are as tenacious of the rights of the poor, as the poor were regardful of their lordship's rights, when they were attacked. May the Lords no longer be deluded by interested Commissioners, and their tools, into the belief, "that it is only Oastler, and a few mad enthusiasts, who are opposed to the New Poor Law;" but let them read from the hustings and the polls, that Englishmen have resolved upon the restoration of their DOMESTIC, LOCAL, and CONSTITUTIONAL rights and privileges.

Our forefathers were tenacious of the rights of the labourers; but our modern "philosophers" (oh, how that word is now prostituted) are everlastingly brawling about the lauded interest—the monied interest—the commercial interest—the manufacturing interest, and the shipping interest; but not one word is ever uttered in Parliament about THE LABOURING INTEREST. Now, Sir, if the labourers and operatives are still intended to be coerced—if their prayers and petitions are to be again disregarded—I am sure that the new government (let who will be at the head of it, and its members be whom they may,) will very shortly be disgraced, execrated, and defeated. For see, Sir, what difficulties would then surround them;—a disappointed People given up to despair! and a whole menagerie of wild, hungry, enraged demagogues, with O'Connell and the Anti-Corn-Law-Leaguers at their head, will be let loose among that People, exciting them to madness and revenge!

Ah! Sir, if the Conservative government should attempt to dispel *that* storm, whilst they resolve to retain the unconstitutional innovations of the "*liberal and enlightened Whigs*," they will find their mistake, when, alas, it will be too late. The safety of the Church, the Throne, the Lords, and of private property, rests, not in swords and bayonets, in spies and police, but in the *hearts* of the People! A constitutional government may lead the people with a silken thread, whilst a government bent upon upholding the unchristian and unconstitutional measures of "*a liberal and enlightened philosophy*," will not be able to keep its place; no, Sir, not even if it could make and maintain every other man as a police officer! What England requires, is, a *paternal* government, which sympathizes with the People, and is resolved to govern free men by free men's laws! I heartily pray to Almighty God that He would now give this nation rest, by granting us such a government.

But, first of all, God must be nationally recognized—He must be nationally honoured. We have sinned as a nation against Him!—we have trampled under foot His laws!—we have companied with Idolaters—we have associated with Infidels—we have, by our acts, declared that we will have none of His laws—we have robbed and oppressed the poor—we have plundered the widow and the fatherless children—we have laughed at their tears, and have tauntingly said, doth God see?—doth He know?

One respite more is given to my native land! Let the first duty of Her Majesty's new governors be, a national humiliation before our offended God, a national acknowledgment of His sovereignty, and an earnest seeking after him.

My heart-heavings are well expressed by Jane Lead, in the following words:—

“ Oh England hear thy genius loudly call,
 Oh hear, and ere 'tis fixed, prevent thy fall!
 Of Heaven thou most abhorr'd, thou dearest loved!
 Ah! stop! take heed lest thou so headstrong prove,
 As e'en to break the very chain of love!
 Still with God's kind indulgent favours blest,
 And prov'd, as oft by bitter plagues express,
 He cannot spare, yet cannot thee forego,
 Oh how His fury tears!—how His compassions flow!”

May the counsel given by the prophet Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, be now acceptable unto our rulers, and may they “ break off their sins by righteousness, and their iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of our tranquillity.”

Oh how I shall rejoice if this letter is received by the Conservative leaders in the spirit in which it is written. How thankful shall I be, if its perusal should lead Sir Robert Peel to appreciate the character of the working men of England! if it should constrain him to seek for guidance from the Spirit of the Living God.

If England is to be saved, if her institutions are to be preserved, that happy consummation of my hopes, will, under the blessing of God, be brought about by a hearty union for mutual protection between the Aristocracy and the working People. The olive branch has now been offered by the latter, may it be accepted in right good will by the nobles of our land, and may they adopt such measures as will establish their own rights and privileges by ensuring competence and comfort to skill and industry, and thus destroy the power of the tyrants' Factory-League, and of that Irish Traitor, who may still, for what I know or care, style himself “ the Member for all Ireland ”—save and except Dublin!! Then, Sir, I shall be happy, although, for life,

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—I have often mentioned the fact that O'Connell was using his influence with his countrymen to excite them against the English; and I have remarked before now, that when he saw his opportunity, he would marshal the Irish in our own towns against the English. The desperate condition of the Ministry, and the madness of the Anti-Corn-Law-Leaguers, have now provided the fit time and means:—a new character is thus given to our national assemblings. This fact cannot be too strongly pressed upon the notice of the Government. It is pitiable to witness how the Leaguers *now* coax and flatter the Irish. I remember how they were wont to abuse them, and mourn over what they then styled “ the vast influx from Ireland of ignorant, discontented, and turbulent people, who, introducing and widely spreading their own habits, have a tendency gradually to demoralize our own native population.”—(See letter in first Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, from Edmund Ashworth, Esq., one of the Leaguers, to his respected friend, Edwin Chadwick, dated Turton, near Bolton, 9th of 6th month, 1834.) Now, however, these traducers of the Irish are their flatterers.—R.O.

ERRATUM.—In part of last week's *Fleet Papers*, No. 30, the first line on page 238 should have been inserted as the first line on page 237.

give way and allow it to be so; besides, the big farm system saves a deal of trouble in collecting the rents. A certain rich lord, some time ago, was advised to put a little land to all the cottagers, and he called his steward to tell his intention, to which the steward answered, 'No, my lord, it will never do; a poor man has no right with any more land than will grow his cabbages;' at which his lordship turned on his heel, and walked off. Sir, if England's doom is not sealed, she must be saved by employing her people on the land; but not at 9s. a week, but by holding tens of thousands of cottages, and allotting 3, 5, 10, or 20 acres, to them, and by letting tenants out of the large towns and cities. I, for one, would go immediately. But I fear the day is gone by; the hearts, eyes, ears, and understandings of our nobles seem to be shut up against all humanity.

"Sir, the farmers and the stewards go hand in hand, and overrule the landlord. I defy the landlord to prove the allotment system any loss to him; on the contrary, I can prove it a benefit, by his getting 5s. per cent. for his money in holdings, whereas now he gets about half that sum. Besides the general employment, it would give universal satisfaction, peace, love, contentment, respect, unity, and happiness. We should then live happily, instead of living in fear of revolution, death, fire, robbery, persecution, murder, and universal destruction. Sir, this, and ten times more should come from every pulpit in the United Kingdom; but alas, also, the Gospel is not preached—Pharaoh's heart is yet hardened, he cannot let the Israelites go, his cup of iniquity is not quite full. May God interfere—may he deliver the innocent, and have mercy on the guilty.

"This, Sir, is my view of things—this is the plan that I lay down as the best means of liberating the sons and daughters of England from the wretchedness and want under which they groan. Breed and feed more fat pigs, and less fat horses—exercise the spade more, and the plough less—sow farms of 3 acres, and less of 500—then, if the cotton lords will have hands, they will have to pay them good wages. Landlords, if you wish well to yourselves, your children, and the country you live in, adopt this plan immediately, or else the cotton lords will most assuredly prove your overthrow. They will improve machinery, and glut the world with their goods, and murder thousands of our fellow-beings in our factories, and fill our country with foreign corn, and bring down the price of land; and they, being as rich as Jews, will buy your estates at very low prices, and so become both landlords and cotton lords; and, as money gives power, they will become law-makers, and pass another Corn Law, as you have done, under pretence of protecting the farmer. Gentlemen, be advised, open your bowels of compassion, and strive to believe in the God that made you and your estates—Clergy preach the truth, as Jesus Christ commands you—plead the cause of the poor, the widow, and the fatherless—remember the mouth of St. Paul was the mouth of God. He says, 'He that will not work, neither shall he eat.' Is it so?—no. Why is it not so?—because you denounce the poor oppressed, instead of denouncing the rich oppressor. He also says, that the husbandman should have the first fruits of the earth. Is it so?—no. Why is it not so?—because you handle God's word deceitfully; and woo unto you for so doing. Well, Sir, if it must be so, I cannot help it—God forbid it. I must conclude, for want of space. God bless you—go on."

The following circular to the ministers of the Christian religion, from the pen of that indefatigable, exemplary, and truly pious soldier and minister of Jesus Christ, the Rev. G. S. Bull, must be read with interest by every patron of the *Fleet Papers*. It was written at a time when the factory masters had defeated Sadler, and had forced him into a Parliamentary Committee. The writer was then resident in the factory districts; since that, persecution has driven him to Birmingham, where he is now sowing good seed, in better soil: where the writer of this hopes that his truly apostolic labours will be crowned by the blessing of the Great Head of the Church.—R.O.

"Reverend Sir,—A Bill has been recently introduced into Parliament, for restricting the hours of labour of children employed in the Factories of the United Kingdom to ten hours actual work on the first five days of the week, and eight hours on Saturdays, to prevent night-work altogether, and otherwise to regulate the Factory System. This Bill is applicable to all young persons so occupied, from nine to eighteen years of age, and prohibits the employment of any under nine years of age.

"The opponents of the measure succeeded in causing the Bill, upon its second reading, to be referred to a Select Committee, which has been for some time engaged in its investigation. This inquiry, however unnecessary it may appear, after the volumes of evidence already published by Select Committees on the same subject, obliges the parents, relatives, and friends of those poor infantile sufferers, to produce evidence, from many distant parts of the United Kingdom, at great expense, a part of which only, according to existing regulations, is defrayed by the Government; and that part of the remainder which is not supplied by the Christian generosity of the British public, must be wrung from the brows and sinews of the poor operatives, and pinched out of their generally scanty and hard-earned wages.

"With a view to interest the Christian public in this righteous cause, and to prepare them the better to appreciate its merits, a short exposition of the case is here presented. To the Ministers of 'the gospel of peace and good will to men,' an earnest and respectful appeal is now made; and it is suggested with all deference, that a notice of the case from them to their congregations, and a brief statement of the exertions at present making to relieve the same, in which all true Christians ought to be united, would be most desirable.

"The case is this:—Many thousands of little children, from six years old and upwards, are now employed in the Flax, Woollen, Worsted, Cotton, and Silk Mills of the United Kingdom. The regular and ordinary period of labour varies from twelve to fifteen hours per day, exclusive

of the time allowed for meals, which lasts from thirty minutes to two hours, but in the greater number of instances for not more than one hour. In very many cases only half an hour is allowed at noon, and no time whatever for breakfast or tea, (which is called 'drinking' or 'bagging,') and not unfrequently no intermission at all; they must eat at their work, in a standing posture, as they can. But in many instances, when large orders are taken to be executed in a given time, the same set of children have had sixteen, seventeen, and even eighteen hours of actual labour per day for several weeks. Instances have been proved, in which, during the execution of large orders, the same children have worked the following hours in a week.—On Monday morning, work commenced at six o'clock: at nine, half an hour for breakfast; from half-past nine till twelve, work. Dinner, one hour; from one till half-past four, work. Afternoon meal, half an hour; from five till eight, work; rest for half an hour. From half-past eight till twelve (midnight), work; an hour's rest. From one in the morning till five, work; half an hour's rest. From half-past five till nine, work: breakfast. From half-past nine till twelve, work: dinner. From one till half-past four, work. Rest half an hour; and work again from five till nine o'clock on Tuesday evening, when the labour terminated, and the gang of adult and infant slaves was dismissed for the night, after having toiled thirty-nine hours, with brief intervals (amounting to only six hours in the whole) for refreshment, but none for sleep. On Wednesday and Thursday, day work only. From Friday morning till Saturday night, the same prolonged labour repeated, with intermissions, as on Monday, Monday night, and Tuesday; except that the labour of the last day closed at five.

"Such cases have not been general; but fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen hours' labour per day is frequently imposed upon the children of the manufacturing poor, and very rarely less than twelve hours and a half.

"The physical, social, and moral evils flowing from such a system, are obvious.

"The physical evils are visible in the crooked limbs and emaciated frames of a great proportion of the factory children, and in the consumptive attacks which carry thousands, prematurely, to their graves. Every eminent medical practitioner to whom the case has been fairly submitted, declares the present system utterly incompatible with health in general.

"The social evils are innumerable. Parental influence is almost entirely precluded. Domestic duties cannot be learned; all that is necessary to cottage economy and the character of a good house-wife, it is nearly impossible to acquire;—the needle, the kneading-trough, and the laundry, are, for the most part, unknown. What time, we ask, have factory children, who are chiefly females, to learn domestic duties? And is it trivial here to observe, that these poor outcasts from the social circle have no leisure for the innocent mirth of infancy? Nature has made them playful and social, but Avarice denies them time and strength to play.

"The moral evils are immense. A large concourse of youth, often promiscuously mingled, must lead to much moral evil, unless great care is taken to prevent it; and, under any circumstances, much must accrue. But what time is now allowed for instilling counteracting principles into our manufacturing youth? Many of them, from weariness, never attend a Sunday School at all; those who do so, are languid and jaded at best, though, accustomed as they are in attending machinery to extreme quickness and vigilance, they may appear to strangers much more alive to instruction than they really are. BUT, PROPERLY SPEAKING, RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IS OUT OF THE QUESTION. The mere elements of reading occupy their time almost entirely; they can attend no day schools, and very seldom evening schools, and thus, at the inexorable demand of Mammon, the purposes of the day of rest and religious instruction are perverted. And with what suspicion must a thoughtful child regard Christianity itself, as well as its professors and ministers, when such excessive toil and unwearied attention are exacted, and the coercion and work of the mill succeeded on the day of rest by the confinement of the Sunday School room! The visible moral effects of such a system can only be partially known, even to residents in manufacturing districts; those only who have diligently explored these evils can appreciate their deplorable extent.

"To British Christians, then, these children of oppression and misery appeal—to those who have listened to the cries of the negro slave, and obtained some relief already for him—inasmuch as by a recent Order in Council for the Crown Colonies, no child under fourteen years of age shall be compelled to perform agricultural labour during more than six hours a day; and even adult slaves are restricted to nine hours a day—to those who often pray for 'young children,' 'fatherless children,' and 'all that are desolate and oppressed'—to the disciples of Him who entwined children in his arms and blessed them—to the friends of those helpless ones who cannot plead their own cause—to these this appeal is made, and surely not in vain, unless indeed it were possible that hypocrisy itself could be so barefaced as to plead for the relief of suffering humanity far over the deep, and yet excuse its neglect when prostrate at our doors.

"(Signed on behalf of suffering thousands,)

"Byerley, near Bradford, Yorkshire, July 3rd, 1832."

"GEORGE S. BULL."

ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY

JOHN PAVEY, 47, HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND,

AND

BENJAMIN STEILL, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. OASTLER is "At Home" on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.—Mr. Oastler's health requires that he should entirely refrain from receiving the visits of his friends on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

"Mariano Minis" is received. In the *Fleet Papers* there is no space for reviews of books.

A. M.—His version on "the Factory Children," and his sonnet "on reading Count Krasinski's History of Poland," will meet with early insertion.

G. Quincey's Bench Prison, would do well to keep his money, and cut with James Montagu.

Will some friend, at Ashton-under-Lyne, favour Mr. Oastler with an accurate account of the English demonstration which was exhibited a few weeks ago in that town?

Mr. Oastler is informed, that a friend in Nottingham must have a sovereign in a letter, some time ago. It was not received. Mr. O's obligation is now the less on that account. It is very certain he would catch it better by post. A Post Office order is the safest mode of transmission.

In reply to a numerous list of kind inquirers—"How can we best serve your interest?" Mr. Oastler begs to say—by promoting the circulation of the *Fleet Papers*, and by procuring advertisements for their columns. Mr. Oastler may be allowed to add, that few better mediums for advertising can be found than the *Fleet Papers*; they circulate in every district, and amongst every rank. In the Palace and the Cottage, readers of the *Fleet Papers* are to be found, Clergymen, Landlords, and Farmers, Ministers of State, Ploughboys, Factory Children, and Weavers, patronise these little *Fleets*.

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Many persons, in different towns, have written to ask "how they can obtain the *Fleet Papers*?"—The *Fleet Papers* may be had of any bookseller in the kingdom, who has an agent in London, by ordering them as all other periodicals are ordered. If persons are told, as many persons have asserted, that "they cannot be obtained," the publishers assure those parties, that the statement is not true. Several editions of the early numbers have been printed, and all orders can be regularly supplied, by application to Mr. Pavey, 47, Holywell Street, Strand; or Mr. Steill, 20, Paternoster Row.

On the 25th of September, 1841, will be published,

PRICE TWO SHILLINGS,

No. 39, of the **FLEET PAPERS,**

WHICH WILL CONTAIN

A VIEW OF FIXBY HALL,

NEAR HUDDERSFIELD,

The Property of **T. THORNHILL, Esq.,**

AND

The Residence of **R. OASTLER,**

FROM THE 5th OF JANUARY, 1841, TO THE 15th OF AUGUST, 1841.

The following report of the trial which was the cause of Mr. Oastler's trip into Yorkshire, is copied from the *Leeds Intelligencer* and the *Northern Star* :—

“ YORKSHIRE SUMMER ASSIZES.

“ THURSDAY, JULY 22, 1841.

“ BEFORE LORD CHIEF JUSTICE DENMAN.

“ **Craven and others v. Thornhill.**

“ SPECIAL JURY.

“ *Important Decision respecting 'Tenant Right' and 'Landlord Right.'*

“ Mr. Cresswell and Mr. Hildyard were for the plaintiffs. Mr. Knowles and Mr. Tomlinson were for the defendants.

Mr. Cresswell said the claim of the plaintiffs was for two sums, one for 282*l.*, and the other 62*l.*, of which 110*l.* had been paid into Court. The plaintiffs were tenants of T. Thornhill, Esq., of Fixby Hall. The father of the plaintiffs, some 16 years ago, became tenant of two farms under Mr. Thornhill, one called Wadlands, and the other Woodhall Hills, which he occupied till his death. When he entered on the farms, he paid a certain valuation. Mr. Craven died in March, 1839, and his three sons (the plaintiff) succeeded as tenants to the farms, which they occupied till the autumn of 1839, when a notice to quit was served upon them by Mr. Thornhill's agent, Mr. Ramshotbottom. Before the period arrived when they were to quit, an intimation was given by Mr. Ramshotbottom, that he had appointed a Mr. Lister to value the out-going crops on the farms; the Cravens appointed a Mr. Butler to value on their side. After some delay, caused by Mr. Ramshotbottom intimating to Lister that he had better defer his valuation, as he suspected that the Cravens had not truly stated the terms upon which their father had entered on the farm, the valuation was gone into. The valuers had completed their valuation on the 20th of February; but in consequence of this intimation, Mr. Lister did not decide the valuation till after May. When he did make his valuation, the defendant said the Cravens had obtained it by fraud. Mr. Butler's valuation came to 310*l.* for Wadland Hills. Mr. Lister's valuation amounted to the sum of 289*l.* As the two valuers could not agree upon the amount, it was determined that the matter should be referred to a Mr. Smith, as umpire, whose award was to be abided by. The before-named intimation of Mr. Ramshotbottom's, that there was a special agreement, prevented an appointed meeting for the umpire to decide this matter; and as Mr. Thornhill's agent refused to pay more than 110*l.*, the present action was brought to recover the amount of the valuation as made by Mr. Thornhill's own valuer, Mr. Lister.

“ Mr. Butler and another witness were examined to prove the valuations as claimed by the plaintiffs.

“ Mr. Knowles, for the defence, said, that Mr. Thornhill had paid 110*l.* into Court, which he contended was sufficient, and more than sufficient, to pay all that the plaintiffs were legally entitled to. Mr. Craven held under a special agreement, and had no right to claim under the custom of the country. He accused the Cravens of obtaining the valuation by direct falsehood and fraud, in stating that they entered to the farms without any special agreement, when the fact was that they held under the terms of a lease which had formerly been granted to a tenant of the very farm in question; which lease required that a certain proportion of the land only should be ploughed, one-third; and the Jury would at once infer that the remaining portion, two-thirds, should be left in grass. He should also prove that so far from James Craven, the father of the plaintiff, having paid any valuation when he entered upon the farms, as was alleged, he had not paid a single shilling. These facts he should prove by the mouth of competent witnesses.

“ Witnesses were then examined for the defence, by whom it was attempted to be shown, that when the farms were taken, the conditions of a lease, which had formerly existed, were named; and the conditions by which the tenant would have to abide; and that under those conditions, the sum of 110*l.*, paid into Court by the defendant, was amply sufficient for the valuation. The difference arose from there being more than one-third of the land under the plough at the time the tenant left. One of the witnesses, a Mr. Lee, the former tenant of the farm, was called to prove that 'old Craven' had paid him nothing, as out-going tenant, for tenant-right, or valuation; and this he swore to most lustily. On cross-examination, however, he let out the ugly fact that he had claimed a valuation as out-going tenant; that it had been allowed him to the extent (he only occupied one of the farms) of more than 135*l.*; that he owed more than 100*l.* rent; and that Craven had paid Mr. Thornhill the amount of the valuation, which had been set-off against his (Lee's) arrears of rent.

“ The lease, under whose provisions it was sought to bring the Cravens, was also put in and read. It turned out to have been granted in the year 1792, to the then tenant, and was for a period of fifteen years. The provision which was sought to be established against the plaintiffs was, that during the last two years of the tenure, the holder should not plough more than one-third of the land.

“ Mr. Cresswell, in his reply, animadverted in severe terms on the conduct of Mr. Ramshotbottom, in bringing charges of fraud against the Cravens, which the evidence he had offered was incapable of supporting. He observed, that such men as Mr. Thornhill were completely in the hands of their agents; and that he was not to blame for the pitiful and humiliating exhibition which had been made in that Court; but agents were bound, in justice to those whose characters were at stake, to weigh well what they were about; to be sure that they had a good case before they dragged their principles into a Court of Justice to prefer charges of fraud and falsehood against honest men, for which charges they had not a tittle of evidence to adduce. With respect to the monstrous attempt that had been made to bring the Cravens, who were merely tenants from year to year, liable to be quitted (as they had been quitted) by six months' notice; with regard to the attempt to bring men

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboreth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 32.

LONDON, SATURDAY, AUGUST 7, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—How kind, how wise, is He in whom I trust!

Nothing is too great, nothing too little; nor is anything too important or too trivial for His care. It is He who feedeth every insect—He upholdeth the universe—He careth for me. There is no chance in anything. And, oh! what peace, what joy, what solid satisfaction there is, in *knowing* that my ways are all ordered by the Lord.

It was needful, for the restoration of my health, that I should once more breathe the refreshing country breezes; but the prison gates were barred, by you, against me. It was necessary that I should, for awhile, be released from prison, and again commune with the free men of Yorkshire, in order that I might learn more fully the direful effects of the iron rule of Infidelity, and be cheered by the assurance that my labours had not been in vain. It was pleasing to your prisoner to find, that even his political foes now regretted his imprisonment, and cordially greeted him, whom you, so sternly, and yet so vainly, had doomed to disgrace and infamy! Ah! Sir, had *you* seen what *I* saw, and listened to what I heard in the Castle Yard at York, you would have felt how weak your malice is, how powerless to harm! Left to myself, I could not have gone to York; but God saw that it was needful, and forced me there, at your expense.

True enough, I longed, before I died, once more to behold the face of Yorkshire; but I was your prisoner in London, and dared not to indulge that hope. Again to mingle in Yorkshire, with the society of Yorkshiremen, was the summit of my earthly hopes; but to appear as a witness against you was too painful—the thought of that would, had I had the power, have kept me here. God has, however, granted that for which I dared not ask—a visit to Yorkshire, without one single sting!

I have been in Yorkshire! I have breathed her air—I have feasted my heart on her beauties—I have felt the warmth of many Yorkshire hands—I have once more spoken with Yorkshiremen in our own county—our hearts have been reunited.—I have marked the ravages of time—I have seen many old friends, with

new furrows on their faces. The tears of friendship have trickled down those channels, from the eyes of many who were wont only to smile on me. They did smile, Sir: 'twas a sunny shower—their smiles mingled with their tears. I have renewed my acquaintance with some of your tenants—I have heard of those who are not—I have seen those who have been bereaved!—I have shed some tears regarding them.

I have conversed with many rich and many poor—with the learned and unlearned—with the nobles and the common people—with old political foes, and with brother warriors. I met all as friends—I never was so happy!

I have shaken hands with O'Connell's victim in his *solitary* cell—I have blushed for my country, and also rejoiced when I remembered that the persecutor of my friend had now lost his power to sting.

I have heard, too, of my little *Fleeters*. I have been told, by those who are well able to judge, that they have been very useful; and have contributed, in no small degree, to the great West Riding victory. I have exchanged thoughts with many practical and experienced men. I have come back again to prison, instructed, refreshed, reanimated, and resolved to use all the knowledge I have gained, all the strength and vigour which have been restored to me, in my country's cause.

It is needful that I told you how it has happened that *your prisoner* should, in reality, (it is no dream, no fantasy—all that I have said is true,) have visited his native, his beloved Yorkshire, at your expense.

It so happened, that some few weeks ago, a very respectable London solicitor called here. From him I found, that the executor of one of your best and most industrious tenants was engaged in an action at law against you. I was grieved to the heart when I heard of it; because I knew that a landlord, with a thousand tenants, can never *gain* by appealing to a court of law, against one or more of them. I was very sorry to hear it, because I know that, till now, no action was on record which yoked *your* name, *versus* your tenant! I regretted that blight upon your father's fame! but I could not interfere. I felt quite sure, that on your part there must be some mistake, caused by misrepresentation or want of information; and that, whatever facts were needed to set you right, I could supply. I had offered to give your steward every information; but, until the attorney of your adversary called, I was not aware that you were "in law." The agent of your tenant's solicitors asked me a string of questions—I refused to answer them. I said, that "I knew nothing about the matter, save what I had learned as your steward; and, although you had behaved cruelly and unjustly towards me, that was no reason why I should act dishonourably to you."

On the 13th ult., I received a letter from your adversary's solicitors, containing the following remarks:—

" CRAVEN *v.* THORNHILL, ESQ.

" Dear Sir,

"As it will be to you an unpleasant task to have to give evidence against your late employer, we are unwilling to impose that task upon you unnecessarily, but if your evidence be indispensable, you will not, we are sure, shrink from a duty, on account of either its delicacy or difficulty. We would add, that however reasonable it may at first sight appear that a steward should be protected

against making communications adverse to his employer, like an attorney against his client, legally there is no such protection, nor on mature consideration will the same reason hold for one as the other.

"If you will be good enough to answer the following questions as distinctly as your recollection will serve, we shall be able to decide whether to require your presence or not. . . .

"We would not, either on your own account or on account of the expense to the parties, willingly trouble you to appear on this occasion, but to arrive at justice, your presence may be indispensable. We shall be much obliged by your answering these questions as explicitly as you can by return of post, and we can then decide how to act."

Having resolved not to answer any questions proposed by your opponent; being exceedingly wishful not to interfere as a witness in any quarrel between you and other persons; but, at the same time, believing, that if I were to be examined before the trial, the difficulty would be removed, the public exhibition of Thornhill *versus* a tenant would be prevented, and the incalculable damage spared, which must inevitably await you, both in name and purse, from such an exhibition, whether you gained or lost the verdict; I wrote to the plaintiff's solicitors as under:—

"Dear Sirs,

"The Fleet, July 13, 1841.

"It is painful to refuse a request, if justice demands an answer. I have explained to your agent, that, situated as I am, I cannot give the required information with honour. I told him all about it.

"Now, it appears to me, that it would be the interest of both parties to join in asking me the questions—then, I should be most happy to answer them to the best of my ability.

"I remain, dear Sirs, with much respect,

"Yours, most truly,

"RICHARD OASTLER."

I should also have written to your solicitor, had I not feared that I should be treated with contempt, and that my motives would be misunderstood. I therefore satisfied myself, that as I had before told your agent, "I should at all times be glad to give him or you any information," I felt that I had done my duty. I hoped to be spared the pain of appearing against you in court, and expected that the two parties would join in questioning me; and that thus you would be saved the pain of contending with your tenant, and enrolling your name in opposition to him before a special jury of Yorkshiremen.

I was, however, disappointed. On the 20th ult. a *habeas corpus* was lodged in the hands of the Warden of the Fleet, commanding him to exhibit my body at York Castle, by nine o'clock on the morning of the 22nd of July, 1841.

You may be sure that I did not much relish that sort of proceeding. Many thoughts jumbled themselves together in my mind. Such were my cogitations:—I thought it a hard matter, that, after having been ruined in your service, and cast into prison by you, I should, after all, be dragged about the country, to give information about your affairs.—It seemed strange to me, that society "outside" should have the power to cage my body in this cell, to suit its own convenience, and then to demand my services in the settlement of its quarrels!—I determined to argue the right, the unreasonable right, thus claimed by society, before the Lord Chief Justice, had I been called into the witness-box. I should not also have taken his Lordship's opinion as to the right of the plaintiff to obtain

any information from a cast-off steward against his former master.—I disliked being dragged as a prisoner into my native county. Such thoughts as these occupied my mind, and I by no means rejoiced at *such* a summons into Yorkshire.

I wished to avoid going to York under such circumstances; and, as I was only just recovering from a very severe illness, I asked my physician to give me a certificate to stay me at home. He smiled, and said, "Nothing can do you so much good as a trip into the country—it is just what is required to restore and establish your health."—It was of no use grumbling or complaining, so I prepared for my journey; and at half-past eight o'clock on the morning of the 21st ult., I found myself seated in a carriage outside the walls, with two officers who were in charge of my body.

I will not, because I cannot, tell you what I felt, when I bade adieu to my wife, as she stood wondering on the pavement.—Those thoughts will keep; and some day, when they have coined themselves into words, I may tell you them. They will make you blush, I know that they will, because you have a wife, and a daughter who is a wife, and, after all, I am sure that you have a human heart, hardened though it be by misrepresentation, prejudice, and pride!

I was not interested by anything that we passed on our way to the Railroad Station. I tried to drag the lingerings of my mind from her whom I had left at the gate of the Fleet, who had just witnessed the removal of her husband's body, in charge of the officers of the law. I forced myself to think on green fields and trees, and brooks, and hills and dales, and flocks and herds, and butterflies and flowers. I passed unheeded the splendid sights of London.

I soon found that my guards were men of kindlier hearts than yourself; and that it was their wish to obey the orders which had been given to them by the kind and benevolent Warden of the Fleet, "that every kindness should be shown to me." On our arrival at the Station, one of them accompanied me to a shop, and bought me some of *the weed*, (as it turned out afterwards, I was now at your expense,) whilst the other officer obtained the "tickets" for our journey to York. After enjoying a few whiffs in the yard of the Station, I took my seat in a first class carriage, labelled "York and London." Soon the *bell*, and then the *puff*, and next the *whistle*, and afterwards the *rumble*, gave token of our advance, and away we flew, as fast as steam could move us, towards old Ebor.

I cannot tell, because no words are given me, the impression made on my mind by the sight of the green fields, the trees, and the landscape altogether. I wanted to dwell on the lovely scene—to stop and ponder, and feast my eyes, and satisfy the longings of my mind. I had been more than seven months locked up in jail, and only such can tell the effect upon my mind at being thus *hurried* past such novel, such pleasing scenes;—but puff went the steam, and on went the carriage, making the landscape like one continued elongated picture. I gazed till I could see no longer. All, at length, seemed to be one stream of green, and blue, and red, and yellow. I shut my eyes to rest them. I had provided myself with a book. I next edified myself with its contents, at intervals feasting my eyes and delighting myself with the transient views of the country across which we were flying at the railroad speed.

It is a curious mode of travelling, Sir; one gains no information; we do not get a *real* look at anything; we pass over England, and learn nothing practically of the people, the towns, the villages, or the country.

I am no admirer of the modern Stations—I hate the very name. *Station* reminds me so of *the police*;—and then, the servants are all dressed like *policemen*. There is no *liberty* in railroad travelling. I like the old-fashioned way best. The lively, jocosé, shrewd, jolly guard and coachman—the fine team of horses—the “short passengers,” who can tell one all about everything as we pass along—the curved line of road—the up-hill and down-hill, and the hawthorn hedges—the road-side public-house, with its Sir John at the door, and Lady Barleycorn in the bar, and the brawny wench in the kitchen. The old sign, the tree in front, and the “long-settle,” and the rustics telling their village tales over a brim-full tankard. I was fond of noticing the changing of the horses—of marking the excellencies or defects of each, and of hearing their pedigree and of their exploits. When time allowed, as sometimes it did, it was my delight to ramble into the country churchyard, and read the rustic epitaph.—Having lighted my pipe, I used to enjoy re-mounting, and from the guard or coachman, as the case might be, to hear the history of all whom we had seen in the wayside public-house, and all about the neighbourhood. When we arrived at a town, it was delightful to run, whilst the horses were changing, to shake hands with a friend or two, and then to hurry back again to the inn. There was some pleasure in that *hurry*—there is none in the hurry of the railroad. I enjoyed “making ready for the night,” either inside or outside of the old stage-coach. The fitting on the night-caps, adjusting the cravats and coats, and legs and arms, and making all comfortable—then the good wash in the morning, and the blazing fire, and the comfortable breakfast, were really refreshing. Oh yes, Sir, I did like the old stager far better than the new steamer. I often wonder what will be the end of this mighty *puff*, this shrill *whistle*, and all this rumbling, hissing noise.—But I am forgetting myself. I *was* on the railroad, and reminiscences were useless.—We arrived safe at York in *ten* hours; and *that* is supposed to make up for all the pleasures of the old system. “We pulled up for tickets,” (*i. e.* to deliver them,) exactly opposite the house I lived in, when I was a clerk. I saw the window of my old bed-room, and thought old times over again.

When we entered Yorkshire, I could have wished to have kissed her soil, I love her so.

I was now a prisoner in York;—in York, where I have seen so many sights, where I have led on tens of thousands of my countrymen against factory oppression—in York, where I have fought some battles for the Constitution and for the Aristocracy—now I was your prisoner, Sir, the prisoner of a Yorkshire aristocrat, in old Ebor’s bosom!

We put up at the White Hart, Stone Gate. It is a humble, but a very clean and comfortable place. The host and hostess were very kind and attentive, the provisions were excellent. We all (the officers and myself) slept in one room; their touching kindnesses I shall never forget. Sir, the officers of prisons have hearts and feelings much more tender than are those of a certain aristocratic

plaintiff. In doing their duty, my guards paid the most delicate regard to my habits and feelings. Their names are Husted and Watson.—Mayhap I shall, some day, have it in my power to give them a good turn.

On the morning of Thursday, July 22, 1841, at nine o'clock, by order of Her Majesty the Queen, my body was in York Castle, safely guarded by two officers. I had been a free man, doing free men's work on that spot, "in days lang sine." There, I had assisted in many county meetings. Once I had entered in triumph, at the head of thousands of my countrymen, lauded by the clergy, the aristocracy, and my own faithful "boys." The High Sheriff was in the chair *that day*—Michael Thomas Sadler was there, and so was the Hon. William Duncombe. Many of Yorkshire's best sons crowded *those* hustings. It was the last county meeting Yorkshire ever held. A vote of thanks, from the County of York, was moved to me by the Rev. John Graham, to whom I owe more than to any other man—the knowledge of the Truth. That vote was passed by the assembled thousands with acclamation. I received it, and replied, until tears muffled my words. Your estate, Sir, large as it is, is poverty, compared with *that* vote. That meeting was held on the 27th of April 1832. Since then, I have always striven to deserve the thanks of Yorkshire, by pursuing a steady course against oppression's power;—but now, in the same yard, I stood a prisoner!—I envied not the man who made me such.

I met your opposing solicitor; I refused to answer him any question out of Court. I urged him to see your agent, and join with him in questioning me, and thus prevent the trial coming on. At all events, I resolved not to hear one word of the trial until I was called into Court. I never was called, and, of course, I heard nothing.

From what I have since been told, I think it was a pity that *you* were dragged to York on such an unlucky business. These are not times, Sir, for landlords to break the bonds of union between themselves and their tenants. It is very bad policy, with such tenants as yours are. "The beginning of strife is like the letting out of many waters."—That, Sir, is all that I shall say about "*Craven versus Thornhill*."

Although I was saved the *pain* of appearing in Court against you, my *pleasures* were not curtailed. That day was one of the happiest of my life. I proved, that although I had lost *your* smiles, *Yorkshiremen* still smiled upon me. I there met many of my countrymen, of all grades—clergy, nobles, barristers, solicitors, bankers, merchants, manufacturers, farmers, and working men. They all greeted me with smiles. I shall not soon forget the pleasures of *that* day. I was much affected at the aged appearance of your old and faithful, but discarded servant, James Thompson! Time and domestic affliction have bent him grave-ward. Well, he will rest in peace, when his traducers will smart, if consciences are left them. When I shook hands with him, I felt as though we should meet no more on earth. I said, "James, we shall meet in Heaven." The good man smiled, and withdrew, dropping a tear or two. The effects of time and care on many of your tenants struck me most forcibly. Their affection towards me, moved the best feelings of my heart. I found, that "they loved the old steward best."

I could not be in York, and fail to visit *the prisoner*. One of my attendants obtained an order that I might see O'Connor. I was requested to send my name. I wrote, "Richard Oastler, and two Queen's officers." Whilst that was conveying to my friend, six prisoners returned from Court, and passed me. They had just received their sentences—some were weeping—they were bound,—chained together. Such sights move me. I was sick when I saw six human beings in such trouble, when I could not help them. What were their crimes, I know not; but I do know, that much crime in England is *now* caused by oppression!

Whilst I was musing about these six poor unhappy brother mortals, the messenger from O'Connor arrived, with the words, "Walk forwards;"—and a weary walk we had, through long passages and staircases, amidst the clank of iron doors. At length we reached the *condemned cell*, in which O'Connor is confined! The officer, who accompanied us, knocked at the iron door. (These officers are much more civil than our persecutors.) O'Connor said, "Come in." We entered. The prisoner was dressing. We shook hands, and immediately entered into an animated conversation.—But I was disgusted! Tyranny has done its worst, Sir; it shall have no quarter! That cell is a low, dark, gloomy spot; but a spark is lighted there, which, if I mistake not, will, not long hence, make a blaze in England!

There dwells O'Connor, for publishing some foolish speeches made by other men; whilst the Traitors who resolved "to pay no more taxes," and "to behead the King, if he refused their demands," are advanced to Ministerial offices, and bask in the sunshine of Royalty! O'Connor was intended to be sacrificed, to please the giant Traitor O'Connell; but God has spared whom Traitor Whigs condemned! I paid O'Connor two visits. We conversed about the poor, and gloried in the defeat of their enemies, the Whigs. He does not look well: confinement has given him a sallow, paste-like appearance. *Solitary* confinement has made his aspect unlike that of other men. The effect of that most inhuman and intolerable system on the human features is indescribable! That accursed torture must no longer be allowed in England! The Whigs will rue the day on which, to please their Tyrant master, they subjected O'Connor to it. On the 14th of November, I expect the pleasure of a visit from O'Connor in this Cell.—The Whigs will hear of him when he comes out. Normanby may then expect what he will not relish, or I mistake. The Lord and the Prisoner will, that day, be on equal terms.

O'Connor's Cell is no joke. Our "strong room" is a much better place. The horrible Silent System must be instantly abolished: Humanity revolts at it, Nature rebels against it; and, although the Whigs delight to enforce it, and are just now building a "Model Prison," in order to exhibit it to perfection,—England must be rid of it! 'Twere much more humane to kill the prisoners at once, than thus to kill their minds, and turn them lunatics!

My faithful friend Hobson, of Leeds, who was bred on your estate, and whose love for me is as that of a son to a father, having heard that I was at York, came to meet me. We had an agreeable time together, the converse of friends is always sweet.—On Friday morning, he left for Leeds, and we for London.

I do not remember at what Station, but somewhere on this side Wakefield, an old gentleman tapped at the carriage-window, inquiring—"Is Mr. Oastler here: I want to speak with him?" At first I knew him not. Time had been playing his pranks with the features of my old friend Charles Turkington; who having heard, the night before, that I was to leave York by the first train, had come from Leeds to see me. We shook hands, spoke a few words, then "puff, puff" went the steam, and, with a whistle, off we flew. I do not like the hurry of these steamers.—Charles was my friend since I can remember;—the hand of an old friend feels very warm to a prisoner. We may not meet on earth again—in Heaven we shall, and never part.

I journeyed to London with barristers, with whom I held an animated and an interesting conversation, until we shook hands and parted at the London Station. I was glad to find that my views and theirs were synonymous on the New Poor Law, the Rural Police, and many other important public questions.

I marked the crops of corn, as well as the speed at which we moved would allow me. They seemed unhealthy, weak, and wiry.

We arrived at the Fleet about half-past eight. We were welcomed right heartily by the officers and my brother prisoners; and the lovely children flocked round me, to tell me how glad they were to see me back again. After many friendly shakes, I found myself seated, as happy as a King, in my own snug cell, No. 5, Coffee Gallery, thankful to Almighty God that I had renewed my strength, obtained so much information, enjoyed so much pleasure, and, withal, had been spared the pain of appearing in a Yorkshire Court against my persecutor. It is worth seven months' confinement to enjoy such a trip. I think I felt myself as happy as man could feel, albeit

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—Do you ask why I have said nothing about politics in this letter?—why I have filled it with a long rigmarole about my journey to York and back? I will tell you. I write for my Factory Children and their Mothers, as well as for Politicians and Statesmen;—and I know, if you do not, that thousands of my poor little "subjects" round about Fixby and Calverley, will rejoice to know that their "King" has had a trip to York and back again at your expense. I know with what glee the little circles will listen to this paper. Their little hearts will "jump for joy," when they know that you have been forced to pay for the journey which has restored your prisoner's health, and given him so much pleasure. Their mothers wont be grieved, nor will their fathers;—my other readers will, I hope, excuse me;—if they knew my little interesting clients and patrons, I am sure they would, forgive me.—But if not, I cannot help it. I will not omit to please my little "subjects," by telling them, at intervals, all about their "King."—R.O.

ERRATUM.—In the last number of the *Fleet Papers*, No. 31, page 247, second line from bottom, for "governors," read "government."

so situate under the provisions of a lease granted for a certain term of years, he must characterize it as the most impudent and unjust thing that he had ever known. The provisions of the lease were wholly inapplicable to a yearly tenant. For instance, the very provision that so much stress had been laid upon, provided, that during the last two years of the tenure, only one-third of the land should be ploughed;—it did not require that the remainder should be in grass—it merely required that not more than a certain proportion should be ploughed—but how could this apply to a tenancy from year to year? How could the tenant know which were the 'two last years of his tenure?' when six months' notice could quit him? The attempt was monstrously absurd—and as unjust as it was monstrous. He again characterized the whole defence as miserable and shameful—renewing his diatribe upon those agents of Mr. Thornhill who had made him appear as a man wanting to defraud his tenants of their just rights. He was satisfied the attempt would fail. The Jury would stand between his clients and the attempted injustice. He confidently relied on their giving a verdict for the plaintiffs.

Lord Drumay then summed up. He observed that this was an important case—a very important one. It involved many and high considerations; and in order that they might have the case fully before them, he would read over to them the whole of the evidence taken on both sides, commenting on such portions as he might deem it necessary to give his opinion upon. He claimed their best attention while he did so. His Lordship then read over the evidence, interspersing the several portions of it with observations, to the effect, that if the Jury were satisfied that the holding in this case was under written agreement, that is to say, under the provisions of the old lease produced, they would find a verdict for the defendant; for it would be then apparent, that the valuation which had been procured was procured by false pretences: on the contrary, if they were satisfied that the provisions of that lease were, as had been ably contended, wholly inapplicable to a tenancy from year to year, and that the valuation which had been made was made in accordance with the custom of the country, (and of all these things they must judge from the evidence adduced by both parties); if they were of opinion that these things were so, they would find a verdict for the plaintiffs.

The Jury retired for a short time, and then returned with a verdict for the plaintiffs—Damages in the amount sought; thus, in the most marked manner, setting their face against the attempt which had been made to secure to Mr. Thornhill, as landlord, all the advantages of a lease, while the tenants were left without any of the advantages arising from leases, amongst which certainty of tenure for the period embraced in the lease is not the least important. The result is of the highest moment to tenants similarly situated.

One thing connected with this trial must not be lost sight of: it was the means of bringing the much-respected Richard Oastler once more into Yorkshire. The plaintiffs' attorney applied to Mr. Oastler, as is usual when it is imagined that evidence can be obtained, for information connected with the subject in dispute, with a view to subpoena him as a witness. Mr. Oastler, however, as Mr. Crosswell's opening speech made known, refused to give any information that way at all; pointing to his peculiar situation with regard to Mr. Thornhill as his excuse. The plaintiffs had been removed from the Fleet Prison upon a writ of *habeas corpus*, for the purpose of giving evidence if it was needed. Mr. Crosswell, however, did not call him into the box, as his case was fully established by the two witnesses he did call; but he offered to place him in the box, if the other side wished it. *This*, Mr. Ramsbottom did not desire—so Mr. Oastler was not examined.

The worthy 'Old King' looked much better than could be expected, considering that he has lately been suffering from an intermittent fever, brought on by excessive fatigue. He is recovering rapidly from its effects; and we sincerely hope that the jaunt he has just had into his beloved Yorkshire, at Mr. Thornhill's expense, will restore him to health. It was pleasing to see the manner in which all parties, Whig and Tory, paid their respect to honour and integrity in the person of Richard Oastler. The cordial greetings and hearty shaking of hands between him and barristers, and gentleman suitors, defendants, jurymen, and witnesses, and attorneys, and coroners, and farmers, and labourers, were truly delightful to witness!

Mr. Oastler (with his two attendants) arrived in York on Wednesday evening; he went back to his prison by the quarter to nine o'clock train on Friday morning; and would sleep in the Fleet that night. He was evidently much gratified with this visit to Yorkshire; it fully proved to him that he is still in the possession of the esteem and good-will of all who know him."

The following interesting communication was written by Mr. Thomas Bailey, of Basford, Nottingham, to Mr. Cavie Richardson, who was deputed by the Central 'Ten Hours' Bill Committee to visit Nottingham and other places, in order to plead the cause of the factory children, and obtain subscriptions to meet the expenses of the Parliamentary inquiry.

Basford, near Nottingham, Oct. 16, 1832.

"Dear Sir,—A particular engagement this evening necessitates my absence from the interesting meeting which I am sure you will have with the intelligent company usually assembling at the Newton's Head news room.

"I rejoice to witness your disinterested and unshaken zeal in the good work of infantile emancipation; convinced as I am, that it is not less a labour of sound national policy, than of enlightened Christian philanthropy. The abolition of FACTORY SLAVERY, indeed, appears to me to lie at the base of all generous political reformation in this country. No plan of education for the children of the poor, deserving the character of national, can be established—no system of amelioration for the operative classes, meeting the eye of enlightened, can possibly be rendered efficient, until their hours of labour are curtailed—until it is recognized as a first principle in legislation, that it is the special duty of governments to care for those who are too feeble to take care of themselves;

and that to provide for the moral and physical wants of the whole rising generation of the land, more especially for the children of the poorer class of citizens, is no less an act of policy than humanity. The children of the poor, it is evident, are the sinews of all states; but let us not forget that they are *intellectual* sinews; it is not enough, therefore, that they be well governed, as members of the body politic: it is required, for the happiness and future improvement of mankind, that they be qualified to think, to judge, to reason; in short, that they be qualified, as intelligent and accountable agents, to govern themselves. The factory system (emphatically so called) precludes these results being accomplished; it reduces the child of the poor citizen to the rank of an animal machine—to the condition of a breathing automaton. Suns shine, and flowers bloom, and forests wave, and streams run glittering in the light in vain, for the tens of thousands of British children condemned to the incessant labours of the factory. The glorious God of nature is almost shut out from the imaginations of these poor martyrs to Avarice, and man's puny arts alone fill their minds; gas and steam are the only elements of power and light with which they are acquainted—potatoes and oatmeal the only viands with which they are familiar—broken rest, severe punishment, excessive toil, the only usage to which they are accustomed. Can it be wondered at that they become, with few exceptions, stunted or decrepid in body, feeble in mind, vindictive in disposition?

“The blood of the innocents has long cried from the ground against their oppressors—it may, ere long, be answered from the skies in a voice of awful retribution. The world, I believe, is on the eve of important changes, moral and political; a full restitution of the rights of humanity to the long oppressed and neglected children of the poor, must lie at the foundation of everything which is substantially good in policy, or permanently beneficial in morals. I hate *Slavery* in all its forms—in all its degrees. I hate it on *principle*, because it is opposed to the true dignity of man—I hate it on grounds of policy, because it is always in its results subversive of the real greatness of states: I hate, therefore, with a perfect hatred, all the disgusting cant about sleek-skinned, happy, well-fed slaves, whether white or black, when used as an apology for their oppression and degradation. Beholding in slavery, under every modification, an obstruction to the development of those higher faculties and attributes of our common nature, which it ought to be the wish of every good man to see predominate in society, I hold the practice of it in an abhorrence I cannot find language to express; and can only hope that the time is rapidly approaching when such an epithet as ‘*Slave*’ shall not be justly applicable to the condition of any human being in the British Empire.

“Persevere, then, my good friend in your glorious ‘labour of love’ for the bodies and souls of poor children. Your country may not yet appreciate as it deserves the value of your work, nor estimate rightly the honourable engagement in which yourself and generous colleagues are employed; this, however, is only the common lot of Philanthropy. To mention no other instances, *Raffles* was ridiculed, and *Wilberforce* contemned and insulted; but they persevered, and an enlightened world is now paying homage to their memories.

“It is my opinion, that in no well ordered state ought children of so tender an age as nine years to be allowed to follow any sedentary employment for *five* hours, much more ten, continuously. They need, and ought to have, the poorest of them, elementary instruction in the different branches of human learning; they need, and ought to have, daily instruction in their duty to God and their fellow-creatures; they need, and ought to have, several hours’ healthy play, with amusement and recreation suited to their sex and years. The factory system, beyond all other systems of labour, appears to me calculated to preclude the enjoyment of these benefits by poor children, hence my dislike and opposition to it, hence my best wishes for your laudable attempt to mitigate its severity.

“I am almost ashamed of this hasty scrawl, which I have not even time to re-peruse, as the hour is arriving for your meeting, and I did not receive your invitation till late.

“I am, dear Sir, your friend and well-wisher,

“To Mr. C. Richardson.”

“THOMAS BAILEY.”

ADVERTISEMENTS.

WANTED by an unmarried man, aged twenty-five, of sober and industrious habits, who is at present employed in a wholesale warehouse in the City, a situation as Clerk or Book-keeper in a Bank, Assurance, Railway, or other Company’s office. The advertiser can write a fair business-hand, he is thoroughly acquainted with accounts, and can obtain undeniable recommendations from his present as well as his former employers.

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THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

Vol. I.—No. 33.

LONDON, SATURDAY, AUGUST 14, 1841.

Price 2s.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—This morning I was honoured by the visit of an old soldier, who is settled at his native village in Lancashire. I am always gratified by noticing the remarks of men of his stamp. A sedate, sober English veteran, is a fine character for the study of a patriot. It is from the off-hand expressions of such men, that very useful lessons, for statesmen, may be learned. The soldier said, "I am fond of my native place. I have seen many finer spots, but I never saw one that I loved like R——." (I do not mention the village where the veteran resides, because I know how easy it is for an ill-natured, unjust Minister to *rob* a pensioner. The fact of his having called upon me, might, by such a one, be construed into an offence, and might deprive the soldier of his right, by causing his name to be crossed out of the pension list.) The brave fellow continued; "but R—— is sadly altered since I knew it. We have there the New Poor Law and the Rural Police; there is neither *liberty* nor *justice* in our village now. They *pretend* that they cannot pay the poor, and yet they have four policemen, who cost 180*l.* a year, which must be paid! Before these men were employed to hatch robberies, the whole expense of the constables in R—— averaged, for forty years, only from 6*l.* to 8*l.* a year; *then*, the place was always peaceable and quiet—*now*, we are constantly in broils and tumults; and if a young woman happens to be out in the evening, she is sure to be pushed about and insulted by these police ruffians. Ah," added the old soldier, "there is no liberty now in R——!" And then he said, in a tone which was mingled with anger and revenge, "more than half of these police are Irishmen!"

Do you ask me why I relate this simple anecdote? It is because, in that short record of true English feeling, a statesman may learn more of the real character of Englishmen, and consequently know better how to govern them, than in whole volumes of Commissioners' Reports, which are too often drawn up for no other purpose than to deceive the government, or to afford them the pretext for destroying the English constitution, and impoverishing and enslaving the Queen's subjects. The strong and natural attachment of that man to his native spot, assures you that the soldier is a patriot. His regret at the innovations

upon his constitutional rights by the New Poor Law and the Police, tells you, that he values the principles of the constitution, and knows that any infringement upon them saps the foundations of "liberty and justice." His quaint observation about their *inability* "to pay the poor," and their nevertheless paying the police, betokens a true knowledge of the subject, and convinces you, that he well understands the object of those who grumble at the cost of the poor, but do not object to the price of the police. Their object, he well knows, is, as Lord John Russell has it, "the destruction of the freedom of England." His remarks about the police "hatching robberies," about "broils and tumults," and then "the insults offered by the police to young women," prove that he knows what these policemen are;—and his tone and manner when he informed me, that "more than half of the police are Irish," left no room to doubt that he was well aware they are the tools of O'Connell, who have, by that enemy of England, been trained to hate the English;—that they are the willing agents of tyranny and oppression. O'Connell has forced Englishmen to detest his tools, not because they are Irish, but because they serve him.

I am always delighted to be assured of the hatred which subsists between the police and the soldiery. In that circumstance, I think I foresee the speedy withdrawal of the police. Many anecdotes, establishing that fact, have come to my knowledge. I sincerely hope that the two forces will always be discordant, and that right true English feeling in the army, as well as in the people, will prevent the arrival of the period predicted by Lord John Russell, when "a standing army of police will destroy the freedom of England."

I rejoice to perceive such a difference in the character and spirit of the two forces. I am by it assured, that it is utterly impossible that an union of spirit can ever obtain amongst them. The soldier is noble, brave, generous, disinterested, and patriotic; the policeman is a mean, skulking, servile, brutish, selfish "reptile." (That is the word for "police" adopted by Lord John.) A more appropriate name could not have been given to that scourge of England.

The following anecdotes will exhibit the character and spirit of the two forces—they will prove how impossible it is that such men can ever have any union of action or of feeling—they will rejoice the hearts of England's friends—they will carry dismay into the ranks of her enemies, who, unhappily, still surround the Council Board of Queen Victoria. May be, the Whig Ministers will laugh at these facts. If they were statesmen, they would know how to appreciate them.

There is no doubt of their truth; I had them from a Life Guards-man who was prominently engaged in them. I published them nearly two years ago. I was then living at Brompton. I sent a copy to the Home Office: I distributed about a dozen copies amongst the men and officers at Knightsbridge Barracks. I know that they were read in the barracks to groups of soldiers, and I was assured by several of the corps, that every word was strictly true. I am quite sure that Lord John Russell was correct in his estimate of the danger to be apprehended from the establishment of the police. His Lordship will, therefore, if he wishes to preserve "the freedom of England," rejoice to find that the army detests the police, and that thus a bulwark is raised against the brutal tyranny of the "reptiles."

I have been present when the two furies have acted together, and I have heard the "curses loud and deep" uttered by the soldiers against the "blue bottles."

Let the following facts tell with what reason the soldiers detest the Police.

"Soon after the centralized Metropolitan Police was established, the insults received by the Life Guards, from them, were so many and so vexatious, that the Guards did not choose to come alone across Hyde Park to Knightsbridge Barracks; but waited for each other, at a tavern in Oxford Street; and many have been the deserved thrashings which the Police have received from the Life Guards, in Hyde Park. Whether the conduct of the Police towards the Life Guards was the result of orders from Scotland Yard, or of that detestable feeling so common in those who fancy that they are of more importance, and of a higher rank, because they are better paid—because they are richer, I know not; but certain it is, that a Life Guards-man could not then be seen with a female (however respectable) without being subjected to the insults of the Police, and being forced to witness their disgraceful treatment of his female friend. The officers themselves were not free from the attacks of the Police. On one occasion the wife of one of the Life Guards was visited, to tea, by a respectable female friend, who resided in or near Oxford Street. It happened that when the friend wished to go home, the husband was 'on guard.' The wife observing one of the Life Guards passing, called him to her room, and asked him to oblige her by accompanying her friend home. The Life Guard readily assented. As they were proceeding across Hyde Park, a Policeman met them. He rudely thrust his head under the lady's bonnet, and threatened her. The Life Guard said, 'If you touch this lady, I will knock you down.' The Policeman persisted. The Life Guard redeemed his pledge. The alarm was given. The Life Guard proceeded far enough with his charge to see her safely out of danger from the Policeman, and then hastened to the barracks. He met the Policeman; expecting that others would be advancing to aid his opponent, he contented himself with once more making his enemy lick the dust, and then retreated into the barracks. Next morning there was a stir! The superiors of the Police required the surrender of the Life Guard, who had dared to protect a female from the brutal insult of one of their minions.

"The Life Guards were ordered out, but the brave protector of innocence could not be identified. The Police retired from the barracks, not a little chagrined. The Life Guards were delighted, and after an address from the Colonel, they were in ecstasies. He informed them, that, 'if they were found beating the Police, he could not save them from punishment; but, so conscious was he of the unmerited insults which the Police heaped upon them, that he should not be sorry, if, whenever they were insulted by the Police, they did their worst at them—always taking care not to be found out.' After this, the battles between the Police and the Life Guards were frequent, and at length fresh orders were issued from Scotland Yard; so that now a Life Guard can walk in the park without being insulted by the Policemen, or being placed in their filthy 'lock up.'"

See again, Sir, the *mettle* of the Life Guards and the *blubber* of the Police.

"On the day when Queen Victoria dined at Guildhall, the streets were kept open for the procession. In one place (where the street was narrow) two ladies were separated from the gentlemen who had accompanied them, and were forced, by the press of the crowd behind, to the front of the causeway; they were occasionally pressed forward into the street. Near them was a Policeman, and also a Life Guard."

Now, Sir, mark the difference in the conduct of these two men; would that the Queen knew all about it, then she would be proud that her Life Guards are composed of such mettle; and she would resolve, that the "reptiles," which form the body-guard of her Home Secretary, should be disbanded.

"The Policeman most rudely, with his staff, pushed the ladies back with violence against the men behind. One of the ladies appeared to be six months pregnant. They expostulated with the Policeman, told him how they had been separated from their friends, and implored him to show them how they might get away. One of them shrieked from fear. The Policeman was inexorable: 'Back, back,' was the word, with a rude thrust of his truncheon against their persons. The Life Guard witnessed all this, and when the Policeman was absent, turning to the ladies, he said, 'Come and stand between these two horses; they will not harm you, and the crowd will not then press upon you.' The ladies advanced, and stood where they were directed. Soon the Policeman re-

turned, and was about to repeat his insult. Observing this, the Life Guard said, 'Those ladies are my friends, I have placed them there.'—'Who the devil gave you leave to have friends there?' vociferated the policeman, and then set straight to work with his staff, against the ladies. 'If you touch them again,' said the Life Guard, 'I will cut you down.' The brute persisted, and, in a moment, the shining top of his hat, clean severed by the sabre of the Life Guard, was seen flying in the air, and the cheers of the crowd who witnessed it gave evident tokens of the approbation of the people. The Policeman dared not again to insult the Life Guard. His soldier-like answer was, 'Touch them again, and next time I will cut lower!'

"Some altercation ensued. The sergeant of the division arrived, and found the inspector of Police removing the Life Guard! 'Hold!' said the sergeant; 'I placed that man there; he is under my command; I am answerable for him; I am sergeant——, ——troop, 2d Battalion, Life Guards; you will find me at the barracks.' The Policeman desisted. The private told the sergeant all about it. The sergeant was pleased with the conduct of the man, but dare not say so. He reported the circumstance to the captain, who could not approve, but who *seemed* delighted, and said, 'Take an opportunity of changing the man, *when the Police are not near.*' The sergeant obeyed his captain's orders, and when the Police afterwards came to take the Life Guard into custody, *he was not the man!* neither could they find him elsewhere."

Thus, Sir, the difference between the spirit which animates the two forces is exhibited—the one is the protector of innocence, the other is the brutal savage, who will insult a woman! How noble is that of the soldier!—how fiendish that of the police!———And shall "the freedom of England be destroyed" by such fiends?—The wretch who is armed, and who can thus insult, assault, and abuse a pregnant woman, is not a man;—he is, Sir, in the very essence—a Fiend! Shall such infernals rule in England?—Forbid it, Heaven!———Death, in any shape, is preferable! May England herself be rooted from the face of the earth, rather than that her sons and daughters should be enslaved by such cowards—such brutes—such monsters—such fiends. Sir, my spirit rises, my blood boils, my indignation is enkindled against the men who are multiplying and establishing this breed of O'Connell—"reptiles" in this, my native isle—in England, which was once the cradle and then the throne of freedom.—Let every Magistrate who votes for the Rural Police, remember, that, *on the word of Lord John Russell, HE IS VOTING FOR "THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FREEDOM OF ENGLAND!"* When the rate-payers are called upon for the police-rate, let each one remember, *that he is paying for the support of an armed force, which blushes not to insult, and abuse, and assault his mother, his wife, his sister, and his daughter!*

I am the more anxious just now to impress this subject on the minds of my readers, because I am instructed by Lord John Russell, that "the House of Commons must yield occasionally to national opinion." If any point is settled beyond a doubt, it is, that "the national opinion" has, at the recent elections, been exhibited against the New Poor Law and the Rural Police. The first duty of the new Parliament will be, to rectify the damage which the late Parliaments have effected, against the rights and liberties of the people; amongst the rest, as a guarantee of their determination to secure "the freedom of England," they will surely "yield to the national opinion," and destroy a force of which Lord John Russell thus speaks:—

"If the corrupt administration have an army to support them, the necessity for reform vanishes, abuses are perpetrated, and the reign of freedom is closed for ever.

"It is in this point of view, that the increase of a standing army is really dangerous, and the encouragement of military habits most pernicious. And the REPTILE is the more to be guarded

against, as it would approach without the rattle which gives warning of its vicinity, and serve as a preservative against its poison. A standing army which destroyed the freedom of England, would not march by beat of drum to Westminster, and blossom the House of Commons; it would not proscribe the House of Peers, and deluge the streets of London with the blood of her magistrates. It would appear in the shape of a guardian of order; it would support the authority of the two Houses of Parliament; it would be hostile to none but mobs and public meetings, AND SHED NO BLOOD BUT THAT OF LABOURERS AND JOURNEYMEN. It would establish the despotic power, not of a single king, or a single general, but of a host of corrupt venalists, and half a million of petty tyrants."

I am aware that I have quoted these words of Lord John's, in No. 16 of the *Fleet Papers*, but, Sir, they are, at this epoch, so important, that I hope you will pardon the repetition. I live, Sir, in hopes, not only that the Rural Police will be abolished, but also, that the days of Ministerial responsibility will be revived, and that a Minister who has supported the establishment of a force which, according to his own showing, "is destructive of the freedom of England," will be impeached.

Of one thing I am sure: if "the national opinion" has any sympathy in Parliament, Her Majesty's Whig Ministers will have other employment than to propound their wild and visionary, and destructive free trade schemes.

I am, Sir, perfectly aware, that the Conservative leader is just as favourable to the establishment of the centralized police as are the Whig Ministers—I know also that many Conservative country gentlemen are delighted with the *apparent* security which the police affords them. But I know also, that the constitution of England does not admit of the existence of a standing army, which is irresponsible to Parliament; and I am sure that no Minister can long govern this country with the existence of such an un-English force. If the aristocracy have forgotten, the working classes remember, that the regular standing army is only maintained by an annual vote of Parliament. The Mutiny Act was a palladium of our liberty; but it is rendered useless by the establishment of a standing army of Police, over which Parliament has no controul. Sir, we may call ourselves what we like—nothing is, however, more certain, than that no true Conservative can vote for such an infringement upon our ancient institutions. For these reasons, I shall lose no opportunity of exhibiting, in the *Fleet Papers*, the constitutional repugnance of the soldiers and of the people to the police force.

The visit and observations of my veteran friend has diverted my attention from the point which I had intended to form the subject of this letter. I am not sorry; the hostility which the soldiers and the people feel towards the police cannot be too often repeated. The members of the legislature cannot be too frequently reminded of the real character and spirit of the police, and of the certain consequences of continuing that "reptile" force.

In my last letter but one, I told you, that the reason why the Whigs had fallen, was their total ignorance of the character, prejudices, and wishes of the people. In this letter I intended to have informed you of the reasons for that ignorance. Now, Sir, this subject is one of the utmost importance, and it is one upon which I am able to speak practically. The exhibition of the reasons why the Whig Ministers are thus ignorant, will, I hope, serve a good national purpose, by preventing any future government from splitting upon the same rock.

After I have explained to you the cause of the ignorance of Her Majesty's

Whig Ministers, I shall proceed to inquire what will be the *object* of the forthcoming Government, viz., will a comprehensive survey of the real condition and requirements of the people, with a view to the re-establishment of their constitutional rights, and the restoration of their national, social, and domestic prosperity, be aimed at by the successors of the Whigs?—or, will the object of the new Government be merely to try to drag on from year to year, just to keep the machine of state from breaking to pieces, and then content themselves with hoping and longing for some future propitious opportunity to refit and restore? In either case, I shall not hesitate to throw in my mite of information, to aid in informing the new Government how to act.

The Whig Government thought that they knew the people of England; they have found out their ignorance when it is too late; but how were they deceived? That is the question which I will now assay to answer.

The Whig Government has been in the habit of seeking information from their friends, in the different localities, whom they believed to have a knowledge of, and also to be in the confidence of the working classes;—they fancied that their friends were thus qualified to give them correct information, simply because those persons made a loud noise about “reform,” and were the foremost in “agitation” during elections, &c.; the truth being, that, excepting for political purposes, most of those friends of the Whig Government never came in contact with the working classes, and those few who did, were only known to the working men by their strenuous exertions to reduce wages, to break up trades’ unions, and otherwise to annoy, perplex, and rob the working classes. It would be invidious to mention names; but I am sure, that, in any locality, every working man who reads this, will have no difficulty in fixing upon the individuals to whom I allude.

Now, Sir, those informants of the Whig Government are those persons who fancy that they have an interest in keeping down the working classes, in order that they may the more readily compel them to submit to their own terms, and thus obtain their labour for lower wages. To those men it is an object of profit “to reduce the working classes to live on a coarser sort of food.” They are all strenuous supporters of the New Poor Law and of the Rural Police, and they are noisy advocates for “free trade,” “no Corn Laws,” &c. By such, the working people have been represented to the Government, as “dissolute, idle, turbulent vagabonds;” and the consequence has been, that laws of coercion have been passed, which have well nigh severed the links of society.

The Whig Government believed, that the real friends of the working classes, those who knew their condition, wants, habits, and prejudices, and in whom they placed confidence, were “disturbers of the peace,” “violent demagogues,” nay, even that they were “incendiaries”—thus they were told by their informants. It was therefore natural that a deaf ear should be turned against the representations of those true friends of the working classes, and that all they said should be treated with scorn and contempt by the Whig Government, who were made to believe that the “agitations” against factory slavery and the New Poor Law, were little less than rebellion; and that the public meetings which were held to consider the propriety of petitioning Parliament against those evils, were the most turbulent, disorderly, and revolutionary assemblages—the truth being, that, although hundreds of thousands of persons have met together for those purposes, *there never*

yet was known a single instance of a "breach of the peace" at any such meeting, nor was there ever a single individual taken before a magistrate from any of those immense multitudes.

More orderly meetings never were held, although it was impossible that stronger demonstrations of "national feeling" could be made. The result of all this misinformation and misapprehension has been, the downfall of the deluders and the deluded!!

Next week I will prove to you how the Government has been deluded by their own Commissioners. That tale is too long for the conclusion of this letter.—

—And now, Sir, permit me to congratulate you on good news for your "order," from Manchester. I have just received a communication from an old friend in that town, which gives me hopes of better days for old England. You will remember that I have already told you, "if England is to be saved, if her institutions are to be preserved, that happy consummation of my hopes will, under the blessing of God, be brought about by a hearty union, for mutual protection, between the aristocracy and the working people." Read my friend's letter:—

"Manchester, August 2nd, 1841.

"Dear Sir,—Will you pardon me for thus directing your attention to a meeting of the Factory Operatives of this town on the subject of 'the TEN HOURS FACTORIES' BILL?' On Saturday evening last a highly respectable and numerous meeting of the very cream of the factory workers of this town was held at the house of our friend Mr. Wilkinson, the Red Lion Inn, London Road. It having been understood that Lord Ashley was in Manchester collecting information on the factory question, and that his Lordship wished to see a few of the most active of the operatives, a number of cards were issued, and about eighty of the most intelligent of the working classes met at Mr. Wilkinson's, in order to afford every facility his Lordship might require.

"The object of the meeting, as I before hinted, was to give Lord Ashley such explanations as his Lordship might wish to have from the operatives themselves, as to certain clauses about to be inserted in the New Factory Bill, which I understand his Lordship will introduce as early as possible in the new Parliament, and I hope with greater prospect of success than under Whig misrule. Oh! my dear Sir, how pleased you would have been, had you been amongst us. At this meeting we were favoured with the presence of our well-tryed friend Mr. Jowett, who is still as hearty in the cause as he ever was. We were also favoured with the presence of Mr. B. Sadler, brother of that dear and devoted friend of the factory children, the late Michael Thomas Sadler, who, it may be truly said, sacrificed his life in the service of the poor.

"Mr. Sadler was accompanied by his nephew; and I am sure you will believe me when I state, that the moment it was known that the son of our once bold and intrepid champion in the British Parliament was amongst us, there was one general burst of feeling, which must have convinced that young gentleman how high his dear father stood in the estimation of the people of this district. Oh! yes, Sir, he must have been fully satisfied, that although his father's soul had gone to everlasting rest, his memory still lives in the hearts of the factory operatives of Manchester. Lord Ashley looked as well and as vigorous as I ever saw him; and what pleased us still more, he seemed as much resolved and as determined, after nine years incessant labour in this cause, (and repeated defeats,) as he did the first time he stood up in the House of Commons, to assert the rights of the factory children of England. I should like to write you a full report of the proceedings of this meeting for the *Fleet Papers*; but I fear it would be considered 'news,' and therefore rendered inadmissible to your columns. We had several very sensible speeches from men of our own body, each and all expressing their willingness to make every pecuniary sacrifice, to obtain a measure which would afford us the means of educating our children, and enable us to bring them up in the Christian faith of our forefathers, for which many of our ancestors bled and died. We had no sophisticated expediency spoken; no fear of the overthrow of our commerce expressed. No, Sir, the working classes have no such fears; they are true Englishmen; they love their children, and are prepared, if need be, to make every sacrifice, in order to enable them to improve their moral and mental condition, by which they hope, under Divine Providence, to avoid the miseries and degradations chalked out for them

by the selfish advocates of 'free trade,' who would transport one half of them by emigration, and half feed the remainder on bones minus beef, and Poor Law Union gruel. At the conclusion of the meeting, I believe Lord Ashley expressed himself fully satisfied with the conduct of the operatives on this occasion; notwithstanding one of the 'Cobden free trade' dupes obtruded himself upon the attention of his brother operatives, and, despite the disapprobation of the whole company, persisted in most grossly insulting our noble friend. This deluded dupe of 'the low wages and free trade' advocates, was quite intoxicated with the 'no-corn-law'-mania, and endeavoured to throw the apple of discord amongst us; but the sensible part of the operatives are now too wise to be carried away by any popular cry that may be raised for any political or party purpose. I need not, therefore, tell you, that the 'Cobden-bait' would not take, and the only reward this poor blind man got for his pains, was the unanimous disapprobation of his fellow-workmen then assembled. His Lordship's reply to the rude attack of his traducer, was the most impressive and complete I ever heard. Oh! how degraded this misguided man must have felt, as the young and disinterested Nobleman poured forth into the very souls of his attentive audience, in a truly Christian spirit, the strong desire he had to promote their interests, at whatever sacrifices to himself, and the pity he felt and expressed for all such deluded, though well-meaning people, whose clearer judgment is clouded by the sophisticated and delusive clutches of those rapacious wolves, who, like the hyena, imitating the cries of infant children, with a view of enticing them into their dens, that they might prey upon their flesh, and drink their blood, are seeking to draw the operatives into their own net, that they may get rich upon the blood and marrow of the children of the poor, extracted from them by imposing upon them a term of labour which human nature cannot endure. At the conclusion of the meeting, a vote of thanks was enthusiastically passed to Lord Ashley, which his Lordship acknowledged in the most suitable terms. How pleased I was to find that the factory workers had not forgotten their absent old friend and leader, though he is now suffering in durance vile;—a hearty vote of thanks was passed with acclamation—'To Richard Oastler, the 'King' of the Factory Children.' In this motion, Lord Ashley joined most fully. Thanks were also voted to Mr. Jowett and the Messrs. Sadler; after which the meeting separated. Believe me to be,

"Dear Sir, yours, very truly, AN OPERATIVE."

Yes, Sir, I do rejoice at this news! The presence of Lord Ashley amongst the working people gladdens the heart of your prisoner. Let the nobles freely mix with the working men, and they will soon know where to find the strongest bulwarks of our Institutions. I wish his Lordship had met the Manchester men in public, as Sadler and I did on the 23rd of August, 1832. Oh what a meeting was that!! I am glad that my friend Jowett was there, because I know that he would rejoice to find that my representation of the working men was correct. Oh, yes, Sir, if your "order" has any secnurity, it is amongst those whom your foes have taught you to oppress! It would have been very odd, if the Anti-Corn-Law-Leaguers had not sent an emissary of theirs to annoy an aristocrat, who dared to meet and converse with their oppressed workmen. They dread nothing more than that the two classes should know each other—the aristocracy and the working men.

No one knows what I felt when I learned that poor Sadler's son was there, and his brother also! Bless the lad, and bless my old friend—the brother of the Philanthropist! The emancipated spirit of their revered relative would rest upon *that* spot! What pleasure would that meeting yield to the working men!! I could almost be angry with you, for robbing me of that treat! But no, it is well to feel some sacrifices in prison. How kind it was—"the boys" did not forget "the King." I thank them, and am proud of their "allegiance," while, during God's pleasure,

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—See Notices to Correspondents about Widow Catherine Lamburn. Society "outside" should be ashamed to drive such a person to beg in a prison! It is too bad, Sir!—R.O.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. Oastler is "At Home" on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.—Mr. Oastler's health requires that he should entirely refrain from receiving the visits of his friends on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

"Reasons political and religious why the Church of Rome should not be raised in power," is removed. Mr. Oastler's opinions on that subject are well known.

The following accounts of the visit of Lord Ashley to the Manufacturing Districts, will be read with interest by every friend of the Factory Children. None can tell the gratitude which swells the bosom of their "King."

"LORD ASHLEY AT HUDDERSFIELD.

"On Wednesday last, this distinguished nobleman arrived at the George Hotel, from Manchester, for the purpose of advocating the necessity of a Ten Hours' Factory Bill. A great number of mill-owners, both of Whig and Tory principles, were in attendance to meet his Lordship, and gave him a most hearty reception. His Lordship strongly advocated the necessity of the measure, as beneficial both to masters and workpeople. The masters promised his Lordship that they would not oppose its adoption, though at the same time they cowardly told him that they could not aid or assist it. At three o'clock his Lordship proceeded to Mr. John Whittaker's, at Wood House, where he dined, and in the evening returned to Huddersfield, where a meeting of the operative classes took place at the Court House. His Lordship was received by the working classes with as much cordiality in the evening as he had before experienced in the morning from the mill-owners. W. Suck, Esq. was called to the chair. Lord Ashley addressed the numerous assembly at some length, and was listened to with the greatest attention throughout, except when his expressions elicited their cheers, which were loud and enthusiastic. The following resolutions were put and unanimously adopted:—1st. Moved by Mr. S. Glendening and seconded by Mr. W. Clay, 'That it is the opinion of this meeting that a Ten Hours' Factory Bill would be advantageous both to the employer and the employed.' 2nd. Moved by Mr. J. Bowker and seconded by Mr. J. Bray, 'That it is the opinion of this meeting that no child ought to be admitted to work in any factory until twelve years of age.' 3rd. Moved by Mr. T. Hawkhead and seconded by Mr. J. Hairehill, 'That the meeting is of opinion that no woman ought to be employed in any factory since marriage.' 4th. Moved by Mr. J. Busk and seconded by Mr. J. Goddard, 'That this meeting is of opinion that all dangerous machinery should be boxed off to prevent accidents, which so frequently occur by its being unguarded.' 5th. Moved by Mr. S. Brown, seconded by Mr. Hairehill, 'That the thanks of this meeting be given to Lord Ashley, for his kind attention to the interests of the labouring classes, and his great exertions in endeavouring to obtain a Ten Hours' Factory Bill.' 6th. Moved by the Rev. J. R. Oldham and seconded by Lord Ashley, 'That the thanks of this meeting be given to the operatives who have so kindly given their opinions and sentiments on this occasion.' 7th. Moved by Lord Ashley and seconded by Mr. Brown, 'That a vote of thanks be given to the Chairman for his conduct in the chair on this occasion.' Three most tremendous cheers were then given for 'The Good Old King,' and the meeting separated at about half-past ten o'clock. His Lordship then returned to Mr. Whittaker's for the night, and on Thursday morning proceeded to Leeds.'—*Hatfield Guardian*, August 7, 1841.

"There was a public meeting on Tuesday last, in Ashton-under-Lyne, on the Factory Question. Lord Ashley attended, and gave great satisfaction."—*Private Letter from Ashton-under-Lyne*, August 8, 1841.

"VISIT OF LORD ASHLEY TO THE MANUFACTURING DISTRICTS.

"During the present week the manufacturing districts of Lancashire and Yorkshire have been visited by Lord Ashley, whose motive was to acquire such information relative to the wants and wishes and interests of the manufacturing population as to enable him to pursue with effect his benevolent labours for the benefit of the working classes.

"The noble Lord was recently one of the distinguished personages assembled at Pausanger, (the seat of his brother-in-law, Earl Cowper,) to do honour to Her Majesty the Queen and His Royal Highness Prince Albert; and no sooner has the noble Lord taken leave of Royalty and the splendour of the Court, than he turns his steps towards the abodes of indigence, in order to qualify himself for the important duty of legislating for the poor and the helpless. Were we to pile column upon column, we could not so effectually portray the noble Lord's public character as by giving this simple statement of fact.

"On Saturday the noble Lord commenced his investigations in Manchester, and in the evening he addressed a large body of the operatives of that town, and was enthusiastically received. On Monday evening he did the same at Bolton; on Tuesday he visited Ashton for a similar purpose; on Wednesday the noble Lord met in amicable and free conference a number of factory masters at Huddersfield in the forenoon; and in the evening he attended a meeting of about two hundred of the operatives of that town at the Music Hall. Everywhere his Lordship's reception was of the most gratifying order; and the declaration of his intentions were warmly applauded.

"On Thursday, at noon, Lord Ashley arrived at Scarborough's Hotel, Leeds, accompanied by Benjamin Sadler, Esq., and Mr. Jowett of London.

"In the evening, a meeting of operatives and others took place (on a very brief notice) in the Picture Gallery at the Music Hall. The room was crowded. Mr. Joshua Hobson was called to the chair.

"Lord Ashley, after having been introduced by the Chairman, made a few observations, in which he said he had come amongst them for the purpose of hearing from them their opinions, their grievances, and the evils under which they laboured; as well as what they proposed as the remedy. He knew that if he wanted a knowledge of themselves he must go to them for it, and not take it second-hand. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) Wherever he had sought information from the working classes, he had never been deceived, never misled, and their demands he had always found reasonable; and he entreated them to give him their opinions with candour, and to deal with him in the spirit of frankness. He would first hear what they had to say, and then give them a detail of his plans.

"Mr. G. A. Fleming was then called upon by the Chairman, and he addressed the meeting at great length on the state of the poor, and especially with reference to a Ten Hour Factory Bill. He concluded by moving—That it is the opinion of this meeting that a Ten Hour Factory Bill would be advantageous to both the employer and the employed.

"This motion was seconded by Mr. Hutton, and adopted unanimously.

"Mr. T. B. Smith moved the second resolution in a forcible speech—That it is the opinion of this meeting that no child under twelve years of age ought to be admitted to work in any factory.

"This was seconded by Mr. Hutton, Jun., and adopted unanimously.

"Mr. W. Rider moved the third resolution—That this meeting is of opinion that no woman ought to be employed in any factory after marriage.

"Seconded by Mr. Temple, and carried *nem. con.*

"Mr. W. Hick moved the fourth resolution—That this meeting is of opinion that all dangerous machinery should be boxed off, to prevent the misfortunes which so frequently occur from its unguarded state.

"Seconded by Mr. Dyson.

"Mr. M. Crabtree moved the last resolution—That the thanks of this meeting be given to Lord Ashley, for his kind attention to the interests of the labouring classes, and for his great exertions in endeavouring to obtain a Ten Hour Factory Bill.

"This was seconded by Mr. Perring, and carried unanimously.

"The last resolution called forth loud and long-continued applause.

"Lord Ashley then rose. He alluded, in the first place, to the expectations he had formed in his first address—he had asked them for information, and he had not been disappointed; he would confess that he was struck with the regularity with which they conducted their proceedings, the beautiful manner in which they expressed their sentiments, the extent of their information, and the simple and hearty eloquence in which they enunciated their propositions. (Cheers.) They had met not so much to discuss questions which were remote, as those which were immediate. In the assembly were men of all opinions, and in the expression of those opinions they had all thrown some light upon the subject. They had done this with much forbearance—had stated their differences of opinion with great judgment, and in a good spirit, so that it was impossible their observations should not have their due weight. (Hear, hear.) The question on which they had more particularly met, had now attained a degree of importance which it had never attained before. (Hear, hear.) They were not told now, as they formerly were, that their interposition on behalf of the factory child had not the sanction of the law—on the contrary, it was now shown to be sanctioned by every principle of law and justice, that they had a right to interfere to limit the hours of labour. It was not necessary to prove now that a child should not work twelve hours a day; they had only to prove that ten hours were better than eleven, not that eleven were better than twelve—that ten were better than either, and by ten he would stand. (Cheers.) One of the speakers (Mr. Smith) had remarked, that when they began to plough the soil, they must expect to encounter great trouble and difficulty before they reaped the perfect crop; they had had their inconveniences, and had, on former occasions, been met by difficulties at every turn; but it was now his firm opinion, that henceforward nothing but benefits could accrue. (Cheers.) His Lordship contended, that what would benefit the mass, would never be detrimental to individuals—that no man would deny that twelve hours of uninterrupted labour would not tend to lower and degrade the physical condition of the species, to say nothing of the moral effects which must be produced upon females by plunging into a vortex where they learned nothing but vice, by being compelled to spend the best portions of their lives, from twelve years of age to twenty-six, in a manner which totally unfits them for maternal duties, and for all the most interesting ties of nature. Children, in their earlier years, were but too frequently left to the care of hirelings, in many cases little better than themselves. He had been told of an instance where a mother, shortly after her confinement, had been carried to the mill,

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Biddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

Vol. 1.—No. 34. LONDON, SATURDAY, AUGUST 21, 1841.

PRICE 2s.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—It has been reserved for this age to prove the patience of Englishmen, and the ignorance and imbecility of those men who have so long boasted of their knowledge and capability for government. The exhibition of forbearance on the one hand, and, on the other, of impudence and impotence, is, I am sure, unexampled in the history of the world.

You cannot have forgotten the ravings of the Whigs, even to madness, at what they called the folly, extravagance, and wickedness of all the Tory Governments of our day:—it mattered not whether Pitt, Liverpool, Perceval, Wellington, or Peel presided, we were everlastingly told by the Whigs, that all of them were "fools or rogues." The members of the House of Commons were represented as the ignorant, servile tools of a class of men, then called Borough-mongers, who were said to be without any practical knowledge, and totally incompetent for legislators.

We were assured that the Whigs would be able to remove all our national grievances, and that peace, prosperity, and contentment would follow the establishment of their rule. The Whigs said, that the reformed House of Commons would be composed of wise, disinterested, practical men, who understood the characters and wants of the people; that in that House there would be no time-serving, place-hunting, ministerial tools; and that the confidence of the nation in such representatives, would be the guarantee of the fealty of all classes of Her Majesty's subjects.

Now, Sir, it is well to remember the officious, unblushing impudence with which our modern quacks denounced the incompetence of the Tories, and blazoned forth their own "talents." We now feel the direful effects of their ignorance and dishonesty. They have multiplied the tools of "Borough-mongers," by giving one traitor more voices in their House, than twenty "seat-sellers" could boast of before; and although regret is unavailing, it is wise to mark the blunders and the crimes which have covered the Whigs of such high pretensions with irretrievable disgrace and infamy. They have ruled by jobbing!—their governing has been one entire system of tyranny, extravagance, and trafficking.

If there was one thing more boastingly asserted by the Whigs than another,

it was the contemptible ignorance of the *unreformed* House of Commons, compared with the anticipated practical skill and local knowledge of the *reformed* House. But what has been the result? Instead of transacting the business of the country *in Parliament*, as was formerly the case, the Whigs have appointed Commissions for everything, and have turned the House of Commons into a mere arena for never-ending wranglings about Ireland, as though Her Majesty had no subjects save Irishmen, and as if the *reformed* House of Commons was composed of men who were incapable of legislating upon any subject without the aid of Commissioners. This has proved to the nation a very expensive, and to the Whigs a ruinous evil.

These observations are necessary, as introductory to the progress of my argument to prove that the Whig Government *are totally ignorant of the condition and character of the working people*. It is a fact, Sir, that the plan adopted by them to obtain national and local knowledge, has, unhappily for themselves, been the means of deluding, betraying, and destroying them. The Whig Government have been deceived by their own well-paid servants—I mean, by their own Commissioners! For some reason or other, Commissioners have dared to suppress information, and to make their reports as unlike the truth, as water is unlike fire! Under what influence the Commissioners have dared thus to deceive their employers, it is not my business to inquire. *The fact is as I have stated!*—The consequence is, that the working people have been misunderstood by the Whig Government, and laws have been passed, “to which Englishmen cannot, and Christians ought not, to submit.” These are not my words, they are those of a right reverend prelate, spoken in my hearing, in the House of Lords.

I am aware, that a more serious charge cannot be made against any set of men, than that which I have charged against these Commissioners. I know the heinous nature of their crimes—they have deceived the Government which confided the most important trust to their hands—they have received the wages of the nation, and have betrayed the people and the Government! I am aware also of the risk I am running by their exposure; but nothing shall scare me from doing my duty. The wretches who have thus pocketed the wages of iniquity, may rank and mingle with your “order”—they may, for aught I know or care, still wear the wigs and gowns, and possess the diploma which they disgrace—they may associate with nobles, and be counted, by them, “respectable”; but I know, that amongst the working people they would be despised, and “sent to Coventry.” Such men would, amongst labourers and artisans, meet with their deserts. Shield them as you may amongst your “order,” the “workies” would scorn to keep such company; and in the *Fleet Papers* they shall take their proper place, being ranked with swindlers, thieves, and traitors.

Granted, if I fail in the proof of their villany, my words are vain and sinful—I should then deserve the punishment which their crimes, as I think, have merited. Hear me. Read, with thoughtfulness and patience, the following facts, then say, do I traduce the Whigs or their Commissioners? Say, is it not needful that some one should expose such wickedness and fraud, and warn the forthcoming Government from employing such dishonest instruments—from falling into such a snare?

Before the House of Commons was *reformed*, many years had been occupied

in discussing the factory question? the simple question of whether it was right to work little boys and girls in the mills, longer than from six o'clock in the morning to six o'clock in the evening, allowing them two hours for meals—that being a much longer period of labour than the adult slaves were allowed to be worked in the Crown colonies, or the convicts on the hulks. Four different Parliamentary Select Committees had investigated the *pros.* and *cons.* of that subject. The late noble-minded, philanthropic Nathaniel Gould, of Manchester, had expended more than ten thousand pounds in illuminating the two Houses—the late Sir Robert Peel had laid before them the result of his forty years factory experience—that eloquent and indefatigable Patriot of immortal memory, Michael Thomas Sadler, had poured into the ears of his auditors the thunder of his alarming and persuasive eloquence, deprecating (even *before* the parliamentary investigation over which he so ably presided was resolved upon,) any further inquiry as a waste of time and money!

The reformed House of Commons, being thus provided with information, and overwhelmed with facts, and being, moreover, supposed to be composed of enlightened and *practical* Statesmen, conversant with the wants and wishes of the people, were expected, without delay, at once to finish the business, which had already gone through so many investigations, and occupied so much of the attention and time of the legislature. If there ever was a subject which had been thoroughly investigated, it was the factory question.

Sadler was not counted worthy of a seat in the reformed House!—his mantle fell upon Lord Ashley. That noble and excellent youth, backed by the prayers of thousands, moved the Ten Hours' Factories Regulation Bill, in the hope of settling the long-pending question. Many persons expected that the new *practical* legislators would assist his Lordship, and that, with their aid, a good, safe, and efficient Factories Ten Hours' Law would be immediately passed. But *no*—the new members pretended to be more ignorant than the old ones, and further inquiry was demanded! But mark the difference. The former inquiries had been conducted before Select Committees of both Houses; in those Committees it was impossible that the Reports could be altered, fabricated, or, in any way, misrepresented. There, the witnesses came fairly before their friends and foes, and what they said was faithfully recorded and correctly reported. That open, straightforward, and manly sort of investigation, by no means suited our modern *practical* and enlightened men. They must have an examination of a different sort. A commission was demanded and obtained—in order, as they said, that everything might be seen and examined, and that thus a faithful Report should be made. How plausible the theory!—but, oh! how villainous the practice! Whig tools—Whig hangers on—Whig electioneering agents—Whig newspaper pufflers, were all wanting places—so Commissions were in great request. A false report of what was seen and heard was required, in order to deceive the Government. The *practical* men (*i. e.* mill-owners) knew that deceit could not be practised in Parliamentary Select Committees; they hoped to succeed, and they did succeed, by the Commission!

In spite of Lord Ashley's remonstrance, of the anxiety of hundreds of thousands of the factory workers, and of the simple nature of the question to be decided, a Royal Commission was appointed, composed of fifteen Commissioners

and one Secretary; each Commissioner was allowed 200*l.* and his *actual* travelling expenses—the Secretary was bargained for, at 200*l.* They were appointed and commanded by the King, as the Royal Commission, dated April 19, 1833, states, in the following terms:—

“Now know ye, that we, *reposing especial trust and confidence in your wisdom, discretion, and fidelity*, have nominated, constituted, and appointed, and by these presents do nominate, constitute, and appoint you, the said [*here follow the names*], to be Our Commissioners for collecting information in the manufacturing districts of Great Britain, as to the employment of children in factories, and as to the propriety and means of curtailing the hours of their labour; and we do hereby enjoin you, or any one or more of you, particularly to inquire into the actual state and condition of such children, and as to the effects of such employment, both with regard to their morals and their bodily health; and also to inquire in what respects the laws made for the protection of such children have been found to be insufficient for such purpose, and what further provisions may be necessary for their protection. * * * And our further will and pleasure is, that you do, with the utmost possible dispatch that may be consistent with the due discharge of the duties hereby imposed upon you, *certify to us under your hands and seals, or under the hands and seals of any three or more of you, your several proceedings in the premises.*”

Perhaps there never was a more *plausible* scheme than this one. If the parties had been sincere, and if the required information had not already been given, there never was a more interesting, a more Christian-like appointment. The King was employing his “trustworthy and well-beloved” servants to inquire into the condition, with a view to its amelioration, of the most interesting, the most defenceless, and the most cruelly-oppressed portion of his subjects—the infant slaves in the factories! If it were possible that *Whig Commissioners* could have hearts and feelings, one would suppose that, being sent by the King on such a God-like errand, those who were thus employed, one and all, would have been bound, by every tie of nature, of religion, and of responsible obligation, to be faithful under such a trust! As we proceed with the facts, we shall see how the King was deceived and betrayed, and how the children were sacrificed! And we shall thus find one reason why the Whig Government is now detested by the working people.

I fear, Sir, that this investigation will be tiresome—it is, however, needful; you must therefore, for your own sake, exercise patience.

We shall not have proceeded far, before we discover, that the very same men who are *now* seeking the destruction of “your order,” were *then* the betrayers of the King, the deluders of his Ministers, and the sacrificers of the factory children.

The Commissioners divided themselves into two classes—the stationary or central, and the itinerant or district Commissioners. The first was composed of three, who, with the Secretary, remained in London; the second was composed of twelve, who were subdivided into threes, and each had districts appointed to them. The *District Commissioners* reported their proceedings to the *Central Commissioners*, whose business appears to have been the classifying and arranging—or rather, as it afterwards turned out, falsifying—the several reports before they were presented to His Majesty.

Was ever anything, seemingly, better arranged, and, apparently, more likely to produce a happy result? Human ingenuity could not invent a more *plausible* scheme. Remember, Sir, that it was essentially a Whig-move—do not forget

that the parties who thought that they had an interest in deceiving the Government, had much influence in the House of Commons, and were possessed of great wealth. They were that portion of the mill-owners who were for "free trade in the blood and bones of factory children"—being the self-same men who now demand a "free trade in corn!"—It should never be forgotten, that the "free trade" theory has reference to the *bodies*, as well as the *food* of the labourers.

I have told you how the Commissioners were divided. Those in the *districts* were supposed to be *managable* by the resident mill-owners, who plied them with civilities—with dinners and feasts of the best and costliest kinds. What other means they used, I know not; but I do know, that they are a very wealthy set of men, who are not *squeamish*, who have no qualms of conscience, and who stop at nothing to gain their ends. It would seem, however, from the sequel, that some of the *District* Commissioners, despite the intrigues of the resident "free-trade" mill-masters, maintained their principles of honesty, and reported faithfully to the Central Board.

Do you suppose that the factory masters have no diplomatic skill? Then you mistake. They soon discovered that it was much easier to corrupt three than twelve; and they immediately appointed Commissioners of their own, who repaired to London, and put themselves in communication with the Central Factory Commission, and with the King's Government. How this "bit of a Parliament" of "free-trade" factory masters contrived to ear-wig the Whig Government, and to tamper with the King's Central Commission—persuading the former to adopt an "impracticable" law, and the latter to falsify their report in such a way as to chime in with the will of the Factory Masters' Commission, and the determination of the Government—I cannot tell. How many votes were promised to one party, how many sovereigns were given to the other, I know not. Those things I leave you to guess—it is enough that I prove that deceit and fraud were practised upon the King and his Ministers, by the Royal Commissioners. It is possible that the sly, cunning, and clever "free-traders" might persuade the Whig Government that their proposal was wise, the wisest and the best; and that thus the Whig Ministers were the innocent dupes of the crafty mill-owners; but it is not possible that the *Central* Commissioners could ignorantly alter and suppress the reports of their brother Commissioners in the *districts*.

It would have been natural to suppose, that the Secretary, being in London, would have been fully engaged in arranging and preparing the Reports of the District Commissioners, in correcting the press, &c. The position into which the *Central* Commission was thrown, by its connexion with the mill-owners' "bit of a Parliament," demanded other work from him. It was needful that the public should be gulled, as well as the King and his Ministers; and so the Reports were got up "any how," and were printed most carelessly—the *Secretary of the Royal Commission* being engaged in writing anonymous puffs in the newspapers in defence of the "impracticable" plan of the factory masters!

In order that you may be sure I make no mistake, and that it may be manifest that the "free-traders in blood" are the veritable "free-traders in corn"—in other words, that the oppressors of the factory children are the enemies of the aristocracy—*ergo*, that you, the aristocracy, and my poor "subjects,"

the factory children, are, as I have often told you, "in the same boat," I will give you the names of "the Committee of Master Cotton-Spinners," copied from their "Resolutions," when they were "assembled at the Union Hotel, London, June 18, 1838." They are as follows:—

"For Manchester	{	HOLLAND HOOLE, <i>Chairman.</i>
	{	R. HYDE GREGG.
— Ashton-under-Line and Duckinfield	{	SAMUEL ROBINSON.
	{	JAMES KENWORTHY.
— Bolton		EDMUND ASHWORTH.
— Oldham	{	JONATHAN HAGUE.
	{	JAMES WRIGHT.
— Blackburn	{	JOHN FOSTER.
	{	JOHN HOUGHTON.
— Rochdale	{	ABRAHAM BRIERLEY.
	{	JAMES SCHOFIELD.
— Preston	{	WILLIAM PRESTON.
	{	J. CANTON.
— Belfast		ANDREW MULLHOLLAND.
— Bury		WILLIAM WALKER."

I am acquainted with some of these persons, and I know that they are now very active members of the Anti-Corn-Law-League. You will hear about them further on, from one of the *District Commissioners*.

It is now time to prove what I have asserted: and I beg that you will charge your memory with all the crimes which I have brought against the parties, it would be a waste of space and time to repeat them. If I fail in proving *all* that I have asserted, then let the disgrace of a slanderer be my portion.

I shall only produce one witness, but he shall be above suspicion. He is thus accredited by King William the Fourth:—

"Our trusty and well-beloved, know ye, that we, reposing especial trust and confidence in your wisdom, discretion, and fidelity, have nominated, constituted, and appointed, and by these presents do nominate, constitute, and appoint you, the said JAMES STUART, Esquire, to be our Commissioner."

If, from the testimony of such a witness, I establish *all* that I have asserted, then, Sir, I claim your credence, and the credence of all my readers; and I leave the Whig Government and their Commissioners, and the "blood and corn free-trading" cotton-spinners, to the odium which their folly and their crimes have merited.

Bearing in mind all that I have said, read the following extracts from the pen of "the trusty and well-beloved JAMES STUART, Esquire," one of the Factory Commissioners; and as you read, I particularly request that you will observe how pointedly and effectively he proves every charge which I have brought against the Government, the Commissioners, and the "bit of a Parliament" of mill-owners. They are addressed by Mr. Stuart to "our trusty and well-beloved JOHN WILSON, Esquire," the Secretary to the Factory Commission. They are public property, having been inserted in the newspapers. I shall take the extracts in the order of their dates, and leave them to speak for me, without note or comment. Speaking of the Report of the Factory Commissioners, he says,

"No. 1, Park Row, Knightsbridge, July 29, 1838.

"There have been *material omissions*, in selecting for the press the documentary evidence transmitted by me."

"I do not know, never until now having been consulted on the subject of these Reports, why the answers of the mill-owners of the United Kingdom to the various queries of the Central Board, were not engrossed in it."

"I am next to call your attention to another not less material omission in printing my letter of May 14, from Dundee. After the paragraph ending with the word 'London,' my letter contains the following passage, which has been entirely left out in your printed edition of it."—[Here follows more than half a page of close printing.]

"I have further to mention, that you have entirely omitted, in the report of my evidence, my letter of the 4th of May, which ought to have been inserted."

"There are, I observe, numerous typographical errors in that part of the evidence sent by me."

"I cannot suppose that Lord Melbourne could have required the District Commissioners to frame such reports, had he not intended that, in preparing the general report, some attention should be paid to them, and to the suggestions contained in them—the recommendations adopted, where sufficient reasons were shown, and ground stated for rejection, where such seemed the fittest course. This line of proceeding has not been followed; and the general recommendation of the Central Commissioners, or, properly speaking, of the Commissioners in London, is DIRECTLY OPPOSED to the opinion and advice of several of the Commissioners, as well as of myself, in whose views and observations little or no consideration seems to have been given by the Commissioners in London. Mr. Cowell told me, the other day, that he, who was one of the Commissioners in Lancashire and at Manchester, was certain that the plan of the Central Board could not be carried into effect, in the district, certainly one of the most important in the kingdom, which he visited. I cannot discover, from the terms of the general report, that the Commissioners of the Central Board had PAID ANY ATTENTION to what, I am persuaded, are the MOST ESSENTIAL PARTS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS of the District Commissioners, especially of myself, relative to the wet-spinning of flax, and the web-dressing in powerloom weaving factories, employments obviously attended with imminent danger to the health of young people."

"The course which has been pursued seems to me the most unsatisfactory that could well be devised."

"I of course abstained from all communication of my sentiments, when I observed it authoritatively stated in your Report, that the three gentlemen subscribing it had been directed by the Secretary of State of the Home Department, to state any opinions or recommendations formed on the whole of the evidence; all mention of the opinions or recommendations of the TWELVE Commissioners who had INSPECTED THE FACTORIES being entirely omitted."

"July 31st.—Now I pray you to notice, that my former letter, though specifying one very remarkable error of the press, relates almost entirely to palpable omissions, one of which, consisting of a page and a half of a letter, could not have happened without special directions."

"I returned my evidence at the appointed time, with various corrections—none of them were adopted, although the Report did not appear till ten days afterwards."

"I submit, with perfect confidence, that no part of your duty was so clear and plain as that which bound you that your Report, which was expected to be the groundwork of Parliamentary legislation, should convey full and impartial details, whatever might be the tendency of the evidence, of the whole depositions and reports communicated by the District Commissioners."

"The Central Board do, therefore, even now, it is obvious, maintain the right to withhold, until after the period had expired during which they had reason to expect it was to be of my use, what I maintain to be the most material evidence which they could procure on the subject of their own recommendation."

"I do not attach, I am bound to say, the slightest value to the minute of a meeting of deputies from the principal seats of the cotton manufacture, of which you have sent me a printed copy. I do not know how many manufacturers attended this meeting; but I have reason to believe, that only one manufacturer from Scotland, except the gentlemen in Parliament, was present, viz. Mr. Haldenorth, of Glasgow. He has told me since the meeting, that he gave his approval to the measure, BECAUSE HE KNEW IT TO BE IMPRACTICABLE."

"But, if you are to be influenced by the opinions of the master spinners assembled at Palace Yard, you should, I apprehend, give fair notice of your intention; so that the population of the factories, and especially the younger population, may have their representatives at this SITTING OF A PARLIAMENT, TO WHOM WISHES YOU ARE NOW PAYING SO MUCH DEFERENCE. Many of the great

master spinners are said to be anxious to put down the small establishments in the country. Your recommendation, if carried into effect, would, of course, be attended with this, to them, beneficial result. And so far, they, or some of them, may give it their approbation."

"August 3rd.—I have pointed out great, extensive, and palpable omissions, and shown that the Central Board have, in their general Report, omitted all reference to the evidence unfavourable to their recommendation."

"With remarkable inconsistency, you, who now deprecate written discussion, even with the Commissioners, have all along shown yourself so sensitive to the remarks of the public press, that neither the labour, nor the time thus lost to you in preparing the Report, could deter you again and again and again from writing and conveying to the journals, articles in defence of your proceedings, sometimes publicly authorized by you, but more frequently anonymous, of the correctness of one of which, in point of fact, I had occasion to write to you from Glasgow."

"The recommendation of the Central Board is not only unsupported by, but is in direct opposition to, the valuable part of the written evidence. For what intelligible purpose were a dozen of individuals dispatched on different routes through the manufacturing districts of England, Scotland, and part of Ireland, if no deference nor attention were to be paid to their opinions, deliberately formed, after inspecting the factories, and becoming acquainted with the state of the population in point of numbers, health, food, and other comforts, education, and morals? THE REPORT OF THE FACTORY COMMISSIONERS IS NO MORE THE REPORT OF THE TWELVE PERSONS APPOINTED TO SEE THINGS WITH THEIR OWN EYES, AND TO REPORT THEIR OBSERVATIONS ON THEM, THAN OF ANY TWELVE GENTLEMEN WHOM ONE MAY BY CHANCE MEET IN SAINT PAUL'S CHURCHYARD. IT IS THE REPORT OF THREE GENTLEMEN RESIDING IN LONDON, WHO, FOR AUGHT THAT APPEARS IN THE REPORTS, NEVER VISITED A COTTON FACTORY IN THEIR LIVES."

The Whigs are now paying dearly for thus imposing on the King and robbing the people, to feed and pamper these hungry commissioned rogues. Their Report, which cost the country about 6,000*l.*, and which laid the foundation for an "impracticable" act of parliament, was, on the showing of one of themselves, A WILFUL LIE!!!

Would you believe it, Sir?—but whether you credit it or not, it is true—the "practical" novices in the reformed House placed more reliance on that FALSE Report, than on the four Reports of the Select Parliamentary Committees! The consequence is, that the factory people have been ever since teased with the "impracticable" Act, and, after all, the work is to do over again; and all that the friends of the factory children ever asked for must now be granted—a plain, simple, and effective Ten Hours' Factories Act! What extravagant dolts these "economical" Whig wise-acres have proved themselves to be!

Next week, I will say a few words on "the Hand-loom Weavers' Commission;" and I mistake, if I shall not prove that it was a Commission to please the "free-traders," by finding an excuse to introduce foreign corn without duty, and to make out a case for the introducing of the new "free-trade" theories, instead of saving the poor weavers from the gripe of their oppressors, the "free-traders."

Oh! these Anti-Corn-Law-Leaguers are a cunning and a cruel race! If they cannot be restrained, your estates are not worth ten years purchase. They have hunted me to this Cell; and, because *you* are their dupe,

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—For Lord Ashley's progress in the North, see the Cover.—R.O.

ERRATA.—In last number (33), page 261, line 35 from top, for "has," read "have."—Page 263, line 27, for "contain," read "certain."

where, in order to find support for herself and her family, she was doomed to toil for twelve hours a day in an upright position, which she had not strength to support; whilst her child was deprived of its natural protector, and of her who alone could administer to its wants, and after being dandled for hours in the arms of its idle father—necessarily, but not willfully idle—was carried to the mill, to labour from her that support which she would gladly give if she could. (Hear, hear, and cries of shame.) The Ten Hours' Bill would, if it accomplished nothing else, give the mother two hours more for her duties at home. The present system reversed the order of Providence; it turned man to woman, and woman to man—it placed them in the way to produce an offspring, but neglected to provide the means for bringing them up. His Lordship went into statements as to the religious and moral education which ought to be provided for the factory children. What, that was useful, could the children be taught, either in the way of domestic duties or otherwise, while they were confined as at present? He had learnt recently in a Sunday School, while inquiring as to the absence of the scholars in the factories, that several of the girls were kept away by their mothers, in order that they might learn to cook. It was unnatural that children should be deprived from receiving their early lessons from their mothers. In Lancashire, parents were manufactured in infancy by the earnings of their children—a reversal of the order of nature, by which they were taught that it was the duty of the parents to lay up for the children, and not the children for the parents. (Hear, hear.) From the official returns laid before Parliament of the number of deaths in the manufacturing districts, it was shown, that there were as many died under twenty years of age as under forty in any other part of the country. (Hear, hear.) The scheme he proposed had no political object; they could raise on neutral ground for the purpose of carrying out a great national question. His own political opinions were 'Blue,' or Conservative; but his Conservatism taught him to look upon station and property as not given to him for himself alone, but as a trust reposed in him for the benefit of his fellow-men; and if station and property were not thus used, he would say, let station and property go down to the working classes. (Hear, hear, hear.) The noble Lord proceeded at length into an analysis of the intended Bill which it was his intention to lay before the House of Commons at the earliest opportunity, and in the preliminary inquiries in which that measure had originated—the Report of the Committee on the Factory Question which he had moved for, and whose labours had been drawn to a close by the dissolution of Parliament. The first of these was, that it would be advisable to extend the protected age from 15 to 17 years—that was, that part of them from thirteen years of age up to twenty-one should not work more than a prescribed number of hours per day; and that the master should have no power to compel the making up of lost time by accidents to machinery—a power which had been greatly abused. (Hear, hear.) The number of hours would be altered; at present the mill might be set a-going at half-past five in the morning and continued running till half-past eight at night, a period of fifteen hours, out of which the master, deducting two hours for meals, could work the hands twelve hours; but this made the 'factory day,' as it was called, fifteen hours long. It had been proposed to limit the hours of running from six to eight—a period of fourteen hours. But he intended to propose an amendment on this clause, and to engraft on it a limitation to ten hours. Then mills would be opened at seven in the morning, and closed at seven in the evening, which, with two hours for refreshment, would leave ten hours for work—as much as any employer had a right to ask, and as much as the labourer ought to give. The advantages of this to the children would be, that they would not have to leave their beds in winter so early as half-past four or five. With regard to accident in mills, there were degrees of difference, from the slight laceration to the loss of life and limb. (Hear.) There was a difference also between the poor and the rich; one might live as usual after losing a finger or an arm, while the other it would deprive of the means of obtaining a livelihood; and the neglect of fencing off the machinery might be punished. (Hear, hear.) He mentioned the case of a young woman at Stockport, twenty years of age, who was caught by the machinery in a mill in which she worked, and, after being whirled round, was dashed to the ground, with her ankles dislocated, and her thighs broken. He would not say all that he had heard about her employer, though it might be well enough known; but this he would state, that her wages were due on the Wednesday, and the accident happened on Tuesday. It might be supposed that he paid her her wages, and several weeks in advance, to support her under her distressing circumstances—(hear, hear); but did he do so? No; he calculated what the time would come to from the accident to her wages being due, and deducted eighteen pence from her earnings. He (Lord Ashley) knew that the principle of the law was favourable to the workman; and, determined to show that it was so, he instituted a prosecution against the factory owner, and he had the pleasure of recovering for that poor girl 100*l.* damages; besides which, the man who refused 4*s.* to box his machinery off, had all the expenses on both sides to pay, amounting in all to nearly 600*l.* (Cheers.) It was now proposed that it should be enacted by law, that all machinery should be fenced or boxed off, or raised so as to prevent injury; if this were neglected, it was the duty of the Inspector to see that it was done, or to subject the offender to heavy penalties. (Hear, hear, hear.) If any man were to refuse to do this, and an accident were to occur from it, it was proposed to make it the duty of the Inspector to bring the subject, not before the magistrates, but before the judges of the land, and to prefer a bill of indictment before a jury of his countrymen; to pay the expenses out of the Government funds, and to give the penalty, whatever might be the amount recovered, to the injured party. (Hear, hear, and loud cheers.) He had called this novel legislation, and it was so; but it was only an earnest of what they would yet get. He then called attention to the friends by whom he had been assisted in his endeavours, and enumerated Mr. Sadler, Mr. Oastler, Mr. B. Jewell, the Rev. G. S. Bull, Mr. John Wood, of Bradford, and Mr. W. Walker, of the same place; and amongst those Members of Parliament whom he had ever found sincere friends of the working classes, he mentioned the names of Mr. John Fildes, of Oldham, Mr. Brotherton, of Salford, and Mr. Hindley, of Ashton—men who, though differing with him in politics, he admired and respected. His Lordship concluded by expressing his most ardent wish that the time would speedily arrive when the mutual interests of master and man should be fully recognized. As an apt illustration of the state of things which he would fain see realised, he would refer them to an older and remote age, the times of pastoral simplicity, as recorded in that inimitable Book, the Book of Ruth. The scene to which he would particularly draw

their attention was that in which Boaz, in the joyful season of harvest, was described as entering his fields in the morning, and addressing his reapers with the salutation, 'The Lord be with you;' and they, as answering in the same spirit of hearty affection and good-will, 'The Lord bless thee,' (Enthusiastic cheering.) His Lordship's hope and belief was, that the passing of the Ten Hour Factory Bill would be an incalculable blessing to the working classes in the manufacturing districts, and a prelude to other healing and beneficent measures. His Lordship returned thanks for the patient kindness with which he had been heard, and retired amidst great cheers.

"A deputation from the Bradford Short-Time Committee then presented to the noble Lord the following address, which was read by the Secretary, Mr. Balme:—

"To the Right Honourable Lord Viscount Ashley, M.P., &c.

"MY LORD,—The Bradford Short-Time Committee having received information of the intention of your Lordship to visit this town, deem it their duty not to allow the opportunity to escape, of acknowledging their obligations to your Lordship, and presenting an assurance of their grateful remembrance of the important services your Lordship has rendered to the cause of humanity generally, but especially to the factory operatives of the United Kingdom.

"We rejoice in recollecting, that at a period when the wrongs of factory children were imperfectly understood, and comparatively disregarded by the legislature, and when few could be found to advocate their claims, your Lordship exhibited that intensity of Christian sympathy, which prompted your Lordship to undertake the responsible and difficult design of rescuing from oppression and cruelty the hapless offspring of poverty. The design has been partly executed; some amelioration has taken place; but we anxiously look to your Lordship as the means of securing another achievement, namely, the obtaining of that just and necessary decree, that no person under twenty-one years of age shall be confined in factory labour longer than ten hours per day. Such a regulation, we humbly submit, is absolutely essential to the health and comfort of the industrial community, being at once the just and satisfactory period of labour. Daily experience convinces us also, that it would greatly contribute to our manufacturing stability.

"We would further express our admiration and thankfulness for the recent avowal of your Lordship, that whatever party may be predominant in the state and government of the nation, no circumstance will induce a relaxation of your Lordship's generous endeavours and disinterested zeal in demanding the removal of those heavy burthens from our youthful factory population which, while they are yet too heavy for them to bear, prove that they are a reproach, and are therefore not to be tolerated in a civilized country.

"Trusting that the Great Ruler of the universe may be your Lordship's constant guide and guardian, we have the honour to remain, my Lord, with the highest regard, your Lordship's most obedient and humble servants,

"For the Short-Time Committee,

"Bradford, August 3, 1841.

"MATTHEW BALME, Secretary.

"Mr. Anty, another of the deputation, assured the noble Lord, that the Bradford Committee were at their post, and ready to act in unison with the friends of the factory children; persuaded that the only effective remedy for the evils now on all hands admitted was a *bonâ fide* Ten Hour Bill.

"The noble Lord then rose and proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman for his conduct in the chair; which motion was seconded by Mr. B. Sadler, who feelingly adverted to the labours of his lamented brother, and expressed his own hearty concurrence in the sentiments, and his admiration of the benevolent efforts of the noble Lord.

"Mr. W. Walker, of Bradford, also spoke to the same effect. He was connected with factories, and had a deep interest in them, yet he most heartily echoed the sentiments of Lord Ashley, assured that the welfare of *all*—the children, the masters, the public—were wound up in the success of a Ten Hour Bill. The cause had slept some little time, but only slept; its friends were again alive to the vast importance of their principles and their duties; and success, complete success, would sooner or later be the result.

"The Chairman returned thanks, and the meeting terminated at eleven o'clock. The auditors were all as highly delighted as deeply impressed. Lord Ashley, indeed, by his noble bearing, and the benevolence of his views, won all hearts.

"Yesterday morning, a deputation from the Leeds Short-Time Committee waited upon the noble Lord at his hotel, and were most kindly received. They stated that their opinions in favour of a Ten Hour Bill had undergone no change. They informed his Lordship, that the agitation of the Ten Hour Factory Bill had been of the most essential service to the working classes themselves; for it had opened up to their view the whole question of *labour and capital*; and they had attentively considered the subject, thought deeply upon it, and arrived at conclusions which they deemed just, because they were based upon first principles. The result of those inquiries were, that they were satisfied that the only mode of saving this country, and rescuing the people from their present misery and degradation, was by giving a new direction to the industry of the producers, by getting them upon the *LAND*—to produce a 'big loaf' and a 'cheap loaf' for themselves.

"Lord Ashley said he should be glad to aid them with all his might in every legitimate object. The welfare of the working classes was near his heart; the best interests of the state were involved in it; and while he lived he should pursue his course without respect of persons or party.

"His Lordship left Leeds yesterday, for London, having indispensable engagements. It was his wish to have visited Bradford, Dewsbury, and other places, but he had not time. We hear that he will return hither at the latter end of the present month."—*Leeds Intelligencer*, Aug. 7, 1841.

THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY

JOHN PAVEY, 47, HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND,

AND

BENJAMIN STEILL, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. OASTLER is "At Home" on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.—Mr. Oastler's health requires that he should entirely refrain from receiving the visits of his friends on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

A. B., Stockport, asks, "Will the Whig Ministers resign?" Not until they are forced. They still cling to the hope that the people will once more rally round them; delusion and alarm will be their weapons. Religion is enlisted to delude their friends, threats are expected to excite the fears of the Conservatives. The Manchester Convention of prayerless* Dissenting Ministers will attempt to cloak the villany of the Whigs under the garb of piety, and to carry the fire of discontent in every nook and corner of the land. The debate on the Address will afford Ministers the opportunity of providing matches and firebrands, which, uniting with the religious fervour kindled by the Dissenting Ministers in their different localities, are expected to cause such an excitement as was the Reform mania. Then it is hoped that public meetings will be held during the fringy of the people—that the Queen will be petitioned to dissolve Parliament—and thus the Whigs hope to retain office. That they will be deceived, the common-sense of the people of England, of which the Whigs know nothing, is a guarantee. It is whispered, that, even should they be disappointed, "they will cling," to use their own phrase, "to the Queen." It has been surmised, that such is their influence over the mind of Her Majesty, that, at all events, a Conservative Government will never enjoy her confidence. If so, strange times are at hand—woful events may be the consequence of the adhesive quality of the Whigs. It is well that the Constitution is stronger than they are. Impeachment should follow their unconditional proceedings. Some persons, who pretend to much political foresight, aver, that the New Poor Law advocates of both parties will unite, and form a Government which will trust to force, in establishing the authority of the three Poor Law Commissioners. If so, it does not require the gift of prophecy to foretell the result.

J. LUSTREY, 58, Frith Street, Soho, on deaths by starvation, will be inserted, if he will introduce a paragraph explaining the remedy which he proposes.

T. G. London.—The fact mentioned respecting the preference given to the Irish in the Royal Police, is very important, but it requires confirmation.

JAMES BROADBENT, Ashton-under-Line, will be pleased to accept Mr. Oastler's thanks. His communication will be useful.

A Friend, HOLT, is thanked. He will excuse the insertion of the exposure of the indecent vendors of the New Poor Law monster at the Union-house, Dowham Market.

Complaints have been made to Mr. Oastler, that, in some places, the readers of the *Fleet Papers* have been told, that they could not have the Portraits of Mr. Thornhill without paying for them. Mr. Oastler assures his friends everywhere, that if more than twopence is demanded for the *Fleet Paper* and the Portrait, IT IS AN IMPOSITION. In all cases, the Portrait is issued from his Publisher GRATIS.

WILLIAM DODD, the Factory Cripple, returns thanks to G. C., Westminster, for 2s. 6d., and also to W. A., Esq., London, for 5s.

* The refusal of the Dissenting Ministers to offer up a prayer before they entered upon the promulgation of the Act, reminded me of a circumstance, which, on the showing of one of the best born & best bred young men, justly termed *ORIGINEE* in his PUL. When I was a very little boy, I asked the late Reverend Thomas Legation, English Minister, of Leeds, "What is Sin?" That holy and devout servant of God replied—"Sinners, were you are about to say or do anything upon a *Lord* you cannot ask God's blessing, you may as well say that it is Sin."

These prayerless men have proved, that they will despise the blessing of God, thence they betray the Whigs and the Anti-Care-Law Factory Tyrants! They call themselves Christian Ministers, and reject the Lord's Prayer!—R. O.

NOTICES OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

"The FLEET PAPERS, No. 32.—For some time we have refrained from noticing at great length the weekly missives against oppression and injustice that issue from the 'Prisoner in the Fleet,' not because there was not in each of them matter sufficiently worthy of notice, but because the demands upon our space have been so very urgent and pressing as to preclude the possibility of our doing more in this way than we have done. This week, however, we purpose to make amends to our readers for any 'shortenings' we may have been guilty of, by presenting them with copious extracts from the 'Little Fleece' published this day. The number contains, as every reader of the *Star* will expect, an account of the journey Mr. Oastler lately had to York, at Mr. Thornhill's expense. It thus opens:— * * * ."—*Northern Star*, August 7, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS, No. 32. London. John Pavey.—Since the appearance of these interesting Papers, their venerable author has been entertained with a trip into his own dear Yorkshire, of which he gives the following graphic description. The Papers are addressed to Mr. Oastler's late master, Thomas Thornhill, Esq., at whose instance he occupies an apartment in the Fleet Prison:— * * * ."—*Sheffield Iris*, August 10, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS for July. London, Pavey, Holywell Street, Strand.—These interesting Papers increase in value as they progress. The number for July 31 is a highly important one; for Mr. Oastler points out what he conceives to be the true policy of a Conservative Government; and we agree in much that he says. Of one thing there can be no doubt, that the Whigs have woefully mistaken the character of the English people, and that, unless the new ministry entirely change the policy of the Government as far as the great bulk of the community, the working classes, are concerned, there can be but little chance of happiness or prosperity for the country. Mr. Oastler expresses his fear, 'that the leader of the Tory party is also totally ignorant of the wants, the condition, and the prejudices of the working classes.' He says,— * * * "

"We never heard that Sir Robert Peel was thus insensible to the working classes; and we think there is some mistake upon the subject. To the wrong-headed Chartists, Sir Robert may have declined to grant an interview; but, unless our memory deceives us, we have read accounts of interviews between that statesman and deputations from the labouring men. At all events, a minister ought to make himself acquainted with the feelings and opinions of that class who have been 'maligned, traduced, misrepresented, and insulted' by Whig-Radical Commissioners, and 'oppressed' by a Whig-Radical Government; and who look to the Conservatives for justice and redress. . . . Mr. Oastler says, speaking of the working classes,— * * * "

"Yes, such they are, till Whig-Radical or Chartist, or Socialist principles, warp them from their religious, their social, and their domestic duty. Such a people should not have the Poor Law applied to them. They should be dealt with with kindness, and treated as men, not as beings of a lower order. We know the Conservative party will so treat them; and we trust the Conservative leaders will legislate for them in an English and Christian spirit, and at once and for ever discard the vain and presumptuous dogmas which infidel philosophers, in their 'reasoning pride,' have thrust upon their country; and which a Whig-Radical, latitudinarian Government has been foolish and unprincipled enough to adopt."—*Hull Packet*, August 13, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS, No. 33.—We submit the following excellent and well-timed remarks to the serious attention of our readers. However unpleasant the subject and the manner of handling it may appear to some parties, there is truth in it, and, we think, good sound honest common-sense. There must be a change in the Police System and Poor Law." * * * "
Shropshire Conservative, August 14, 1841.

"WILLIAM DODD.—This victim to the factory system, who has been made known to the public through Mr. Oastler's *Fleet Papers*, and by his own modestly-written memoir of his life of trials, visited Hull last week. He is completely disabled from following any employment that requires exertion; and unless he can get engaged as a porter at a lodge, or in some capacity that will not call him to exercise manual strength, or to walk any distance, a workhouse will be his only resource in the winter, as the sale of his books (which may be had in Hull) is not sufficient to support him. He can write tolerably with his left hand; and it would be an act of charity if any benevolent individual would give him occupation, to keep him from what he dreads—the poorhouse. He is perfectly unassuming in his manners and cannot be seen and conversed with, without exciting feelings of strong indignation at the system which has crushed him. . . . The factory masters should be compelled by law, if they will not do it voluntarily, to find subsistence for those who are disabled in their service as poor William Dodd has been."—*Hull Packet*, August 13, 1841.

The following letter, from a Spitalfields hand-loom weaver, is deserving the attention of the readers of the *Fleet Papers*. The author of these Papers is always delighted to afford working men an opportunity of speaking for themselves. The instances of sound sense which have been already exhibited by that "order" in the *Fleet Papers*, have conduced to make many an aristocrat alter his opinion respecting the working men of England. Many such have expressed their delight and surprise on perusing the *Fleet-Paper* productions of artisans.

"To Mr. Richard Oastler.

"June 10, 1841.

"Honoured Sir,—I am happy to say, that the perusal of your opinions on 'free-trade,' given in the *Fleet Papers*, have afforded me the highest gratification. They are, indeed, valuable and well-timed. Your arguments are clear and convincing, and must be so to every rea-

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Alar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."
"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."
"He shall judge the poor of the people. He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break
in pieces the oppressor."

Vol. I.—No. 33.

LONDON, SATURDAY, AUGUST 29, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—Oh! no, you mistake—I am not shut out from the world's society; I am only caged, that my friends may the more readily know where to find me. And, truly, their visits *here* are doubly refreshing.

I have just had two friends from Yorkshire—Mr. Rhodes, jun., from Clough House near Huddersfield, and Mr. Nichols, jun., from Wakefield; and right *True-Blues* they are. We have had the West Riding election talked over again. I am almost inclined to write another paper on the subject—perhaps, however, I should weary you; and therefore it shall suffice that I say, I was delighted to converse with them on that great triumph, after a battle in which I know that they both did their duty.

Mr. Rhodes gave me all the news about Huddersfield, and reminded me of a very interesting conversation which took place about four or five years ago, when he, myself, and his brother-in-law Mr. Wilson, banker, of Huddersfield, were, one evening, walking up to Fixby Hall from Clough House. My friend Wilson is a Whig free-trader, and was, of course, entirely opposed to my views, which he was contesting. Time has, however, settled the question, and proved that the steward was wiser than the banker. The latter was dreaming of national prosperity under the "enlightened and liberal" government of the benighted and tyrant Whigs; whilst I maintained, that dismay and ruin to the manufacturers, must inevitably be the result of working upon the visionary schemes and plans of the free-trade school. I endeavoured to prove, that we were financially, commercially, and agriculturally, in an *artificial* state; and that national ruin was inevitable, if we attempted to work out the theory of free-trade and *no protection*. My friend Rhodes, reminding me of that conversation, said, "I was talking to Mr. Wilson the other day, about what you then told us, when we both agreed that every word you had said was true, all that you told us then has come to pass, even to your assertion, 'that, in a few years, respectable merchants would be forced to give 20 to 25 per cent. per annum discount, for cash.'"—"Aye," said I, "and the time is not far distant, my friend, when the very men who have pursued me to this place—I mean the Malthusian Free-trade MAN-

facturers and Mr. Thornhill—will be glad to see persons of my principles in Parliament, to assist in saving them from ruin." Do not sneer and rail, Sir; I have already seen stiffer backs than yours broken, and we are now *hurrying* upon strange times, at a railroad speed.

About eight years ago, I was reasoning, upon the question of free-trade, with a manufacturer who was then supposed to be worth "half a million;" he was very angry with me—he railed and stormed most furiously against me. "Well," said I, "it is of no use that I should reason with you any more; you *have* lost your temper, you *will soon* lose your cash. You think yourself wise, and that I am a fool; time will settle our dispute. Suppose that, in ten years time, the prosperity of which you boast, under the approach to free-trade, should end in the Gazette, how then?—will you then confess that I am wiser than you?"—He looked and felt just as I dare say you will look and feel when you read this letter. But, Sir, he *has* become a bankrupt since I came here!

Now, Sir, do hear me, for the times are pressing. If a false philosophy should continue to be counted *wisdom*, and if landlords are resolved to separate their interests from their tenants and labourers, *in ten years, your rent-roll will be £nil, s. nil, d. nil*. Maybe, you are as unbelieving now, as were the banker and the manufacturer then; if so, keep this letter, that you may hereafter know if I have made a mistake.

The whole question is in a nut-shell. If the Queen is resolved to have her taxes—if the fund-holder is determined to receive his dividends—if the landlord intends to retain his rents—if the mortgagee will not forego his interest—if the farmer, the manufacturer, the merchant, or the shop-keeper, hopes to obtain his profits—if the artisan or labourer is resolved to have good wages, they must, one and all, have PROTECTION. To attempt to uphold their prosperity and the institutions of this country by the system of FREE-TRADE, is just as wise as it would be to attempt to grow wheat without sowing. Granted; free-trade may be painted in beautiful colours, but its *practice* is destruction. Do you not perceive that every attempt at its approach is an advance towards national bankruptcy?

Now, Sir, what is it that thus rewards industry with poverty, and makes England at once the *busiest* and most *destitute* place on earth? (I blush whilst I ask the question!—but, Sir, I repeat it,—Show me, if you can, a nation so industrious—tell me, too, where so many die of starvation!) It is Infidelity!—Philosophy, so called—which, to gratify the pride of man, releases him from the controul of God's law of *Proportion* and *Degree*—proving the truth of the immortal bard, who somewhere says,—

"Take but *Degree* away, untune that string,
And, hark, what discord follows! each thing meets
In mere oppugnancy."

"Then, everything includes itself in power,
Power into will,—will into appetite;
And appetite, an universal wolf,
So doubly seconded with will and power,
Must make perforce an universal prey,
And, last, eat up himself!"

Do you understand this, Sir? *Shakspeare* did; and so do the working men. It is a

dry, but a most useful subject. Some time, I hope to write you a letter or two about it. No stronger proof that we have abandoned the laws of *Proportion* and *Degree* need be given, than what is exhibited in the universally acknowledged fact, that we produce such an *abundance* of manufactured goods, that they are valueless; whilst the *limited* production of our food, has enhanced its price beyond the reach of the people. The only cure is, a return to the law of *proportioning* our products to the *degree* required by our demand for them; or, in our case, encouraging agriculture, and restraining manufacture.

Meanwhile, it is essential that you should satisfy yourself of the fact, that all the social miseries under which the inhabitants of this country groan, may be attributed to our adopting the principles of Infidelity, instead of those of Christianity. The latter, leave man unfettered as to the *increase* of population, saying, "increase and multiply," but reject the very thought of independence or freedom in our transactions with each other,—denounce competition, and bound all our operations by the command, "do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you." The principles of Infidelity, on the other hand, reject all restraint in our transactions between man and man, promote universal competition in the products of man's labour, and limit him only where God has given him freedom—in the matter of population. I have now, Sir, glanced at a subject which I shall, some day, enlarge upon.

I have wandered from the argument in my last letter, because circumstances were forced upon my attention which I could not, in justice to myself and you, pass unnoticed.—Now to the subject of Whig Commissions.

Oh yes, Sir, I must not forget those wicked and "commissioned," extravagant and unconstitutional engines of delusion and oppression. I hope to satisfy the Whigs themselves, that it is folly to trust any longer to such broken reeds. At all events, I cannot fail to enlighten the country gentlemen and the labourers, on a subject which is to them all-important, they having been the dupes of those expensive devices.

In my last, I am sure that I produced evidence to prove that the Royal *Factory* Commission was a mere instrument in the hands of the "bit of a Parliament" of cotton-manufacturers; but I did not tell you what was the "impracticable" nature of the plan recommended by the *Central* Commissioners, in defiance of the remonstrances of their brethren in the *districts*.

That truth, that *bloody* truth, I must, however, communicate. Every English mother will blush while I relate it—it should always be written in characters of blood! It was a cowardly and murderous scheme! Let it never be forgotten, that it was devised by the most efficient members of the Anti-Corn-Law-League, Hoole, Greg, Ashworth, & Co.

The bloody plot was, to kidnap, and then to sell the children of the agricultural poor (whom the free-traders impiously term "surplus") to the Anti-Corn-Law factory masters!! Those monsters had already worn out the children of the factory districts, killed them off, when they hit upon the migration scheme—that monstrous plan of thus working up your "surplus population!"

The chief agent who was employed in that work of death, was Dr. Kay, whose business it was to delude your poor neighbours into a belief, that the fac-

tories were paradises, although he had previously written a book to *prove* that they were hells! You will remember how I exposed the wickedness of that monster in a series of letters dated from your residence, Riddlesworth, in the neighbourhood of which he was then doing his bloody work. Let it never be forgotten, that the reformed Parliament *sanctioned* that scheme; that regular offices and officers for the buying and selling and transporting free-born Britons were established; and that thousands of the children of the poor agricultural labourers were thus consigned to a premature grave!!

I had the honour to obtain your censure for opposing that march of death. I produced the invoices of the slaves, containing their names, ages, and the prices and terms on which they were sold!—I exhibited the bodies of the slaves at public meetings in the North!—I proved how they had been sold, cheated, robbed, and murdered! England could not bear *that* shock, and the traffic in the bones, blood, and sinews of her children was abandoned!

Remember, Sir, that *that* stain upon her character was the invention of the free-traders. Did not I tell you, that the *bodies*, as well as the *food* of the poor, were involved in the free-trade question? Remember, also, that *that* national sin, was the fruit of a Royal Commission; and learn, with me, to denounce that unconstitutional and expensive mode of tyranny, delusion, and fraud.

The next fraudulent Commission to which I shall call your attention, is that appointed under the Royal Seal of Victoria, bearing date September 14, 1837,—

“To inquire into the condition of the unemployed hand-loom weavers in Our United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and for reporting whether any, and if so, what measures can be devised for their relief.”

Four persons were named in that Commission, with a Secretary, who were empowered, “with the consent of the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury, to appoint five Assistant Commissioners, or any greater number.” The number of Assistants was about twelve. How many thousand pounds were expended, I know not. The origin of this Commission differs very materially from that on the factories: the latter was appointed by the Whig Government, against the wish of Lord Ashley, the parliamentary champion of the factory children; the Hand-loom Weavers’ Commission was, on the contrary, appointed against the wish of the Government, at the instance of the parliamentary champion of the hand-loom weavers, John Maxwell, Esq. Mr. Maxwell is a sincere and honest Reformer, and seems to have been impressed with a conviction, that a Royal Commission was a better mode of obtaining information than a Parliamentary Select Committee. He had previously obtained a Select Committee, which had printed two large volumes of a Report, upon which he felt himself unable to compel the Government to adopt any proceedings, so he, no doubt, hoped that, by the additional evidence to be given before the Commissioners, he should be able to make out a case, which would force the Whig Government to adopt some measure of amelioration for the distressed, over-worked, famishing hand-loom weavers, numbering, with their families, 800,000 persons.

The Whig Government, being thus compelled to appoint this Commission, had no alternative but that of frustrating its object. How they succeeded, the

sequel will explain—remembering always, that the Queen had commanded her Commissioners thus :—

“ And Our will and pleasure is, that you, Our said Commissioners, or any three of you, do, with as little delay as may be consistent with a due discharge of the duties hereby imposed upon you, *certify to us, under your hands and seals, or under the hands and seals of any three of you, your several proceedings in the premises.*”

It must have required more hard-heartedness than falls to the common lot of man, to have counteracted the benevolent intentions of Mr. Maxwell, by transforming this Royal Commission into an inquiry for a case in favour of free-trade and competition, instead of an instrument for the amelioration of the hand-loom weavers, by the protection of their labour. The Report of that Commission proves, that the Whig Government, or their Commissioners, were thus wicked and cruel.

I need not urge you to grant me your attention, whilst I prove the charges which I have now made. The landlords of England are as much interested in this investigation, as are the hand-loom weavers. It will be interesting to you and “ your order,” to learn how the free-traders can turn everything to their own advantage, and make you and the people pay for making out a case against yourselves.

Remember, Sir, as I proceed, that these Commissioners were commanded “ to certify to Her Majesty their several proceedings in the premises.” Now, Sir, if this does not mean, that the whole case is to be “ certified ” to Her Majesty, Her Royal Commission is waste paper.

Whether the Whig Government or the Whig Commissioners are the culprits, I must leave them to “ certify.” If the Government are blameless, it is clear that they were deceived by their own Commissioners. Most certain it is, that the Report of the Commissioners is a one-sided Report; it is also true, that *very important* evidence has been entirely withheld, and a very competent witness has not been examined—the evidence omitted, and the witness rejected, being entirely in favour of the hand-loom weavers and the landlords of England! The Report is little else than a Catechism of Free-trade, got up at the expense of the public, to serve the purposes of the “ bit of a Parliament ” of free-trade cotton-spinners. What I have asserted, I must now prove.

You will agree with me, that in any investigation of the condition and views of the hand-loom weavers, those of Spitalfields should have had fair play from the Commissioners. You shall hear, Sir, how they have been treated.

A gentleman who has, since I came here, become my friend, Mr. William Atkinson, a merchant of the city of London, had taken great interest in the fate of the Spitalfields weavers, and, having given the subject of political economy his close attention, had arrived at the conclusion, as I have done, that the theory of free-trade, when reduced to practice, is the bane of England; and that under its operation, ruin to our manufacture and our agriculture is inevitable. This gentleman had explained his opinions to the Spitalfield weavers; and when the Hand-loom Weavers' Commission was appointed, he again put himself in communication with the weavers.

Mr. Atkinson was afterwards desired to attend upon the Assistant Commissioner on their behalf, as is shown by the following letter, from the intelligent Secretary of their Association :—

“ March 20, 1838.

“ Sir,—Having been to Dr. Mitchell, the Assistant Commissioner to the Hand-loom Inquiry Commission, I mentioned your name to him, as a gentleman capable of showing, in clear and strong light, the injurious operations of the free-trade fallacy, and the Doctor expressed a desire to see you upon the subject. The Committee of the Operative Weavers of Spitalfields have therefore ordered me to respectfully request the favour of your attendance on the Doctor, conceiving that your evidence will materially serve their cause.

“ I have, Sir, the honour to be, your obedient servant,

“ C. COLE, Secretary to the Hand-loom Weavers' Association, Spitalfields.”

“ To Mr. W. Atkinson.”

Mr. Atkinson was desirous, before he complied with that request, to meet his constituents, in order that he might lay before them the arguments which he thought necessary to be urged upon the attention of the Assistant Commissioner. Consequently, a meeting of the hand-loom weavers of Spitalfields was held, at which certain resolutions were passed, and which were communicated to Mr. Atkinson by Mr. Cole. It is only needful here to insert one of them:—

“ July 28, 1838.

“ Sir,—The following resolution was unanimously carried at a meeting of the Spitalfields Operative Weavers, held at the Golden Heart, Phoenix Street, Spitalfields, on the 26th inst. :—‘ That it would be a matter greatly injurious to the future well-being of those concerned in the inquiry, if the labours of the Commission should terminate without the fullest investigation having been made respecting the causes of distress; and as, from the instructions of the Commissioners, the inquiry is to embrace certain very important laws as probable causes—viz. those affecting the importation of foreign corn, the introduction of foreign manufactures, the currency, &c.—It is Resolved, that it is in the highest degree essential that the operation of these laws should be patiently and carefully investigated, in order that their effect upon the branch of trade whose relief is proposed, and also upon the community in general, may be rightly understood, and that the Commissioners be requested to receive Mr. Atkinson's evidence, and Mr. Atkinson be requested and authorized to attend the Board on behalf of the trade, in order that the case may be fully investigated.’ Hoping that this Resolution may be, in your hands, the instrument of some good,

“ I have, Sir, the honour to be, your very obedient servant,

“ C. COLE, Secretary to the Operative Weavers of Spitalfields.”

“ To Mr. W. Atkinson.”

Mr. Atkinson had already, in the preceding May, in consequence of Dr. Mitchell's invitation, conferred with him, the Assistant Commissioner; he was now anxious to lay his argument before the Board of Commissioners, which he intimated to them, when he lauded them the above resolution. Being refused that request, he consulted with Mr. Maxwell, who wrote the following letter to the Secretary of the Commission:—

“ 12, Stafford Street, Bond Street, August 4th, 1838.

“ Sir,—I inclose you an application from Spitalfields for the examination of a gentleman who is able to attend your Board, and give some important evidence upon the cause of their distress and the means of relieving it. I have seen and also conversed with him, Mr. W. Atkinson, and I find that his mind has been directed to their case, and that he is likely to afford some new and valuable information to the Commissioners of the description they have desired and they are expected to obtain and to report to the House. Under such circumstances I trust that the Board will invite his attendance, or send their Assistant to examine him, and that they will approve of my supporting the application herewith transmitted.

“ I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

“ J. MAXWELL.”

“ To the Secretary of the Hand-loom Inquiry Commission.”

Still the Commissioners resolved not to see Mr. Atkinson. He repeated his request urgently, but no, they were inexorable. At length, Mr. Atkinson wrote to Lord John Russell, communicating to him all that I have now informed you of, urging him, at the same time, "to instruct the Commissioners to receive his evidence." His Lordship "declined interfering."

Mr. Atkinson, being thus prevented meeting the Commissioners, wrote out his case, and attended meetings of the weavers in Spitalfields six successive nights, to read it deliberately to them. Several spoke upon the subject, all gave their entire approbation to Mr. Atkinson's views, and a Committee of twelve was appointed, to sign the case on behalf of the Spitalfields hand-loom weavers.

Mr. Atkinson attended the Assistant Commissioner, Dr. Mitchell, on the 1st and 2nd of May, 1839, and read over the whole case and argument to him, when the Doctor expressed his approbation, and informed Mr. Atkinson, that it should be delivered into the hands of the Commissioners immediately. You will remember, that the Queen commanded her Commissioners "to certify to Herself their several proceedings in the premises;" but, Sir, it is true, NOT ONE WORD ABOUT MR. ATKINSON, OR HIS EVIDENCE, OR HIS ARGUMENT, APPEARS IN THEIR REPORT!—NOT ONE SINGLE WORD!

And why? I can easily account for it. The case required by the Commissioners was one *in favour of free-trade*, to meet the views of the "bit of a Parliament" of cotton-spinners. Mr. Atkinson's case went to prove that free-trade *was the cause* of the distress which was sought to be removed! Hence, his argument and evidence was kept from Her Majesty, in defiance of her Royal commands! Did not I tell you, Sir, that these Commissions were Whig free-trade jobs?

I have received a letter from my esteemed friend, Mr. Atkinson, which establishes many of the facts I have been narrating. In justice to him, myself, the hand-loom weavers, and "your order," I will insert it:—

"No. 16, Doughty Street, Mecklenburgh Square, August 12, 1841.

"Dear Mr. Oastler,—If there be one duty more than another which it is incumbent upon us to perform with the utmost care and accuracy, it is that which relates to our treatment of the poorest and most distressed members of the community. To you, who are the persevering and enlightened advocate of the rights of the oppressed, I cannot do better than address this letter, its object being to narrate a case of culpable perversion of justice on the part of the present Government. You are well aware, that by means of the persevering exertions of Mr. John Maxwell, then member for the county of Lanark, a Crown Commission was issued, a few years ago, for the purpose of instituting an inquiry into the *state* of the hand-loom weavers, as well as into the *causes* of distress, and the remedies for it. Some time after the formation of this Commission, I received a letter from Dr. Mitchell, one of the Assistant Commissioners, stating, that the weavers of Spitalfields had mentioned me to him as a person capable of giving proper evidence upon the causes of their distress, and consequently he requested me to wait on him for that purpose. I called on Dr. Mitchell, who questioned me as to the nature of my evidence, when I informed him, that as the subjects suggested for inquiry were of a most extensive and important character, I should deem it my duty to investigate them thoroughly. He then told me, that whenever my evidence was ready, he should be happy to receive it. Having made a very attentive examination of the book of instructions which had been published by the Commissioners to their Assistant Commissioners, I found that the case was there fully stated, all the leading causes which can conduce to social good or injury being particularly noticed for investigation. Such being the fact, it appeared desirable that a public meeting should be convened of the general body of operative weavers, in order that the nature of the case might

be explained, and that the proceedings about to be instituted might receive the sanction of the general body. This was done, and a vote was passed unanimously, authorizing me to collect evidence for the purpose of the Commission. An account of this meeting, together with a copy of the resolutions which were passed, were sent to the Board of Commissioners by Mr. Cole, the Secretary of the Operative Weavers' Association. I then commenced my labours, and entered very fully into the nature of those important questions which the Commissioners themselves had described as indispensable to be inquired into. This work occupied my time for many months; and when it was finished, I attended at Spitalfields, for the purpose of communicating the whole to a committee of the weavers, as well as to others of the body who might choose to attend. This having been done, the evidence received the sanction of the Committee, which was composed of twelve persons, including the Chairman and Secretary, all of whom signed the document. Whereupon I waited again on Dr. Mitchell by appointment, and read over, at two sittings, all the evidence to him, when he expressed to me his opinion of its important character, and assured me that it should be sent forthwith to the Board of Commissioners. Now, Sir, this case which we thought right to submit, the Commissioners have thought right to suppress: they have published their Report, but have not thought proper to take even the slightest notice of the argument thus tendered to them. It is not for me to express an opinion as to the nature of the argument which I have thus submitted on the part of these distressed men. This much, however, perhaps I may say without impropriety, namely, that of all persons who gave evidence, and to whose evidence the Commissioners *have alluded*, not one has attempted to search, in anything like the same degree as we have done, into the character of those causes and remedies which had been set forth by the Commissioners themselves as fitting to be inquired into. Besides which, no other matter offered to the Commission came before it with such a weight of authority as that of a public meeting embodying the interests and experience of such a great and important and suffering district as that of Spitalfields, for whose especial relief the Commission was issued. Notwithstanding all this, that entire body of evidence is kept out of sight, and judgment is given the contrary way. Having felt it to be my duty to publish the argument, it is now laid before you; so that whether the evidence itself *be inapt*, or whether members of government view it as *too apt*, it is for you and other clear-sighted and resolute supporters of the rights of the oppressed to consider and to decide.

" I am, dear Mr. Oastler,

" Yours very sincerely,

" W. ATKINSON."

Mr. Atkinson has published the rejected document, under the title of 'Principles of Political Economy.'—(*Whittaker & Co., Ave Maria Lane.*) He has kindly presented me with several copies. A friend of mine has sent one to Sir Robert Peel, urging him to read and study it. In that work, the whole science of political economy is established upon Christian principles—hence, it was counted unworthy of a place in the Whig free-trade Commissioners' Report.

That book of Mr. Atkinson's is worth more than all the Commissioners' Reports I have ever seen, *because it is true*. I would advise every one who is enamoured of free-trade to read my friend's argument.

I have not yet finished my observations on the Hand-loom Weavers' Commission, but,

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—For an answer to the question, "Will the Whig Ministers resign?" see Notices to Correspondents.—R.O.

ERRATUM.—In No. 33, page 260, line 11 from top, for "Battalion," read "Regiment."

soning and impartial mind; but I have found that these desirable mental qualifications are too often deficient among the advocates for commercial reform. The cry of a 'cheap loaf' has a wonderful effect upon some of those who are compelled to live on low wages, for it deprives them of the power to reflect, or at least in a very erroneous direction, on the necessary contingencies attending on free-trade; they do not consider that there are trades which would be cut up root and branch by the unrestricted introduction of foreign manufactures. I met with an instance of this inevitable result the other day. I was told, and by a free-trader too, that a description of snuffers could be imported (I believe from Strasburgh), at the cost of 14s. 6d. per dozen, while the same article, of British manufacture, cannot be obtained under 18s. per dozen. Now let us suppose the duty taken off foreign cutlery, and what will be the fate of Sheffield and its cutlery, axe, and of its master-cutler too? In this case, I calculate that Mr. Ward, the mighty 'organ and advocate of free-trade,' would have very little to say about, and would have less trouble with, the representation in Parliament of that important place. Again, take off the restriction on the importation of foreign fire-arms, and what would be the condition of the English gun-trade? We are told, that the Belgians (if I recollect aright, at Liege,) make guns much cheaper than they are made in Birmingham! Ruin would be the inevitable consequence of free-trade. Can a more fearful state of things be conceived? It will, in reality, be high time for the aristocracy, yes, and the rotten lords too, to look to their estates, when our agriculture and manufactures are destroyed. As to any benefits arising from the promised demand for English manufactures on the continent, they will, most assuredly, not be realized; for, granting the increase of trade and all that, how is it possible for the workman to be benefited by it, when his wages will be reduced? I know that the hired agents of the 'League' are now giving the lie to the expressed opinions of their masters, who say, 'that they desire the repeal of the Corn Laws for the express purpose of reducing wages, so as to enable them to compete with foreigners.' Those most honest spouters are telling us, that cheap food will not cause wages to be lowered; but they must 'tell that to the marines,' for the working classes are becoming aware of the attack that is intended on their earnings; and it most fail, or Britain will rue it. And are we to be plunged deeper and deeper still in misery and confusion, to satisfy the all-grasping, and, eventually, over-reaching cupidity of the factory mob? Will the middle classes allow themselves to be duped into this destroying system? I hope not; but we shall see.

"It may appear, and be considered, an act of impertinence for a working man to interfere and put forth his opinions on a subject which is bothering so many philosophers and statesmen; but as it is a subject that is all and everything to the poor, I have given it my humble, yet best attention. And I am convinced that free-trade will bring unavoidable ruin on English manufactures. I need not dwell on this important matter, as you, Sir, have explained it so unambiguously. And we are not enveloped in the cloud of unrestricted intercourse yet; and, as regards Germany, we are not likely to be. According to the accounts from that part of the continent, a very strong opposition has arisen against the opening of any trade with this country. This I believe to be strictly true; and the Anti-Corn-Law-League believe it also, for they tell us that this opposition has been caused by the Corn Laws! Now, with all due submission, I deny this; and assert that it is the result of something else. We have often heard of England's being the envy of surrounding nations; well, we have here the proof of it. I know, though I have not been to Germany on an expensive mission, that the great renown and former prosperity of Britain has long excited the jealousy of foreigners. And this is no new thing, for it existed very many years ago, as testified the 'Armed Neutrality' of the Northern Powers. The almost constant wars which intervened from the outbreak of the American Revolution until 1815, gave our continental friends other employment than that of imitating the commercial greatness of this country. But since the war, the case has been altered, and attempts have been unceasingly made, and in many instances most successfully, to rival our manufactures. In this they, the Germans and others, have adopted the policy of Napoleon, and have been assisted therein by English machinery and capital! I have known cases where Germans have actually carried machines out of this country without paying a farthing duty! Such is the paternal care of our government! Having thus succeeded in creating manufactures, the Germans tell us that they are determined on protecting them; and that we must, for the future, content ourselves with our colonial trade. This feeling of rivalry, united with an expression of satisfaction at English difficulties, extends over the whole of Central Europe, from the diatribes of Augsburg and Berlin, to the bear-like caperings and growlings of Moscow, on the imbecile policy of 'debt-burthened Albion.' Such is continental gratitude for the enormous expenditure of English blood and money in the contest with Napoleon. It is true, that there are a few persons in Germany who are anxious for the removal of all impediments to commercial intercourse between the two countries; but the cause of this difference of opinion is a very plain one—they know that the returns Germany will receive from England will be in gold! But all this is as nothing, for, say our wise-acres, free-trade is indispensable. Well, then, if we must have free-trade and competition without ruin, we must needs search for another nation in the same situation as our own—enjoying all the benefits of a debt of eight hundred millions, and subject to an interest of twenty-eight millions; for it is impossible for the English working men to enter into competition with the working men of a country comparatively unfettered by taxation. Therefore, whatever may be the difficulties in which we are placed, and great as is our distress, and though it may even go so far as to make a Westmoreland Pauper of Lord Brougham, this country cannot, must not realize the wishes of the advocates of free-trade; for if such should ever take place, woes unnumbered and indescribable would infallibly fall on this devoted land. And shall this be? No, no; we are low enough and miserable enough already, without having the cup filled until it runs over. I fear, Sir, that I have over-drawn on your patience, but really it is a matter that I feel so deep an interest in, that I trust you will excuse me. I intended to have offered you my opinions and experience of free-trade in labour; but this, if permitted, I will endeavour to do another time. And I now beg leave to subscribe myself,

"Your most grateful and obedient servant.

"JOHN JONES."

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Mr. OASTLER is “At Home” on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.—Mr. Oastler’s health requires that he should entirely refrain from receiving the visits of his friends on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

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The following facts and remarks are copied from the *Wiltshire Independent* of August 5, 1841. They are inserted here, for the purpose of proving to the Aristocracy how utterly impossible it is to maintain the New Poor Law and the Corn Laws, by showing them the argument in favour of a repeal of the Corn Laws, which is raised upon the fact of low wages. The object and effect of the former Law is to *reduce wages*—the latter *advances* the price of food. Now, it *cannot be safe*, and it is manifestly *unjust*, to subject the working classes to such a screw. Starvation or depredation must be the inevitable result. It is hoped that persons of property will ponder over them, and assist the poor in their efforts to obtain the repeal of the New Poor Law, and to secure a law for the protection of wages, without which it is impossible that there can be *contentment* in our cottages, remembering always, that Sir John Beckett, Bart., who was Judge Advocate under the Duke of Wellington's government, has said,—“Peace at home means *contentment* at home; and unless we can establish such a system of things as will afford men a *fairer remuneration for their labour*, and enable them to maintain themselves and families *in comfort*, there can be no *peace at home*—*there never will be peace at home*—THERE NEVER OUGHT TO BE PEACE AT HOME.”—These words of Sir John Beckett cannot be repeated too often at the present moment: when our statesmen believe them, and act upon them, England will be saved.

“THE RATE OF WAGES AND THE PRICE OF BREAD.

“The popular argument that has been made use of by the bread-taxers, in support of their monopoly, is, that cheap bread would be of no avail to those who had no money to buy with;—and that, wages rising and falling with the price of food, the labouring man must be better off with high wages and dear bread, than with low wages and cheap bread. Now we do not intend to dispute the first position; it is a truism, but not one applicable to the question at issue. The second is a fallacy which has been so often and so thoroughly disposed of that we do not intend to waste time or space in its refutation. We will, however, simply point the attention of those who are most vitally concerned in the operation of the Corn Laws—the labourers—to the relative position which the price of wages bears to the price of bread at the *present time*, and to the relative position which they bore to each other *only a month ago*, and then ask them whether the whole *clique* of bread-taxers have not proved themselves, if not blind leaders, something much worse, namely, wilful deluders and deceivers, men unscrupulous enough to fill their pockets by starving the poor, and mean enough to justify their nefarious conduct by resorting to the falsehood of telling their victims that it is done for their particular and especial benefit.

“A month ago the general rate of wages in this neighbourhood for the *best able-bodied labourers* was 9s. a week, and the price of the 8lb. loaf was 13d. Now the 8lb. loaf is charged 17d., but *no increase has taken place in wages*; nay, on the contrary, in some instances, the 9s. have been reduced to 8s.! Where then is the proof that wages rise with the price of food? Where indeed! Let the labourers ask their masters. But *who is benefited by the advance which is now taking place in the price of wheat?* Not the labourer truly, for if his wages were really dependant on the price of wheat, and if those gentlemen who, at their convivial meetings, declare that *his welfare is the object they seek in upholding the Corn Laws*, were *sincere*, he would now be receiving *twelve shillings* a week instead of *nine*, and even then, if he had a large family, he would be worse off than he was a month ago with wages at 9s. and bread at 13d.

“We have stated the general rate of wages in this neighbourhood to be 9s. a week;—in the Southern division it would seem they are not so high, for in a Tory paper, published at Salisbury on Saturday last, we find the following:—

“SOUTH WILTS PETTY SESSIONS.

“Present—W. Wyndham, M.P., J. H. Jacob, G. Fort, H. Hetley, and E. Hinxman, Esqrs.

“*Caution to Farm Servants.*—J. Small, under-carter, was charged by his master, Mr. Read, of Charlton, with having left his employment contrary to agreement, he being engaged until Michaelmas next. The agreement being proved, the Bench ordered Small to pay his master the amount of *one week's wages*, 6s., with the expenses, and return to his work.”

“Again, in another number of the same paper published on the 17 ult., we read thus—

“SOUTH WILTS PETTY SESSIONS.

“Present—W. Wyndham, M.P., G. Matcham, J. H. Jacob, G. Lawrence, and H. Hetley, Esqrs.

“*Caution to Farm Labourers.*—Thomas Blake was summoned by Mr. J. Lush for leaving his service on Saturday, July 10th.—Mr. Lush deposed that he agreed with defendant, from Michaelmas last, at 5s. 6d. per week, and 52s. at the end of the year, and that on Saturday last he left his employ, and had not returned to work since.—Blake said, Mr. Lush agreed to find him lodgings, and he had never done so; and he did not like to sleep in the hay-loft, without pulling his clothes off, which he had been compelled to do.—Mr. Lush said he gave him 6d. per week more than he agreed for, because he would not have anything to do with his lodgings.—The Bench ordered Blake to return to Mr. Lush's service, and fulfil his agreement.”

“Talk of the Polish serf indeed! Here is a pretty specimen of the Corn Law-protected English labourer—6s. 6d. a week including harvest, and the privilege of sleeping in a hay-loft with his clothes on week after week, for fifty-two mortal weeks! How *this man* must suffer from a repeal of the Corn Laws!”—*Wiltshire Independent*.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk :

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."
"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."
"He shall judge the poor of the people. He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break
in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 36. LONDON, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 4, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—I sometimes wish that all my little factory children could witness, for one day, the pleasure I enjoy when visited by my friends. They would think it no hard case, (that of their "King,") if they were privileged, for once, to see and hear what passes daily in my Cell. True, they would, perhaps, be most attracted by the presence of my noble visitants; but, methinks, that they would also rejoice to witness the devoted attachment and grateful attention of two of their own "order," who never fail to visit me when they have an opportunity—two, whose visits yield to my heart, a joy mingled with pride. It is soothing to a prisoner, Mr. Thornhill, to receive the visits of those to whom God has privileged him to be useful, and to mark their gratitude. You will easily guess that I allude to those two crippled victims of the factory system, Joseph Habergham and William Dodd.

Poor Joseph has had a holiday: he has been to Huddersfield, and Leeds, and Fixby; he has visited his mother and his brethren; he has seen many friends of mine. On his return, he called here, and told me how the people flocked around him, to ask all how and about the "Old King," and how they blessed me! and how angry they were with you. He brought me a relic, which I value very much—the walking-stick of your faithful servant, poor old James Fox: it was grown in Fixby Park. I have placed it over my mantle-piece, that I may be reminded of the good old man who used it, and of the lovely spot where it grew. By the bye, Joseph told me, "that they are still making ready at the Hall for the 'Squire's reception." What a time you are in fixing your residence there! I am very anxious that you should keep the promise which you made to me on the 28th of May, 1838, when you said, "I shall reside myself at Fixby, as soon as you move out." Three long years have passed away since "I moved out," and still you hesitate. You may rest assured, Sir, that you are wasted there; for, whether you believe it or not, you will very soon find, that "Property has its duties as well as its rights." I can assure you, that the people about Fixby are beginning to account for your absence, in a way which cannot be very pleasing to you. One of your particular friends told me, the other day, "that, during your very short visit to Fixby last summer, you were

teased so much for money, (I mean, for gifts—100*l.* to Huddersfield Church, to wit,) that you would be very careful how you went to *reside* there." I would advise, however, that you no longer delay those *duties*—if you do, mayhap, many of your *rights* will be questioned. Sir, I am not writing in the dark—I know that your tenants will be very uncomfortable, if you much longer delay appearing amongst them. They say, that they lost considerably by your last short visit. Remembering the promise which you made them, to return them ten-fold for their kind attention to you on your arrival at Fixby last summer, they hope to gain by your *residence*. Yes, Sir, there are *duties* on that estate which you have too long overlooked—*duties* which it cannot be your interest any longer to neglect. Times are approaching when the owners of such estates must remember, that the caution given some years ago by the Irish Government to the Irish landlords, is needful to be remembered in England. I write not thus to alarm you, time will prove to you that my advice is that of a friend.—To your estates, oh landlords!

The news I hear from "outside," warrants me in warning you, that it is not possible to maintain peace in England, if tenants and labourers are neglected much longer. Sir, the former are despairing, the latter are starving; and I never forget the words of Sir John Beckett, Bart., who, when he was Judge Advocate under the Duke of Wellington's government, thus addressed the people of Leeds:—

"I say, that *peace* at home means *contentment* at home; and unless we can establish such a system of things as will afford men a fairer remuneration for their labour, and enable them to maintain themselves and families *in comfort*, there can be no *peace at home*—there never will be peace at home—THERE NEVER OUGHT TO BE PEACE AT HOME."

Now, if the Government are resolved to continue the system which leads industry to starvation, landlords must, if they wish to secure their property, repair to their estates, and assist in preventing an agrarian war, by the performance of their duties. It is because I believe with Sir John Beckett, that I urge you, in these terms, to be at your post.

False philosophy *may* force men to desperation, but it can never reconcile them to starvation.

It may happen, that you, or some of my well-intentioned readers, will reject the observations I have made, upon the necessity of landlords attending to their *duties*, whilst they demand their *rights*. Some persons, who have not deeply pondered over the effects of that neglect of *duty*, by estranging the minds of our legislators from tenants and labourers, and, through their evil Acts, upon society, may think that my remarks are calculated to arouse and excite the worst passions of the people, and uselessly to disturb the minds of the owners of property.

To such persons, I would affectionately, but seriously address a few words.

The object of the *Fleet Papers* is, to establish the security of all our institutions, and, amongst the rest, that of private property. I know the reason why society is convulsed—I know, also, that *force* cannot still the maddening discontent. Its origin is, as I have often told you, Infidelity, which has propagated the dogma, that "*the poor have no claim upon the community for even the smallest portion of food*," and, as a consequence, that landlords have no *duties*. Our legislature has embraced that doctrine, and, in defiance of every remonstrance, contrary to the laws of nature and of revelation, and in open rebellion against

the primeval law of society, and the first principles of the constitution of England, they have repealed the laws which established the rights of the poor to liberty and life, and they have passed an Act of Parliament, founded upon the avowed principles, that—

“The poor have no claim upon the community for even the smallest portion of food.”

And that—

“Every permanent fund set apart for their support, from whomsoever proceeding, and by whomsoever administered, must needs multiply the evils it is destined to remedy.”—(See Lord Chancellor Brougham's Speech in the House of Lords, on July 31, 1834, when moving the second reading of the New Poor Law Bill.)

Now, Sir, the effect of that law has been just what I always asserted it would be—it has broken the links which bound society together—it has disconnected the poor from all our institutions, and deprived them of any interest in the commonwealth. Hence, our present alarming and dangerous situation. In vain do the philosophers hope to defend property by the establishment of a Rural Police; such a remedy must make matters worse, by draining the purses of the wealthy, and by enkindling a spirit of revenge in the breasts of the discontented.

Who then is to blame for this state of disquietude? The founders of the New Poor Law, or its opponents? Those of the aristocracy who have insisted upon that law, or he who has, from the day on which it was proposed, denounced it? The proposers of the Rural Police, or he who proves that they will add fuel to the fire? The man who insists on his own right, and undermines it by denying the right of the poor, or he who would fain establish the rights of private property upon the recognized rights of all?—Common sense, nature, and religion, must award the title of Destroyer to the former, and of Conservator to the latter.

Infidelity has persuaded too many landlords, that they have a right to do wrong with their own; that they may remove the land-mark of the poor, and retain their own; that, for their own pleasure, they may “clear their estates,” and leave the poor to starve. No wonder that nature should rebel against such an unwarrantable assumption of power—no wonder that religion should animate her children to prevent such an infraction of her fundamental principles! The man who thinks that he may thus use his property, is ignorant of the title by which he holds it—he is his own enemy, when he permits the Infidel philosophers thus to beguile him.

Almighty God hath said—

“If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, in thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him.”

“Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor and to thy needy in thy land.”

“What mean ye, that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor?”

“Wo unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the name from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless.”

“Shall not the land tremble for this?”

I am too well aware that the Infidel refuses thus to acknowledge the rights of the poor; but, Sir, when he attempts to persuade the legislature to act upon his destructive principles, the Christian should not be afraid to point out the

injustice and consequent danger of acting upon his suggestion; for, whether it be right or wrong, it is a constitutional principle, that—

“There is no man so indigent or wretched, but he may demand a supply sufficient for all the necessaries of life.”—*Blackstone*.

“The state owes to every citizen a proper nourishment, convenient clothing, and a kind of life not incompatible with health.”—*Montesquieu*.

Dr. Paley argues thus:—

“The poor have a claim founded on the law of nature, which may be thus explained:—All things were originally common; no one being able to produce a charter from Heaven, had any better title to a particular possession than his next neighbour. There are reasons for mankind agreeing upon a separation of this common fund; God, for these reasons, is presumed to have ratified it. *But this separation was made and consented to, upon the expectation and condition that every one should have left a sufficiency for his subsistence, or the means of procuring it.*”

“Therefore, when the partition of property is rigidly maintained against the claims of indigence and distress, *it is maintained in opposition to the intention of those who made it, and of His, who is the supreme proprietor of everything.*”

Mr. Locke declares—

“We know that God has not left one man so to the mercy of another, that he may starve him if he please.”

Let these few authorities suffice for the present. They will surely relieve me from the charge of being a false alarmist, and prove that the rich cannot *safely* question the RIGHT of the poor to liberty and life. If, however, the legislature should persist in believing the false philosophers in preference to Almighty God—if they will listen to folly instead of wisdom, and establish tyranny in the place of justice, they must submit to be surrounded with difficulties and discontent, and finally, to lose that which is now, on very easy conditions, their own.

These observations are forced from me, by the reports I constantly receive from “outside.” These reasons urge me to remind you of your *duties*.

This morning, I was waited upon by a friend from Liverpool, a kind operative mason, who sometimes ministers to my wants—his name is John Eaves; he now works in London. He accompanied another of my faithful friends and patrons, Alexander Arnott, of Berwick-upon-Tweed. Eaves told me the following melancholy tale. It is very short, but wondrous touching—it ought to be instructive. Tell me, Sir, when you have read it, is there a God? and does He still “bottle the tears” of the indigent? If it be so, strive to avert His vengeance! “We were, as we came here,” said my friend, “walking along a narrow street leading from the Apothecaries’ Hall to St. Paul’s Churchyard, when we saw a poor hungry man picking up pieces of bread out of the gutter, and eating them! I bought him a loaf, which, after saying, ‘Thank you, Sir,’ he immediately broke in two, and devoured most ravenously! I shall not soon forget that man’s look!”—What a sight—a Christian man eating dog’s street-food, in the very centre of the metropolis of Christendom! That case is not a solitary one—I often hear such like reports; they are brought home to a man’s feelings, when they are seen and recounted by friends. The thought is truly awful, but the facts are so: *hundreds of human beings die of starvation annually in this proud city!* It is the accursed New Poor Law which has forced this new calamity upon us. We treat our poor worse than we treat our dogs! and still we pretend that we are Christians, and that we are “doing unto

others as we would that others should do unto us!" What horrible blasphemous hypocrisy! That starving man, left to starve by a *Christian* community, and thus casually relieved by a working man, will probably, in a few weeks, be "sat upon," and add another to the list of "deaths by starvation." His blood will, however, be required at the hand of those who thus force him out of life—that "loaf" will not be forgotten in the great day of account!

In the Provinces, too, "death from destitution," or "natural death, hastened by the want of the *necessaries* of life," is now no uncommon coroner's jury verdict. In fact, so frequent are such records, that men cease to shudder as they read them. But, Sir, the agonizing tortures of that death are still felt by the victims; and if man will not avenge that national crime, there is a God who, in His own way, will make inquisition for the blood of his servants. It is not enough that "Philosophy" sometimes steps in, to ward off such a death, for see how she then tortures man:—

"There is a poor fellow, attired in the coarse grey garb of the workhouse, to be seen daily taking his weary way from the West London Prison Poorhouse, carrying a great lump of granite, weighing twenty pounds, suspended from his shoulder by a leathern strap. Some days since, the man, in a very exhausted state, rested himself at the door of the Blockmakers' Arms, Ashley Terrace, City Road, and in answer to some questions put to him, he stated, that the Board allowed him 1s. per day, for which he had to carry the lump of granite upwards of twenty-two miles every day of his life. Thus in six days this poor fellow, thus loaded, traverses more than 132 miles; and were it not for the sympathy that such a disgraceful exhibition naturally prompts, he would absolutely sink under the exertion. He produced a book, regularly signed, in evidence of having performed his allotted journey, and without which signature he could not obtain the shilling for this uselessly inflicted labour. Painful, however, as was the task, the poor slave declared, that he would drag double the weight if his strength would permit him, rather than be immured within the dreary walls of a prison workhouse."—*Morning Herald*.

It is impossible that I can tell the feelings of a man of your possessions, amidst such scenes of agonizing woe; but methinks, that very selfishness would, in your case, arouse me to strive, if, by any means, they might be changed. Surely the time is come when such as you can no longer think it safe to pamper your appetites, and, lolling on your cushioned couches, smile at such calamity, and whisper, "It is no business of ours!" or, "The poor have no claim for even the smallest portion of food!" If you are still so foolish, no earthly power can long preserve the social compact.

Sir, if you will not visit the houses of sorrow, and strive to dry the tear of hungry industry, your *interest* requires that you, and such as you, should use your influence with our law-makers to change the system, and no longer grant to crime a premium.

Would that you had been in my Cell the other day, when I was sitting with one of your friends! You shall not, however, lose the lesson—I will give it you.

Your friend and I were conversing about your folly, as exhibited in your conduct towards me, when poor William Dodd, the Factory Cripple, entered my Cell. He looked melancholy. He had been sent for, to the Mendicity Society; he had received their benefaction, but his eyes were suffused with tears. "The gentlemen at the Mendicity Society," said William, "have told me, that my best way will be to go to my parish, and get into the workhouse!"

Now, Sir, William has a mind which recoils at imprisonment—he knows that he has done nothing to deserve such punishment—he feels that he has done his

duty to society, and has sacrificed much for the benefit of his employers. He has not been idle, dissolute, and disorderly, and it breaks his heart to think that, after all, the dreaded Bastille must be his home! Such thoughts as these made the poor over-worked cripple melancholy. My friend's presence prevented him telling me, as is his wont, all his thoughts. I rejoice at that circumstance, because it induced him to go home and write to me. That letter shall have a place in the *Fleet Papers*. I request, for it, an attentive perusal, and a thoughtful consideration. And tell me, when you have pondered over it, can a system long remain, which offers such a premium to vice, and thus tramples upon virtuous industry? This is the poor worn-out cripple's letter:—

“23, Little Gray's Inn Lane, August 23, 1841.

“Dear Sir,—I hope you will permit me, through the medium of your valuable publication, to return thanks to some kind and unknown friend for 10s. and a portion of bread and cheese, forwarded to me through the office of the Mendicity Society, for which I feel very thankful.

“The officers of the above Society, after carefully investigating my character, sent me a letter, requesting my attendance at their office, and kindly inquired into my present circumstances and future prospects; and, after satisfying themselves that I was a real object of charity, they handed to me the above donation, accompanied with a word of advice, to the effect, ‘that seeing I am unable to maintain myself by honest industry, in consequence of the crippled state of my body, caused by the cruel treatment I have received, and the factory labour which I have undergone, it appeared to them, that the best thing I could do would be to go to the parish I belong to, and at once submit myself to the workhouse.’

“I hope, Sir, you will not think me ungrateful, when I say, that at the bare mention of the workhouse, my heart sank within me, coupled as it is, at the present day, with everything calculated to lessen a man in his own estimation, and destroy all feeling of respect for his fellow creatures. The various accounts which have reached the ear of the public, of the working of the New Poor Law, and of the cruelties practised in the workhouses, are sufficient to appal the stoutest heart. I had a still further proof of these horrors a short time ago, by accidentally meeting in London a young man who, after four years' confinement, had escaped from the very house that is gaping for me. To hear his account, and see the effects of the pauper's dietary on his person, created a disgust in me, which I have not yet been able to conquer. It appears, that a very large proportion of their food is composed of oatmeal; and this young man, from its constant use, was literally covered from head to foot with scurvy; and I firmly believe that he would submit to anything rather than go there again.

“I have frequently asked myself the question, ‘Is this miserable pittance all I am to receive for a life of toil and suffering? Can it be possible, that in this enlightened Christian country, after having exhausted my health and strength, deformed my body, and lost my right hand and part of the arm in creating wealth for the enjoyment of others, I shall be confined the remainder of my life in a prison, be fed upon a diet which engenders in the system a foul and loathsome disease, and be subject to the cruel treatment of inhuman taskmasters?’ I thought that I must be mistaken; surely something better than this must be my portion, after such toil as mine! I consulted the law, but there I found only a confirmation of my worst fears. The law informed me, that if I would patiently submit, I should be taken care of in confinement, and kept to work at something that I may be able to do, from six o'clock in the morning till seven o'clock at night, be fed upon 21 ounces of coarse food per day, and lodged in a place where 207 die annually out of 1,000.

“But do pray mark the difference. The law also says, if I will take courage, and make the last sacrifice which I possibly can make, viz. that of my character, why then I shall be allowed 4½ ounces of a better sort of food per day, for about six hours daily labour, be treated more like a Christian, and live in a better sort of prison, where only 16 die annually out of 1,000!

“If this is not offering a premium upon crime, I do not know what is. Under such circumstances, who would be surprised to hear that every pauper in the land had accepted this offered premium, by stealing, or otherwise placing themselves under the milder law—thus protecting themselves from the severity of the law for poverty and industry? I seek in vain for the wisdom or

justice of such strange laws—I strive, but I cannot reconcile my mind to the justice of my fate. Had I spent my life in idleness and vice, my punishment would be less than the law awards me now!

“Can this be England! the boast and envy of the world? Can those be the laws (laws which are said to be the perfection of human wisdom) of that country for which I have toiled early and late, wasted my strength, exhausted my natural resources, and sacrificed everything valuable in life, save my character? Oh God, do not suffer me to be so far reduced, as to crave the shelter of such a workhouse, or so far to degrade myself as to break the law, in order to secure the better protection of a prison!

“I return my sincere thanks to my unknown benefactor, and heartily thank you, Sir, for the many kindnesses you have conferred upon your

“Much obliged, humble servant,

“To Mr. Richard Oastler.”

“WILLIAM DODD.”

Remember, that *machinery*, the unnatural use of which destroys the physical powers of so many, has hitherto escaped taxation, and is privileged to make any number of cripples, and then throw them upon the *land* for sustenance. You know that I have often told you that this should not be. If any man, I care not who or what he is, can, after reading William's letter, assert that the New Poor Law is a wise, a just, or a *safe* measure, I shall wonder. The argument is so striking and so convincing, that temerity and self-conceited obstinacy, the pride which will not confess an error, can be the only cause which prompts the strongest supporter of the New Poor Law still to persist in its continuance. Words of mine would weaken the force of Dodd's reasoning. I will therefore proceed directly to the exposure of that Anti-Corn-Law Whig job, the Hand-loom Weavers' Commission of Inquiry, which was, as I have told you, transformed into a search for a case in favour of free-trade, and a repeal of the Corn Laws, as is further apparent, from the fact, that another important witness for protection is not named in the Report of the Commissioners. He was a most important *Lancashire* witness, who had closely investigated the miserable condition, and deeply studied the causes of the destitution of the *Lancashire* hand-loom weavers, and had arrived at the conclusion, that the poverty and misery of that industrious, moral, and peaceable class of operatives, was to be attributed to the power of unrestrained wealth, the avarice of its owners, and the consequent dreadful system of universal competition.

Such was the nature of the evidence of that talented and indefatigable *Belton*, the Rev. Joseph Rayner Stephens. He was examined at great length by Mr. Assistant Commissioner Muggerridge. The opinions of Mr. Stephens on that particular question would have been considered all-important in the mind of an impartial judge; but it was so condemnatory of the theory of free-trade, so much in favour of home and of England, of her soil and her agriculture, and of the domestic system of manufacture—so decidedly opposed was it to the unrelentingly and embarrassing operations of our modern mills and *thirsting* course of trade, that the tools of the Manchester free-traders (the Hand-loom Weavers' Commissioners) have, with reference to Mr. Stephens' opinions, left Her Majesty and her people entirely in the dark, not having alluded to him, or his evidence, in any way, throughout their Report. Be it remembered, that Mr. Stephens was a deputed organ of a very large number of hand-loom weavers.

Again; the *Yorkshire* hand-loom weavers were insulted with the rejection of the testimony of their oldest and most indefatigable friend. If there be one

man who has really made himself master of the condition, character, and wishes of that body for whose benefit the Inquiry *professed* to be instituted, it is Mr. William Stocks, of Huddersfield. On no man's evidence did the *Yorkshire* hand-loom weavers place so much reliance. But the fact is, that although he was present on the public examination of witnesses, during the stay of Mr. Mugeridge in Huddersfield, and also spent many hours in private with that Assistant Commissioner, still, Sir, *his evidence was never taken*, though in my presence he tendered himself as a witness to the Assistant Commissioner. *Not is there even the mention of his name in the Report.* And why? Because of all men Mr. Stocks had the strongest arguments, and was in possession of the most demonstrable facts, to prove, that *the ruin of the hand-loom weavers was consequent on the advance to the establishment of free-trade.*

I have only room, in this letter, to ask you, is it to be endured, that, for the purpose of serving the Anti-Corn-Law factory masters, the nation shall be put to so much expense, and the sufferings of 800,000 persons shall be thus neglected, by the very persons who have sworn to obey Her Majesty's commands by "inquiring into the condition of the unemployed hand-loom weavers, and certifying to Her Majesty their several proceedings in the premises?"

Sir, if the landlords are disposed to be thus plundered and befooled by an avaricious band of free-booters, (I do not libel the Leaguers of Manchester, when I give them their proper name,) the fault shall be their own, and not mine—although,

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—I have already told you, that the Rural Police are mainly Irishmen. The following letter proves that it is not so by chance:—

"London, 18th August, 1841.

"Sir,—I have read your last number, in which you so properly comment on the *Rural Police* to which *noval* and Whigish system I am equally *adverse* with yourself, feeling well assured that such will end in tyranny, subverting even the common habits of our country population, and causing general ill-will and distrust in the minds of the people.—I confirm what the 'old soldier' told you, that '*more than half of those Police are Irishmen*;' for in the *Times* newspaper a short time back there was an advertisement requiring men for the *Police* in the *Isle of Ely*, to apply at an hotel in Leicester Square, to the chief constable or superintendent. I sent *three* persons as applicants, efficient men, of proper age, who, from untoward events in life, are so reduced in circumstances, as even to be glad of employment as *Policemen*: the place was completely besieged by applicants, and the three persons sent by me saw the superintendent, who received them very civilly, but candidly told them, '*that the preference was given to Irishmen.*' They all told me the answer was to this effect.

"To Mr. R. Oastler."

"T. GRAHAM."

The poor destitute Irishmen who have been driven by want into all our towns, have long since, of necessity, formed so many missionary stations for the propagation of the Roman Catholic religion. Could a more dangerous scheme for Protestantism be invented, than thus to increase the number of Roman Catholic missionary stations, by planting an Irish Police in all our rural districts and villages? I think not.—R.O.

The reader is requested attentively to peruse the following, which is extracted from the *Wiltshire Independent* of August 5, 1841. Let him lay his hand upon his heart, remembering how tenacious the Constitution is of the liberty of the subject, and say, if such a system of torture, inflicted by such a "reptile," can be endured in England. If England is to be enslaved, it will be, as Lord John Russell has assured us, by a Centralized Police!

"WOOTTON BASSETT.

"*Extraordinary affair.*—Great excitement prevailed at Wootton Bassett on Saturday week, in consequence of the following circumstance: A man of the parish of Cliffe Pypard had been taken into custody the Saturday previous by the police officer, for threatening to beat a woman. The officer, whether acting under the advice of a magistrate or not is unknown, took him into the parish of Wootton Bassett, and turned him over to the policemen stationed in that town, who, without any ceremony, put him into the Blindhouse, where he was confined until the following Thursday. He was then taken to the County Magistrate, but from some cause or other, nothing was decided, and he was again placed in confinement, where he remained until Saturday, the policeman refusing to allow him to breathe fresh air, or to obey the calls of nature, otherwise than in his dungeon! Thus was a free-born Englishman imprisoned for a week, without any inquiry having been instituted into the charge on which he was apprehended. The Mayor hearing of the matter, and understanding that the inhabitants were disgusted at the manner of confinement, (the Blindhouse being a miserable hole, only 6 feet by 4 feet,) desired the policeman to take the man to the parish where the alleged offence was committed, and in which a County Magistrate resided. The case was then disposed of, and the man dismissed, it appearing that he was of unsound mind! Surely this matter requires investigation.

"[We received the foregoing account last Thursday, but we could not believe that it was true, and therefore we refused to give it publicity. We have since made inquiry, and find that the statement is correct as far as it goes. The case, however, is actually worse than it is stated to be; for the poor man was confined nearly a fortnight instead of a week! Well may our correspondent say—'Surely this matter requires investigation.']"—*Wiltshire Independent*.

FACTORY CHILDREN.

I.

"Look in their little thin blue faces,
See there the marks and cruel traces
Of sleepless nights and days of care,
That childhood ne'er was form'd to bear.
Is there no voice to plead for them,
Or must they live and die
The slaves of avarice that fill
The heart with misery?"

II.

"These ill-used babes of England's poor,
In vain their hopeless lot deplore,
For they who set the negro free
Refuse to them their liberty:
For still they toil and labour hard,
From morning's dawn till night,
To fatten those who treat with scorn,
And trample on their right.

"July 27, 1841."

III.

"Oft, when the tedious day is o'er,
Those little limbs that long have bore
Incessant toil, when home they gain,
Pass their short night in sleepless pain;
And e'er the morn is seen to break,
The factory bell is rung,
With aching head and breaking heart
Another day's begun.

IV.

"And this is Briton's favour'd soil,
'The land of freedom, and the isle
That boasts no slave can breathe its air;
And yet will see its young and fair
Condemn'd to pass their youthful days
In misery and pain,—
Arose, and blot for ever out
This dark upbraiding stain."

A. M.

SONNET

On reading Count Krasinski's 'History of Poland.'

"Let a poor poet, who, with heart sincere,
Feels and laments with thee thy country's wrong,
Approach thee with a tributary song.
Thy glorious fame will long thy name endure,
When thou hast past from this terrestrial sphere.
Right well hast thou thy country's story told—
How for the truth they bravely fought of old!
When persecution, with its sword and spear,
Was spreading desolation far and near:
Bright on thy page stands Ferley's deathless name,
Who dauntless by the throne of Poland stood,
When truth was trembling for her right in fear,
And freedom for a time appeared to wane,
Like a young wife, that droops in widowhood."—A. M.

“ On Monday last, the body of a poor man living at Sibley was found dead in the river Soar, near that place. For some time the deceased (who has left a family of children in the greatest distress) has been out of employ, and a continual dread of the horrors of the bastille caused him to struggle on, until every prospect of getting a maintainance for himself and family had vanished. The deceased had tied his left arm and thigh toge her, showing a determination to perish rather than be subject to the rigours of the New Poor Law.”—*Stockport Advertiser*, Aug. 20, 1841.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

Just published, Price 25s.

THE BOOK OF THE BASTILES ;

OR,

THE HISTORY OF THE WORKING OF THE NEW POOR LAW,

By G. R. WYTHEN BAXTER.

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Mrs. HOPPER was many years engaged in the Seminary of her mother, the late Mrs. Tetley, (Mr. Oastler's aunt,) under whom she obtained the habit and inclination of leading the juvenile mind to the acquirement of useful knowledge, and moral and religious principles and habits.

On the 25th of September, 1841, will be published,

PRICE TWOPENCE,

No. 39, of the FLEET PAPERS,

WHICH WILL CONTAIN

A VIEW OF FIXBY HALL,

NEAR HUDDERSFIELD,

The Property of T. THORNHILL, Esq.,

AND

The Residence of R. OASTLER

FROM THE 5th OF JANUARY, 1821, TO THE 25th OF AUGUST, 1838.

THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY
JOHN PAVEY, 47, HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND,
AND
BENJAMIN STEILL, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Mr. OASTLER is "At Home" on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.—Mr. Oastler's health requires that he should entirely refrain from receiving the visits of his friends on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

R. P., Regent Street.—Many persons, as well as he, have asked for "a letter on imprisonment for debt." On that subject, it would be impertinent, at present, to say much in the *Fleet Papers*. *Scotch*, however, may be said—it is *ARKENCK, not JUSTICE, which fills this Prison!* Some few persons are permitted to remain here, because their friends "think that it is a good school." Such well-meaning persons will have cause to repent, when it may be too late. The proprietor of the *Fleet Papers* often asks himself, "What benefit can society receive by shutting up so many persons here?" No satisfactory answer, as yet, has presented itself to him. Upon his own mind, the result of imprisonment is, *Pity* for his persecutor, and *Contempt* for the law which thus arms a revengeful creditor.—The following sentiments on the subject, from the lips of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke, (which have been kindly furnished by a Reverend friend,) will surely have some weight on the mind of our law-makers:—

"There are two capital faults in our law with relation to our civil debts. One is, that every man is presumed solvent—a presumption, in innumerable cases, directly against truth. Therefore the debtor is ordered, on a supposition of ability and fraud, to be deprived of his liberty until he makes payment. By this means, in all cases of civil insolvency without a pardon from his creditor, he is to be imprisoned, it may be von *LINA*; and thus a miserable mistaken invention of arbitrary *arbitrio*, operates to change a *civili* into a *criminal* judgment, and to scourge *ministeria* or *indistinctio* with a punishment which the law of England does not inflict on the greatest crimes. The next fault is, that the inflicting that punishment is not on the opinion of a jury under an equal and public judge, but it depends on the arbitrary discretion of a private, nay an interested, and frequently an irritated and malignant creditor. He who formally is, and substantially ought to be, the judge, is, in reality, no more than ministerial—a mere executive instrument of a private man, who is at once judge and party; for the creditor can remit the sentence, and release the prisoner, whenever he thinks proper to give him a discharge. Every idea of judicial order is subverted by this procedure. If the insolvency be no crime, why is it punished with arbitrary imprisonment? If it be a crime, why is it delivered into private hands, to pardon without discretion, or to punish without mercy and without limitation."—*Edmund Burke's Speech at Bristol, 1780.*

It is no answer to say, "the prisoner may be released by application at the Insolvent Debtors Court," seeing that society "outside" has fixed a stigma upon those who pass that Court, which, to many minds, is far worse than death.

ARTHUR D. RUSSELL, Vicarage, Caxton.—Shortly.

Anonymous writers may be saved much trouble, by being informed, that without reading them, their papers will be burned.—All communications must be post-paid.

In reply to a numerous list of kind inquirers—"How can we best serve your interest?" Mr. Oastler begs to say—by promoting the circulation of the *Fleet Papers*, and by procuring advertisements for their covers. Mr. Oastler may be allowed to add, that few better mediums for advertising can be found than the *Fleet Papers*; they circulate in every district, and amongst every rank. In the Palace and the Cottage, readers of the *Fleet Papers* are to be found. Clergymen, Landlords, and Farmers, Ministers of State, Ploughboys, Factory Children, and Weavers, patronize these little *Flecters*.

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Complaints have been made to Mr. Oastler, that, in some places, the readers of the *Fleet Papers* have been told, that they could not have the Portraits of Mr. Thurstall without paying for them. Mr. Oastler assures his friends everywhere, that if more than *one* copy were demanded for the *Fleet Paper and the Portrait*, IT IS AN INNOVATION. In all cases, the *Portrait* is issued from his Publisher GRATIS.

Many persons complain, that "the Publisher of the *Fleet Papers* is very remiss. It often happens," say they, "that the *Fleet Papers* are a week too late," &c. The fault is not with the Publisher. The *Fleet Papers* are always in his hands on the Monday, ready to be delivered; so that they may be, and ought to be, in the hands of all on or before Saturday. Persons who are disappointed by not receiving them punctually, may be assured that the fault is not with the Publisher.

NOTICES OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

"OASTLER'S FLEET PAPERS."

"Whoever, of late, these *Fleet Papers* has read,
Must be certain they're honest and good;
For they prove that the men who brawl for 'Cheap Bread'
Are the same who 'make Use' of 'Cheap—Blood!'"

The Age, August 29, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS, by Richard Oastler.—Mr. Oastler's publications having come to us in a lump, it is extremely difficult to treat them according to their merits. There is such a variety of subjects touched by his ready pen, and touched in a style so vigorous and refreshing, that we know not how to pick out a morsel for the gratification of our readers. It would be useless to write a dissertation on the *Fleet Papers*, at least at present; this must be a work more elaborate than is suitable for the columns of a weekly paper. The great and prominent trait in Mr. Oastler's character being humanity, and as he has lived in manufacturing districts, where such a quality is not known, or, if known, scouted as a foul leprosy, it appears to us that a few extracts from his prison labours will more benefit the cause of the poor, and the cause of the prisoner, than any recommendation in our editorial capacity we might be inclined to indite. It may be as well to remind our readers, that these papers are in the form of letters:— * * * ."—*Sheffield Patriot, August 31, 1841.*

"The FLEET PAPERS.—The following graphic description of Mr. Oastler's recent journey to York by steam conveyance, is from No. 32 of the *Fleet Papers*. It will be read with pleasure by all who admire good Saxon English:— * * * ."—*Bury and Suffolk Herald, Sept. 1, 1841.*

"To Mr. Richard Oastler, Fleet Prison.

"Ever honoured Sir,—I return you many thanks for the insertion of my letter (see No. 35); but permit me to point to two mistakes. In your very kind introduction, I am described as a 'Spitalfields hand-loom weaver'—your obliged servant is a tortoiseshell-comb polisher. The other mistake is, that I appear to say, 'that scissors can be imported from Strasburgh at 14s. 6d. per dozen'—it should be 4s. 6d. per dozen; an important difference, as you will, I have no doubt, perceive. Oh, Sir, what a grand, nay, a mighty victory, will be obtained, if your exertions will make the Aristocracy acquainted with the true character of us working men. It is, indeed, a consummation most devoutly to be wished for. I am happy, most happy to inform you, that the Anti-Corn-Law and Free-Trade humbug is beginning to be detected by several persons whom I know to have been strongly advocating those cruel delusions. One of them proved his conversion, by giving that worthy gentleman, Mr. Robinson, a plumper at the late election for the Tower Hamlets. My wife joins with me in hoping that you, Mrs. Oastler, and your adopted daughter, are enjoying good health; and that God may bless you, and grant that you may see the hard-working people of this country once more comfortable and happy.

"August 30, 1841,

"Your most obliged and obedient servant,

10, Enoch's Court, Goodman's Yard, Minorities."

"JOHN JONES."

The following remarks, from the pen of the excellent and amiable editor of *The Watchman*, are worthy of serious attention. He is remarking on the unclerical and factious interference of the *prayerless* Divines at Manchester with the Corn Law question. After pointing out certain subjects with which they might properly, usefully, and honourably meddle, he says,—

"Another object worthy of their most anxious attention and deepest consideration, regards the propriety of their suggesting motives for restraining in all, but chiefly in religious men, the *crying vice of the age*, the rage for commercial speculation, which, from the frightful consequences of re-acton, when an over-stimulated commerce recoils on an unemployed population, spreads misery far and wide. Surely there is ample scope and an inviting field for useful and honourable exertion in the paths trodden by Chalmers in his inimitable sermons on the application of the lessons of Christianity to the commercial classes, and by the able author of 'Mammon'; no less than in the development by Sadler and Lord Ashley of the iniquities which have been more or less associated with the factory system,—there is, we repeat, in this direction and application of ministerial usefulness, a far more hopeful as well as becoming exercise of their proper functions as Christian pastors, and overseers of the moral health of the commonwealth. And, if we mistake not, in the tricks and contrivances of this wretched spirit of commercial cupidity, in many of its joint-stock companies' operations, much more than even in the pernicious chicanery, in which the same spirit has entangled the working of the Corn Laws, resides the *immorality*, against which Christian Ministers are called upon loudly to protest."—*The Watchman, August 11, 1841.*

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

Vol. I.—No. 37. LONDON, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 1841.

Price 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

Sir,—I am in ecstasies!—"The enemies of God are scattered, and they that hate Him flee before Him." The brazen Frontlet of the impious Inposter is shivered by the shafts of Truth!—his blood-stained Spear is broken against her Bosses!—the heart-heavings of his victims have met with sympathy in the bosom of their God! "The cries of them which have reaped, of the labourers which have reaped down our fields, and whose hire is kept back by fraud"—the moans of the fatherless—the agonizing shrieks of the desolate widow, questioning if love should kill or spare her offspring—the groans of the dying, who are driven out of life for lack of food—the sighings of the bastille prisoners, have prevailed! They have "entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." Their prayer is heard, and God has answered it. The Tyrant is vanquished—Falsehood is abashed—Truth, resplendent, crystal Truth, has triumphed! The nation's bidding, at the Queen's request, has been responded by Her Parliament—the national Incubus is dislodged—Infidelity scowls, but he retires—the bubble of delusion has burst—in vain have the Ministers invoked the people—they called aloud, but none would answer—the stern verdict of an insulted nation is against them—the Whigs are out—England is free—and I, your prisoner, have, once more, breathing room!

Sir, I *am* in ecstasies. I thank God that I have lived to see this day. Although in prison, I heed not, for the genius of England rejoices, and my heart is glad.

I have waged a long and steady war against the monster—he has fallen, and I am repaid.

But what a wreck the fell fiend has left behind him! The hearts of England beat in enmity—class against class in envious strife is now engaged: where union is most needed, discord reigns. Fraternity is broken—man scowls upon his brother man. The head is sick and wayward—the body rebels against dictation—the bones are out of joint—and all the limbs are muscleless. Some time will be required to make England, Old England once again.

Her Church mourns and is disconsolate—her nobles have lost their father-station—her merchantmen are bewildered and confounded—her manufactures languish from repletion—her public coffers are moneyless—the plough no

longer yields bread to the man who guides it—he who throws the shuttle, sits in tattered rags for clothing—the poor perish in our streets of hunger—prisons and workhouse-bastiles and police, are now the *glory* of England! Oh, no! I err—the Whigs are out, delusion is ended—*they are her curse!*

There must be a cause for all this misery. There is, and I will tell it.

We have mistaken Gold for God—we believed a lie for truth—we have seized the poor man's lamb, and thought to keep our flocks—we have removed his landmark, and hoped to retain our own!—we refused the law of God, and He rejected us. Hence all our misery.

Once more, in mercy, our day of grace seems lengthened; and the Whigs, whom I verily believe to be the enemies of God and man, are vanquished! Methinks hope dawns in the lengthened vista—the Godless men retreat—oh! may His true worshippers assume their place!

But, Sir, it is a serious and a solemn time. We have despised the Book which Helkiah found—we have mistaken false philosophy for truth! May our Queen now command her servants—

“Go ye, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all *my empire*, concerning the words of this Book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because we have not hearkened unto the words of this Book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us.”

“Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left *in my dominions*, concerning the words of the Book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because we have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this Book.”

The burden of England is, that she has despised that Book: she has listened to the delusive melody of the charmer—she “has hewn out for herself cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water;” hence “her gold is become dim! and her most fine gold is changed!” Because she has despised God's law, her borders are filled with mourning, lamentation, and woe. Oh! that the Queen of England—

“May now stand in her place, and make a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all her heart, and with all her soul, to perform the words of the covenant which is written in this Book.”

May Victoria, who hath now “received the letter” of her people's sufferings, written by death's pen, with ink of widows' and of orphans' tears, like Hezekiah of old,—

“Go up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD, and praying, say, O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth. LORD bow down thine ear, and hear: open LORD thine eyes, and see; and hear *the wailings of my people*. Now, therefore, O LORD, our God, I beseech thee, save thou us, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.”

Do you think it strange, Sir, that I write thus to you? *The disease of England is beyond the cure of unaided man!* If we are not now prepared, as a nation, to acknowledge God in all our ways, and to take His word for our guide, we may have a *change* of Ministers, but we shall “*keep the pain*”—we shall stumble on in the dark—the breaking up of our institutions will but increase the confusion—we shall sink into nothingness, and become “a reproach among the nations.” And for why? It is true—

"We have oppressed the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and we have turned aside the stranger from his right, we have not feared the Lord." "We have not relieved the oppressed; nor judged the fatherless; nor pleaded for the widow. We have forsaken the fatherless and widows in their afflictions; we have not kept ourselves unspotted from the world."

It is for these sins that our land is now in heaviness — for this it is that our wise men are in perplexity. We are now feeling the burden of our disobedience. In consequence of our sins, we are stricken by the hand of Almighty God: our Leviathan merchants stagger like drunken men—our nobles are bewildered—whilst want and desolation are spreading from the workmen to their employers. But "Why should we be stricken any more?" Why not "humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord?" Why not "cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment; relieve the oppressed; judge the fatherless; plead for the widow?"—and renounce for ever that doctrine of devils, which, in spite of every warning, our legislators have assumed to be Truth—that heart-freezing dogma—that "*the destitute have no claim upon the community for even the smallest portion of food!*"

Think not, Sir, that because you have not felt the pelting of the storm, that you will remain scathless—the tide of misery is rising. He who knoweth the heart and strength of man, has warned you, "trust not in riches;" and Wisdom hath told you, that "hunger will break through stoue walls." Poor Law Commissioners and Rural Police may strive, but they will strive in vain, to save you from the consequences of now laughing at the law of God and of necessity. "You have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; you have nourished your heart, as in the day of slaughter; you have condemned and (as you had hoped) killed the just; and he doth not resist you."—But, Sir, read the following:—

"Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them. THEREFORE saith the LORD, the LORD of Hosts, the mighty one of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of my enemies."

Now, Sir, those sins of Israel are the sins of England. True, if you are stiff-necked, you will laugh, until God laughs at you! But, blessed be His Holy name, "judgment is His strange work"—"He loveth mercy"—yea, even "in judgment He remembereth mercy." Hence He hath declared,—

"I will turn my hand upon thee (rebellious Israel), and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: and I will restore thy Judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning."

In that word I see hope for England. The love of wealth has brought her to the very brink of destruction; but if she will forsake her covetousness, she shall learn wisdom, and be saved by the hand of the Lord.

Are you one of those who laugh at the thought that God interferes in the affairs of nations; and who think that no notice is taken by Him of national transactions? I am aware that false philosophy sneers at the thought, and counts him a madman who believes in Divine superintendence. I cling to the hope that you are not thus deluded. *It is the belief in the non-accountability to God, which has led our Whig governors astray*—it is the consequent national sins for which we are now suffering. The punishment of nations for their crimes must be in time, because, as nations, they will not exist in eternity. Let the

false philosophers sneer at me, if they will—I believe, with a very learned and pious divine who sometimes honours your prisoner with his presence, that—

“In many respects God deals with *nations* after the same manner that He does with *individuals*; and the sins of nations, like those of individuals, bear in themselves the seeds of their own punishment. They who are best acquainted with history, sacred and profane, ancient and modern, will be most sensible of the wide and universal application of the prophetic warning given by Moses to the Israelites: ‘If ye sin against the Lord, be sure your sin will find you out.’ If we consider wisely the dealings of God with Israel, with other nations, and especially with Christian nations, we shall see how close the connexion is between *national* sins and *national* punishments. We shall see that, as long as a national sin is continued, the evil consequence, which is its punishment, will continue also. We shall see that God chastises nations for their profit, as he does individuals.”

We are all agreed that these are “dreadful times,” but some persons will not believe that our sufferings and perplexities are *consequent* upon our sins. If the nation shall unhappily be such like, and if our Government should continue to take philosophy, so called, for their guide, instead of the word of God, then I know that our troubles, as yet, are only commencing, and that these are but the beginnings of sorrow. Time and circumstances, with a correspondent force of Scripture truth, tend to confirm me daily in these views, which I have entertained, from the time that I set my heart to study the Bible as an oracle and rule of life; for, as every violation of God’s Holy Law will, sooner or later, be visited upon every individual, so also will the divine vengeance be surely executed upon nations and empires who reject its authority, and go on walking after the counsels and imaginations of their own evil hearts. There are sins, and especially when committed under peculiar circumstances, which do not fail to meet with an early retribution. “The times of ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness.”

England, like Israel of old, has been favoured above the surrounding nations—she has been a people saved by the Lord—she has been blessed with mercies and privileges innumerable. The Lord has been “as a wall of fire round about her, defending her against all her enemies.” In her, the light of Divine Truth has shone forth with resplendent lustre—in her, the Gospel has had free course, and, for a long period, every man “has worshipped under his own vine and fig tree, none daring to make him afraid.” But, how have we improved these mighty blessings? Instead of profiting by them, as we ought to have done, and wisely considering the gracious day of our visitation, have we not abused the Gospel, by making use of it as a liberty to sin, and that too against the clearest light?—until we have believed, and acted upon the dictation of men calling themselves philosophers, who, in the teeth of Divine Truth, have asserted, *that nature has not provided a place at her table for the poor!* So that “the light which is now in us, may be said to be darkness; and if our *light* be *darkness*, how great must that darkness be!!! Well may we, therefore, work the works of darkness, seeing we have an evil eye, and have deliberately chosen the paths of the destroyer, out of which we have refused to return, notwithstanding all the warnings and threatenings denounced against us.

“How are the mighty fallen!” and “How” is this nation, which “was faithful, become an harlot! It was full of judgment, righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers; and judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth

afar off. Yea, truth faileth, and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey;" *for an insatiable thirst for gain has swallowed us up, and Covetousness, as a leprosy, cleaveth fast unto us!*

"The love of money, which is the root of all evil," begets every other sin: its principle is subversive of all good, and productive of all evil;—it is odious to the sight of God, and utterly at variance with His Holy Law;—it is incompatible with the happiness and prosperity of man, being in its nature arrogant and selfish—cruel, tyrannical, and insatiable in its demands;—it hardens the heart, corrupts the affections, blinds the understanding, perverts justice, and derides mercy;—it wars against every principle of humanity, and is at once the civil and political enemy of all mankind, as well as the bane of all true religion and sound morals.

What wonder, then, that England is in an evil case, seeing that Covetousness is now become its characteristic feature, and the fear of the Lord is no longer before our eyes—"Neither are we ashamed of the abominations which we have committed, neither can we blush;" therefore, we consider not "to amend our ways and our doings, by ceasing to oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and thoroughly to execute judgment"—nay, we "trust in lying words, that cannot profit or deliver."

May be, you, being in prosperity, smile at all these things. You may be saying, "Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." But, Sir, hear what the Lord saith:—

"Among my people are found wicked men; they lay wait, as he that setteth snares, they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit; therefore they are become great, and waxen rich." "They are waxen fat, they shine; yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked; they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge." Yet "they stand before me in my house and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations,"—"they hear the words of the Lord; but they will not do them, for, with their mouth, they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord; and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this."

Many have been the intimations of God's righteous displeasure against us within the last ten years. I allude to wars and rumours of wars—civil broils and discontent; to the cholera and other epidemic diseases, which have swept away so many thousands; also to storms and fearful wrecks at sea—terrific and desolating winds at home—lightning, and sweeping rains—overwhelming floods, and destructive fires; and, last of all, earthquakes in divers places.

Thus hath God spoken loudly to us, in the way of His providence. He "has stricken us, but we have not grieved; and consumed us, but we have refused to receive correction, and have made our faces harder than a rock, and refused to return."

In former years, national calamities occasioned national humiliations, and national rejoicings gave rise to national thanksgivings. But now, we take not God into the account—He is not in all our thoughts; "for we say the Lord saith not, the Lord hath forsaken the earth."—"Therefore, thus saith the Lord: Behold, I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them—the neighbour and his friend shall perish;" and "I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it."

If, therefore, we haste not to put away the evil of our doings—if we still

determine to fight against the Lord, and impiously despise the chastening of the Almighty—if we refuse to acknowledge his righteous judgments, to humble ourselves under His mighty hand, and “to stand in the ways, and see and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, that we may find rest unto our souls”—if we still reject instruction, hating to be reformed, then will the Lord take away from us His merciful loving kindness, and give us up to a reprobate mind, that we may fill up the measure of our iniquities.

Of my beloved country, however, I will hope better things—even things accompanying her salvation; and I look upon the fall of the Whigs, consequent upon the universal cry of the people, as a symptom of returning prosperity, because I believe it is the effect of national disgust at the false philosophy, upon the principles of which the Whigs have ruled; and I rejoice to believe that it is a proof the people are returning to Bible truth—to Christian principles. It is this conviction, that makes me still hope for my native country—it is this which raises my soul to ecstasies, when I contemplate the downfall of the Whigs. Shall I ask pardon, for thus obtruding these, perhaps unwelcome observations? I cannot—sincerity has dictated them; I can but write what I feel.

But to the question—the universal question now raised in every bosom—“What ought the new Government to do?” Many subjects press on the mind when this question is asked—many which, in the short space of one letter, it would be impossible to mention. It seems to me, however, that two questions have been settled by the people of England at the last election; and if it be true that the Queen is constitutionally bound (as all parties acknowledge) to change her Ministers, when their measures are disapproved by her people’s representatives, so must it be the constitutional duty of Parliament to obey the will of their constituents, whenever that will is manifest and undeniable.

There can be no doubt, that the question propounded by Her Majesty to her people was, “Are you for free-trade?” It is equally certain, that every exertion was made, every argument was used, every exciting inducement was offered, to persuade the people to answer “Yes!” Still, despite the most strenuous efforts of the free-trade party, the answer returned to Her Majesty was “No!”—in consequence of which, the Queen has discharged Her free-trade Ministers. It cannot, therefore, be too much to require Parliament also to attend to the constitutionally declared will of the people. The evils of free-trade are exhibited in the facts, that the more foreign trade we have *under its operation*, the more we lose, the poorer we become, and the less wages we pay. Thus have facts proved, (what common-sense has so long taught,) that poverty is the consequence of unrestrained competition. The new Ministers ought, therefore, to abandon the system of free-trade—else, why have the Whigs been driven out?

There is, however, another subject, upon which they were not questioned, but on which it is admitted on all hands that the people have declared their will—viz. the New Poor Law. Upon that point, there has been neither *if* nor *but*. The new Ministers will, therefore, if they are wise, and resolve to walk in the light of the Constitution, repeal the New Poor Law, and return to the glorious 43rd of Elizabeth.

It would not be wise to modify the former. To pretend to modify the hateful thing, is parleying with Satan, for it is the Devil’s work. The very name of it

is so odious, that it is due to the insulted and outraged feelings of the nation, that it be for ever obliterated. "Then," say some, "what will you do with the bastiles?" That is no business of mine; let those who built them answer it, or, at once pull them down, leaving not one stone upon another. The sooner the whole thing is forgotten the better. A mistake upon the New Poor Law will prove fatal to the New Ministers. Common sense is only needful to discover, that if we are to have the New Poor Law, the New Poor Law Ministers have been unjustly treated—if *that* be a good measure, *they* (the Whigs) must be good Ministers.

I ask not what is Sir Robert Peel's *private* opinion; nothing is more clear than the fact, that it is the people's hatred to the New Poor Law which has given him so large a majority. If his supporters have deluded the people by their electioneering addresses, Sir Robert would have proved his wisdom by refusing office, for, in that case, the re-action must be terrific.

The new Government will, if its members are wise, weaken and impoverish the nation no more by emigration; but, on the contrary, they will offer every inducement to persuade and encourage the people to locate on the land. Drawing the "surplus population," as fast as they prudently can, out of the manufacturing towns, and thus restore the just proportion of the creation of wealth, by gradually *reducing* the quantity of our manufactures, until they are equalled by the demand, and by *increasing* our agriculture, so as to reach the demand, and thus meet the pressing wants of the people. We have land enough for all we need in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, but we have foolishly withdrawn the hands; and consequently, we are *minus* the corn.

If our new Ministers are constitutional, they will, of course, repeal the Rural Police Act, abandon the scheme of centralization, and restore the local system of management. In other words, they will abandon the insane Whig notion of governing the people by force. It is futile any longer to attempt to keep the people in awe by force and coercion—it is against the genius of their laws, and the spirit of the Constitution. The presence of *force* implies injustice.

The Ten Hours' Factories Regulation Bill they cannot refuse, when the evidence of its necessity has been so often proved before Parliament, and it is remembered that Sir Robert Peel's father was the first who introduced it; nor can they safely neglect to protect the labourers from the power of wealthy selfishness. This subject is obtaining more and more importance in the minds of the well-disposed manufacturers. They feel that something must be done by law to prevent the wasting influence of universal competition. They are well aware, that all our great statesmen recoil at the very thought, still they feel that something must be done to prevent the cruel and selfish from getting rich by any means, regardless of the miseries occasioned to their work-people, and the loss sustained by all who wish to give a fair day's wages for a fair day's work.

The question of some restraint upon machinery, is, I am happy to say, forcing itself upon our manufacturers, and they say, "Parliament must interfere." The approach to free-trade has had one good effect—it has proved its unsoundness, by emptying the pockets of hundreds who were formerly its admirers.

There are many other subjects which require the immediate attention of Parliament, which I have no room to mention, but which, in due time, I shall

place before you in the *Fleet Papers*. It is self-evident that the case of the working classes *must* now be seriously considered, with a view to their amelioration. I shall ever be ready to aid in that labour.

I have now only room for a valuable document, which I have just received from my friend the writer. The "question" was propounded to him by me:—

"*Question*.—What measures would you adopt, were you in office, for the purpose of securing the proper working of your principles with reference to the trade and commerce of the country, for the immediate benefit of ALL, and especially of securing a just remuneration to the labourers and artisans?"

"*Answer*.—The question here put is the most important and extensive that can be advanced with reference to the physical condition and progress of a nation. *One* word in it should be especially noticed and kept under consideration, which is the word ALL. The answer to this question must embrace the good of ALL the people: it must combine, under one proposition, the agricultural, the manufacturing, and the general trading interests.

"In the first place, then, with regard to the cause of poverty and destitution.

"*Cause*.—I hold the cause to be EXCESS OF CHANGE, arising of course from two such action or freedom. My allegation is not confined to our commercial relations with foreign nations, but applies equally to changes of every kind made *within* our own country, as also by means of our own capital, *out* of our own country, *one* principle being applicable to all. The changes made by the society in general have ever been greater than the *increase* of capital warranted. By this indulgence in excess, many members of the community have been continually cast down to the base of the social fabric, the results of their labour having been greatly depressed or wholly excluded from the demand of the society. Thus the error is entirely on the side of excessive, or disproportionate supply, and that which is wanted is the preservation and restoration of demand.

"*Remedy*.—It follows, therefore, that the only remedy is that of administering a check to the cause, by diminishing the degree of those changes which are being made by the community in general. If this were effected, the result would be, in the first place, the keeping up of all present demand, or the preservation of existing capital, thus constituting a better state of home demand. The agricultural labourer would acquire an increased demand over manufactured and other commodities; and the manufacturing labourer would acquire an increased demand over agricultural and other productions, and so throughout the system. We should see better rents, better profits, and better wages. All resulting from the great law of PROPORTION being applied with greater accuracy to production in general. It is this law which, hitherto concealed, forms the main feature in the plan of realizing the physical well-being of nations. It is the antagonist of looseness or unrestrained traffic; for while it ordains progress, it establishes the LAW of progress. It rejects competition, and enjoins a just and general combination.

"The first step to be taken is that of instituting a full and patient inquiry into the whole subject. Much of public attention, and a great deal of talent, have been applied of late years to the support of the free principle of trade, while, on the other hand, the Spitalfields case in the Hand-loom Weavers' Commission contains a summary of evidence and a complete argument on the side of the principle of regulation. Let the government of Sir R. Peel set on foot an investigation of the whole subject before some competent tribunal, and the result will be a settlement of the question. I shall not at present attempt to anticipate the result of such an inquiry, but if you should desire a more practical detail of the necessary legislative measures, I shall be happy, in some future letter, to give you my opinion on that branch of the subject.

"August 30th, 1841."

"W. ATKINSON."

The principle of that letter must, sooner or later, occupy the attention of Parliament. If our new Ministers are wise, they will not hesitate fully and impartially to investigate the whole subject.

The great point, however, on which I place the utmost importance, is the abandonment of the principles of Infidelity, and the introduction of those of Christianity. It is high time that, as a nation, we humbled ourselves before Almighty God, imploring His forgiveness and His future aid. Nothing is more certain, than that it is the rejection of the counsels of the Most High, that has brought us to our present deplorable condition. If our governors and the people will return to Him, He will bless our industry; and then, Sir, I shall hope that England will be herself again, while

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—The recent important political changes have induced me to delay one week the further exposure of the Commission system of fraud and delusion.—R.O.

TO THE MEMORY OF MICHAEL THOMAS SADLER.

- " *Thou memory of great and virtuous men*
Retains its sweetness, though corroding time
Lays empires waste, but proudly passes them;
For still undom'd their triumphs brightly shew.
- " *Too oft the warrior's name is wrote in gore—*
His glory marr'd, by orphans' tears and sighs;
His mighty deeds may spread from shore to shore,
But many an ear 'twill pain as on it flows.
- " *Not so his name, whose brilliant victories made*
The slave-child happy—the neglected man—
He like a warrior, for the fight arrayed;
But fighting fell, e'er the great cause was won.
- " *Lamented SADLER! long thy name will shine*
Brightest 'mongst those who garnish history's page;
The laurels which thy honour'd brow entwine,
Will never know the sear decay of age.
- " *The grey-hair'd old will teach the living young*
To speak thy name, which is to them
The dearest;—around which their love hath clung,
As doth the ivy round the brave oak stem.
- " *The tomb to which the eastern pilgrim goes,*
Is not more revered than the hallow'd earth
Where thou art laid;—oft the tear-drop flows,
When weeping sorrow pictures forth thy worth.
- " *A Nation wept, such tears as sorrow weep,*
When thou wert ta'en from this terrestrial scene;
It was a time of anguish keen and deep,
Which finds not words, but in the face is seen.
- " *Mourn not, good OASLER, that thy friend is gone,*
Remember that to thee be left the fight;
There may be some that treat thy name with scorn—
Heed not, but keep the end in sight."

A. MACINTOSH.

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Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddleworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

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Price 2s.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—Can you understand them? I confess that I am puzzled. I cannot comprehend the sayings of the Duke and Lord Stauley. Is it really true, then, that all the grave charges against the Whigs, which have been made, both in and out of Parliament, by the Conservative leaders, were mere bluster?—that the people have been aroused against Her Majesty's Whig Ministers, and that the Queen has been *forced* to part with them, so that other men might take their places? Have we been mistaken all the way through, and are the late Ministers, after all, men of "honour, honesty, zeal, perseverance, ability, and talent?" Have they, indeed, "rendered the greatest possible service to Her Majesty?" If all this be true, I have made a very great mistake, and so have many others. I cannot understand it, Sir.

I thought that *Impeachment* was the natural and constitutional consequence of the treason of the Whigs. I expected, after all the Conservative anathemas against the Whig Ministers, that a serious and solemn constitutional inquiry would be entered into, with respect to their *responsibility*. I was not prepared for this slatting parliamentary coquetry. I supposed, that "Ministers of the Crown, who were," to use the words of the Hon. J. S. Wortley, "in close alliance with men whose political lives had been devoted to agitation, and who sallied the name of the Sovereign, by using it for factious purposes, at the very moment when they gloated over the prospect of a foreign war, and in their seditious harangues offered aid to the enemies of the country;"—I fancied, that men who had uprooted the constitutional rights of the people, who had thus produced civil commotion and universal discontent—men who had multiplied foreign wars—ruined our trade—paralyzed our manufacture—jeopardized our agriculture—disorganized and separated all classes—garrisoned England with Police—disfigured her by the erection of union-bastiles—squandered and dried up our resources—plundered and emptied the Exchequer—pilfered the savings' banks—created new and useless places for their sycophants and hangers-on—degraded the magisterial bench—undermined the Church—and, last of all, with the avowed conviction that they were doing it, *forced* our Queen to station herself

at the head of a traitorous and expiring faction, instead of taking her proper place as the Constitutional Monarch of a mighty empire;—I say, Sir, I was prepared to hear of *Impeachment* against such Ministers, but I did not expect to find them complimented by such men as the Duke of Wellington and Lord Stanley.

I believed, and still believe, that there are charges against the Whigs sufficiently grave to warrant *Impeachment*—I grieve the more, when I find that the heads of that banditti (I must call things by their proper names) are not only excused, by men calling themselves Conservatives, but are complimented by the Duke of Wellington and Lord Stanley, as being men of honour, ability, and integrity!

Is, then, the constitutional *responsibility* of Ministers of the Crown extinct?—and is the Royal office now a mere ministerial plaything? Have the people, all this while, been exerting themselves to get better Ministers, and have they thus been annoying the Queen, by overruling her predilections, and separating her from the Ministers of her choice, merely that their places might be occupied by their flatterers? In short, Sir, has the national “move” been a mere child’s game at battledoor and shuttlecock, to get the Whigs out and the Conservatives in? If the Duke and Sir Robert think so, their surprise will soon be as great as mine was, when the Duke of Wellington assured the House of Lords, that—

“He had *always* considered that Lord Melbourne had rendered the *greatest possible* service to Her Majesty. He had reason to know that Her Majesty herself was of opinion, that the noble Viscount had rendered her the greatest service, *not only as a public servant engaged in the conduct of affairs*, but in the assistance he had given Her Majesty in making her acquainted with the laws, policy, and system of Government in the country.”

Now, Sir, the man lives not who has revered the Duke of Wellington more than myself. His attachment to the monarch has been above suspicion; but, as a plain, home-spun Yorkshireman, I am utterly unable to guess how the Duke can reconcile it to his loyalty, to aid in *forcing* such a Minister to retire from the Queen’s Government. How thankful I am, that I never was a “Conservative!” Then, again, in the House of Commons, we find how great is our loss, (Lord Stanley being the judge,) by ridding Her Majesty of that mischievous adviser, Lord John Russell. Lord Stanley says, respecting him,—

“I fully give the noble Lord the credit of having been influenced by no consideration but the sense of duty, which, with a man of his high honour, must be paramount to every other. Every one who has watched his conduct, *must regard it with no sentiments but those of admiration of the great zeal, perseverance, ability, and talents with which, not only in the duties of his own department, but in the management of the political business of the House*, the noble Lord has uniformly conducted the very arduous and difficult task which was assigned to him.”

Every Englishman must now naturally ask, “If this be really so, why should we have been excited to require the expulsion of these Ministers, by leaders who, after all, are their admirers, and compliment them, when certain of succeeding to their places?” Do not mistake me; I know, as well as any man, what courtesy requires, aye, and what gallantry demands, from the conquerors to the vanquished; but I have yet to learn that *flattery* is a requisite in the character of a soldier or a statesman. If all that the Duke and my Lord Stanley have said is true, it will be difficult to convince men of any party that the Conservatives

have not been guilty of a grave offence against the Queen and the people, in forcing these "serviceable, dutiful, honourable, admirable, zealous, persevering, able, and talented" Ministers to resign their offices, and the Queen to accept their resignations—thus depriving both of the services of such honest, faithful, and excellent advisers. It has been disingenuous work from beginning to end; and, by the showing of the Conservative leaders, I fear that it is likely to turn to bad account.

How much soever I regret it, I must and will speak what I think. I do not relish these symptoms of rising "Conservatism." Have we been making a change of men only, and will false philosophy still mislead our rulers? If so, the nation will become very uneasy. There is, however, one comfort, the new Ministers will be more easily removed than the *old ones*.

Lord John Russell does not often receive praise from me. I do not flatter, when I thank him for the reasonable reproof administered by his Lordship to the Hon. J. S. Wortley. Many a Yorkshire heart will have responded to that rebuke! There was much force in his Lordship's observations:—

"Nay, I cannot help saying, that the honourable gentleman (Mr. Wortley) who moved the amendment, in his addresses to the electors of the West Riding of Yorkshire, told them, that he had great objections to the New Poor Law, that the confinement of people in workhouses was not necessary." "The hon. gentleman, he goes and rouses the people on the topic; he makes it a cry against Lord Morpeth, a member of the Government; and, when he has been elected, and when Lord Morpeth has been rejected, then the hon. gentleman comes down to the House on the first day of the session, not with any proposition to alter the law, which, if he considers it unjust, should without delay be amended; no, not a word of that law in the whole of his discourse." "He did not find fault with the hon. member for holding opinions against the New Poor Law; but he said, that any hon. member who thought a man should not be obliged to accept the workhouse as a condition of relief, who thought it a hardship for a man to be separated from his family, and who thought it was a question whether the law should not be totally repealed, ought not, when he came forward to bring the condition of the country before the House, to have omitted these important matters. If the persons who had called for 'cheap bread' out of doors, were to enter the House, and never make mention of the Corn Laws, then he should say, that their belief in the advantage of an alteration of those laws was not very sincere. The hon. gentleman had not mentioned him, by his speech on the first night of the session, that he attacked any very great importance in an alteration of the New Poor Law."

The following extract from the address of the Hon. J. S. Wortley to the electors of the West Riding of Yorkshire, will show you with what reason Lord John Russell lectured *our representative*:—

"Lastly, we come to the New Poor Law, to which my objections remain unchanged, as well as to the administration of it by the Commissioners, without casting any reflection on those gentlemen individually. It appears to me, that they have shown a disposition to carry out their theory with a speculative rigour ill calculated to mitigate whatever there was of harshness in the law, and in its operation on the poorer classes. I wholly disapprove of the principle that relief should, as far as possible, be confined to the workhouse, but hold, on the contrary, that the workhouse should never be made a condition where it can safely be dispensed with, for I cannot think that we are justified in lightly forcing the poor man from his home, because he is reduced to the maintenance provided for him by law. I am dissatisfied with the Bastardy Clause; with the great extent of unions, which appear to entail so much hardship on the pauper applicant. I cannot consent to the attempt to reduce the sustenance of the pauper to a level with the lowest destitution; nor can I consent to the admission of relief as to discharge alone giving. But it appears clear, that this law must undergo much alteration, in any the least; and I shall always approach the subject, whether it is to be altered or repealed,

with a deep conviction that the first principle to guide us in dealing with it is a tenderness for the poor."—*Leeds Intelligencer*, July 3, 1841.

It is indeed hard to account for Mr. Wortley's silence upon the New Poor Law, in the debate on the want of confidence in the Whig Ministers, when, as he said,—

"He appeared in the House as the bearer of a portion of an answer from her people to Her Majesty, which might serve as some guidance to her in the future conduct of the Government; he hoped that, without presumption, he might say, that he appeared there as the bearer of not the least significant portion of that answer." "In giving expression to his sentiments on this occasion, he should do that which would be acceptable to his constituents; and he should not only express the sentiments of his own constituency, but, as he believed, of a great portion of the constituencies of this country." "The constituencies had sent him and the rest of the House there to return that answer, and it was not disrespectful to the Crown that, at the earliest possible moment, they should give Her Majesty the means of learning what was that answer, and communicate to her what they had learned from the country, in order that she might be relieved, as soon as possible, from any further state of delay and uncertainty." "It was the first duty of the members of that House to prove, that the sentiments which they entertained were in unison with the unequivocally expressed opinions of their constituents." "If, therefore, he took a greater range in the retrospect which he was about to institute than might be barely called for by the occasion, he thought that the Ministry could not complain."

I say, Sir, it is not easy to explain how it happened that the honourable gentleman, thus circumstanced, having his mind all the while fixed upon his constituents, and "the sentiments which they entertained," and being, "*first*" of all, anxious that his own parliamentary declarations should be "in unison with the unequivocally expressed opinions of his constituents," should so soon have forgotten the flags, mottoes, and arguments which were used during his canvass and election with reference to the New Poor Law; and should have been so little impressed with his responsibility to the 13,165 Yorkshiremen who sent him to Parliament, as never to utter one single word upon that all-important subject, when he was communicating "their answer to Her Majesty, which might serve as some guidance to her in the future conduct of the Government," "and was telling her what he had 'learned' from the country, in order that she might be relieved, as soon as possible, from any further state of delay and uncertainty." If Mr. Wortley "learned" anything during his West Riding canvass, it was, that the people there are resolved, some how or other, to get rid of the accursed New Poor Law. Mr. Wortley knows full well, that if it had been known in Yorkshire that he approved of the New Poor Law, he could never have obtained his present high and honourable station. It was not generous, on such an occasion, when he "ranged" all over the world to rake up the crimes of the Whigs, that he should withhold the opinion of his constituents on this, their master sin. If any change had come over his own mind upon the subject of the New Poor Law, it was still his duty to tell *what his constituents thought about it*. True enough, if he had done so, he would have thrown a heavy stone at the leaders of his own party. That fact leads me to suppose, (as I understand that on such occasions the *leaders* are consulted as to what shall be said,) that Sir Robert Peel had enjoined *silence* on that particular topic. I grieve that Mr. Wortley had more *dread* of Sir Robert Peel, than *respect* for his Constituents and the Queen.

See, Sir, how such conduct enables the Yorkshire Whigs to laugh at those of their own party who were persuaded to vote for Mr. Wortley, under the conviction that he was opposed to the New Poor Law. Surely the people of the West Riding will not be silent on this subject, although their member is.

Sir Robert Peel will, I hope, find himself mistaken, if he thinks to silence all his parliamentary friends on that point. It is a fact which cannot be disputed, that very many of the Conservatives have been returned to Parliament under the conviction that they would endeavour to rid the country of the New Poor Law curse. The people have confided in them, and, on all accounts, I hope that they will not be disappointed.

Mr. Wortley laid himself open to a similar attack for his silence on the subject of the Rural Police. How he could, upon such an occasion, withhold the opinions of his constituents in reference to that point, I cannot understand. It is one on which they are justly alarmed, and upon which, as he well knows, they hold very strong opinions. If the reproof of a political enemy has not been lost upon him, Mr. Wortley may still recover himself, by coming out boldly on the New Poor Law, the Rural Police, and the Ten Hours' Factory Bill. Most sincerely do I hope that he will have the manliness to do so; and then he need have no fears about the West Riding, let a dissolution of Parliament come when it may. I write as his true friend; but I will not mince matters, to please any one.

The timely reproof which was given by Lord John Russell to the member for the West Riding, will, I hope, make others more attentive to their electioneering declarations. And I sincerely hope (for I have a high respect for Mr. Wortley) that he will satisfy himself, that the *opinions of his constituents* are more to be valued than the *dictation of any leader*. Mr. Wortley will, I am sure, take these observations in good part. He knows how I rejoiced at his triumph over Lord Morpeth; such a victory must not be thrown away, in deference to the suggestions of a temporizing expediency. The chosen champion of 13,165 Yorkshiremen, should not be the man to become the *back* of any Minister. Why not tell Sir Robert Peel the truth once for all. Mr. Wortley knows very well, that if the New Poor Law is not repealed, neither Sir Robert Peel nor any other statesman can govern England. It is not dealing fairly by the Premier, to hide that truth from him. Sir Robert must know, that his friends have everywhere used the New Poor Law as their strongest weapon against the Whigs. He must either repeal that law, or place his supporters in a most disreputable position. I am quite sure, that no true friend of the Conservative Government will endeavour to uphold the New Poor Law. I am also certain, that as sure as the New Poor Law has dislodged the Whigs, it will also toss out the Conservatives, if they are so foolish as to attempt to enforce it.

If the New Poor Law and Free-Trade are really good measures, why then I am in error—that is all about it. But, if so, why are the Whigs discharged? When that question is satisfactorily answered, I will be silent, but not till then.

Somehow, I do not like the casting of this new Conservative administration. I fear there is something rotten, out of joint, and ricketty about it. I see always jealous of those Cotton Lords. I have read over the ministerial list, but there

is one name wanting—I allude to Lord Ashley's. I cannot help asking, "How is this?" His Lordship was in Sir Robert's last administration. I cannot, however, find that his Lordship is in now. This looks strange—very strange; there must be some reason for it. I have been turning the matter over very anxiously in my mind, and fancy the Cotton Lords must have ear-wigged Sir Robert;—they have impudence enough for anything. Lord Ashley has rank, character, talents, industry, and influence; he is one of the few Conservatives to whom the Queen has shown marks of personal regard. True, he is also a great favourite with the working classes; he deserves their love, and by his exertions in their favour he has secured it. I cannot believe that the Premier would reject him on that account. I remember the Duke of Wellington saying to me, some years ago, "what we want is a strong Government." Sure I am, that Lord Ashley's presence in the administration would give it more strength amongst the people than any name I see there; and these are times when the affections of "the common sort of people" ought not to be despised. No, no; Sir Robert Peel cannot have been so foolish as to reject Lord Ashley because the working classes love him. Nor can his Lordship have offended the Premier by his recent tour in the manufacturing districts. Seeing how the Whig Government have been deceived by Commissioners, a nobleman who takes the pains to examine and investigate for himself must be a valuable adjunct to any Ministry. Lord Ashley is, however, left out; and a reason there must be. Perhaps Sir Robert has been trying to "come Wortley over Ashley," and has met with sterner stuff. *Silence* on the Ten Hours' Factories' Regulation Bill may have been required, to quiet the Conservative Cotton Lords. If so, no wonder that the noble champion of the factory children has rejected the gilded bait. It is due to the working people and to their children, that some authentic account of the refusal of Sir Robert to receive Lord Ashley into his administration should be given; indeed, it is also due to Sir Robert and to his Lordship.

I am not altogether without my fears that this Conservative administration will be only a cotton-twist affair after all. If so, my poor factory children must, for awhile, linger on in hopeless slavery—the bastile prisoners must still pine and starve in anguish—and the poor, everywhere, must continue to suffer. The Cotton Lords will, no doubt, agree to any modification of the Corn dispute, if Sir Robert will still permit them to work their factory children to death.

If I am correct in my surmise as to the reason for the exclusion of Lord Ashley, then it will be needful that the northern hosts be stirring. And, Sir, if "your order" does not wish to be *cotton-twisted*, you must join the Ten Hours' Bill men; for the rejection of Lord Ashley augurs no better for the aristocracy than it does for the factory children. Again, for the hundredth time, I tell you, "*you are both in the same boat.*" I fear that Sir Robert is resolved to stand by "the extensive manufacturing concerns," although he has declared, that whilst they exist, he cannot hope to see the day when the distresses of the people can be alleviated.—(See No. 23, p. 178.) He admits the existence of great distress in our manufacturing districts, and does not scruple to attribute it to some mismanagement in our over-grown mechanical power, and to "the extensive credit which has been adopted so generally, and which has," as the Right Hon. Baronet

asserts, "brought about this melancholy state of things." But, by the rejection of Lord Ashley from his administration, it would seem that the Premier has not yet determined to grapple with our "extensive manufacturing concerns."

Although we were promised that the New Poor Law would elevate their character and improve their condition, it is admitted, on all hands, that the working people are in a state of unparalleled poverty and misery.

Nothing is more certain, than that an investigation of the woful condition of the labourers and artisans, *with a view to its amelioration*, must, sooner or later, be instituted. If so, Lord Ashley is a man who ought to be in the government, to aid by his extensive knowledge, and to give the sanction of his name, which would go far to secure the confidence of the people.

If the Duke of Wellington really wishes for "a strong Government," he must not suffer the conscience of England to be trifled with any longer.

The Conservative Government may attempt to *enforce* the New Poor Law, after all; but neither parliamentary majorities, soldiers, police, spies, nor magisterial tools, will be able to *force* the people from their religious convictions, their natural sympathies, and their national prejudices. Sir Robert may think the Cotton Lord alliance "stronger" than the aristocracy and the working people; but, Sir, if so, the Premier is mistaken. If I must apologize for these remarks, this is my excuse—I wish the new Government well; hence I will not flatter it.

Well, well, sometimes good comes out of evil. I think I see, by Lord Ashley's rejection, hope for the aristocracy and the poor. It may form the foundation for that union, without which, I have always said, England cannot be saved. Such a nobleman as Lord Ashley cannot long stand alone in his own "order." The wise, the prudent, the good, the benevolent, the right Old English, Christian noblemen, must join him; the poor will flock to his standard, party names will be buried, and thus a powerful union will be established, which will be able to put down the foes of England, the destroyers of her peace and happiness.

I also look in vain, in the new ministerial appointments, for Sir John Bockett, who for many years adorned our Tory administrations, and who gained golden opinions from the people of Leeds, by that manly, constitutional, and memorable declaration, of which I have reminded you in a former letter. The worthy Baronet's words should never be forgotten:—"Peace at home means contentment at home; and unless we can establish such a system of things as will afford men a fairer remuneration for their labour, and enable them to maintain themselves and families in comfort, there can be no peace at home—there never will be peace at home—THERE NEVER OUGHT TO BE PEACE AT HOME." Is it for holding such sentiments as those that Sir John is passed over?

There is still another of our friends, an Anti-New-Poor-Law man, who, though not altogether excluded, is certainly not in his right place. Far inferior men, men in whom the country has, comparatively, no confidence, are put over his head, and have seats in the Cabinet, while Lord Granville Somerset (for it is to him I refer) is kept at bay, and placed at a long distance from the place to which his merits entitle him.

I marked the equitable bearing of that nobleman, when he sat upon the Committee to inquire into the conduct of the Trades' Unions, some two or three

years ago; and I was also an attentive observer of his efforts to alter many oppressive clauses in the New Poor Law, during the two last sessions. No person of equal rank, weight, and standing with himself, on the Conservative side of the House, laboured so assiduously for the people in that matter, or denounced, in more indignant terms, the insolent behaviour of "the three kings?"

What influence has kept Lord Granville Somerset out of the Cabinet? Have those subtle personages, those "arrogant" men, who are above all law, been consulted on any of the appointments? Have they put their backs against the door of the Privy Chamber to keep him out? Some way or other we must get to the bottom of this, for it looks as if there was a determination to retain "the three kings" in their unconstitutional position, and to carry out a measure which your friend, the late Earl of Eldon, declared to be "the most execrable and atrocious law ever enacted in a Christian country."

Sir, I may be blamed by some timid or half-hearted Conservatives for resolving thus early to state my fears. These are no times to flatter our friends. I know that their tenure of office depends upon their taking a straightforward constitutional course, instead of following the Whigs through their devious windings amongst the intricacies of a proud, arrogant, selfish, but false philosophy.

The Conservatives may be the means of saving the country, even at this, the eleventh hour. If their actions agree with their hustings promises, all will be well. But if they fancy, that because they are in power, and have a seven years' Parliament before them, they can now neglect the people, forget their vows, enrich themselves, and govern by force—they have mistaken the times, their position, and for what ends they have been returned to Parliament. If they forget their hustings pledges, they will find, that the people, having thenceforth no confidence in any party, will trust, in future, to no representatives but their own. If any one knows the why and the wherefore that the Whigs are out-numbered, I do. That knowledge forces me, as I love my country, thus to write. If there be any value in the *Fleet Papers*, it is, that in them is found the mind of your prisoner. I may offend many valued friends, by so freely expressing my thoughts on the formation of the present Ministry and those other matters to which I have alluded in this letter—I should offend myself, if, at such a time as this, I held aught back. Let Sir Robert Peel "walk in the light of the constitution," as he himself expresses it, and he will be supported by an united nation; but if he lingers in the intricacies of expediency, and strives to reconcile opposites, his official days are numbered, and they will be few.

If the former be his resolve, no stancher friend will he have than myself; but if the latter, I will wage a steady, and, I have no doubt, a successful, war against him, as I have done against the Whigs, under my own banner, of "The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage." The Cotton Lords shall not rule this country, if I can hinder them. So much, Sir, at present, on this subject. The circumstances referred to in this letter will satisfy you and my readers, that it is necessary to delay my further exposure of the Whig Commission Jobs another week.

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—I beg to refer to the Cover of this *Fleet Paper*, for a copy of an important letter from Lord Ashley. If I had seen that document before I penned this letter, it should have formed a part of it.—R.O.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM PRISONERS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruit."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

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Price 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—I cannot forget the unmerited ministerial compliments that have been so profusely lavished, and so unseasonably, (by men who profess a stern integrity,) upon those who were allied with traitors and with knaves! The recollection of Wortley's inauspicious *silence* haunts me day and night. The remembrance that Ashley and Beckett are passed over, and that Lord Granville Somerset is not where the universal voice would place him, clings to me as a night-mare. I would think hopefully of the new Government; but these facts convince me that there is in them enough to justify alarm and uneasiness. I would not be suspicious, but I *must* be vigilant. A few false moves now, and the mischief may be irreparable. "There is a tide in the affairs of men." It has cost some labour to turn the torrent of Whiggery. May He who overrules the destinies of nations, make our governors wise, and bold, and patriotic, and thus quell my fears!

These are not common times—our institutions have been undermined, the foundation has been shaken, the rights of the poor have been violated; until they are fully recognized, and their constitutional charter is restored, it is impossible that the peace and prosperity of the nation can be established.

For many years, our legislators have forgotten that we have a Constitution—it shall be my business to remind them, that unless they will fearlessly study its principles, and act upon them, their attempts to govern will be fruitless.

If my honest endeavours to serve my country, by steadily adhering to truth, should happen to give offence to some loved friends of mine, I have to rejoice that all are not offended, as the following letter will prove. It is from the pen of one who, with myself, hoped much for our country from the defeat of the Whigs, but whose rejoicings were suspended, by the inauspicious opening of the new Conservative campaign. My friend says:—

London, September 14, 1841.

"Dear Mr. Oastler,—Language would fail to express the admiration I felt in reading your last letter. Some, no doubt, would consider you precipitate, in commencing an assault upon the new Government upon any question, before they have had an opportunity of acting or having

it forward in debate. I do not think so, but agree with you, when you say, 'what is the use of turning out men, without you desert the measures that have caused them to be despised?' As you very justly observe, courtesy demands much; but with yourself, I did not think so renowned a soldier, and no less admired statesman, should have considered it necessary to have sacrificed those principles he has so long supported, with honour to himself and the welfare of the country, at the shrine of courtesy.

"Is not the language of his Grace adding insult to injury to a forbearing people, who have been so long oppressed by the misrule of the defeated Government? Is it not treating the generous exertions of a devoted people with contempt, to hear one of their oppressors thus lauded? May they not truly ask, 'If Lord Melbourne is what you say, why have you been so anxious to divest him of power?—why wish to remove so faithful and disinterested an adviser from Her Majesty's Council?' Either he must be a very ill-used gentleman, or the Duke must have knowingly perverted the truth, when he addressed his Lordship on his resignation.

"No one, Sir, entertains a higher respect for the talents of our illustrious chieftain than I do; at the same time, I cannot allow my admiration to overcome the love that I entertain for the land of my fathers, and in which I first saw the light of heaven. I should like to know in what has Lord Melbourne served Her Majesty. Is it by alienating her beloved people?—by carrying measures that have reduced them to the lowest depths of misery?—by making poverty a greater sin by far than that of felony? Can he be called a *patriot* who would do this?—can he be called a loyal subject of his Sovereign, who would advise her to deprive one section of her subjects of protection, that another portion may feast on their ruin for a time, but which ultimately will be for the destruction of both? Yet this despoiler of British rights is eulogised for his *patriotism*, when no longer able to proceed in his course of spoliation, and having been denounced by the people as unfit (and by a people adequate judges of his capabilities) to preside over the affairs of this empire.

"Still those accursed bastiles are allowed to stand, monuments of tyranny, on which is inscribed, in letters of blood, the heartless character of the Whigs. Still there they stand, mocking the misery of the people, while one of their principle originators is *applauded for his patriotism*, and that by a man whom they look up to with a love amounting almost to veneration; whilst a distinguished nobleman, whose whole life has been spent in trying to ameliorate the condition of the oppressed children of the poor, feels it his duty to refuse office under Sir R. Peel, because he will not relinquish his philanthropic views, which he must, if he joins the present administration, as they differ materially from those entertained by the Right Hon. Baronet upon that important subject. Well may you be alarmed for the future at this first essay. I must confess it holds out no very flattering prospect for the time to come.

"If Sir R. Peel thinks he can retain office, and at the same time continue to support the New Poor Law, his disappointment will be equal to that lately experienced by the sanguinary Whigs. The people are determined they will no longer be ruled by such despotism. The time has arrived when humanity must triumph over such a system of cruelty. The eyes of this mighty nation are fixed upon Sir Robert: God grant that we may not be disappointed, for it is not too late to restore this great empire to a state of unexampled wealth and prosperity. But this consummation, so devoutly to be wished, cannot be achieved, till every particle of that anti-constitutional measure, the New Poor Law Bill, is expunged for ever from the statute book.

"Does Sir R. Peel imagine that the community were anxious only for a change of men? If he does, he will find how delusive his imaginings have been. Does he think they will silently see that law continued, which separates the husband from his wife, the parents from their children, and leaves unprotected the erring daughter of sin and shame? Is the factory child still to be doomed to slavery?—is their youth's dark history still to be written in tears?—is there no hope that the hour of their emancipation will soon arrive, or are they still to remain at the tender mercies of the Cotton Lords, whose avarice only surpasses their cruelty? Are our rural districts, once the scenes of peace and contentment, still to be infested by that unconstitutional force, the Rural Police? If so, for what have the people been fighting?—what is the result of their enthusiasm? Sorry, indeed, am I to write it, but truth compels me—*bitter disappointment*, the effects of which will soon be seen.

"I have the honour to remain, dear Sir, faithfully yours,

"A. MACKINTOSH."

At present, I will not dwell upon that heart-grieving subject—I will cling to the hope that the noon-day of Conservatism may be brighter than its dawning.

It is now needful that I returned to the subject from which I was diverted by the sudden change of Ministers—to the exposure of the Whig Commission jobs. It is that of the Hand-loom Weavers, about which I was addressing you. I have shown you, that the evidence of two most important witnesses on behalf of the hand-loom weavers of Spitalfields and Lancashire, (against the delusions of the free-trade theory,) has been entirely suppressed, and that the man of all others, in whom the Yorkshire weavers relied, has been refused examination or neglected to be heard.

But, Sir, this is not all. The office of Assistant Commissioner needed still farther degradation, and, in the person of Mr. Muggeridge, it has assumed that of Spy. That man's official promise has proved to be valueless: he dared not to examine me openly and fully; but in secret he obtained all that he required, and, in defiance of his solemn word, he kept from me what he had promised to deliver. Not one word is mentioned of the whole matter in the Report of the Commissioners. But you shall now hear all about that tool of oppression, delusion, and fraud—all concerning the manner in which that spy inveigled me.

Mr. Muggeridge was formerly a "migration" agent in Manchester; but when the horrible system of selling agricultural labourers and their families to the mill-owners (under the authority of the Poor Law Commissioners) had aroused the indignant feelings of the people, Muggeridge's "occupation was gone"; he was then provided for by the Whigs, as an Assistant Hand-loom Weavers' Commissioner—a better berth, no doubt.

Under the instructions of his employers, he sought an acquaintance with me; he appeared to be, in all respects, a gentleman; he professed to be a Christian, and assured me "that he was a believer in the Bible, and read portions of that sacred book every day." How little he was benefitted by its injunctions, his base conduct towards me fully proves. Having manifested that he was a fit tool for the Whig Government, after he had, under false pretences, obtained what information I was enabled to give, and after having broken the solemn promise he made to me, he was considered a proper object of Whig Ministerial favour, and was immediately appointed Assistant Poor Law Commissioner in Ireland! It is but fair that the public should know by what means men have prepared themselves to climb into office under the Whig Government.

As a proof that Muggeridge's conduct was well known at the Home Office, I will relate it to you in the very words which I used, when I felt it to be my duty to explain the whole affair to Lord John Russell, who was then Secretary of State for the Home Department, demanding, as I did, a copy of that evidence which Muggeridge had surreptitiously obtained from me. The following is a copy of a letter which I then addressed to Lord John:—

"To the Right Hon. Lord John Russell, Her Majesty's principal Secretary of State for the Home Department.

"My Lord,—The session of Parliament being closed, and the duties of office being in some measure lessened, I hope your Lordship will not blame me, if I lay the following facts before you, and then make a request.

"Some months ago, Mr. Muggeridge, Assistant Hand-loom Commissioner, visited Huddersfield in his official capacity. I happened to be there at the same time. It was mentioned to me, by Mr. William Stocks, jun., that Mr. Muggeridge wished to be introduced to me. In consequence of that intimation I waited upon him, accompanied by Mr. Stocks. We had a long and a very interesting conversation; after which, Mr. Muggeridge intimated his wish to examine me in public; but expressed his fears, 'lest I might say anything which would have a tendency to excite the minds of the people.' I assured him 'that I had no wish to do so, and that I would confine myself entirely to answering any questions he might ask me.' I was accordingly examined by Mr. Muggeridge in public. At the conclusion of my examination, I offered 'to answer any other questions which he might wish to put to me.' He thanked me; stated 'that he was much pleased with my evidence, but had no wish to ask me any other questions.'

"Afterwards, I saw him, by appointment, with Mr. Stocks, jun., when he expressed a wish 'to examine me in private.' I told him 'that I had no objection to be thus examined, on condition that he would give me an exact copy of all my examinations.' He replied, that 'he had got into some trouble at head-quarters by giving Mr. Stephens a copy of his examination, which was published in the *Times* newspaper, and that he was blamed for having given that document; but he would give me a copy of mine, on condition that I should not publish it before the Report of the Hand-loom Weavers' Commission was printed; and, if my examinations were not published in that Report, then I might be at liberty to publish them.' I told him 'that I was particularly wishful to communicate all I knew to the Government; that I was persuaded our governors were totally ignorant of the real condition and wishes of the people; that it was no wonder they were so, because they consulted only such men who had an interest in deceiving them; and that nothing would give me more pleasure than to tell them all the truth, but that I wished also that the people should know all I said; and on the conditions proposed by him, I was quite willing to be examined in private, because I should have an opportunity of publishing all I had said, in case the Government did not do so.'

"I accordingly underwent a very long examination. About twelve o'clock at night the examination closed. Mr. Muggeridge then gave me the books, containing both my examinations, and wished me 'to read them over, and, if I wished to alter anything, or to add anything,' he desired me 'to do so.' Next morning I saw him again, and returned the books; at his request I underwent another long examination. During this examination Mr. Muggeridge cautioned me, 'that perhaps it was not safe to use some expressions which he had entered.' I replied, 'that I wished to say everything which I knew in the plainest language; and that I would be as free and as plain with the Government as I had always been with the people; that I rejoiced at this opportunity of telling the Government all the truth, and that I was ready to suffer any punishment which the law might award; that if I had said or done wrong, it was only fair that I should receive punishment for what I had said or done.' At the conclusion, without being asked, I signed the books, saying, 'as you think there is some risk in the matter, I will fix it upon myself, by signing all the examinations.' Mr. Muggeridge went to Manchester immediately, having, before we parted, promised 'to furnish me with a copy of the whole in eight or nine days.'

"Two or three days afterwards, being in Manchester, and having thought of a few more points, I called upon Mr. Muggeridge at his office: I told him, 'I wished to add a few things to my examinations.' He said, 'you can add what you like, I have not yet forwarded them.' I gave him several items, which I signed, and he said, 'he would enter them in my examinations.'

"Mr. Muggeridge then said, 'Your examinations are very important, and I really should not wish to appear in the character of a spy from Government, or that it should hereafter be thought that I had obtained this information from you unfairly. Will you, at your leisure, write me a letter, saying, that you were a willing witness?' I replied, 'Give me a sheet of paper, and I will do so immediately.' I then wrote a letter to the effect required, and gave it to Mr. Muggeridge. We had a good deal of chat, and he promised to send me a copy of the whole examinations in a few days. He said, 'I have your address—' "Advertiser office, Manchester."

"I waited until after the appointed time, but no copy was furnished to me. I then called several times at his office. He was in London. I left word with Mr. Mott, jun., for what I had called. I neither received a copy nor a letter. At length I wrote to Mr. Muggeridge. At first I received no reply. In answer to my third or fourth letter, Mr. Muggeridge informed me, that my commu-

circumstances were so important, that he had immediately forwarded them to Her Majesty's Government, and consequently he could not give me a copy!!

"To this most extraordinary letter I replied, reminding Mr. Muggerridge of the promise under which the evidence was obtained, and urging him to procure a copy, and to send it to me. To this letter I have received no answer. I then requested Mr. Mott, *sen.*, the Assistant Post Law Commissioner for Manchester district, to try to get me a copy. He wrote several times to Mr. Muggerridge, but still 'the copy' was not forwarded.

"I next requested a county M.P. to call at the Home Office, and ask for a copy for me. He saw the Under Secretary, who told him 'that he could not furnish him with a copy.'

"My Lord, I have now no other plan left than to trouble your Lordship. I have no request that you will favour me with a copy of those examinations, as promised to me by Mr. Muggerridge, as the condition on which I gave them to him.

"The fact that they are acknowledged to be 'important,' is a strong reason why the faith of an officer of the Government should not be broken with a subject.

"I feel assured that your Lordship will not refuse me a copy. I do not wish to repeat, in any way, or to explain away one single word in that evidence, but I do wish to have that which was promised to me—*i. e.* a copy.

"The facts that I am a political opponent—that your Lordship has charged me with being one of the authors of the late disturbances—and of your Lordship's having referred, in your place in Parliament, to these very examinations, are only so many additional reasons why faith should be kept with me—why I should have a faithful copy of all those examinations.

"My Lord, I should not have troubled you with this, if I could have thought of any other means of obtaining the document which was promised to me.

"Mr. Muggerridge was agent to the Government, employed under the department of which your Lordship is the head.

"This letter is long, but you will perceive that I have wasted no words in detailing the facts of the case.

"I have the honour to remain, my Lord, your Lordship's most obedient servant,

"RICHARD OASTLER."

"Royal Arms, Ramegate, August 29, 1839."

My application was useless. His Lordship had possession of the pilfered goods, but he refused to be governed by the principles of honesty! I may well rejoice that he is "out."

You will observe, that before I consented to be examined *in private*, Muggerridge gave me his word that I should have a copy of all that I told him. Some days after I was examined, he told me, that he had *not* forwarded the evidence; and afterwards he said that he had forwarded it, *because it was so important, before he had time to make a copy*; and still the whole is kept from the knowledge of Parliament and the public, and the promised copy is withheld from me, in spite of my repeated applications for it to Muggerridge, Lord John Russell, and the Marquis of Normanby.

It is possible that some persons will scarcely credit this statement—that they will not be able to comprehend how it is possible that any Government can thus act the part of swindlers. For the truth of all that I have asserted, I refer to Mr. Muggerridge, Messrs. Mott, Mr. William Stocks, *jun.*, Lord John Russell, and the Marquis of Normanby.

Why, Sir, the whole affair was a fraud from beginning to end—a fraud upon yourselves, (the landlords,) practised upon you, at your own expense, under cover of humanity! Instead of being an inquiry to benefit the hand-loom weavers, it was for the purpose of bolstering up a case in support of free-trade in Corn! This fact I shall, in due time, prove from their own Report.

Is it to be wondered at, Sir, that I should rejoice when such cheats are exterminated? More, however, about their frauds and themselves in future letters.—

I must not forget that this is my "*Fixby*" number. The accompanying drawing will recall to your mind, as it does to mine, your father and my father. You cannot look upon that sketch, without thinking of your prisoner, and of your ingratitude to him—I cannot see the picture of *Fixby*, without pitying its revengeful, but powerless owner.

It was my intention, when I arrived at this number, to have accompanied the view of *Fixby* Hall with a few of my reminiscences of that lovely spot. I am saved that trouble—an abler pen than mine has done that office of friendship for me.

On seeing the advertisement on the Cover of the *Fleet Papers*, an old and valued friend, who has resided many years on your estate, wrote me a letter which is worth printing—a letter which calls many things to my memory, and which will, I am sure, gratify many of my readers. If you knew who is the writer, you would feel the force of the following remarks, which have touched my heart, and made me still more pity you. For reasons which may be easily guessed at, the name of the writer must be withheld.

This is the letter of my talented and much-loved friend:—

"To Mr. Richard Oastler, Fleet Prison, London.

"———, August 27, 1841.

"My dear Sir,—Having observed a notice in the *Fleet Papers* that you are about to favour your readers with a view of your late residence, *Fixby* Hall, many recollections, both of a pleasing and painful nature, have been awakened in my mind, in reflecting on those bygone days of comfort and delight, when you lived at *Fixby*, and where I frequently made one amongst the happy, social party which surrounded your comfortable fireside, and were favoured, so many years, with your intimate friendship and regard. Those were indeed happy days!—yes, they were very happy, at least, they were so to me; and the inhabitants of that charming place always seemed to be peculiarly happy. *Fixby* is a lovely spot of earth! Elevated in its situation, it looks proudly down upon the vales below; while the freshness of its pure and invigorating atmosphere, seems to impart new life to those who, in their escape from the wearisome toils and business of life, seek to relieve themselves of their monotonous feelings, by throwing their cares to the wind, and inhaling those refreshing gales which sweep along the hills and rustle in the trees.

"But you are now gone! and with you, much that contributed to the attractions of that place is departed. You and yours constituted the chief joy and delight of that once enviable and sweet retreat! The whole scene is now changed! The Hall is deserted by its late loved inhabitants, save one solitary individual, who still remains, as if left only to chant a requiem to the lamented departure of those whose presence bestowed life and animation, and seemed to crown the whole with interest, cheerfulness, and sweet content.

"Often does my imagination still wander; and I, as it were, realize over again those scenes which yielded me such true delight, when staying under your hospitable roof. There I have, indeed many a time enjoyed 'the feast of reason and the flow of soul.' I have there met that best of men, the late Michael Thomas Sadler—the Rev. G. S. Bull has been your guest with me, and so have many other of nature's nobles.

"Your lovely neighbours, those young girls who used to come and sit, and chat, and sing, and play, and smile, as though 'at home,' with the amusing Quaker and your other neighbours, enlivened many winter evenings which I have spent at *Fixby*.

"In those days, a visit to *Fixby* was, to me, earth's highest treat. When I think that any man has been so cruel as to break up your domestic circle—to tear that wife from her husband—to cause her heart, and that of your adopted, to sigh for you—and fix you thus in prison, I blush to acknowledge myself a man.

" Ah, my dear friend, when I awake from my pleasurable dreams about Fixby, a dreary vacancy presents itself. Those richly diversified and splendid views, which strike the sight wheresoever the eye turns itself throughout the widely extended amphitheatre of the surrounding country, and which at once astonish and delight the beholder, while they give wings to the imagination, have now lost their power to charm me, as in former days! The chain of events is broken, and many links are now wanting to bind my attachment to that once delightful place, where I have so often, with you, beguiled the hours of leisure in rambling through the woods and grounds, listening to the sweet and useful melody of the feathered songsters, and admiring the beauties of creation in all the rich and varied tints of foliage which embellished the surrounding scene. If, in those rambles, we met a servant, tenant, or neighbour, it was delightful to witness your friendly greetings. The events of friendship, in those days, heightened every pleasure, and doubled every delight! Nor can I feel less contrasting your present situation with your youthful days, and with those years when the sun of worldly prosperity shone so brightly upon you; but your subsequent residence at Fixby seemed to have settled you for life—all around you there looked loveliness and peace, nothing appeared wanting to complete your joy. Alas! what changes does time produce! 'Tis well the future is veiled from our view, or sorrow would often enter sooner than her allotted time.

" I am well aware of the strength of mind which you possess to bear up against changes, in themselves calculated to depress your energies and to destroy your health; but it cannot be that you do not sometimes feel, and acutely too, the very great alteration in your circumstances. How different the cell which now confines you, to the spacious apartments you formerly occupied!—how dense is the atmosphere of the Fleet, compared with the pure air of Fixby. Of how many domestic comforts and enjoyments are you necessarily deprived, which throughout your life you have been accustomed to—to say nothing of the prison walls which surround you, and limit your ramblings, though they cannot fetter your spirit, which rises superior to all; yet the dull monotony of each succeeding day must weary the mind, and perhaps slowly, though surely, undermine your once vigorous constitution.

" In contemplating these things, I am apt to grow angry, and without ceremony to upbraid Mr. Thornhill for rewarding you in the way he has done, for so many years of anxious, diligent, and faithful service. I cannot understand how a man of his reputed honour, integrity, and benevolence of character, should have acted in the cruel manner he has done to you. Many times have I heard you speak of his humanity and kindness towards the widows and orphans on his estate, and of his unwillingness to afflict or distress, in any way, the industrious poor. I well know the very high esteem in which your late excellent and venerable father held him, and how he thought it an honour to serve him and promote his interests in every possible way. Nor have you been less assiduous and faithful, during the whole period of your residence at Fixby. As Mr. Thornhill's steward, your reputation has stood deservedly high, while the tenants loved and revered you, whose friend you were, as well as that of your once honoured and highly esteemed master. I should have thought it impossible for a man of Mr. Thornhill's character ever to have forgotten the debt of gratitude which he owed to you, for the zeal and ability which you always exercised on his behalf, and particularly for your successful opposition to the new claims of the Vicar of Halifax. Your labours in that cause cost you, as I well remember, more than Mr. Thornhill could have repaid you, and he been disposed to try. Your anxieties and exertions deprived you of your health, and also endangered your life; but I never heard that you received any, the smallest recompense, although the benefit to Mr. Thornhill was very great. A cell in the Fleet is a poor recompense for such services as yours. I often feel surprise that, after such treatment, you should think well of the astrology.

" I know your noble and disinterested feelings in serving others; and I must tell you, as a friend, that I do not think you have always acted the wisest part for yourself in the course which you have pursued. You have not sufficiently considered your own interests, nor those of your family, in your eagerness to benefit others. It was always your pride to save your master's pocket, even at the expense of your own; but you have done it to your own disparagement, for the honour due to your merit is not assigned to you. So true is that proverb—"Men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself;" and would not Mr. Thornhill have thought more highly of you, had you grown rich as his steward? I believe he would. But so it is—a man's good will is but little accounted of, and voluntary services, however valuable, are seldom appreciated. Hence,

that which ought to excite the liveliest gratitude, and to call forth a return worthy of such disinterested benevolence, seems often to become a motive for withholding that which is so justly due.

“Excuse my having said thus much relating to your affairs with Mr. Thornhill. I cannot, however, conclude this letter, without expressing my regret and astonishment that he should, after approving and aiding your endeavours to destroy tyranny in the factories, be so utterly blind to his own interests, as to become a supporter of the New Poor Law, after all the pains you had taken to convince him how inimical it was, in its very principle, to the interests of the aristocracy, as well as to the community at large. The honest frankness of your letters, and the subsequent confirmation of your repeated warnings, ought now, at least, to satisfy Mr. Thornhill that you have always sought to promote and secure his interests; and that in pleading the cause of the poor, you were most effectually advancing and confirming his own. Excuse the trouble I have given, and the liberty I have taken; the recollection of Fixby forced me into this strain.

“Hoping that mistaken principles may no longer lead Mr. Thornhill astray, but that he may soon emerge from the clouds of prejudice, in which he has been so long enveloped concerning your real character, and that he may delay no longer to do you justice, is, my dear Sir, the ardent desire of yours ever,

“—————.”

The writer of that letter is your friend and mine. When I received it, I resolved to print it in the number with the picture of Fixby Hall. I wish that I might also have given you the name of my friend and yours—that, however, I am forbidden. Our friend views things through an earthly medium, and seems to fancy that there is no reason for my being here—that it is all *your* prejudice and malice. True, those are the *means*, but I look beyond yourself for the *cause* and the *end*. This cell, these walls, and all this *seeming* punishment, cause no grief to me—they give a sweeter zest to Fixby and its recollections.—Think not, however, that I can look unmoved upon the picture of Fixby Hall. Ah! no, Sir, every touch of the pencil reaches my heart-strings! The ties which bind my best affections to that place, defy these prison bars; aye, and what is still more steelly—*your malice!* My friends, *your* tenants, surround that spot: in prison, I cheer myself by knowing that they love me, and I feel that I deserve their love and yours. That flag you see over the eastern front, was unfurled in honour of the visit to your steward of the best man of his age—it was inscribed, “WELCOME TO SADLER.” Your mansion never contained a worthier visitant! I must not now dwell upon this subject;—true, I can feel, although I must not grieve about Fixby.

It was needful that I should come here: God saw that it was good; and while it is so, He will keep me here; no longer shall I be, what now

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—I wish that I had received the letter from the stone-masons earlier. As it is, I must, for the present, be content to refer my readers to page 2 of the Cover. Those who would really understand the circumstances and condition of our working classes, will do well to read that letter with serious attention, and then ask themselves, “Would it be desirable that the working men of England should be reduced to the degradation of tamely submitting to such brutal treatment?” I feel assured that the employers of those men will, when they have read their letter, justify their conduct.—R.O.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

Vol. I.—No. 40. LONDON, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2, 1841.

Price 1d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—Many are the inquiries which I receive, "Will the *Fleet Papers*, hereafter, be Ministerial or anti-Ministerial?" My answer to one and all is this—I shall take the word of God for my guide, and steadily pursue the course which I have followed for the last thirty-four years. I am, in heart and soul, an admirer of the British Constitution, because I do not believe that the wisdom of man can devise a scheme more fitted to produce general prosperity, harmony, contentment, and happiness. Our national and social evils have their origin in the neglect of the principles upon which the Constitution is founded. It will, therefore, be my duty, as it is my determination, regardless of persecution and obloquy, to support every measure of the present Ministers, which is founded on the principles of our Constitution, and to oppose every scheme which tends to their destruction.

Centralization, which is destructive of the constitutional principle of self-government;—*Competition*, which rejects every constitutional restraint;—*Emigration*, which is founded on the assumption that every industrious man has not a right to live in his native land, and which, in its operation, weakens and impoverishes the country, by draining it of its strongest, most skillful, and consequently, most useful workmen;—*the New Poor Law*, which is acknowledged, even by its supporters, to be unconstitutional, and which, in practice, is intended to dry up the sources of charity, and, by law, awards a severer punishment to poverty than to crime;—as well as every attack upon the national Church, from the Conservatives, will be resisted by me, as boldly and constantly as they have been, when adopted by the Whigs;—in short, every departure from the constitutional bulwark, will find, in the *Fleet Papers*, a resolute and constant opposition.

I shall prove myself to be the best friend of the Conservative Government, by fearlessly telling them the truth. Had the late Ministers believed, instead of abusing, wronging, and persecuting me, they would not have been driven from office, under the execrations of a betrayed people. I know, and therefore I speak right out, that the people of England will not endure the con-

nance of Whig misrule, though it should be practised by parties who call themselves Conservatives. A change of men will not satisfy the nation—a return to constitutional liberty will alone allay the national discontent, and restore tranquillity and prosperity.

I am also asked, “If I approve of the delay, which has been proposed by Sir Robert Peel, for five or six months, before the state of the nation is to be considered?” Unhesitatingly I answer, “No.” Delays are always dangerous—delay, under our present circumstances, will be ruinous. The inconsistency of Sir Robert Peel’s first proclaiming the national affairs to be in a most ruinous condition, and then demanding the immediate expulsion of those who had mismanaged them, and his own call to office, before he would propose a remedy; and now, when in office, refusing to attempt any restoration of the national health until he has received two quarters’ pay, as his prescribing fee, can meet with no defence from me. It may, or may not, be considered good diplomatic generalship, by mere partisans; that is a question to be settled between the two parties, and, *as parties*, I shall not interfere with them. Sir Robert was justified in keeping silence while the Whigs retained office; since then, his silence appears to me to be indefensible.

I object to any delay, because I know that the country cannot safely wait. These are not ordinary times; Great Britain has, at this epoch, reached her most perilous day of trial: she has been driven about by the whirlwind of faction—she has almost lost her reckoning—waves and billows, and rocks and sands, still beset her course—she has changed her captain, not to slumber awhile in this raging storm, but steadily to direct her track towards the haven from which the billows of party strife and false philosophy have driven her. If Sir Robert Peel has no meliorative and restorative principle to propose, I think that he would have shown his wisdom by refusing office. True, he has for the moment exalted himself and his party, but what can the nation gain, if the ruinous course of Whig legislation is to continue another six months?

It is natural enough to imagine that Sir Robert may not be able, all at once, to arrest the confusion and ruin which, on the development of the gross mismanagement of all the departments, must meet him at every turn: it would be unreasonable to expect any man to be ready with specific measures of relief for all that mass of misgovernment which the Whigs have created. But, there are general principles upon which the Whigs have acted, and which have resulted in the derangement of all our national affairs; and I cannot hide from myself the necessity, ay, and the sound policy also, of Sir Robert’s at once stating, “My predecessors have brought the empire to the brink of ruin, because such and such have been the principles upon which they have acted; I shall hope to restore national prosperity, by pursuing a very different line of policy. I shall found all my measures of melioration and restoration upon such and such principles. My predecessors have governed by fraud and force—justice to all shall be my aim; they have stripped the cottage, degraded the throne, and desecrated the altar—my course will be the restoration of the rights of all. Meanwhile, I shall require Parliament to aid me in a searching inquiry into the condition, the disorders, and the resources of the nation.” Then, Sir, it would have been wise

and safe to have kept Parliament together, to have fully investigated the whole state of the nation—to have searched for the real cause of all our distress, and perhaps we should have discovered, that the very things on which we most pride ourselves,—the amount of our vast and individual masses of accumulated capital—the enormous extension of our manufactures—the vast increase of our untaxed machinery—and the unparalleled amount of our foreign trade, were some of the causes of our national and domestic sufferings; and that the very remedy which is proposed by the Whigs for our cure, would, if administered, only accelerate our national dissolution.

It is high time that we should make some inquiry, as to whether we can grow and produce sufficient food for the people, and not determine, in the dark, that it is most advantageous to be fed by foreigners out of the produce of our manufactures. Nay, the question of the good or evil of free-trade has never yet been settled—Huskinson is *supposed* to have determined that point in favour of the freedom of trade, and yet he, as I have shown you in a former letter, abandoned that theory as hopeless. For myself, I entirely repudiate all hope of redress for our manufacturing grievances from the adoption of free-trade, because I believe that *theory* to be contrary to the very principles of our nature, the laws of God, and the precepts of Christianity; and, in *practice*, we find, that the more we slacken restraint and protection, and recklessly increase our exports, so much the more we are involved in misery, wretchedness, and want.

This, Sir, is a time when the helmsman of this country must be bold, as well as prudent. These are questions which must be met—they can no longer, with safety, be evaded. The whole system of our manufacture must be examined, and some cure must be provided, against the universal tendency to remove wealth from the working and from the middle men—the labourers, small manufacturers, and shop-keepers—to the large and extensive manufacturers and traders. This system of permitting the unlimited centralization of manufacturing wealth, has not only weakened the country, but it has tended to remove the blessings of the national laws from all the manufacturing operatives. They are no longer, as they used to be, sprinkled about in families, working independently in their domestic circles, but thousands of them are now pent up in mills and workshops under one man—he alone has the care and controul of them—him only do they *serve*. His laws are their guide, and they are virtually removed from under the laws of the land. Sir, it is, in a great measure, to this source, that much of the discontent and demoralization of the country is attributable. Now, a Government that will fearlessly meet our national difficulties, must not be afraid to enter upon an investigation of these matters, and to provide a cure for the evils which are avowedly consequent upon our present system of machinery and trade, and for the natural tendency of capital to centralize under such circumstances.

Then, the question of the industrious poor having a *right*, *yes*, Sir, a *right*, to be fed, and sheltered, and clothed in the enjoyment of liberty, which wrong the Malthusians and the New Poor Law *deny*, ought to be, nay, must be settled, before any statesman can safely proceed to legislate for this nation.

Another great national question seems to be still undecided, which must be solved before any further State measures are adopted, *viz.* is it wiser to quell distri-

bances and destroy discontent by removing their causes, or to attempt to smother them by an exorbitantly expensive police force? Read the following—look at the cost, contemplate the hateful feeling which such force engenders in our different localities and neighbourhoods, and say, is it not time to inquire how all this expense and these heart-burnings may be spared?

“THE RURAL POLICE.—This Whig measure of centralization is about to receive its quietus in Lancashire. On Thursday last at the annual County Session, at Preston, it was resolved by a majority of 71 to 18, ‘that it was desirable to abolish the County Constabulary Force, in consequence of the great increase of county rates, which had advanced three-fold, without any corresponding advantages.’ The expense of maintaining this force in the rural districts, we are told, has been of so serious a nature, that the cost to the farmers in many instances has operated equal to a tax of 5s. an acre.”—*Stockport Advertiser*, Sept. 17, 1841.

On the same subject, my friend, the editor of the *Halifax Guardian*, remarks:—

“The reasons which induced such a large majority to vote for the dissolution of this pet force, are worthy of attentive consideration, since they furnish us with a complete refutation of the Whig arguments in Yorkshire. Its grievous expense and its notorious inefficiency, coupled with the unpopularity which it continued to experience, were the causes assigned by the Lancashire magistrates for their votes against the continuance of the force. Between three hundred and four hundred petitions were presented against the force, signed by all classes of rate-payers, and coming from all parts of the county, all bearing testimony to its enormous expense and its ridiculous inefficiency. As a preventive service, (in which light the Whigs would force it on this Riding,) we have it on the authority of several magistrates, that the Lancashire police was of no benefit whatsoever.

“‘In Blackburn Hundred,’ said Mr. Greene, ‘the force as a preventive service was quite useless;’ whilst Mr. P. Ainsworth said, ‘the prevailing opinion in Bolton was, that the force was quite inoperative; the charges now levied on four townships were 300*l.*, whereas before they did not amount to 50*l.*; and he felt quite convinced that the *detection* of crime was not at all greater than before the force was established.’”

Such facts should make the admirers of the Rural Police, question the policy of continuing that force.

Before Sir Robert Peel can know how to provide for the deficiency in the revenue which the Whigs have bequeathed to him, he ought to settle the long disputed question of taxation—viz. as to whether direct or indirect taxation is the wisest?—whether taxes on the labour of the poor or on the property of the rich ought to be levied? If this point is not now settled upon the principles of wisdom and justice, no human power can prevent its future “adjustment” by the laws of necessity.

The whole question of our Machinery, too, as to its use or abuse, and whether any, and if any, what limit or restraint ought to be adopted, and as to whether it is just that machinery should still remain untaxed. All this, Sir, ought now to be investigated, considered, and settled.

To me, it always seems very strange, that a power which has, in two generations, amassed so much wealth as to enable its possessors to boast, “that they can buy up the property of all our aristocracy,”—a power which has, without controversy, degraded the condition of our operatives, thrown thousands and tens of thousands of cripples and disabled persons on to the land for relief, and which has shortened the duration of life one half!—I say, Sir, to me it does seem passing strange, that such a power should have been allowed to

exist so long amongst us, and not one of our statesmen should have dared to ask, "Shall we tax?—shall we regulate?—shall we restrict this mighty power?" Nay, that when I have proposed any inquiry into the matter, I should have been denounced, not only by the owners of machinery, but by the Government, as a madman, a firebrand, and an incendiary! Still, Sir, I have a shrewd guess, that much of the bewilderment of our statesmen arises from the want of information on this subject. And I am sure that the time for inquiry has now arrived, when the owners of *that* untaxed power are employing their wealth to excite rebellion against the landlords, and threaten to abscond with their capital, if we will not permit them to march on in their career of destruction, by surrendering our agriculture to their rapacious maw.

You, Sir, who have never resided in the manufacturing districts, are ignorant of the moral and social evils of permitting thousands of human beings to exist, the mere slaves of the most ignorant and brutish men—for such, in too many cases, are the Factory Lords. To those slaves, the laws of the land are generally a dead letter—the tyrant-will of their vulgar and despotic lord, is all the "law" they know! The result is, rebellion against such usurpation, which has too often been punished as rebellion against the laws of England! This, Sir, is a large field of inquiry, but it must be investigated, despite the bluster of the free-traders. You will then discover, that it is the untaxed monster of machinery which taxes the people to uphold its tyranny! Hence all our manufacturing towns are become military stations—they are garrisoned to protect an anti-social power against an industrious loyal people!—If Sir Robert Peel has not the courage to investigate the whole question of machinery, he is not the Minister who can save England at this epoch. I am well aware of the opposition which any Minister will meet with, who dares to grapple with this question; but, Sir, I heed not—if England is to be saved, it must be encountered.

The Currency, too—yes, the Currency—spite of its "final settlement" by the present Premier, requires further consideration. This subject will never be fully understood, and can, therefore, never be justly settled, until the Government is disposed to push inquiry respecting bills of exchange, as well as promissory notes and cash. *It is none other than THE QUESTION OF CREDIT*;—sooner or later, it must be investigated and settled upon that broad basis.

The Church must also occupy much of the attention of the legislature, with a view of restoring her to her primitive simplicity, purity, and usefulness. In fact, Sir, there are so many great and important questions to be decided, before any man can prescribe a sure remedy for England's disorders, that I think no wise Minister would propose to get over another winter with our national wounds and sores running and putrifying before his eyes, without once inquiring, what is the cause?—where is the remedy? Should Sir Robert Peel be so foolish, I warn him, that he will find his mistake, and that this mistake will prove his ruin. I warn him, that his enemies will not slumber during the recess.

It may appear very strange, that, at this time of day, so many important matters should remain uncertain and undetermined. It is strange, but so it is. The fact is, we have been bewildering ourselves so many years with the theories of false philosophy, that we are blind to the simplicity of truth. We have boasted of our acquirements

and knowledge in political science, whilst we are confessedly uncertain as to the rudiments and first principles of political economy. In search of freedom we have sacrificed our liberty, for liberty implies restraint. Hence all our discontent, poverty, and misery. Before Sir Robert Peel can restore this nation to her former greatness, he must eschew the dogmas of the philosophic school—he must be content to believe in the principles of the Constitution and of Christianity, from which he must have strayed, else he never would have approved of the New Poor Law and the Rural Police.

If “no legislative act can remove those distresses,” surely that “legislative act” should not be continued, which was intended to increase them by “reducing the people to live on a coarser sort of food,” and which has succeeded in wantonly augmenting the sufferings of the poor. It cannot be, that Parliament is omnipotent for evil, and impotent for good.

It is of no use that the Prime Minister should weep over the distresses of the people, and “hear of their sufferings with the deepest regret, with feelings as poignant as those of other gentlemen”—he is expected to prescribe. The patient has been delivered into his hands—he has accepted the fee—the nation is looking for his remedy.

Sir, Britain is not in a condition to allow her legislators to enjoy their accustomed sports this shooting and hunting season—her disorder requires immediate investigation, serious consultation, cool deliberation, and prompt application; for see what a state she is in!

I am in no danger now of being charged with sounding an unnecessary alarm, when I inform you, that in all our manufacturing towns, thousands of industrious persons are in a state of destitution which it is truly appalling to contemplate—thousands are literally dying of want! We have now become so accustomed to read reports of cases of deaths by starvation, that they excite but a moment's horror. It is fitting, however, that the gaunt tyrant—want, should not ride over us unnoticed. Read the following paragraph, which I have taken from the *Salford and Manchester Advertiser* of Septeianber 18, 1841;—it is only like many others in different papers which I might have selected. If the eyes of Sir Robert Peel are those of a statesman, (to say nothing of his heart,) he will not think it safe to leave such things to stain our weekly records, and rankle in the minds of the people a few months longer:—

“ANOTHER DEATH FROM STARVATION—INHUMANITY OF THE POOR LAW.—In our last, we stated that a poor woman had died in this town, whose death, according to the declaration of the coroner's jury, was ‘accelerated through the want of the necessaries of life.’ In that case, it was proved that the fear of being immured within the walls of the union workhouse had operated to prevent an application for relief; and we have this week the melancholy task of recording a case in which the same ‘test’ has still more clearly and immediately been the cause of death. The name of the deceased is John Handley; he was 39 years old, had a wife and six children, the oldest about 15 years, the youngest in the arms, may be about 18 months old. He was afflicted with asthma, and was under the Infirmary about ten months ago for his complaint, at which time he applied for assistance from the overseers of Manchester: he was severely reprovod, and told to go to work, (although yet unwell, and not fit for it,) and that he should have no more money. He was promised a hammer, with which to break stones in the town yard, (and this in winter too, and for an asthmatic man) or he might have an order to go into the poor-house. He was not able

to perform the work with the hammer, and the dread of being separated from his wife and children prevented him from complying with the latter. He occupied a house in Edwin Court, Buxton Street, London Road, not far from the 'gates of the rich man,' our present mayor, the rent of which was 4s. a week. They let off the front room for 1s. 10d., leaving the rest rent 2s. 8d. The eldest boy received 5s. a week up to May last, when he was admitted to 6s. 6d., taking 2s. 6d. from which, there is just 3d. a week each for the man, his wife, and the six children, or about one-third of a penny per head a day for food, for fuel, for clothing, for soap, and all the usual items of a family!! We extract the following from the evidence given by the deceased's widow, Mary Handley, at the inquest held before Mr. Chapman, on Thursday. It is as follows:—During ten weeks we were nearly starving, and deceased went to the board of guardians, and they ordered him 4s. a week for a month. I think he received that sum twice; but when he went the third time, Mr. Howard met him at the door, and said he should have nothing, as he was able to work; but after waiting some time, the board gave him 3s., and stated that he was to have no more unless he would go into the workhouse. On asking what was to become of his wife and children, Mr. Howard said that he must be parted from them, upon which he burst into tears, but said nothing. On his return home with the money, he told me what had been said to him, and added, that before he would go to the workhouse, and be separated from us, he would die with me and my children. I wanted to go to the board again, but he would not let me, and he did not go himself, saying that he would die rather than give them any more trouble. The reason why out-door relief was suspended was, that Mr. Howard had been to our house the day before, and, having seen deceased smoking, said that he did not want, as he was able to purchase tobacco. We told him that a friend, who was then sitting by deceased, had treated him with it. They had nothing to it but water. We were teetotalers. During last week we had scarcely anything to eat; on Wednesday and Thursday we had nothing at all. We had three meals on Sunday, but on no other day for the last twelve months. The children are all naked, and but for the neighbours we must long since have died. The deceased was 39 years of age. He had been reduced by hunger to a state of extreme weakness, and died about three o'clock on Monday morning.—Much compassion was shown by the jury to the widow, and they collected a small sum for her temporary relief, and signed a request to the board of guardians that her case might have proper relief and attention. Verdict, 'Death accelerated by Starvation.'

Such awful *State* murders may now obtain little notice among politicians who can postpone the remedy for such evils six months, but they are regarded in Heaven, and will most assuredly bring down the curse of Almighty God upon our guilty land, if unrepented of. For "the eyes of God are upon the ways of men, and he seeth all their goings." "He knoweth their works, He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others; because they turned back from Him, and would not consider any of His ways: so that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto Him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted."

I am often struck with the anxiety of the leading Whigs in Manchester, Leeds, Huddersfield, &c., who *now* make so much ado about the awful sufferings of the poor; because when Mr. Fielden, myself, and our friends, some years ago, published the destitute condition of the manufacturing operatives, *these very* men were our reprovers! — they *then* denied our statements, gave us very foul names, ridiculed our conduct, and laughed us to scorn. Still the fact *was* so, as the fact is *now*!

Whence, then, their present sympathy for the poor!—why now are their complaints so loud? I will tell you, Sir. The tide of misfortune has risen—its murky wave has wet *their* thresholds!—they have now a fellow feeling with the unfortunate operatives! When I told them, some years ago, that "their turn would follow," they sneered and scoffed at me—now, they feel the pang of poverty themselves, and complain both loudly and bitterly.

Sir, your "order" must follow, if a complete change of measures is not adopted by our legislators! and methinks five or six months is too long to wait! Visit the Exchange, and hear the opinions of our first-rate merchants; they will tell you, "they do not know who to trust." Ask your first-rate shopkeepers—"not one in ten of us are solvent," will be their answer. Inquire at Manchester—"the distress is universal, it pervades all classes of the manufacturing community," is their reply. Paisley moans, "our manufacturers are almost all in a state of bankruptcy." The universal cry of your bankers betokens despair—never before were their ledgers so blotted with bad debts. Indeed, turn where you will in all our manufacturing districts, and amongst all classes—save the overgrown capitalists, who, like birds of prey, feast on rottenness—the slaughter-house masters, who thrive upon the loss of others—all but these, Sir, are in a state of the most awful uncertainty, tottering on the brink of ruin, or already dashed to pieces on the rocks and shoals of the ocean of free-trade! Sir Robert Peel thinks that these matters may be safely left to right themselves another six months—I think that Sir Robert Peel will discover his mistake before the winter is over.

Is your rejoinder, "what you say may be all very true about the manufacturing districts, but in the agricultural districts we are very prosperous?" If so, you are very cruel, very unjust, and you deserve severe punishment; for look here, Sir, see what is related of your "agricultural labourers," in the Appendix to the first Annual Report of the Registrar General of Births, Deaths, and Marriages:—

"The Poor Law Inquiry, and successive Parliamentary Committees, have shown that the families of agricultural labourers subsist upon a minimum of animal food, and an inadequate supply of bread and potatoes."

If you have money to spare for Rural Police, how much wiser it would be to pay your labourers honestly the full value of their work, and thus save yourselves from so much anxiety and expense. If you are prosperous, your labourers should not be in this wretched plight.—I do not believe it. I never can believe that either of our great interests can be prosperous, when the other is so awfully depressed. There is something rotten at the core, Sir; and if Sir Robert Peel does not rue delay in probing the festering wound, I shall be much surprised.

These hints are given in the true spirit of friendship;—may they be thus taken.

My anxiety to strengthen the Government, by warning Sir Robert Peel against a ruinous delay, (for such, I am persuaded, delay will prove,) has left me no room for the exhibition of the Whig fraud upon the landlords of England, under cover of the Hand-loom Weavers' Commission. I shall, therefore, reserve that matter for my next letter.

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—Letters reach me from your agricultural districts, convincing me that your population is in a very unsettled state. Low wages, and the heartless conduct of your New Poor Law minions, are at the bottom of this.—R.O.

THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY

JOHN PAVEY, 47, HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND,

AND

BENJAMIN STEILL, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW.

THESE Papers are principally intended for the perusal of the friends of Christianity and the Constitution; particularly the Clergy and the Aristocracy, and of all persons who are possessed of Property. The object of the writer will be to explain the reason for the present alarming state of English society, and the consequent insecurity of life and property; also, to offer some remarks upon the folly and wickedness of attempting to uphold our Institutions, particularly that of Private Property, by the unconstitutional means of Centralization, Commissioning, Espionage, and Force; finally, to state his own views on the best mode of restoring Peace, Contentment, Security, and Prosperity, to every rank of the people of England.

The author is perfectly aware of the fact, that every Parliamentary leader is now only attempting to legislate for the present moment—putting off the evil day—making laws “from hand to mouth,” in the hope that some unforeseen, fortunate event may enable succeeding Statesmen to legislate for posterity. He is also convinced that there is a mode of successfully re-establishing our Institutions upon their original foundation—Christianity;—and that that is the only way to preserve them from the encroachments of political partisans, who are now only paving the way to universal Ruin, Anarchy, and Despotism.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LUKE SWALLOW's kind and affectionate letter, dated Manchester, September 30, 1841, arrived too late for insertion in this number. It will be published next week.

WILLIAM DODD, the Factory Cripple, returns thanks to a Lady and Gentleman, London, for 15s.; to Mrs. Cadman, Leeds, for 3s.; and to William Thornhill, Esq., Buxford, for 5s.

Such letters as the following prove that the working men of England are libelled, when they are charged with ingratitude.

Leeds, September 24, 1841.

Dear Sir,—It is with feelings of pleasure that I now address you, after reading of the praiseworthy efforts of the working men of Bradford, particularly when we consider how frequently it has been remarked, that we are insensible of the greatest blessings during possession, while we feel their loss acutely, so are we slow in acknowledging our system of labour until the very hour they cease; and how often the bright token of a people's regard has to be dimmed with the tear of sympathy, unhappily caused by heart-felt regret. The example set by you of perseverance is the more valuable, because those exertions have been so disinterested. But, Sir, those remarks are not applicable to the men of Bradford; they have stood the foremost in your behalf on every occasion,—may their exertions be crowned with success. And should any plan be formed for the settling of these questions at issue between Mr. Thornhill and yourself, and if any exertions of mine can be of any service to you, they shall be cheerfully given, if you will return me, either by private or public communication. Sir, if there is any real happiness in this life, it is in the attainment of one like yours, which has been spent in good actions, and rec'd to memory and being with them the same pleasurable feelings which are always experienced in doing good actions. Accept my kind regards to yourself and family; also to the Rev. G. S. Hall, Mr. and Mrs. Hall, and their sweet Joseph Habbergham.—I remain, dear Sir, your sincere friend and well-wisher.

“To Mr. Oastler, Fleet Prison, London.”

“JOHN FLOCKTON.”

NOTICES OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

The FLEET PAPERS.—With this week's number of these eloquent and affecting outpourings of an true and honest heart as ever beat in man's bosom, is given a beautiful lithographed view of Fixby Hall, near Huddersfield, for seventeen years the residence of Mr. Oastler, while the steward of his present persecutor, Mr. Thornhill. The periodical in question has been published weekly for the last eight months. The first thirty numbers were almost entirely devoted to a full, free, and ungarbled narrative of the various circumstances which resulted in the author's imprisonment in the Fleet; he has now come to treat of political matters in general, but particularly those which bear upon the condition of the poor. 'The ways of Providence,' says a contemporary Conservative organ in the south of England, 'are marvellous, wonderful, and mysterious. This man, Richard Oastler, is in prison for debt—a debt that entails no dishonour upon him; and we wonder why such a man should thus, in his apparent sunset of existence, linger in the chamber of darkness. Our answer is in the fact, that his incarceration, though perhaps a deprivation to him, is a blessing to thousands, for it has re-opened his heart to pour out passages of pure philanthropy, that will live when his bones are in dust, and when the tears of the orphan child and the aged will have ascended to the throne of mercy for his eternal rest.' We were gratified to observe, in a late number of the *Flecters*, that a former townsman of our own is 'entered on the list of friends' of Richard Oastler. The name occurs in the author's introducing as horrible a picture of wretchedness as was ever put upon paper. We shall quote the whole paragraph:— * * * "—*Berwick and Kelso Warrier, September 25, 1841.*

The FLEET PAPERS.—We confess to our great negligence in having suffered so many of these talented Papers to pass without a special notice. The number for the present day (No. 39) contains a lithographic view of Fixby Hall. It is necessarily on a small scale, but is very like; and Mr. Oastler preserves his idiosyncrasy even in this, the prominent feature of the Hall being the flag with which he gave, many years ago, 'Welcome to Sadler.' The pen of Mr. Oastler is that of a sound as well as ready writer; he is a deep and original thinker—his ideas are bold, startling, sometimes ultra (for they own not expediency); but in all things he sees and owns the supreme necessity, not only of an individual acknowledgment (which for himself he ever manifests), but also of a national recognition of the Divine Being. We commend his remarks on the defeat of the Whigs to every Conservative and Christian heart:— * * * "—*Halifax Guardian, September 25, 1841.*

The following extract from the columns of the *Standard* of the 29th ult., in reference to the remarks made by William Busfield Ferrand, Esq., respecting Mr. Oastler, in the House of Commons, on the preceding evening, have conveyed to Mr. Oastler's mind a gratification which more than compensates for his imprisonment. To be understood, and to be more than appreciated by such talent, seldom falls to the lot of man in his lifetime. Those kind and benevolent persons will not despise the thanks of the writer of the *Fleet Papers*.

"The public gratitude is due to Mr. Ferrand, for his generous and manly acknowledgment of the inappreciable services of the excellent and cruelly persecuted Richard Oastler. It required no small gallantry of spirit to vindicate a man who has fallen under the ban of the aristocracy, for fighting their battle upon Christian and popular principles—the only principles by which an aristocracy can be saved in this age of the world, but principles so humiliating to the pride of wealth and station, that they make him who asserts them as much an object of dislike with the mass of those whom he defends, as with the enemy he resists. It was honourable and worthy of all praise in Mr. Ferrand to render justice to such a man. For ourselves, we never can think of Mr. Oastler's services, and of their reward, without a sense of shame for our party and for ourselves—of shame for the party that neglects such a champion and benefactor, shame for ourselves, upon the reflection that, with all our efforts, and with the enjoyment at least of liberty, we have not, no, nor all the Conservative press put together, done so much for the promotion of Conservative principles, for the cause of peace and religion, as this one gentleman has effected from his cell in the Fleet Prison, the debtor of a professing Conservative too, who knows that his victim is unable to pay, and whose conduct must, therefore, be purely vindictive."—*Standard, Sept. 29.*

The following address, from the eloquent pen of that truly benevolent Christian, disinterested politician, and classical scholar, Sir George Sinclair, Bart., will be read by the patrons of the *Fleet Papers* with admiration for the man who can thus utter the feelings of a heart beating with love to his country.

"TO THE CONSERVATIVE ELECTORS OF CAITHNESS-SHIRE.

"Gentlemen—Severe and protracted illness has prevented me from appearing amongst you both before and since the late dissolution, and I therefore deem it a duty, as well as an honour, to address a few remarks to you at this important crisis. I do not intend to dwell upon the circum-

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."
"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."
"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break
in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 41.

LONDON, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 9, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—I am a bold man, am I? A friend, who writes to me respecting my observations in the last number, says, that I am indeed a bold man. He is surprised "that I *dare* express my opinions on the subject of machinery and the factories so strongly."

I was not wont to fear the monster when I was in his presence—in his own territory, I fearlessly grappled with him—nor can I dread him now. He has done his worst to me. These walls protect me from his ire—this seclusion leaves me time to ruminate on all his deeds of blood!

Although I am your prisoner, I still love my country; nor will I silently behold her yielding to his murderous gripe! This once fair land shall not continue his charnel-house, if I can hinder it. Others may be terrified by his power and influence, and prepare to parley or succumb;—such foes he heeds not.

He knows my nerve, for he has tried it; but he never saw it bend—he feels it cannot break.

He has made some drunk with his poisonous theories—he has bewildered them with his puzzling sophistries; others are intoxicated with the contemplation of his greatness, and think that all must yield to him! I view him otherwise: his origin, his nature, and his name, are known and appreciated by me. I can behold his huge brick carcass without dismay, though not without loathing. When, in breathing, he emits large volumes of thick black smoke, he scares me not, but he excites disgust! The trophies of his prowess in the crippled limbs, curved spines, and wan and haggard features of his victims, but nerve my arm for conquest—nay, even his soul, the Anti-Corn-Law-League, which is now striving to shake the nation to its centre, and to provoke the people to rebellion, may spout, and foam, and storm at his own pleasure, he only makes me smile, and, by his writhings, proves to me, that victory must soon crown my efforts.

How strange, that he whose power a nation dreads, and makes her nobles tremble, but nerves your prisoner to another bold encounter!

The reason is, we have tried *our* strength in many battle-fields—many laurels have we broken. I have seen him fly—he never saw me falter. But since I came

to prison, he has saucy grown. I must once more meet the foe, and so I will; and, aided by strength divine, I hope to vanquish him!

But, Sir, it does surprise me, that the great aristocrats of England should so long have pandered to his will. First, you fed him with your foundlings, and the orphans of the poor—then looked tamely on, whilst he devoured his neighbours' children. When they were proved too few, the Irish flocked into his greedy maw, and he devoured them by thousands. For awhile, he was almost surfeited, until Friend Ashworth found the residue of Irish blood intractable, and neighbour Gregg was inconvenienced for hands "to mend his parlour doors!"—(See the letters of those two cotton-spinners to "Friend Edwin Chadwick," the Secretary of the Poor Law Commission of Inquiry, extracted in No. 14 of the *Fleet Papers*, p. 108.)

To quell the Quaker's fears, and save his neighbour from "catching cold by drafts," you, the landlords of England, forgetting that he was your foe, gave the greedy monster another meal of human blood, and delivered into Moloch's jaws the youthful progeny of your own labourers! This, Sir, is no fiction, it is an awful truth. For that crime you all now suffer! and will suffer more, if you repent not! You sold them to the fiend who now demands *your* lands! See the just retribution of an avenging God. Some years ago, I told you that it would be so—I have now lived to see the day of which I spoke.

Yes, the scourge of you landlords will be—nay, it is now even so—the "League," to whom you sold your labourers' little ones—for see, he now strives to wrest from you your property!—and unless the bloody parchment, the accursed New Poor Law, is rent from England's statute-book, until that compact of blood is broken, you will contend in vain with the foe you have thus strengthened!

They asked your "surplus population" for murder, and you surrendered them!—they now demand your surplus wealth, and you are powerless, and will be so, till justice once more resumes her seat in England's aristocracy!

Do you not see, that the New Poor Law is your weakness? Repeal it, and you stand—retain it, and your fall is sure!

The monster tells you he wants, and that he must and will have cheap corn. What for, the poor? Pshaw! he feeds upon *their* blood—he trades on murdering *them*! No! no! it is not the poor he thinks about, it is more "twist," more "cotton twist" for less wages; and then, with his future profits, he hopes, when he has reduced the value of your land, by depriving its produce of protection, to buy it, and thus turn all the present owners out.

There, Sir, in those few words, I have told you the foul fiend's secret. But knowing it, you cannot lift a hand to hinder, unless the New Poor Law is repealed; the people hate it so, and God abhors it!

How strange this talk. Many will say, why surely your prisoner is raving and insane! Sir, every word I have now written is sober truth—soon, you will find it so!

But why do I feel that it is required of me once more to buckle on my armour against the factory monster? It is because he will not tamely yield to justice. True, he no longer scowls upon the operatives—he is courting them

He now assumes another character. In the House of Commons, his representative dares to insult the champion of the factory children, Lord Ashley. True, in the agricultural districts, his emissaries are building their reputation upon "enormous lying," to drive your labourers to incendiarism. But in his own district, he puts on the mask of humanity, and is, forsooth, preparing "to do an act of grace!" By one of his servants, a Factory Inspector, he is proclaiming the necessity of AN ELEVEN HOURS' FACTORIES' REGULATION ACT, which, we are assured, "will be received, on the part of the well-conducted operatives, as a great boon!"—Now, Sir, this "Eleven Hours' Act" is really one for THIRTEEN HOURS!—from six o'clock in the morning to seven o'clock at night; and this, the Factory Inspector says, will be "a great boon!" More shame to the factory system, say I. This proves how cruel it has been.

I will tell you all about this subject in some future letters. It is enough, at present, that I assure you, and, through you, my little factory "subjects," that their "King" has *his eyes on their foes*.

I foresee that I shall have some rough work with the monster. He has driven me into another campaign against his tyranny—I will not spare him. I know that his "great boon" will be rejected "by the well-conducted operatives." They have resolved on obtaining the TEN HOURS' BILL, nothing else will satisfy them. They demand it, not as "a great boon," but as A RIGHT.

It is, however, needful that, in the onset, I should prove to you, and to my readers, that I am no foe to the improvements of science, or to the employment of machinery. I am only an enemy to their *misapplication*. Machinery was *intended* for a blessing, it is *used* as a curse to the country.

On this subject I have much to say; at present, in order to be understood by those to whom I have been *misrepresented*, (and I can assure you, that no man has been so *wilfully* misrepresented as myself,) it is only needful that I should reprint my former thoughts, and thus prove that I war against a tyrant-power, which has converted a great intended *good* into a real practical *evil*. I do not wish to destroy, my object is, and always has been, to restrain and regulate, and thus preserve.

On the 18th of May, 1833, I wrote a letter to the editor of the *Leeds Times*, which was inserted in that paper on the 28th of the same month, in which I said:—

"I have long been convinced that machinery was *intended* to be a *blessing* to the poor; but that avarice has, in many instances, constituted it a *curse*!

"There can be no doubt, that machinery was *intended* to lessen both the time and the *irksomeness* of labour; but it is, in too many instances, *applied* to increase the length and *tediousness*, and to decrease the reward of labour. It was *intended*, no doubt, to be a helpmate to the mind of man, to destroy, or at least to mitigate the horrors of the curse, 'of the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread,' and gradually to improve the condition of man, by allowing him time for religious, moral, and social duties and pleasures—thus preparing the world for that time 'when knowledge shall cover the face of the earth.' But the avarice of man has in many, very many cases, turned it into an instrument for increasing and perpetuating ignorance and vice.

"I set it down as an axiom, that whenever the use of machinery requires more or longer labour, and decreases the reward of the labourer, IT IS A CURSE.

"No person will dispute that a *spade* is an useful instrument, and that it is much better to dig with a spade, than to scratch the earth with a *stick*; but mark, if the capitalists make themselves

masters of all the spades, and the labourers cannot buy them, it is then in the power of the owners of the spades to make them a curse, by giving *too little* for the labour, and charging *too much* for the capital expended in the spades; or, in other words, by taking all, and more than all, the profit of the invention to themselves.

“No one will dispute, that the labourer who formerly *obtained a good living* by scratching the earth with a stick, was better off than if he were ‘*pinning*’ (starving) and working longer hours under the *improvement* of the spade.

“My opinion is, that the avarice of man will prevent the labourer getting his share of the advantage of machinery, until the law of the land protects him, either by shortening the hours of labour, or by *taxing very heavily every machine which does not belong to the man who works with it.*

“The present system is most ruinous. The moment that labour is made (to use the hackneyed phrase of the mill-owners) ‘*light and easy,*’ by improvements in machinery, the owner of the machines not only employs *women and children* instead of MEN, but he also requires that they should extend their hours of labour. Thus are the *men* turned out from the mills, the *children* are prevented having any instruction or recreation, and the *women* are taken from their families; and we are then told, that if we will not be such fools, the foreigners will. Thus we are persuaded to reverse the order of nature, and to destroy the happiness of the labourers.”

I remember reading the above to my dear friend, Michael Thomas Sadler. When I had done so, he, smiling, said, “Oastler, you have hit the nail on the head. In those few lines you have settled the question; that is the true principle; volumes cannot make it plainer.” I am induced to reprint it, because it has been the habit of my enemies to represent me to be an enemy to all improvement. Thus they have contrived to prejudice those who would otherwise have aided me to curb the tyranny of the factory masters. As I before told you, it has been the constant habit of my enemies to misrepresent my sayings;—what a mercy it is, Sir, that your malice has furnished me with the means of correcting the errors thus created in the public mind, by the weekly publication of my thoughts in these little *Fleeters*.

I hope that I shall now be understood; and I doubt not that I shall be able to establish, to the satisfaction of every unprejudiced, disinterested person, the right of the factory children to that which I have always demanded for them, a Ten Hours’ Factories’ Regulation Act—meaning always twelve hours, including two hours for meals—*i. e.* from six o’clock in the morning to six o’clock in the evening.

I shall also, I hope, be able to prove, despite the cavil of the philosophers, and the ravings of the Anti-Corn-Law-League, that it is for want of that wholesome restraint that much of the present misery in the factory districts, both of employers and employed, is to be traced. It is a never-failing truth, that to do justice is the way to do well: injustice is the sure forerunner of misery.

The factory masters have, hitherto, been strangely prejudiced against me, because I would not give their sins soft names. They have, however, often thanked me, for forcing them to look into their mills, where, to use their own words, “they have found cruelties and hardships inflicted which they never contemplated, in the working out of their own system.”

The fact is, Sir, until they were aroused by my exhibitions of the effects of their system, they never pondered on the weakness of the infants’ frames; they ruled all by arithmetic, “so much ‘twist’ for so much money;” but they never once asked, “Can the children bear it?”

I do not fear, before I have concluded my remarks and reasonings on the factory system, that I shall convince many mill-owners of their folly in persisting to uphold a scheme of injustice, the effects of which they are now, many of them, smarting under.

The universal cry now is, "We are ruined because we produce too much"—my cry has been, for many years, "Produce less." Had my advice been taken ten years ago, the present losses of the factory masters would have been prevented.

Enough upon this subject; I deemed it needful to tell my northern friends that I am watching the movements of the foe. They know that I will not show or spare him. Ten Hours' Bill men everywhere must prepare for action! Let the committees resume their offices, and tell the "King" of all their doings!—

It was my intention, in this letter, to have concluded my remarks on the infamous trick played upon the land-owners and the poor weavers by the Handloom Weavers' Commissioners. A circumstance has, however, occurred, which forces me to devote my remaining space to our own private affairs.

I will not apologize, I cannot beg your excuse, Sir; you have been in Yorkshire, to Fixby Hall. There you have seen some of my kind friends, the working men. I have observed paragraphs in the *Leeds Intelligencer* and the *Hull and Guardian* respecting their interviews with you; gratitude forces me to insert those paragraphs in the *Fleet Papers*—gratitude to those kind, affectionate, faithful, and beloved friends, whom the patrons of the accursed New Poor Law, once dared to designate "idle, unprincipled, profligate, turbulent, dissolute, and unnatural monsters." I cannot, however, permit these extracts to be read in my paper, without some remarks of my own—not about yourself or your family, or your claim against me, or mine against you, those matters I leave to be judged of by all who know us, and by posterity: they will be set right at the great day of account, if not before. But I must have "my say" upon a matter of principle, before I record the hitherto unheard-of kindness of my working friends.

It is impossible that any man can be more overcome by a sense of gratitude, than I am, to all my friends of every rank, but especially to those of the working classes, for the innumerable proofs of strong and ardent affection which my imprisonment has afforded them the opportunity of showering upon me. I do thank them! but most I thank God, who has given them such hearts, and who has thus, by them, "spread a table for me in prison." My comforts have abounded—my cup has overflowed—my mercies have been "heaped up, pressed down, and running over."

This last proof of affection has almost unmanned me. I am thankful—I am grateful to those, my friends of the working classes. And why? Ah, Sir, the reasons why I am thankful to them press so numerously and so touchingly, that I cannot speak them. To contemplate, that midst all their own unmerited and unprecedented sufferings and privations, they still think most of what they fancy are mine, makes my heart melt, its feelings force my eyes to overflow;—my lips cannot utter what I feel, my pen cannot write what I think.

My privations are not like theirs—I have no sufferings! This place, to me, is more like Heaven than a prison! I am wiser, I am happier, I hope that I am better for being here. I have no wish to leave this cell, except in God's

own way. Should that day arrive, I could not leave it without some feelings of regret. Ten such happy months were never my portion elsewhere. The face of man has never frowned upon me—the harsh tones of his anger have never reached my ears—I have not seen a foe in all that while! My friends have clustered around me! Perhaps my health has suffered; but God has never left me. I cannot give place to anxiety or fear, because His promises are faithful. I *believed* them so, before I came to prison—now, I *know* them to be true!—No, Sir, I have not a wish to leave;—and should I die, then the working men will see to it, that my remains shall moulder and mingle with my own Yorkshire's dust—I know that they will.

There is, Sir, a PRINCIPLE involved—I *am a prisoner for debt!* The Constitution of England awards no such imprisonment! I do not rebel, I do not complain—I *submit*, but I PROTEST! If the unconstitutional law thus barbarously wantons with the liberty and the LIFE (for that law leaves men here to starve and die) of the subject, it also ordains, that *caption pays the debt!* It unjustly gives the savage murderous heart the power to choose “body or goods,” NOT BOTH. I offered you more than the law awarded, all that I had, and then MY AFTER EARNINGS! Your choice fell on my body: it is yours, the law says so—flesh, blood, sinews, bones, skin—they are all your own; and had I owed you all England's currency, the moment my body became your property, that debt would have been cancelled. Remember, you did not take my body, till I had given you all the books—books which the verdict could not award you! They were not included in your claim against me, nor were they *yours*. I trusted to your honour! I believed, from what I heard in Court, that we were friends.—When you resolved to be vindictive, had honour retained her seat in Thornhill's breast, you would have returned the books, which were delivered up by me, under the conviction that your anger was appeased. But, unhappily for you, you were betrayed by those whom you believed to be your friends: thus did the false representations of *my* enemies and *yours*, compel you to perpetrate an act, which, when reason resumes her wonted seat, you will regret much more than I. Your prejudices now blind your reason, and force you to “reward me evil for good, and hatred for my love.” Time will remove those prejudices!—honour will once more find a home in your bosom, then all will be well: till then, Sir, I am willing to remain your prisoner.

I can never (until I am proved to be in error) admit the principle, that after ten months' imprisonment, a detaining creditor has any claim in law but blood and bones, and sinews, and flesh and skin.

I hope, Sir, that my friends will excuse me—I *am grateful to them*; BUT I PROTEST, ON PRINCIPLE, AGAINST PAYMENT FOR MY RELEASE! I protest, in the name of the spirit of the Constitution, against my, or any Englishman's or Englishwoman's, imprisonment for debt!—necessity forces me to submit. I do so with some degree of pride, knowing *that I suffer wrongfully!* The hand which strikes me should have been the hand to nourish me. I hope, however, that the mistaken kindness of my friends will not *force* me to submit to, and then protest against, my release.

I know, and I would have my friends remember, that the heart of my detain-

ing creditor is in God's keeping! When God wills, He can release *my body* and your *mind* at the same moment. But if I die here, and die a few months or years sooner for being here, what of that!—it will be God's will and way—it *must be right*. He never mistakes!

These remarks cannot grieve or offend those kind friends, whose devotion to me is unprecedented. In my life, I have never abandoned principle! My devoted friends will save me from that pang, on my release! I will not apologize for these remarks—I could not record this last kindness of my friends without them.

“MR. OASTLER AND THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

“At a meeting of the friends of Mr. Oastler, held at the New Inn, in Bradford, on Friday, Sept. 17, convened to take into consideration the propriety of addressing Thomas Thornhill Esq. on the subject of Mr. Oastler's liberation, a deputation, composed of Messrs. Auty, Balme, and Clarkson, was appointed to wait upon Mr. Thornhill, at Fixby Hall, which mansion he was expected to visit in the early part of the ensuing week.

“Agreeably to the above directions, the deputation having received information, on Monday noon, that Mr. Thornhill was at Fixby, took an early conveyance, and arrived at Fixby Hall at three o'clock, previous to which two deputations had already had interviews with Mr. Thornhill, viz. from Huddersfield and Dewsbury, on the same subject. The Bradford deputation, however, soon found themselves in the presence of Mr. Thornhill, when the object of their mission was briefly stated, viz. that they had been deputed by a meeting of the friends of Mr. Oastler, in the town and neighbourhood of Bradford, to wait upon him for the purpose of inducing him to liberate Mr. Oastler from the Fleet, believing as they did, that his services in Yorkshire at the present time would be of essential benefit to his country; and they feared that if Mr. Oastler was confined much longer, his health would be materially injured, and his life shortened, and that they trusted he had no desire to shorten the days or injure the health of his old Steward. They also assured him, that he could not bestow upon the working classes, as well as his own order, the aristocracy, a greater benefit than by allowing Mr. Oastler free-action in their defence.

“Mr. Thornhill, in reply, stated, that he had no ill-will towards Mr. Oastler whatever; that he had no wish to shorten his life or injure his health; that he had no doubt but that Mr. Oastler might be of use to the country were he at large; that he should be glad to see him liberated; but that he felt that he would not be doing his duty to himself and to his family were he to consent to Mr. Oastler's liberation without security for the debt.

“The deputation discussed the subject with Mr. Thornhill for upwards of an hour and a half, urging Mr. Oastler's claims upon him, believing as they did, that Mr. Oastler had sacrificed his all for his country's welfare; all of which Mr. Thornhill listened to with the greatest courtesy, and stated, that an influential gentleman in London had called upon him a short time since on the same subject, and to whom he had returned the same answer. He also showed the deputation a letter which he had lately received from one of his own counsel in the late action, Thornhill v. Oastler, interceding in Mr. Oastler's behalf, but to which he had not yet been able to reply.

“The deputation expressed their gratitude for the interest which that learned gentleman had exhibited in Mr. Oastler's behalf, and hoped that that, together with the wishes and interests of the thousands which had been represented to him that day, would be taken into his serious consideration, and that whatever proposition might be made to him for Mr. Oastler's liberation, they entreated him to be as lenient as possible; when Mr. Thornhill assured the deputation, that their visit would not prejudice him against Mr. Oastler, but the contrary.

“The deputation retired, regretting that Mr. Thornhill could not consent to liberate Mr. Oastler, but was glad to hear him express himself ready to enter into an amicable arrangement for that purpose; and they would hope that the time is not far distant when Mr. Oastler will be again restored to his family and friends.”—*Leeds Intelligencer* and *Halifax Guardian*, Sept. 25, 1841.

“MR. OASTLER.—In consequence of the visit of Thomas Thornhill, Esq., to his Fixby estates, a number of Mr. Oastler's friends held a meeting last week at Huddersfield, at which it was resolved, that a deputation should be sent to Mr. Thornhill, earnestly entreating him to extend his clemency to his late steward, by cancelling the debt for which he is now suffering the hardships of imprisonment in the Fleet. A deputation of nine respectable individuals waited on Mr. Thornhill

on Monday last at Fixby. Mr. Thornhill received them very courteously, but declined acceding to their request, except upon certain conditions, which, under existing circumstances, it was found impossible to comply with. We cannot at present enter into particulars; but we hope that, now the ice is broken, the Tory friends of Mr. Oastler will at once adopt such measures as may ultimately lead to his release from incarceration, and restore him to his family and friends."—*Leeds Intelligencer*, Sept. 25, 1841.

"Mr. OASTLER.—In consequence of Thomas Thornhill, Esq., being on a visit to his Fixby estates, a number of the friends of Mr. Oastler seized the opportunity to hold a meeting, at which it was resolved, that a respectable deputation should wait on Mr. Thornhill, to solicit him to extend his clemency towards his late steward, now a prisoner in the Fleet. Mr. Thornhill received the deputation, which waited on him last Monday, with much courtesy, but declined complying with their request, except upon conditions which could not, under existing circumstances, be complied with. We cannot at present go into the particulars, but we must be permitted to express our most fervent hope, that now the first advances having been made, that his Tory friends in Huddersfield, Bradford, Leeds, &c. &c., as well as those in Lancashire and other places, will immediately take up the affair, and, by using their most strenuous exertions, adopt some plan by which this great and good, but much oppressed and persecuted champion of the poor, may be restored unshackled to his family and friends."—*Halifax Guardian*, Sept. 25, 1841.

Thank you, Sir, for being courteous to my working friends.

Does it not strike you, Sir, on reading those extracts, that you are a *very mighty man*?—to have hundreds of thousands of your fellow men, by their representatives, imploring you to grant the liberty and save the *life* of an Englishman?—Ah, lack-a-day! what has my native country come to? Where are her *ancient laws*, her ancient sours? Where is her *boasted* liberty of the subject? How happens it, that in England, *under any circumstances*, one man can thus be arbiter of the liberty and *life* of his fellow man? I would rather be your prisoner, dying whilst protesting against such tyranny, (it is not, it cannot be law—it is sheer barbarism,) than call myself a *subject*, and be a *despot*!——What a contrast there is between "the fine *old* English gentleman," and he of *modern* times! "But," say you, "why does not Oastler take the benefit of the Insolvent Debtors' Act?" An *old* friend of mine, a *new* one of yours, says, "that you wish me to do so." Have you forgotten the bargain made between your attorney and mine, "that Oastler was not to avail himself of the Insolvent Debtors' Act?" You remember, that it was *proposed* by your attorney, and agreed to by mine.

But, Sir, had no bargain been made between our solicitors, I could not "pass through the Court," without sanctioning the barbarism which gives you the power to imprison and starve me to death! I am too much of an Englishman to admit that that is justice, and I can never become a *willing* party to that which is tyranny. Were I to regain my liberty by submission to that "law," I should become its slave. I would much rather be an unconsenting prisoner "inside," than a consenting slave at large. I cannot indeed understand how it is, that anything called "a law," can give one Englishman the power to imprison and *murder* another—can exalt *you* to an eminence, where hundreds of thousands must crave the favour, *that you will not murder me!* Do you think that the term *murder* is too harsh? Had it not been for the kindness of my friends, you would have *murdered* me, for we "prisoners for debt" are not like other prisoners—we are not allowed even the dietary of a modern workhouse! Some day, perhaps I may aid in shaming England out of such "a law." I am not the prisoner of a ^{con-}stitutional Jury or Judge, or of the Queen—you are sole Monarch, Judge, Jury, and Executioner, whilst

I am, YOUR PRISONER,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—Once more I thank my *working* friends! God bless them all! Be of good cheer, my kind and faithful friends. When I can serve you better "out" than "in," the prison bars will fly open.—R.O.

stances which led to the late change in our county representation, the details of which are better known to many of you than to myself. The great number of electors introduced upon the roll at the last registration, on the part of our opponents, convinced me at that time that we had no prospect of success on the present occasion; and this is the reason why I accepted, though not without reluctance, a most urgent and unexpected invitation from the Conservative electors of Halifax to stand forward as their candidate at the recent contest; and, although their efforts were not crowned with success, I can never feel sufficiently grateful for the disinterested zeal and unwearied energy which they displayed on my behalf. I subsequently learned, that my friends in Castlemore had determined, if there was the slightest prospect of success, to persevere in endeavouring to secure my return; but as it was discovered, after a careful scrutiny, that we could not have commanded a majority, they most wisely resolved to put an end to a contest which could only have occasioned irritation and expense. I rejoice to hear that both parties have agreed to eliminate all life-tenants from the roll; and if that step has been taken, I think that the Conservative party in Castlemore may look forward with much confidence to the result of any future election. In the meanwhile, I have learned with great satisfaction, that almost all my friends and supporters have remained true to the cause, and, however distant their place of residence, would not have hesitated (if called upon) to have honoured me with their attendance at the poll. One gentleman of great respectability, who declined to vote for me at the last election, did me the honour to inform me by letter, that he was now so thoroughly disgusted with the conduct of Her Majesty's Ministers, that he should be most happy to vote in my favour on this occasion.

Although, gentlemen, I have no longer the honour to represent you, I can never feel sufficiently grateful for the many proofs which you have given me of your confidence and esteem. I shall always reflect with cordial satisfaction that I was enabled as member for Castlemore, to render my name in the glorious majority by which, if I may so express myself, Her Majesty's Ministers have been branded in the forehead with the hot iron of a no-confidence vote. As the organ of an agricultural constituency, I have assisted in displacing a Government whose measures had a direct and inevitable tendency to lower the rents of the landlord, to curtail the profits of the farmer, to diminish the wages of the labourer, and ultimately to ruin all the great interests of the country. These Ministers, it is true, continue to be, *de facto*, the ministers of the Court, but have ceased to be, *de jure*, the Ministers of the Crown. I regard the late dissolution of Parliament as one of the most desperate and reckless acts ever perpetrated by a disorganised and reckless administration. In the first place, it was perfectly notorious, even to their friends, that they could not possibly secure a majority in the new Parliament, and, therefore, as was well observed by an honest adherent of their own (Mr. Stansy), 'they ought to have resigned after their first defeat.' In the next place, it is evident that they were chiefly anxious to embarrass their Conservative successors, by retaining the possession of a few of those seats which are still to a considerable extent under Government influence. And, lastly, their chief object was to retain for a brief season the enjoyment of place and patronage, for it is quite notorious that for several years past they have been totally destitute of power. This is well illustrated by a letter which I received the other day from a very able supporter of their own, whose name figures away in the list of the Liberals returned to the present Parliament, and who says, 'I see no reason why Peel should not remain in place for some years—I say place, for he has been in power for the last four years.' If anything were necessary to corroborate the assertion, that place and patronage are their only object, I should refer as an apt illustration to what I consider one of the most flagrant and disgraceful jobs ever perpetrated even by themselves—I mean the displacement of Lord Plunkett from the office of Lord Chancellor of Ireland. It is not for me, gentlemen, to discuss the merits or the services of that distinguished nobleman; it is not for me to say—'expedi Hannibalem.' It is not for me to enumerate the honours and emoluments which Her Majesty's Ministers have heaped upon that Noble Lord and his family, and to ask

"Quis LIBRAS de duce summo
Invenies?"

But surely an individual on whom they bestowed so many marks of their confidence was entitled to be treated with some degree of courtesy and forbearance, instead of which, when it suited their own purpose, they displaced him in a manner the most unceremonious and unfeeling. The Whig benefactor, wherever he was, by whom Lord Plunkett was virtually forced to abdicate, might just as well have borrowed a horse from the last of the highwaymen (if any such there be) in Ireland, and stopped the Lord Chancellor's coach, and put a pistol to his breast, and have exclaimed, 'The snail, or your life!' We may infer from Lord Plunkett's own volucratory speech, that the steps actually taken were to him just as compulsory and as revolting. Methinks I see the venerable Judge handing over his official insignia to the importunate Viceroy, and exclaiming, with a sigh—

"Oh, yes, my Lord, I see how it is;
I stay too long with thee—I weary thee;
Plain John so hungers for my empty chair,
That I must needs divest me of mine honours,
Before mine hour be ripe."

Now, gentlemen, although ingenious Whig special pleaders may palliate, or perhaps even praise, this closing act of the "Cromwell," I am sure you will agree with me in thinking, that 'the force of meanness can no farther go.' They cannot shelter themselves from ignominy by quoting the example of Sir Robert Peel, who appointed my distinguished friend Sir E. Sugden in 1834, because it is the invariable usage, when a new Government attains office, that a legal supporter of theirs should be entrusted with the Irish seals; but in this instance a friend of their own, who had no wish and no intention to resign, was unexpectedly compelled to abdicate his functions, when there was a perfect certainty, that in the course of a very few weeks their own official career would be brought to its termination.

Her Majesty was most graciously, but somewhat abruptly, pleased to dissolve the late Parliament, because they refused to sanction the financial measures of Her Ministers, and had declared, that their continuance in office was at variance with the principles of the constitution. Never was any decision less premature or more in accordance with public feeling. The general voice of the country had long anticipated this tardy verdict; and I do believe, that if the whole population, of every rank, sex, and age, had been divided into sections of 658, you would have found very few instances in which the opinion would not have prevailed, that the Government had forfeited every claim to national confidence or respect. The state of parties in the late House of Commons was anomalous and unprecedented. The numbers were so equally balanced, that each individual was 'himself a host.' At no former period were the inquiries after invalids so anxious and so frequent—never was the absence of a defaulter so deeply regretted, or a parliamentary traveller so cordially greeted on his return from foreign lands. A few years ago the dual party of the late noble member for Northumberland would have assumed (at least numerically) no greater importance than the contingent of the Abbess of Quedlinburgh, in the congregated squadrons of the Germanic empire; but, before the dissolution, Lord Howick and his respected *alter ego* were well entitled to say, *nos duo turba sumus*. I often thought, in reference to Her Majesty's Ministers, that there is one point of view in which it may be said, that during the last few years, their weakness has constituted their strength. Their supporters may be regarded as constituting two sections, the one of which contends, that in respect to reform we ought to go further, whilst the other as strenuously maintains, that if we did so, we should fare worse. We may suppose their noble leader turning, in the first instance, to the *ne plus ultra* section of his partisans, and saying, 'Well, Lemon, or worthy Sir Gilbert, pray do not be at all afraid of our going too far in the career of liberalism; you need not cast a longing, lingering look across the table at the Tory benches—the line of demarcation, which separates Peel from us, so far as political reforms are concerned, is purely mathematical and imaginary; it has neither length, breadth, nor thickness; in these respects we are nearly as Conservative as he is, at least, as aristocratic, and certainly far better courtiers. The political world assumes a different aspect when viewed from the Himalayan heights of office, from that which it wore when we surveyed it from the narrow Thermopylæ of opposition. You see how completely we have thrown the Dissenters overboard; we would not for all the world be seen in such company; and as for the Radicals, although when we are quite sure that it will not be carried, we must now and then bring forward some measure in accordance with their views in order to save appearances and keep them in good humour. You perceive here, in the main, we completely keep them at bay; and yet, although they may now and then belabour us with their vituperations, they will, on every pinching question, be enrolled in all our majorities, though they may occasionally (and they have our full licence for doing so) give their suffrages against us, when their opposition cannot affect our political stability.' As soon as his Lordship had calmed the fears and quieted the consciences of these over-cautious alarmists, (who, according to the Radicals, are afraid of their own shadows,) he turned round to the men of the movement, and exclaimed, with a sympathizing shrug, and expressive shake of the head, 'Ah, Grote—or, well, Gisborne—or Joseph, my fine fellow—you are all quite right in principle, wherever there is the march of intellect, there must always be the march of reform. I wish we were only free agents like you. Be assured that we are finalists by compulsion, and not by choice; but you know how awkwardly we are circumstanced. Did you read young Ellice's speech at Cupar, in which he gives a rap on the knuckles to the lukewarm friends who would secede from our ranks, if we attempted a manœuvre in advance? Even as it is, we are anxious to go on with you as far as we can—not that we could, at any rate, go the whole hog—not that, as yet, we are "absolute Josephs," but we are already half-seas over as regards the ballot—and we admit that there is a great deal in what Hume urges on behalf of household suffrage. Remember, that our only chance of keeping out the Tories, is to allow us to act on Tory principles—don't be in too great a hurry—only give us time—only let us live as long as Mr. O'Connell's grandmather—take, in the meanwhile, the word for the deed—and at the end of thirty or forty years, you may expect to see—what you shall see.'

"It is thus that Her Majesty's Ministers continued to please one-half of their adherents by their actual conduct, and to pacify the other half by their presumed intentions—they have thriven by promises, which were never meant to be kept—and the Radicals have lived upon hopes, which are never to be realized; relying as implicitly on the Whigs, as if they had entered into recognizances to become more zealous reformers by and by, and allowing them for several successive sessions to persevere in what, perhaps, may be not inaptly defined a crafty system of stationary progression.

"And here I may venture, gentlemen, to put a question to Her Majesty's Ministers. How did they mean to have disposed of the House of Lords, even in the very improbable event of their having secured a majority in the present House of Commons, in favour of their destructive and revolutionary budget? It is rumoured that they intend (as was the case at the period of their former surrender) to create a fresh batch of peers. But are they prepared to manufacture two hundred fresh patents of nobility for the attainment of their selfish and sinister designs? for even if, through the medium of Court intrigue, they should ever contrive to effect their restoration to office, they can expect nothing from a patriotic assembly of British peers but defiance and desert, and by such a *coup d'état* they would only effect boldly and at once what they have gradually and astutely been labouring to achieve. There can be no doubt that there never have been such unscrupulous tenants of the Crown patronage; and having no predilection for the Whig successors, they have been reckless to what extent they carried dilapidation and expiation, by fines, mortgages, and incumbrances, without dreading impeachment of waste. Very few gleanings indeed will be left for him who comes after them—there will scarcely remain enough in their coffers to pay just debts and defray their funeral expenses.

(To be continued.)

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

JAMES BEDFORD AND JOSEPH FIRTH, Keighley, will accept Richard Oastler's thanks for their kind letter, containing an interesting account of their interview with Mr. Thornhill.

To many kind friends, who urge Mr. Oastler to avail himself of the Insolvent Debtors' Court, the answer is, death in prison is, in Mr. Oastler's opinion, preferable to life at large, burdened with the sacrifice of Principle.

A Friend at Ashton-under-Lyne is thanked for a copy of the Manchester Guardian of the 2nd inst. Mr. Oastler is glad to see that the mill-owners, who were determined to break the Factories' Regulation Act, and to murder their factory children in defiance of all law, have not forgotten the useful lesson of "my grandmother's knitting-needle."

The friends of humanity and of law will not regret to hear, that Mr. Oastler's "deadly hostility" to such "hard-hearted and avaricious tyrants, who, like the ogres and giants of romance, lure yonge into their factory castles, and there destroy them, without mercy or compunction," is unabated. Mr. Oastler is obliged to the editor of the Manchester Guardian for the above faithful description of his patrons, the lawless "mill-owners and manufacturers," and cordially agrees that their character is not libelled by the Guardian's addition of, "Nay, so desirous were they (the mill-owners) of drawing the unfortunate poor into their mills, that they devised the New Poor Law, for the purpose of obtaining a further supply of victims." In proof of this, read Friend Ashworth's and neighbour Greg's letters to Friend Edwin Chadwick, praying that the agricultural poor with large families might be sent to the factory districts.

The readers of the Fleet Papers do not yet know one-half of the cruelty and villany of these lawless monsters, who assume that a spindle is of more value, and more sacred in the eye of the law, than a factory child, as was demonstrated, some years ago, in the famous argument between Richard Oastler and the editor of the Manchester Guardian. The weakness of the cruel monster was, however, exhibited—the grandmother's knitting-needle forced him to pay some attention to the law. The "League" may rest assured, that the tale of the knitting-needle will some day be told in the Fleet Papers. Mr. O. is obliged to the Guardian for reminding him of it. The Guardian needs not to be told who and what "the Champion of the Factory Children" is, for, as he observes, "he knows him well;" and he may assure himself, that no power of malice, misrepresentation, or scurrillity, shall drive him (Mr. O.) from the attainment of his "ultimate view"—A PLAIN, SIMPLE, AND EFFICIENT TEN HOURS' FACTORIES' REGULATION ACT. This refresher about the KNITTING-NEEDLE, from the organ of the "League," proves that the Little Fleeters have done good service, and animates the writer to proceed in the war against the trembling monster with redoubled energy, and an increased assurance of success. Few circumstances, since the author's imprisonment, have given him more pleasure, than the revival by the Manchester Guardian of the cry of "THE LAW IS YOUR NEEDLE." Let the law-breakers look to it—none else can save it.

Many readers of the Fleet Papers will wonder what all this means. The Manchester Guardian, the Anti-Corn-Law-League, and all these mill-owners and magistrates who resolve to treat the law with contempt, will understand all about it. In due time, the readers of these Little Fleeters shall be illuminated. Mr. O. presents his sincere thanks to the Manchester Guardian for the just description he has given of the real character of the lawless "mill-owners and manufacturers."

The expression "ogres," is singularly happy in the sense in which the Guardian has used it; and if Mr. O. remembers rightly, there is higher authority for its use than perhaps the Guardian is aware. It was the late Sir James Mackintosh who first resorted to this appropriate epithet, to describe a certain class of mill-owners; and it must be confessed it is a stinger, if there ever was one. Mr. O. can never be sufficiently grateful to the Guardian for reminding him of it. Perhaps, now that the Guardian has made a beginning, Mr. O. may be favoured with a few more such refreshers.

MR. OASTLER.

"The friends of this estimable gentleman are about to collect, from the admirers of his sterling principles, a sum of money sufficient to support him in comfort and respectability during the closing years of his active and useful life. Sufficient is already known of Mr. Oastler to secure the praiseworthy objects contemplated by a few of his more immediate friends. The Protestants can never forget his persevering advocacy of Scriptural principles—his self-denying exertions in the cause of the oppressed creatures in the factories—his sacrifices of money and time for the spread of Conservative feeling; and we are much mistaken if the present opportunity will not be speedily seized upon, for the purpose of testifying the high estimation in which Mr. Oastler is held as a man, and in which his exertions are regarded by the public. When the plans are a little further matured, we shall be happy to give any additional information as it reaches us."—*Liverpool Standard*, Oct. 1, 1841.

"In Mr. Ferrand's speech, he introduced the name of Mr. Oastler with a panegyric, which that injured gentleman most amply deserves. He has earned it by the untiring devotion of his life to the benefit of his fellow countrymen; and if his reward is incarceration in a cell in the Fleet, he may console himself with Lovelace's reflection, that

"Stone walls do not a prisoner make,
Nor iron bars a cage.

He has that within which cannot be cribbed, cabled, and confined—his intellect; and that, too, which no writ can attach, no warrant distrain—the approbation of his own conscience. He can speak more loudly, and more widely disseminate his opinions, by his *Fleet Papers*—his 'Little Fleeters,' as he likes to call them—while locked up, than by his most energetic speeches when at large.

"The subjects to which he chiefly devotes his attention, are those connected with the state and prospects of the labouring classes of England—the New Poor Law, the Factory System, Free Trade, the Corn Laws; on all of which he upholds doctrines diametrically opposed to the rascal political economist, and the grinding capital-monger. He maintains, and with perfect truth, that the misery of the poor must in every country re-act upon the rich, and shows that it is so re-acting in our country at the present moment. In his last Paper, he says—

"These Papers are all addressed to Mr. Thornhill, of Fixby Hall, whose steward Mr. Oastler had been, and at whose suit he is now incarcerated. We perceive by the newspapers, that a deputation lately waited on Mr. Thornhill, requesting him to liberate his captive, urging such reasons as one would think might have melted a stone, much more * * * the Lord of Fixby; but no; he will do nothing of the kind. 'I must look to the good of my family, and, therefore, cannot afford to bate a jot of my rights.' This is as gross as the man himself. His property is some fifteen or sixteen thousand a-year—the debt, disputed and undisputed, between 2,000*l.* and 3,000*l.*—arising out of the multifarious and complicated transactions of some fifteen years. Mr. Thornhill, however, is not to be blamed—the *right* is his:—

"The law allows it, and the Court awards it.

"Why there should exist such a law as to make it just and necessary that a Mr. Oastler should die in jail—and, as far as the law is concerned, of starvation—for the good of the family of a Mr. Thornhill, is a very different question."—*The Age*, Oct. 3, 1841.

"The recent events at the visit of Mr. Thornhill to his Fixby estates, with the reception which the numerous deputations who waited upon him relative to the imprisonment of Mr. Oastler, we copied last week from the *Leeds Intelligencer*. We notice the subject again for the purpose of urging his numerous admirers to some vigorous and substantial effort on his behalf. We are fully aware, that, at the time of his departure from Fixby, a subscription was in course of collection, for the purpose of presenting Mr. Oastler with a national testimonial, for the many and great services he had rendered the people of England. But the Charter movement, and others of a similar character, distracted the attention of the working classes, among whom are his most numerous friends, from the personal wants of their 'King,' while the depression of trade which has followed the subsidence of these agitations, has in some measure rendered the operatives unable to contribute to the extent which they would desire. The effort intended now to be made, is to get, by means of public subscription, such a sum of money as may enable him to continue uninterruptedly his labours, and to promote this object. We are glad to hear, that a Committee is about to be formed in Sheffield."—*Sheffield Iris*, Oct. 5, 1841.

"The recent events at the visit of Mr. Thornhill to his Fixby estates, with the reception which the numerous deputations who waited upon him relative to the imprisonment of Mr. Oastler, will be found by the reader in another column. We notice, however, the subject, for the purpose of urging the numerous admirers of that talented but unfortunate patriot to some vigorous and untiring effort to enable him to devote his whole energies, which he would most willingly and unceasingly

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddisburgh, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."
"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."
"He shall judge the poor of the people. He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break
in pieces the oppressor."

Vol. I.—No. 42.

LONDON, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1841.

Price 2s.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—Well, how say you? Will the Peel Government stand? If *delay* has not ruined them, I fear that Sir James Graham has. Read his speech in the House of Commons on the 28th ult., and then tell me, where is the difference between his policy and that of the Whigs? If it be true, as Sir James says it is, that "the Government is conscientiously pledged to the PRINCIPLE of the New Poor Law, from which they WILL NOT recede;" and if, as he tells us, it be really his opinion, that "THE MAIN SOURCE OF THE PROSPERITY OF THIS COUNTRY IS ITS MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY AND ENTERPRISE,"—why then I demand, in the name of all that is honest and patriotic, why have the Whigs been turned out? None but a Whig "cotton twist" Ministry could thus have given a *secondary* place to AGRICULTURE—they must be philosophers of the Whig Malthusian school, who can also resolve to maintain the PRINCIPLE of the New Poor Law. But, Sir, the people are sick of Whiggery; they will not endure it, even under the name of Conservatism. Judging, also, from several remarks which were made by Sir Robert Peel, during the late session of Parliament, that he is of opinion that no legislative measures can remove the distress and destitution of the people, but that the chapter of accidents is their only hope; and knowing, as I do, that every legislator, from Moses downwards, has considered the care of the poor to be his *first* duty, and their protection the end of all good government, I cannot refrain from thus early assuring the Premier, that he is greatly mistaken, if he thinks that he is the man who can *successfully* establish a new theory of government, on the Infidel Whig principle, that the poor have no rights, and that legislation cannot provide any remedy for their distresses. My heart grieves sorely, when I find that we have still a Whig Ministry, with a mere change of name; but I will not blind myself to truth, and knowing it, I dare not hide it from you. Time will prove if I am mistaken.

Leaving this painful subject, I must now call your attention to those betrayers of your "order," the Whig Hand-loom Weavers' Commissioners.

I have already shown you how those tools of the Anti-Corp-Law-League have expunged from their Report every word of the evidence of those witnesses on

whom the operatives most relied — of those who, after the deepest research, arrived at the conclusion that *protection* was the only cure for the wretchedness and misery in which the hand-loom weavers are involved. I have asserted, that this Commission was a mere job, to make out a *case* (and a slovenly case they have made of it) for a repeal of the Corn Laws.

Bear in mind the facts which I have related, with reference to the witnesses against free-trade, and then, remembering that you are a landlord of England, (for a moment forget that you have imprisoned their best friend,) read the following extract from the Report of these Hand-loom Weavers' Commissioners, pp. 69, 70, and say, is it not disgraceful thus, under the mask of serving the poor hand-loom weavers, to betray the agricultural interest? These Commissioners say—

“ We trust that we do not exceed our duties when we add, that we believe the Corn Laws to be injurious to the permanent interests of every class of the community, including the class which they are intended especially to protect. But we do not think that we should be justified if we were to enter into a statement of the premises on which this conclusion is founded, or insert answers to the arguments which have been used in support of opposite opinions. So vast a discussion, even if our limits would allow it, ought not to be introduced incidentally.

“ For the same reason we shall abstain from dwelling at any length on the details of the alteration which we think advisable. Four plans have been proposed:—

“ 1. Recurring to the lower scale of duties proposed by Mr. Canning in 1827, which passed the House of Commons, but was rejected by the House of Lords.

“ 2. Immediate abolition of all duties.

“ 3. A considerable duty, to be annually diminished.

“ 4. A moderate permanent duty.

“ The first of these plans would certainly be a great improvement on the present law; but the corn trade would continue to oscillate between prohibition and freedom with a less tendency indeed to reach the former extreme, but nearly as prone as it is now to the latter. Under Mr. Canning's Bill, when wheat was 60*s.* a quarter, the duty was to have been 20*s.*, a duty of at least 50 per cent. on the average prices in the principal European shipping ports. From this point it was to rise or fall inversely, at the rate of 2*s.* per quarter, with every shilling by which corn should fall or rise, so that a rise of 10*s.* per quarter on the price of corn was to lower the duty from 20*s.* to 1*s.*, and a fall in the price of corn from 60*s.* to 50*s.* was to raise the duty from 20*s.* to 40*s.* It is clear that this plan is affected by nearly all the *vices* of the present law. Like the present law, it *endeavours to keep corn at an artificial price*; like the present law, it must prevent any steadiness in the corn trade. A duty rising as the price of the commodity falls, and falling as it rises, that is to say, diminishing as the value of the article increases, and therefore can bear it better, and increasing as the value of the article diminishes, and therefore can bear it worse, *is a monster of fiscal legislation reserved for the corn trade*. Such a measure might have been supposed to be intended for the purpose of excluding from that trade all men of capital and prudence, and tempting into it the gamblers of commerce. The two great evils of average high price and fluctuation would probably continue if Mr. Canning's Bill, or any other measure founded on its principle, were adopted, though, of course, in proportion as the scale of duty were lowered, those evils would be diminished.

“ The second plan, the immediate abolition of all duty, would be a great and sudden change. Every such change, even from a *bad* system to a *good* one, is productive of immediate mischief. The transition even from war to peace was followed by a long period of distress. Another objection to it is, the alarm which it would spread among our own cultivators. They have so long been told that, in the absence of the Corn Laws, wheat would not be worth cultivating, even on soils of average goodness, that they generally believe the statement, and to a great extent would act on it. First would probably come a diminution of cultivation, which importation could not compensate—the consequent high prices would probably produce, as such prices generally have produced, an excess in the contrary direction. And we might have to undergo years of fluctuation before the inestimable benefit of regular prices and a steady trade were obtained.

“ The third plan, *that of a considerable duty, to be annually reduced, is the one we should*

prefer. It would lead us, and, as we firmly believe, with little intermediate inconvenience, to the state most favourable to the permanent welfare of the whole community, a PERFECTLY FREE TRADE. But if the state of political parties, and the ardent wishes and firm convictions which animate both those who demand immediate freedom, and those who maintain permanent restriction, render this compromise impracticable, and we fear that such is the case, we then recommend the fourth plan, that of a moderate permanent duty. Such a duty would allow us more regular prices, and a more regular trade than can be hoped under any other system, EXCEPT THAT OF FREELY TRADING. It would also afford a revenue. But we must admit that the revenue so obtained would be dearly purchased. A duty, indeed, on any raw produce, which is obtained solely from abroad, falls always, in part, on the foreign producer, the price never rising to the amount of the duty. But as import duty on any raw produce, of which the principal supply is obtained from our own soil, always takes from the consumer more than it gives to the treasury. For though the price does not rise to the amount of the duty, it always must rise, in consequence of the diminution of supply, and this rise of price affects the whole aggregate supply, while the duty is paid on only a portion of it. We will suppose, for the sake of illustration, perfect freedom of trade, an annual consumption of 20,500,000 quarters, and 2,500,000 of these to be supplied by importation. We will now suppose a duty of 5s. a quarter to be imposed, and that it excludes from our consumption the 500,000 quarters imported at the greatest expense, and that this diminution of supply raises the price of wheat by 1s. a quarter. The consequence would be, that, as the rise in price would affect the whole 20 millions, we should have to pay a million a year in additional price, and obtain only 500,000l. a year of revenue. Still there would be a revenue. Under the present system, the price is higher than it would be under a moderate fixed duty, and the revenue is much smaller."

Now, Sir, is not this a curious argument to be found in a Report about the hand-loom weavers? Did not I tell you, that the landlords had been hoaxed and betrayed? Have I not proved my case?

You will observe, that the whole argument (if argument it can be called) is against an "ARTIFICIAL PRICE." The object of these wise-acres, is, to reduce the prices of all things to their *natural* level! Now, Sir, nothing is more certain, than that if the engagements and institutions of this country are to be secured and upheld, every "*price*" in England must necessarily be "*artificial*." Your rents are at an "*artificial price*"; so is the regal income. Every officer of state is paid an "*artificial*" amount of salary; aye, these very Hand-loom Commissioners would have to disgorge more than one-half of their receipts for betraying the landlords and the hand-loom weavers of Great Britain, if the *natural* price of their labours were to be their stint.

The reason why the hand-loom weavers are distressed, is, because their "*artificial*" wages have been *naturalized* by the unlimited and unrestrained power of an untaxed machinery, by an approximation to free-trade, and by the removal of all protection to their labour. The question of *artificial* or *natural* prices is not one for the hand-loom weavers only, it extends to every class, rank, and order in the State. It is the question, shall we secure our engagements, and uphold our institutions?

But, Sir, you, the aristocracy, cannot long maintain your "*artificial*" position, if protection is not afforded to the labourers and the operatives, so as to secure to them "a fair day's wages for a fair day's work," or, as we are all now circumstanced, an "*artificial*" price for their labour. If it be true, that no legislative enactments can accomplish this, then it is also true, that the time is arrived when society must be re-organized. I believe, however, that, bad as our plight is, we are in no such difficulty.

There is no truth more evident than this—if we are determined to adopt the system of free-trade, or, in other words, if we will not secure to the labourers and operatives an “artificial price” for their labour, we must be prepared first to destroy all other “artificial prices,” including the Crown, the fund-holder, the landlord, the mortgagee, and all the professions; which means neither more nor less, than that we must have an “EQUITABLE ADJUSTMENT” of all our affairs, national, social, and private. But the Anti-Corn-Law-Leaguers would invert the natural order of things, by adopting free-trade first; forgetting, that justice demands that we should equitably arrange our “artificial” affairs, before we venture on the “free and easy,” voluntary free-trade system; else universal confusion, anarchy, and ruin must necessarily be the consequence. These may seem hard sayings, but, Sir, they are truths.

I cannot withhold my pity from a class so powerful and wealthy as the landlords of Great Britain, when I see how patiently they submit to be duped, betrayed, and plundered by these Commissions of Inquiry.

From these matters of public concernment, I must now beg your attention to those more nearly connected with ourselves. It is a long time since I recorded those acts of kindness which are daily showered upon me, by persons of all ranks. Some day, I must fill a letter with their recital. One, which I have lately received, I cannot delay. The following letter, from my kind Manchester friends, will explain what I refer to. I publish it, that you and others may see what sort of communications pass between the working men and your prisoner. One object of the *Fleet Papers* is, to rescue the working classes from the foul and false charges which have been made against them by the friends of the New Poor Law. By exhibiting such a document as the following, the character of the operatives will stand before you and my readers in its true colour:—

“Manchester, September 30, 1811.

“My dear Sir,—Some few days ago, the Treasurer of the Oasiler Committee forwarded you the sum of 10*l.* 12*s.*, being the full amount of the balance in his hands, after paying for printing, advertising, &c. Having been appointed Secretary to the Committee, I am directed to forward you an official communication, stating the amount, and to request that you will be good enough to publish the same in the *Fleet Papers*, for the satisfaction of the public, for whom we are now acting. I may also state, that the efforts of the Committee have been materially assisted by the gratuitous exertions of our friend, the Rev. J. R. Stephens, to whom we thus publicly tender our most hearty thanks.

“The Committee now exerting themselves on behalf of their ‘Old King,’ is composed of the same parties who have long worked with you on behalf of the oppressed factory children of this district. Our testimony of your valuable services on behalf of ourselves and children, we think, can be most effectually demonstrated, by our determination not to forget you in the time of need, and whilst you are labouring under the pangs of oppression, which, had it not been for your advocacy of our cause, you never would have been subject to; not that we think the scanty pittance which we and our fellow workmen can spare, will reward you for the thousand sacrifices you have made. No, Sir, we know too much of your noble spirit ever to think so; but we do know, that our gratitude thus bestowed, as it were in *pence*, will be a more welcome consolation than the *pounds* of the rich and the aristocracy; for the service of the latter of whom, we well know, the best days of your life have been spent, and your health impaired. Oh, Sir, for your sake we do, for once, wish we were rich; we would not then allow you to remain within the confines of a prison, at a time when your services in our cause, and the cause of the aristocracy, are most wanted.

“We are sure, Sir, if Mr. Thornhill but knew how dear you live in the hearts of the mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters of the factory children of Lancashire; if he could but feel, how deeply

they deplore your loss, and what sacrifices they are prepared to make to secure your liberation, we do think that he would not continue to confine you in a dungeon; if he knew how many thousands of poor factory children nightly fall upon their knees in earnest supplication to God for your release, we do feel, that even Mr. Thurbill would not allow their prayers to go unheard or unattended to; nor can we doubt, that the God of the poor will eventually hear and answer their prayers, and soften the heart of your persecutor.

"Hitherto, the exertions of the Committee have been confined to Manchester; but a suggestion has come from Mr. Stephens, that it would be well to extend our labours to other towns. We have, therefore, fully adopted that suggestion, and will forthwith proceed to the pleasing duty. If Mr. Thurbill will kill you in a prison, we will take care you shall not die without our blessing, and the blessing of our children! Our penions, too, shall not be wanting to administer some of the comforts of life to one who so lavishly sacrificed his comforts for us and ours. With many thanks for your former efforts in our behalf, and trusting soon to see you free,

"I am, my dear Sir,

"On behalf of the Committee,

"Yours, very truly,

"P.S.—Best regards to Mrs. Oastler.

"LUKE SWALLOW, Secretary."

"To Mr. Richard Oastler, Fleet Prison, London."

Having received such a letter and such a gift, I could not be silent. As I never had a secret, I cannot object to publish my reply; you will then see in what strains the old factory "King" addresses his own "subjects," and what advice he gives to them. Excuse its length—my heart was full:—

"The Fleet Prison, Oct. 3, 1841.

"To Mr. Luke Swallow, Secretary, and the Members of the 'Oastler Committee,' Manchester.

"My old, tried, and beloved friends,

"You know me, and therefore you can form some idea of the feelings which possessed my heart, when I received your freely offered tribute, and when I read your kind and affectionate letter.

"Truly, my friends, so many pleasing reflections occupied my mind, that words were valueless—feelings, such as man, I think, never felt before, overpowered me.

"'And are these the men,' said I, 'whom the authors of the accursed New Poor Law dared to charge with being 'guilty of every species of crime'—'sons of idleness, vice, and profligacy'—'improvident'—'forsaking every habit of frugality'—'taking to care to provide against the ordinary calamities of life, or the inevitable infirmities of old age, but in sickness or in health, to yoke us in age, in impotence or in vigour, heedlessly and recklessly counting upon parish relief'—'preferring idleness and a bare subsistence to plenty earned by toil'—'depending to rely upon their honest industry for support, their minds becoming debased as their habits are degraded'—'downcasting'—'sturdy'—'insulting'—'imperative'—'dead to all sense of shame, all sense of real dignity'—'only fit for acts of outrage or of fraud'—'promoters of crime'—'workers of mischief'—'ready accomplices and followers in every depredation, every outrage that is perpetrated in their neighbourhood'—'with hearts hardened against the tenderest sympathies, and every human feeling eradicated from the human bosom'—'listless'—'pampered'—'irritable'—'nervous'—and 'unfitful'—(See Lord Brougham's Speech in the House of Lords, on proposing the New Poor Law.) 'Am I, my prison benefactors,' I inquired, 'deserving of such foul epithets?'—And then, my friends, I made a vow—it was not a bloody one, but it was destructive—I vowed never to rest, until that foul stain on England's statute book (which is founded on such outrageous mistakes in the character of the working classes of England,) should be torn therefrom, and in its place be registered our Ten Hours' Factory Bill.

"Such was the first effect produced on my mind by the receipt of your gift and your letter. Then, I turned to your own sufferings and privations, and wondered how any *love* could draw your thoughts from home, to think, under such circumstances, of one so distant, and would venture you, out of your necessities, to administer to his *extremities*? I then contrasted the ingratitude of my aristocratic persecutor with your unshaken fidelity, and felt thankful that I had chosen to reserve the character of such men from the foul defamation which the authors and friends of the New Poor Law had heaped upon them.

"Next, I seated myself in my arm-chair, and ruminated—and oh! what scenes passed before my imagination. Your faces and persons were all present, and Sadler was there, and Bull and Wood, and many others: poor Condy, he was with us. Would that he was now as then! That dense mass of human beings who welcomed and surrounded us, the day when Manchester demonstrated her attachment to our cause, and when, at the Exchange, the tyrants scowled upon us! All the proceedings of that memorable day passed in review before me;—and then, my visit to the tomb of the father of us all, NATHANIEL GOULD! I remembered the vow I made, when, in a solemn moment, I visited the dark spot where the remains of that martyr wait for the morning of the resurrection—when God alone beheld me! When I remembered that vow, I did not repent it. In Gould's prison I first made it—I have renewed it here!—*never to desist, until the factory tyrant yields to justice!*

"The decrepid and mangled forms of thousands of factory children flitted before my imagination. They cast a look of hope, as they registered their prayers for me; and thus my arm was nerved for the coming struggle.

"Then I saw the changed countenances of our foes—I heard the altered language of the tyrants. Now, they simper and smile upon you—from threats and curses, they have changed to promises and blessings!—they coax and flatter, where once they menaced and defamed! Formerly, they were blind to all your sufferings—now, they have sent for hundreds of Christian ministers to witness and proclaim them!

"They now feel the curse of their own system, and recommend reduction in the hours of factory labour! ELEVEN HOURS they now consent to; but we must make them yield to TEN! And why?—because justice demands it, and more than TEN HOURS A DAY is proved, by the united testimony of the medical profession, TO BE DEATH! If it be just, it must be profitable—their own affairs have proved the soundness of all our arguments, by demonstrating, in their ruined circumstances, that over-production has drained away their fortunes. There is no need that I should argue the question with you, my friends;—in the *Fleet Papers*, every objection to our demand shall be answered, until Mr. Ward, the member for Sheffield, shall know that your 'King' is an authority not to be despised, even by himself, upon the factory question.

"When you tell me that you are those with whom I have so long tugged against the monster—the *self-same* men—you give me confidence, and assure me of success. We are no novices—we know our strength, and that no circumstances, misfortune, or imprisonment can stay our efforts. We need not the expiring groans of party to urge us on to action—we have long felt, seen, and pondered over the sufferings we would relieve.

"I do rejoice that Stephens is amongst you—I know the value of his aid, and am grateful to him. Tell him so; he will not despise the thanks of his imprisoned 'King.'

"We must not talk of past exertions—we have all done our best; but we have more to do:—we are in the field to conquer, not to fly. The kind remembrance of my poor factory children, and the certainty that I have their prayers, and that those prayers are heard, but wet my sword for future victories. Cheer up their drooping spirits, and tell them, numerous and powerful as are their tyrants, God will tame and humble them.

"Ah! truly the *pence* which they and you have sent me are more valued and more valuable than thousands given by the rich. That truth, Jesus has recorded. True enough, but for the kindness of such friends, imprisonment for debt, under the laws of England, would be death! You have hindered my detaining creditor from killing me! The life thus saved by friendship shall be devoted to those friends! If, under the delusions of a false philosophy, many of our natural and constitutional leaders, the aristocracy, have forgotten that their strength is *the love of the people*, it is our duty to prove to them, that they have listened to *their* enemies as well as *ours*. By our conduct, let us continue to give the lie to all the malicious tales of our foes, and by a steady, peaceful, and orderly demeanour, win back the hearts of those who have been estranged from us, by the false representations of the very men who, after having pocketed the profits of your labour, are now striving to undermine the value of *their* land.

"As to my release, about which you seem to be so anxious, I have no care or thought. I shall remain here until I can be of more use 'outside,' not one moment longer! Nothing is ruled by chance! I am contented and happy. My best exertions, whilst 'inside,' to thwart your foes and strengthen your friends, shall not be wanting. I know that my labours are not useless. Believe me, my kind friends, my little *Flecters* have found their way to palaces and mansions, and

have there done good service to our cause. Ignorance of your cause and condition, and prejudice against you, have vanished at their presence. Man thought that he had crushed me, when he sent me here—God permitted man to imprison my body, that my mind might become more stayed, and more at liberty, that I might occupy a more prominent position, and be more useful. My friends, man never made a greater mistake, than when Mr. Thorndill bargained my body for his debt!

"But now accept my grateful thanks for your great kindness, and pledge yourselves, with me, that nothing shall stay our energies or damp our spirits—that no party feuds shall draw us from the goal we started for—A GOOD, SAFE, PRACTICAL, AND EFFICIENT TEN HOURS' BILL.

"How say you?—Yes! Then to your work, and I to mine—for see, our foes are gathering. The 'Leaguers' are our enemies, no less surely now than heretofore.

"We must use a power stronger than the 'League'—the power of Truth. And so we will, for see, ASHLEY stands the leader of our host! He has rejected honour, place, emolument, to stand by Truth. Ten thousand thanks to him. He has been tried and found of sterling weight! No circumstance that has occurred since first we met, has given such sure presage of certain and speedy victory, as the noble stand just made by Ashley. His own order will surely rally round him, and unite their cause with yours. You will not, you cannot be wanting. Thus, by the union of our strength, the tyrant-power of covetousness must yield to us. Prepare, my friends, for the coming fight. Merge all your sectional and party differences—look at the children—think of their sufferings—behold your noble leader—contemplate his sacrifices—and remember, that your imprisoned 'King' can have no greater joy than that you should be unanimous, vigilant, and energetic.

"Organize your committees, correspond with each other, prepare for public meetings everywhere, and let the Houses of Commons and Lords be filled with the best proof of your resolve, that come what may, the murder of factory children shall no longer be legal; and you know that they are murdered when they are worked more than ten hours a day—else, there is neither truth nor knowledge in our wisest and most eminent medical practitioners.

"I do not wish to be despotic, but I give you a hint. I hate the plan of Inspectors—it is only another name for commissioners or spies. I abhor the whole swarm of such locusts. A clause to stop the moving power, and to imprison the delinquents, would, in my opinion, save much expense and vexatious annoyance. Do not you think so?

"We must be cautious and wise. We no longer labour unobserved—all England now watches our movements; and so do France, Prussia, Austria, Russia, and America. We must permit no act of ours to mar our sacred cause. WE ARE NOT DESTRUCTIVES—our aim is, to make the intentions, given by God to man, a BLESSING, instead of a CURSE—protective, and not destructive, of the life and happiness of man! That, my friends, is what we aim at. If our foes misrepresent us again, as they have done formerly, let our actions, as well as our professions, still prove that they libel us; but let not their misrepresentations scare us from our post. The Ten Hours' Flag is nailed to our mast—the principle is graven on our hearts—WE WILL NEVER REST, TILL WE OBTAIN THAT LAW!

"Our foes are mighty, but we know them—and knowing, we must conquer them. They are humbled since we met them last—they are half subdued, ere now we meet again. 'Dread not, neither be afraid of them;' but swear, by all that is good, and just, and true, YOU WILL NOT YIELD TO THEM! If I may not see the conflict, I shall be within hearing of the shout of victory!

"Thanks to you, my friends—thanks to your wives—thanks to your little ones. God bless you all! Amen!

"RICHARD OASTLER.

"P.S.—I must have a postscript, else you will doubt the genuineness of this epistle. Did not FERRAND do his duty manfully? I thought that he made a breach in the Towers of Oppression, by which my gallant Ten Hours' Bill men will enter the citadel. Let every man be at his post, and, when the next Parliament assembles, be ready to make your footing sure. Mrs. Oastler, who, I am sorry to say, is far from well, unites with me in thanks and kind regards to all.—R.O."

I should not write thus, to men of the stamp and character which the working classes are represented to be, in the Report of the Commissioners on the Poor Laws. Ah, Sir, I know that my friends were grossly and savagely maligned, to afford an excuse for such unconstitutional measures as the accursed New Poor

Law and the Rural Police. I know, also, that no Minister can govern this country, who will not open his eyes to the *real* character of the working classes. You have seen some of them lately, begging my life at your hands! Were they not noble fellows? They were a sample of their "order."

But whilst my hand is in for showing you my letters, you may as well read one from a man of your own rank, an old neighbour, and a kind friend of mine. The writer of the following has seen you lately, and thinks that you will never yield, never relent, but that you are resolved either to have the money, or leave me here to die!—and so he says, that my best way would be to go through the Insolvent Debtors' Court. Read his epistle:—

"Huddersfield, September 30, 1841.

"My dear Sir,—I sincerely sympathize with you and Mrs. Oastler in your sufferings. I heartily wish you could be prevailed upon to avail yourself of the Insolvent Act, in which I cannot conceive anything derogatory to your integrity, which remains unsullied, as ever it did, in the estimation of your friends.

"In extreme haste, in order to save the Post, believe me to remain, as ever,

"My dear Sir, your sincere friend,

"To Mr. Oastler, Fleet Prison, London."

"—————."

The writer of that letter is, without exception, the best man in his district. His good opinion is sweet to your prisoner. Still, I cannot break my bargain with your solicitor—I cannot acknowledge the justice of your proceedings. As there has been so much ado about getting me out, I will tell you a fact. It is true, you are under a delusion—you have been deceived. *The report handed to you of the proceedings in Court, and of the arrangement there made between Mr. Kelly and myself, WAS FALSE.* Show it to the Lord Chief Justice, your own counsel, or to any of the jury, and let them speak. It was *intended* to pamper your pride, feed your revenge, and make you hate me. I am forced to tell you this much *now*, to excuse you in the eyes of others. When you talk about "your family," I must speak out. Had you received a true and faithful report of what passed in Court, you never would have sent me to prison—you could not then have excused yourself for keeping me here, because of "your duty to your family"—that, "family" which, I am sure, cannot approve of your conduct to me. Enough, at present, on that subject;—in my next, I will give you a copy of my reply to *your* friend, whose kind letter to me I have inserted above.

A few words upon the New Poor Law Commission of Inquiry next week.

I am,

Your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—I am delighted to find, by the *Manchester Guardian*, which is their organ, that I have already touched the Anti-Corn-Law-Leaguers to the quick. They are actually vomiting "knitting-needles" by wholesale. (See Notices to Correspondents, on page 1 of the Cover of this *Fleet Paper*.) These "mill-owners and manufacturers" are actually enfuried, because I told them, some years ago, that a factory child was as worthy of legal protection, and as valuable, as one of their spindles! You shall know more about that shortly. You will then learn the *real* character of your foes and mine.—R.O.

do, to the maintenance of those great principles of constitutional government, of which he was and is so able an exponent. We are fully aware, that at the time of his departure from Fitchy, a subscription was in course of collection, for the purpose of presenting Mr. Oastler with a national testimonial for the many and great services he had rendered the people of England. But the Charter movement, and others of a similar character, distracted the attention of the working classes, among whom are his most numerous friends, from the personal wants of their 'King,' while the depression of trade which has followed the subsidence of those agitations, has in many instances rendered the operatives unable to contribute to the extent which they would desire. In Manchester, however, the operatives have not forgotten the claims of the imprisoned man who has so often and ably advocated their cause. Last Whitsuntide—though a very unseasonable time, owing to the dissipation induced by the amusements connected with the race—an entertainment was given on his behalf, the result of which was such as to enable the Committee in forward ten guineas to the Fleet, and to spur up the Associated Cotton-Spinners to enter into a subscription for Mr. Oastler. We noticed this at the time with approbation, and urged other towns to 'do likewise.'

"The labours of Mr. Oastler entitle him to the admiration and assistance of all sinners. He never could be considered as a party man; in his conduct when at Fitchy, with respect to the factory question, he has found himself opposed and supported indiscriminately by both Whigs and Tories, though we are bound to say, that he has had more of the former class as opponents than friends. His object has been the good of the people at large, and his party the nation. He has supported the people in everything which has been for their good, and the people must now support him. We look to the aristocracy for an answer to this appeal; he has been their tried and constant friend; it is he who has taught them, that the best security for their lives and property rests in the affections of those whom Providence has placed beneath them; and the affectionate terms in which every mention of his venerated name is clothed by those among whom he for so many years lived as the representative of their landlord, show how he has carried out the principles he inculcated. To unite the poor and the peasant, the landlord and the tenant, in those bonds of unity and mutual esteem which once joined them together, has been his constant aim; and a deep debt of gratitude is due to him from the lords of the soil.

"To the clergy, his early and unfeigned piety, his unexceptionable character, and the strict morality of his entire life, need no recommendation. The fervent spirit of Christianity which illumines his writings, shines forth in his life, and every servant of God will aid in the preservation of so good a fellow-labourer.

"To the labouring classes, no repetition of his claims is necessary. They are indebted to the hearts of men who can and have appreciated his abilities and sacrifices for their cause. The tributes which their scanty means have permitted them to pay to his merit, though small and trifling in a pecuniary point of view, are doubly valuable, when we consider how great must be the claims of a man who, when far distant in prison, receives such testimonials of gratitude from those who are hailed as proverbial for inconsistency and forgetfulness. They can lay no such charge against the operatives of England towards Richard Oastler; and that very gratitude which has been so often evinced, will, we feel assured, be again made manifest, till wealth and intelligence shall, from very shame, join in the movement which their noble 'inferiors' have led. Not less than, we thank heaven, not unto them can the future chronicler ascribe popular ingratitude, selfishness, or neglect. But let the Conservatives read this from the *Standard*, and let the blush of shame rise to their cheek at the thought of their calumny on the working classes:—

"'For ourselves, we never can think of Mr. Oastler's services, and their reward, without a sense of shame for our party and for ourselves—of shame for the party that neglects such a champion and benefactor—shame for ourselves, upon the reflection that, with all our efforts, and with the enjoyment at least of liberty, we have not—no, nor all the Conservative press put together—done so much for the promotion of Conservative principles, for the cause of peace and religion, as this one gentleman has effected from his cell in the Fleet Prison, the debtor of a professed Conservative too, who knows that his victim is unable to pay, and whose conduct, therefore, must be purely vindictive.'—*Manchester and Salford Advertiser*, Oct. 2, 1841.

CONTINUATION OF THE ADDRESS OF SIR GEORGE SINCLAIR, BART. TO THE CONSERVATIVE ELECTORS OF CAITHNESS SHIRE.

"The Whigs often noticed, in terms of grave reprobation, the number of parages assumed by preceding Governments. But I ask whether it is not in this respect alone that they have entitled themselves to the characteristic designation of 'Liberal.' Have they not, in the plenitude of their self-denial, since 1831, created or advanced upwards of ninety of their addresses? A few of this enormous number have deserved their honours by their services; but of the rest, it may fairly be said, that, however respectable in private life, if they have accomplished any public good, it must have been by stealth—if they have done the State some service, the State cannot be said to know it—if their deserts or exploits were blazoned forth in golden capitals, the vellum on which they were inscribed would leave a very ample vacant space within the dimensions of the smallest notebook. Her Majesty's Ministers have certainly made hay while the sun shone, and in everying house have almost annually called into existence a plentiful crop of mushrooms in the shape of coronets,

and this, too, on the part of a Government which assured us, on assuming office, that the reign of influence, like the age of chivalry, was gone, and that of economists and calculators had succeeded. If from the delicate impulse of an over-sensitive bashfulness, it seemed as if they shrunk from the responsibility of having anything to give away. I thought it highly probable that the whole patronage of the Crown would be put into commission, and perhaps vested in three Ministers of Justice at Somerset House, one Whig, one Radical, and one Conservative, who, with all the caution of Minos, and all the discernment of Æacus, and all the impartiality of Rhadamanthus, would have strictly adhered to the *detur digniori* principle, and put the surviving members of all preceding Governments to the blush; instead of which, I venture to assert, that in the distribution of dignities and bestowal of appointments, they have shown less forbearance and exercised less discrimination than the most reckless and lavish of their predecessors.

"I believe that no House of Commons ever stood so low in public opinion as did the late Parliament when Sir John Buller's motion was rejected—a motion almost as unanimously approved of by the Radicals out of doors, who are sincere and unflinching in their opinions, as by the Conservatives themselves. It may with truth be asserted, that during the three sessions preceding the last, there were two objects which an overwhelming majority throughout Great Britain had almost equally at heart—namely, the dissolution of so obsequious a Parliament, and the dismissal of so unprincipled a Ministry as this country had the humiliation to witness and the misfortune to endure. I believe that, on the whole, the Radicals were the most dissatisfied with the conduct of their representatives, who, although they now and then, *pro forma*, found fault with the Ministry, were sure to rally round them on every question which affected their stability. An acute observer, who acts upon the principle, that 'the study of mankind is man,' and who delights to survey the human character in all its various aspects, quits the precincts of the Court occasionally, and dives into one of the metropolitan oyster cellars, in order to suck the brains and ascertain the opinions of its more regular inmates and frequenters. He not long ago found himself seated in the next box to a sincere and steady partisan of the movement, who, with grief in his heart and gravity in his countenance, was explaining to a neighbouring sympathizer the extent and the bitterness of his disappointment and disgust. 'Oh, yes, Sir,' said he, 'there never was an unfortunate constituency so shamefully taken in as we have been; and I must confess that, to a certain extent, we are very properly served, for having preferred a political adventurer, of whom we knew nothing, to a respectable proprietor in our own vicinity, of unblemished character and acknowledged worth. Our member may most justly be denominated a *Whig-Radical*, for he is a mere Whig and nothing more in the House, whilst at the hustings he is every inch a Radical. I suppose he is so much occupied in conning over the Bills which are brought before Parliament, that he has never found time to bestow even a second reading upon the bills which he himself has, for some years, left unpaid at the Hoax and Humbug Hotel. There is one particular only in which he is at all anglic, and that is, in the rarity and *far between-ness* of his visits to his supporters; but when he does condescend to return, he opens an iron trunk, on the lid of which has accumulated a thick coating of dust since his last appearance amongst us; then he unfolds and puts on the gorgeous uniform of a Radical Lieutenant-Colonel, with stars of every shape at his breast, and ribbons of every colour at his button-hole—swaggered up and down the streets with an enormous scimitar at his side, looking for all the world as if he wished that all the Whig and Tory statesmen had but one neck, that he might have the pleasure of exterminating the whole lot of them by a single stroke. Then he struts into the town-hall, and takes his station at the right hand of the mayor, proceeds to address the meeting with imposing solemnity, recites his political breviary, renews his subscription, not to the town charities, that duty devolves on the unsuccessful Tory candidate, but to all the main articles of the genuine Radical creed. Then we have three cheers for the Queen—three cheers for Joseph Hume—the Kentish Fire for the repeal of the Corn Laws; after which the Honourable Member returns in triumph to the inn, divests himself, with all imaginable expedition, of his Radical accoutrements and paraphernalia, resumes the modest blue and buff attire of the Whig *condottieri*, and hurries post haste to the metropolis, that he may again be prominent in the ranks of officiousness and servility.'

"In addition to the time-serving members thus described, they were also kept in office by the convenient, but not very creditable, aid of a few more obstreperous and out-spoken Radicals, whose motto was, '*Inimicus Whig, sed magis, inimicus Tory*;' and who overwhelmed the Government with reproaches at the very time when they were retaining them in office. In this respect they remind me of a country squire, who one day sent for his groom, and exclaimed—'Hark ye, sirrah, I dare say you take it for granted, that I intend to break every bone in your skin, and then turn you, without ceremony, out of doors—and so I should, if I served you right. You know that you have belied all your professions, and disappointed all my expectations; in regard to honesty, I believe you are a knave, and in point of intelligence, I know you are a blockhead; but still, it is just possible, that I might fall into worse hands, and I shall therefore allow you to remain in the house until I find a substitute, who will suit me better; but whenever that happens, (and the sooner the better,) remember that you are fairly warned, and shall not continue a moment longer beneath my roof.' The servant, who was not deficient in spirit, indignantly declined to stop one night upon such terms, and would have rather swept the streets than have crouched to a master by whom he was thus abused and insulted. But Her Majesty's Ministers have long been content to accept, and even to court the suffrages of the very politicians by whom they are most despised, and thus to accumulate to themselves (so to speak) a sinking fund of degradation, both unparalleled and overwhelming.

(To be continued.)

THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY

JOHN PAVEY, 47, HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND,

AND

BENJAMIN STEILL, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW.

THESE Papers are principally intended for the perusal of the friends of Christianity and the Constitution; particularly the Clergy and the Aristocracy, and of all persons who are possessed of Property. The object of the writer will be to explain the reason for the present alarming state of English society, and the consequent insecurity of life and property; also, to offer some remarks upon the folly and wickedness of attempting to uphold our Institutions, particularly that of Private Property, by the unconstitutional means of Centralization, Commissioning, Papism, and Force; finally, to state his own views on the best mode of restoring Peace, Contentment, Security, and Prosperity, to every rank of the people of England.

The author is perfectly aware of the fact, that every Parliamentary leader is now only attempting to legislate for the present moment — putting off the evil day — making laws “from hand to mouth,” in the hope that some unforeseen, fortunate event may enable succeeding Statesmen to legislate for permanency. He is also convinced that there is a mode of successfully re-establishing our Institutions upon their original foundation — Christianity; — and that that is the only way to preserve them from the encroachments of political partisans, who are now only paving the way to universal Ruin, Anarchy, and Despotism.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. OASTLER is “At Home” on *Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays*.—Mr. Oastler’s health requires that he should *conferly* refrain from receiving the visits of his friends on *Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays*.

B. W., Doyet.—He, and other persons who have enquired—“How can the back numbers of the Fleet Papers be obtained?” are requested to order them of their Booksellers. The early numbers have been reprinted, and all the numbers are to be had of the Publishers.

A. G., Brompton, and other Correspondents, will receive their answer in the following statement, which will fully satisfy their inquiries:

LORD ASHLEY’S APPOINTMENT AS AN ECCLESIASTICAL COMMISSIONER.

A strange idea has got abroad, in many quarters, that Lord Ashley has departed from his declaration, not to join any administration, which is not prepared to accept and carry out a Ten Hours’ Factory Bill. The misunderstanding has arisen in consequence of that nobleman’s having been gazetted as one of Her Majesty’s Ecclesiastical Commissioners. The matter can be satisfactorily explained in a few words. The case is this: the situation is in no way a political or ministerial one, and has no emolument whatever attached to it. Its business and subjects are simply and solely Ecclesiastical, relating to Church-lands and Church-revenues. The appointment is a highly honourable and useful one. The Commissioners have to administer certain surplus revenues, as they arise from time to time, and devote them to the increase of small livings. They have also many other important duties to perform. To this Commission the Bishops, without a single exception, belong, as well as some of the members of the late Cabinet, and other Whigs. The late ministerial changes here occasioned no commotion; but in consequence of death happening to arise, the offer of a seat on the Ecclesiastical Board was made to Lord Ashley by the Premier, in the name of his Sovereign, and on behalf of the Church; and it would, under all the circumstances, have been a most magnificent act on the part of his Lordship to have declined the offer, in a case where, without political, or emolument, but gratuitous service alone, was concerned.

MR. OASTLER.

" We have great pleasure in learning that a public effort is about to be made on behalf of a man who has laboured zealously, nobly, and successfully, during many years, for the public good. The person to whom we allude is Mr. Richard Oastler. It is well known that this benevolent man and great constitutional advocate has been a prisoner in the Fleet since December last; and although he still devotes all the energies of his mind to upholding those principles of government which ought to be dearest to all men, yet his confinement necessarily precludes him from following any pursuit from which to derive a sufficient income. The effort, therefore, will be to get, by means of public subscription, such a sum of money as may enable him to continue uninterruptedly the promulgation of those valuable ideas and principles which he has put forth in the *Fleet Papers*, and which are of such inestimable importance at the present juncture of public affairs. It is very rarely that good leading spirits spring up in a nation, but when they do, they ought to be carefully cherished. The friends of order, benevolence, and constitutional principles will deeply deplore if Richard Oastler, who has devoted the energies of his capacious mind, as well as his property, to the service of his country, should at last be suffered to sink down in the cell of a prison for want of those means which he has generously expended in the cause of humanity and for the public welfare."—*Leeds Intelligencer*, Oct. 9, 1841.

" THE FLEET PRISONER.—We are happy to learn that a public effort is about to be made on behalf of a man who has laboured zealously, nobly, and successfully, during many years, for the public good. The person to whom we allude is Mr. R. Oastler. It is well known that this great advocate of humane laws, and of the rights of the oppressed, has been a prisoner in the Fleet since December last; and although he still devotes all the energies of his mind in support of the cause which is dearest to him, yet his confinement necessarily prevents him from following any pursuit from which to derive a sufficient income. The effort, therefore, will be to get, by means of public subscription, such a sum of money as will preserve him from want, and enable him to continue his great and valuable services in the cause of humanity and of his country. We heartily wish that this well-timed and benevolent effort may be crowned with success."—*Northern Star*, Oct. 9, 1841.

" MR. R. OASTLER.—We rejoice to learn that a public effort is at length about to be made in his behalf. It is well known that this upright and truly benevolent man has been a prisoner in the Fleet since December last—more, we verily believe, as the indefatigable advocate of the oppressed Factory Children, than in any other light—but let that pass; and though he devotes all the energies of his mind to and for the benefit of his 'beloved children,' yet his confinement necessarily prevents him following any pursuit from which he can derive a sufficient income. The effort which is now about to be made will have for its object the raising, by means of public subscription, such a sum of money as will preserve him from want, and enable him to continue his valuable exertions for the public good. They who know the 'good old King,' can want no stimulus; but we would remind even the poorest of his 'subjects,' that they owe him and themselves a bounden duty, which is weekly presented to their notice—that of supporting the *Fleet Papers*. Here all can work: those who cannot afford to give one away, let them seek to extend the circulation, and, consequently, the influence and pecuniary means of the kindest, the best, the most able and disinterested man of his class."—*Cleave's Gazette*, Oct. 16, 1841.

NOTICES OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

" THE FLEET PAPERS.—The hon. member for Manchester (Mr. Gibson) quoted, the other night, the opinions of a chaplain extraordinary, the Rev. Baptist Noel, to prove that the Corn Laws had produced all the existing distress. I, too, will quote to the House the opinions of a man, who, during a long life, has studied the whole subject of the causes which have produced the present distress of the working classes in the manufacturing districts, and who has laboured night and day in this good work—his own approving conscience his guide, a cell in the Fleet Prison his reward. [Ironical cheers.] You (the Opposition) cry, Hear hear—you rejoice in this man's sufferings: yes, you may imprison his body, but you cannot imprison his soul, for Mr. Oastler is even now engaged in forwarding the welfare of the operatives by his *Fleet Papers*, and in whose hearts and affections he reigns as triumphantly as ever. Yes, Sir, it was Richard Oastler who put a stop to the horrid system of dragging the poor people in the South of England out of their humble cottages, and driving them from their green fields and shady lanes into the fetid atmosphere of a cotton-mill, and the dark, damp cellar of an alley in Manchester, that they might for a short time fill up the places of those who had been brought to a premature death by this accursed system, but soon to follow after in the ceaseless train of its victims."—*Speech of W. Busfield Ferrand, Esq., House of Commons*, Sept. 23, 1841.

" THE FLEET PAPERS.—We never read one of Mr. Oastler's *Fleet Papers* without feeling ourselves wiser, and, we hope, better; but we have seldom found anything in that repertory of good sense and good morals more valuable than the following passage, which we extract from the last number published:— * * * * *"—*The Standard*, Oct. 5, 1841.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."
"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."
"He shall judge the poor of the people. He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 43. LONDON, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—You mistake, if, for one moment, you conceive that I have any pleasure in anticipating the downfall of the present Government. The man lives not, who will be more delighted than myself to find that the expectations of the country are realized in the present Ministers. If they shall determine, as Sir Robert Peel has beautifully expressed it, "to walk in the light of the Constitution," then, Sir, all will be well—then will the nation prosper—then shall I rejoice; for then the rights of all will be maintained, and the character of the working classes will be appreciated. They will no more be dealt with as if they were ruffians or beasts of burden; but they will be placed under the protection of the law, and, with the Premier, they will be enabled, in peace, comfort, and contentment, "to walk in the light of the Constitution." Then we shall no longer be betrayed and duped by the cunning, or enslaved by the tyranny of Commissioners; we shall hear no more of unrequited labour, or of unrelieved want, but "our garners will be full, affording all manner of store." The turbulent and disaffected will be silenced, for "there will be no complaining in our streets." Then shall we cease to be a reproach amongst the nations of the earth; for they will, when they look upon Britain under such circumstances, say, "Happy is that people that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the Lord."

The Government which shall, by "walking in the light of the Constitution," produce such a change in England, must, however, entirely eschew the dogmas of that school, which dignifies itself under the title of "liberal and enlightened philosophy," which laughs at the laws of God, ridicules the wisdom of our ancestors, and tramples upon the rights of the poor! If such shall be our Conservative Government, and if the Premier's declaration is, indeed, verified by his actions, then Sir Robert Peel will not have a more sincere or a more determined supporter than myself. True, I have, unhesitatingly, already told the Ministers of their faults; and, Sir, when I see them adopt unsafe measures, and hear them making unwise declarations, I shall never fear to tell them so, for I have still to learn, that friendship implies deceit. Knowing something of public men and of

the different political parties, I have never ceased to warn the Whigs, when I saw them sacrificing the best interests of the country, nor will I screen their successors, however painful it may sometimes be to speak the truth.

I have, however, some hopes of the Conservatives; and I rejoice to avail myself of the earliest opportunity to express them. The announcement of my joyous anticipations, yields me unmitigated pleasure; I have now hopes that Sir Robert Peel and his Government will attend to the cries of the people, and redress their grievances. You have a right to demand upon what I found those hopes. I will tell you; for it is fitting that he who willingly incurs the pain which censure gives him, and fears not to condemn when cause demands, should enjoy the gratification which commendation yields, when circumstances warrant.

In a former letter I told you, that I feared Sir Robert Peel was not acquainted with the real character of the working classes, and that I was apprehensive his ignorance on that *one point* would be the ruin of his administration, as it was of that of the Whigs. I informed you, also, that it had hitherto been Sir Robert Peel's habit, not to receive the deputations of working men, when they waited upon him, but that his custom was, to require them to state their views in writing.

I am now delighted to have the opportunity of stating to you, that Sir Robert Peel has received a deputation of working men from the Short-Time Committees of Lancashire; that he has patiently listened to them, whilst they rehearsed to him the miserable condition of the factory workers, whilst they explained the causes of their misery, and whilst they pointed out the remedies. The Premier received them with great courtesy, listened to them with marked attention, and expressed to those working men his approval of the very proper and able manner in which they had described the sufferings of their clients, and pointed out their causes and remedies. Sir Robert Peel assured the deputation, that "he was deeply impressed with the very great importance of their mission, and of the facts which they had laid before him, and that he and his colleagues would devote their most serious attention to the question, with a view to the happiness and well-being of those concerned." The deputation did not forget to impress upon the Premier the close connexion which there is between the Factory system and the New Poor Law, and how the latter was calculated to oppress and add to the sufferings of those who are engaged in the former.

I do not remember to have experienced more pleasure on any occasion, than when, as I lay on my bed, (being just then suffering from rheumatism in my head, and lumbago in the back,) that deputation of "my own boys" waited upon their imprisoned "King," and communicated these glad tidings to me. Bless them! I was delighted to see them, and still more so, to hear their report. They had seen other members of the Cabinet, and were to see more. God speed them well.

Now, this is as it should be. The Government and the working classes are no longer strangers. The truth has been told by working men to Her Majesty's Ministers. There was no Edwin Chadwick, no Muggeridge intervening to mar their tale, or to suppress their evidence. I *know* what effect has been produced on the minds of the working men by that interview—I *guess* what impression has been made upon that of the Premier. No man can come into close contact

with the working men of England without loving them. It is the host of idle cormorants of Commissioners, their assistants, and secretaries, who have lived upon traducing the working classes, and who have ruined their patrons, the Whig Government, (who listened to their lies, and acted upon their suggestion)—it is those despicable hangers-on, who have, by deceiving the Government, caused all the misery under which the people of England groan.

Believe me, Sir, the fact that the Premier will now commune with working men, raises my hopes more than I can tell; for, although it may seem strange to you, it is true, that *all the difficulties of the Government have arisen out of this one fact*—A PERFECT IGNORANCE OF THE CHARACTER OF THE WORKING CLASSES. The truth is, that Commissioners have found it to be their interest to make the Government believe that the working classes were idle, turbulent, vicious, profligate, and I know not what. Hence every measure which has been adopted by the legislature is of a coercive character, being calculated for a different class of beings than the working men of England; and, consequently, it has increased the misery which it was intended to remove—forced the complaints of the people to become louder; and then it required another set of idlers, in the shape of Commissioners, assistants, secretaries, inspectors, clerks, and all sorts of idle drones, to keep the most industrious, reasonable, virtuous, and loyal people, from rebellion! Now, however, that the Premier and the working classes have had a meeting, I anticipate the death of Job-Commission-Legislation; and, amongst other good measures, I think that I foresee the speedy enactment of a simple, plain, efficient Ten Hours' Factories' Regulation Act, without one single hanger-on.

When Sir Robert Peel has received a few more deputations from the working men, I am confident that he will see how grossly the working people have been libelled by the Poor Law Commissioners; and when he has discovered that, there can be no doubt that he will at once repeal the accursed New Poor Law Act, which was passed under the assumption and positive declaration, that the working classes were idle, lazy, turbulent, and profligate! The truth is, and it is impossible to lay too much stress upon this one fact, the philosophers are a race of men who are ever dreaming of a state of existence *without restraint*, which they call "liberty," but which we, of the Christian school, know to mean LIBERTINISM. To pave the way for the consummation of their hopes, they want to get rid of the aristocracy on the one hand, and of the poor on the other. It mars their peace to see a race of men, who, from their station, are so much their superiors. The restraint which homage imposes makes them miserable: and then, the poor are "so burdensome, so costly," that, in order to gratify the selfishness of our modern philosophers, and to ease them of the restraint required by the support of the poor, a dogma was unblushingly propounded, that "the poor have no right to eat; that nature never provided a seat for them at her table!" Upon that doctrine, so contrary to the Divine law, was the New Poor Law founded; and thus philosophy succeeded in undermining the Christianity of the Constitution, and, as it hoped, got rid of the claims of the poor. To accomplish the fiendish desires of these philosophers (the destruction of the aristocracy and of the poor), they have pictured the one to the other as

monsters, and have succeeded in setting them at variance. The result has been, that the deluded aristocracy have been beguiled by the sophistries of the philosophers; and believing that the poor were, in reality, the monsters which they were depicted in the fables of the great schoolmaster, (*see Lord Brougham's Speech on proposing the New Poor Law,*) a law has been passed, on the principle that the poor have no rights; and now, by the power of the discontented poor, (who are naturally, by that act of tyranny and robbery, enraged against the aristocracy,) the philosophers are attempting to ruin your order, by removing all protection from your land. Such, Sir, is the cunning, such is the cruelty of those enemies of your order and the working classes. But I rejoice (now that the Prime Minister has begun to commune with working men,) in the prospect, that the duplicity and the malice of the philosophers will be frustrated—that delusion will no longer blind the one and enrage the other; but that the aristocracy and the working classes will endeavour to administer to the comfort and happiness of each other; and thus, under a wise and Christian system of legislation, I hope, that the philosophers will be outwitted, and that England will be herself again! Such are the hopes engendered in my mind, by the knowledge of the fact, that the aristocracy, in the person of the Premier, and the working classes, in my own Ten Hours' Bill men, have met together. I pray God that I may not be disappointed.

Another communication which I have received gives me much pleasure. A dear friend of mine called upon me the other day—he is a very large factory master—he employs some thousands of “hands.” And where do you think he had been? To Sir Robert Peel, Sir James Graham, the Duke of Buckingham, Lord Wharncliffe, and others of the Cabinet. What for? Glorious! Why, Sir, he had formed one of a deputation from the humane portion of the Yorkshire mill-owners, to ask for a Ten Hours' Factories' Regulation Act! So that, you see, all the factory masters are not, like the “Leaguers,” cruel and selfish. No, no; I have always known, and have ever been proud and happy to declare, that amongst the mill-owners are to be found some of the best and staunchest friends of the Ten Hours' Bill. These good men wish for legal restraint, not only because the well-being of the factory children requires it, but also to protect themselves from the grinding, and grasping, and ruinous competition of their hard-hearted, cruel, and selfish neighbours, who care not at what cost to the health, and happiness, and morals of the children, they are enabled to bring a “cheap article,” however worthless, into the market, and thus undersell those who desire “to live and let live.”

That friend of mine told me, that, being a Conservative, now that we had a Conservative Government, he could not, in conscience, desist from using what influence he had with his political friends; and, as he had hopes that a Conservative Government would deal fairly with the factory question, he resolved to set them right upon a question on which he felt so deeply and was so much interested, and on one which he understood so well. I found, that after talking the matter over with several Cabinet Ministers, he had very strong hopes of eventual success, although one of the Ministers (Sir James Graham) had plied him rather closely with his Whig philosophy. No wonder that a Minister who believes that

"the main source of the prosperity of the country is its manufacturing industry and enterprise," should philosophize a little. But Sir James must not think to carry his Whig prejudices against the force of reason; if he should push them too hardily, he may, and I hope that he will, get pushed out.

Barring Sir James's philosophy, my friend was in high glee.

You may be sure that I am in famous spirits. But, then, there is the awkward DELAY of Sir Robert—the long dreary winter to get over! What must be done? My opinion on the danger and the bad policy of that delay is unchanged. Seeing, however, that prospects are brightening for my little factory children, I must take care that their enemies, the Anti-Corn-Law-Leaguers, do not kick up such a stir, as to frighten the Conservative Ministers out of office before the meeting of Parliament.

The Leaguers (for to them is evidently committed the arrangement of the winter's campaign) will send their messengers of mischief into every nook and corner of the land, who will, without blushing, tell their hearers, "that their employers, the Factory Lords, are the most liberal, humane, and benevolent people on earth; that the factory system is the most delightful thing in the world; that you landlords are the greatest fiends on this side the bottomless pit; and that the New Poor Law is the masterpiece of good legislation." This they will do. How are you to meet them? May be, you will think that I am a busy, meddling fellow; I know, however, that if you sleep this winter, when you awake, you will be shorn of your strength. Knowing this, I advise, that wherever the emissaries of the "League" appear, they may be confronted with a factory worker, and that he shall propose a petition for the Ten Hours' Bill and for the repeal of the New Poor Law.

Do not start, Sir, at the mention of the repeal of the New Poor Law!—that must be granted, or your order will be destroyed by the "Leaguers." The Constitution, Religion, and Justice demand it—the prejudices of the people must be yielded to; the security of your "order" and of your property, require the recognition on your parts of the RIGHTS of others. It is settled on all hands, that to attempt to maintain the New Poor Law and the Corn Law is madness! If, therefore, they would not fall into the hands of the "Leaguers," the aristocracy must now shake hands with their best friends, the working classes of England!

You may then leave the Anti-Corn-Law-Lecturers to be dealt with by a few plain-spoken, warm-hearted, honest factory workers. There is no difficulty in the matter;—surely the landlords can afford to pay the expenses. If so, I will engage (provided they give me timely notice) to have the Leaguers met everywhere, with men who will prevent them from deluding and betraying the people of the agricultural districts. If the landlords despise this proposal, I shall be sorry. I require no reward; all that I ask is time to make arrangements. If this offer is accepted, why, then, I see the accomplishment of all my wishes—a Ten Hours' Factory Bill, the repeal of the New Poor Law, the defeat of the "Leaguers," and a return, on the part of the Government, to sound, constitutional, protective legislation. My confidence in the talent and honesty of my faithful Ten Hours' Bill men, assures me that such would be the result, if they were universally pitted against "the lecturers of the League." What a mercy

it will be, if, from this cell, I shall be permitted to sling that smooth stone at the forehead of the giant, who now defies the lords of the soil, and feasts on the blood of my little ones!

You will, I am sure, excuse this digression. The delightful news which was brought to me by the deputations required some notice, else I should have given to you, at first, what now I copy for your perusal, *i. e.*, my answer to the letter (which I inserted in my last) from an old Tory friend of mine, a neighbour, residing near to Fixby Hall.

Having the highest esteem for that gentleman, I deemed it but his due, as I could not take his advice, to state my reasons. This is what I wrote to him:—

“ The Fleet Prison, October 2, 1841.

“ My dear Sir,

“ You cannot have the remotest idea of the satisfaction which I have derived from the perusal of the latter part of your very kind letter. To be assured by you, who have witnessed my ‘goings out and comings in,’—who have lived close by Fixby Hall the whole of your life—who have visited Mr. Thornhill, and received him at your house, during his late visit to Fixby—who have twice counted me worthy of being your representative in Parliament—who have read all that I have published, and have so often honoured me by marks of your friendship,—I say, my dear Sir, that no one can even guess the pleasure that it imparts to my mind, to be assured by one, who, added to all that I have said, stands A 1 in *our own* neighbourhood as a man of practical, but unostentatious piety, of unsullied honour, of unimpeachable veracity, of unbounded philanthropy and benevolence, and of undoubted wealth—a man, too, who is beloved and honoured by all who know him, let their rank or party be what it may,—to be thus assured, by my old neighbour and kind friend, ‘that my integrity remains unsullied as ever it did,’ and that ‘you remain, *as ever*, my sincere friend,’ is a balm to my mind, of which no man, who has not been persecuted, maligned, and imprisoned as I have been, can form the slightest conception.

“ With regard to ‘availing myself of the Insolvent Act,’ it is due to you that I should explain why it is impossible that I can do that. I must, however, first thank you for your kind intentions.

“ The *principles* which have brought me here do not permit me to bend to *expediency*. I cannot do any act which would, in the slightest degree, give my sanction to the *justice* of my incarceration. I protest against the whole proceeding, from beginning to end. If I were to seek the protection of *that Court*, I should acknowledge its *right* over me. By no act of mine, will I thus consent to the *justice* of Mr. Thornhill’s proceedings against me.

“ True, he has been deceived, I know that he has—the nature of the settlement in Court was, I know that it was, entirely misrepresented to him; else, he never could have sent me to prison without hearing my case—as a man of honour, he never could have accepted the books, (which, under the verdict, I was not bound to return,) if he were resolved to imprison me.

“ You know, Sir, that the sum which he allowed me and my father, never could pay the expenses of the stewardship—he knew that as well. Then how can Mr. Thornhill make ‘his family’ an excuse for keeping me here? For that ‘family,’ I have sacrificed more than he detains me here for—for that ‘family,’ aye, to maintain the reputation of *that* ‘family,’ I have devoted my best years—to enrich that ‘family,’ I have exerted my talents and lavished my health. It is very odd, that ‘the interest of that family’ should demand my imprisonment. If the mother of that ‘family’ were living, she would have thought differently. I do not mistake—Mr. Thornhill was good enough to explain to one of the deputations which kindly waited upon him to ask for my release, for which part of his ‘family’ it was that he held me in prison.

“ Excuse me, my kind friend—I love liberty, but I love truth more. I have not deserved the treatment which I have received—I cannot become a party in any way to such proceedings. Mr. Thornhill ought to have *pensioned* me, instead of having *imprisoned* me; but he has listened to the false and malignant misrepresentations of those who never sacrificed anything for him, who are now making his name on his own estates as much *detested* as it was *honoured*. I could name them, if I would; but I have resolved to leave the whole matter in the hands of that God who knows, that if ever one human being was devoted to another, I was to Mr. Thornhill.

" Whilst I feel obliged to all my kind friends who wish me out of this place, I cannot do one act which could be construed into an acquiescence in this punishment.

" My duty is plain—to submit and protest. That God who has permitted my enemies to triumph by my imprisonment, knows how and when to confound them, and release me. Here, I leave the whole matter.

" I am, my dear Sir, faithfully and gratefully yours,

" RICHARD OASTLER.

" To _____, Esq., _____, near Huddersfield."

" P.S.—Under any circumstances, the agreement between Mr. Thornhill's attorney and mine settles the question, as far as the Insolvent Debtors' Court is concerned.—The reason which Mr. Thornhill gave to one of 'the deputations,' for detaining me in prison, *i. e.* 'his duty to his family,' is, under the circumstances, the most extraordinary excuse that the ingenuity of man could have invented. It is known to all who know anything about our affairs, that, in consequence of Mr. Thornhill's 'family' not being heirs to the Yorkshire estates, he did not reside at Firby; and in consequence of his absence, I spent a much larger sum for 'the interest of his family,' than that which detains me here. My letters to Mr. Thornhill, during my stewardship, explain that fact. It is, therefore, very odd, that, after all, 'the interest of his family' should require my liberty and life!—R. O."

It is painful, at a time when subjects of so much public interest demand attention, to be compelled to occupy time and space upon such trifling matters; but the kindness of my numerous friends is beyond example, and it is due to them that I revealed thus much. I hope, now, the question of my release being settled, that I may be permitted quietly to wear and work out here, and that you may enjoy the felicity of having safely caged a man who has devoted the best portion of his life to the service of you and "your family." Leaving these private matters, it is time that I returned to the exposure of those Whig curses to the country, Inquiry Commissions—those schemes of tyranny and fraud, which are adopted for the purpose of carrying out the insane schemes of false philosophy, under the pretence of benefiting mankind!

I have surely satisfied you, that such was the case with the Factories' and Hand-loom Weavers' Commissions; it will establish the evil character of all such plots, if I allude to one more of them; and that shall be, that masterpiece of iniquity, the Poor Law Commission of Inquiry.

You will remember, that when the Reform Bill was passed, the Whigs were in high favour with the people—they had their confidence; and we poor Tories were, at that time, only named as objects of ridicule, to be laughed at. The people of England were not then aware what *rogues in grain* their pet "patriots," the Whigs, were. Having secured their elevation to power, and believing them to be honest and patriotic, the people seemed to slumber for awhile, and expected great national blessings to be the result of Whig rule. They therefore left their affairs with confidence in the hands of their own chosen Ministers. The Whigs were always very cunning, but never honest; so they, very characteristically, took advantage of the apathy of the people, and of the confidence which WILLIAM the Reformer reposed in them, and, having many persons to provide situations for, who had been useful to them in deluding the people and in obtaining their returns to Parliament, and knowing that all the ordinary resources of the country were required for services and situations already provided for, they resolved to lay their hands upon a fund which had for hundreds of years escaped the notice of former Ministers, and which, until the Whigs required it, had never been calculated upon as a source from which to obtain ministerial patronage. So

hungry and so shameless was the party, that they resolved to lay violent hands upon the poor-rates of the country, and thus, by depriving the paupers of their rights, to pamper their retainers and menials!

The idea having presented itself, the death-dealing project being once entertained, there could be no difficulty in contriving its accomplishment, with men who had already declared themselves to be the disciples of Malthus, and to be ready, at any fitting opportunity, to carry out the principle, "that the poor have no right to a seat at nature's feast—no claim upon the community for the smallest portion of food!"

It was, however, needful to delude the King: it was necessary also, apathetic as the people were, not to alarm them. A great outcry was therefore raised against the mal-administration of the Poor Law; (mark! against the mal-administration, not a word was *at first* whispered against the *principle* of the Old Poor Law;) and His Majesty was prevailed upon to appoint a Commission—

"To make a diligent and full inquiry into the *practical* operation of the laws for the Relief of the Poor in England and Wales, and into the manner in which those laws are administered; and to report their opinion whether any and what alterations, amendments, or improvements may be beneficially made in the said laws, or in the manner of administering them, and how the same may be best carried into effect."

The Commissioners were empowered, as in other cases, to sit in London, and to send their Assistant Commissioners to prowl about the country, and make out such a *case* as the wily promoters of the Commission required.

When I tell you, that one of those Assistant Commissioners was he whom I have alluded to in a former letter as being, in the opinion of one who knows him well, "without a heart;" he who, when his father was in distress, and applied to him for relief, sternly replied, "Sir, I owe you nothing—you beget me—but you could not help it;" and when his own illegitimate child was waiting at table upon him, *banished him and his mother penniless*, because an acquaintance (such men have no friends) who was dining with him, merely to raise his jealousy, jocosely said, "how like Mr. — your servant is!"—I say, Sir, when I assure you that such a man was appointed upon such an inquiry, no further proof need be given of the objects of its promoters. But, needless as the proof is, I shall be able, before I finish with this subject, to prove, from the speech of the Whig Lord Chancellor Brougham himself, that their object was to deprive the poor of England of their constitutional right to relief! It is obvious, from parliamentary proceedings, that it was also their desire "to bring the people of England to live upon a coarser sort of food." This, Sir, is an astounding declaration; it is one that I dare not make, if I had not undeniable proof of its truth. That proof shall be furnished next week.

I envy not such men their ill-gotten wealth; I would rather be, what
I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—One who knows "the man without a heart," and who knew him when he obtained a miserable livelihood, by inventing and contradicting newspaper tales about murders, accidents, pigs with five legs, geese with three, asses with two heads, and eggs with ominous inscriptions, one who is an old acquaintance of that wretch, has told me, that the fact which I have related about the illegitimate child, was the foundation of the horribly cruel bastardy clauses in the New Poor Law! There is an historical fact for you, Sir!—R.O.

"The FLEET PAPERS.—We love to see native kindness and benevolence breaking out through the cloud of a great man's prejudices and party preferences. This is precisely the difference between the patriot and the political partisan; and hence we have unmingled pleasure in observing, that, in his *Fleet Papers*, Mr. Oastler hesitates not to tell truth equally as boldly to the Tories as to their predecessors. In his present number we find the following:—

"Since the above was written, we have received No. 41, from which we give the following remarks, by Mr. Oastler, on the conferences between Mr. Thurlkill and the several deputations of Mr. Oastler's friends, who have waited upon him for the purpose of soliciting Mr. Oastler's discharge:—

"In reference to the Insolvent Debtors' Court, Mr. Oastler writes thus:— * * * —
Northern Star, Oct. 9, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS, No. 41.—The well-known name of the author of these Papers needs no introduction to the public from us; he is not only one of the most original scribblers of the day, but his name is familiar to every reader in the three kingdoms. In the number before us, the 'venerable old King' thus eloquently and affectingly refers to the interviews which have taken place between various deputations of the working men of the West-riding and his late master, Thomas Thurlkill, Esq.— * * * —
Sheffield Iris, Oct. 12, 1841.

CONTINUATION OF THE ADDRESS OF SIR GEORGE SINCLAIR, BART. TO THE CONSERVATIVE ELECTORS OF CAITHNESS-SHIRE.

"When they relinquished place in the month of May, 1839, I did not grudge to Her Majesty's Ministers the *eulhasia* of a semi-voluntary retirement, for the same reasons which induced me to condemn their subsequent tenacity of place after an unexampled series of disasters. I thought that they exercised a sound liberation in taking, if I may so express myself, the benefit of the Insolvent Act, and endeavouring by a timely, or rather tardy, *cessio honorum*, to smother, or at least to silence, a host of importunate and merciless creditors out of doors, who, instead of being satisfied with receiving now and then, in the shape of dividend, a paltry expense in the pound, were constantly dunning them for a fresh instalment. The divisions which preceded that resignation were scarcely regarded as victories even by themselves; at least if they were, they resembled those *resolves*, after which each party, according to the usage of antiquity, erected a trophy, or shouted the *To Drum* in more modern times. Their majority, like the days of the poor's *decrepit monarch*, 'had dwindled to the shortest span,' and the whole nation, when the result of those trials of strength was ascertained, considered Her Majesty's Ministers as virtually locked up in the condemned cell, and existing only by sufferance, glad even of a respite, and putting every iron into the fire, for the purpose, if possible, of obtaining a commutation of their sentences. But when all their intrigues and expostulations proved unavailing, and the day of execution was about to be fixed, they resorted to their courage to escape the guillotine of a no-residence vote (which might, I believe, have been carried by a considerable majority), by reluctantly swallowing in a fit of despair the gross acid of resignation. At this critical juncture arrived the welcome intelligence of a reserve. By a somewhat convoluted exercise of prerogative, the Royal clemency had interposed on their behalf. But the fatal dose had been rashly swallowed, the vital spark was nearly extinct, a *commissio lethargica* had almost supervened, the *facies Hippocratica* had begun to appear. What was to be done? Not a moment could be lost. One only resource remained, which proved to be effectual, for, under prompt and benignant auspices, the stomach-pump was applied, the subtle poison got rid of dexterously, and the suspended functions restored. I have met with numerous politicians of all classes in society, who regard their resumption of office at that period as one of the most ignominious actions recorded in our annals—that their resignation was neither more nor less than a juggle from beginning to end—that there was what great philosophers would have called a pre-established harmony between the Cabinet and the Court. In short, gentlemen, the general persuasion was, that whilst the dependents of Her Majesty's Ministers were weeping and wailing over their affecting valedictory declarations, they themselves were quite sanguine that the auspicious moment of resuscitation would arise long before the most expeditious artist could point upon their hatchment a consolatory *resurgens*. I myself do not altogether participate in this opinion; I believe that in the buff and hurry of the moment they had really made up their minds to relinquish office, because they had ceased to be supported by some of their friends. But I am not less convinced, that their divorce from place, like many marriages in high life, was hastily concluded, and almost as speedily repented of, and that they were most happy to grope their way back to Buckingham Palace under cover of the dense fog of an 'erroneous impression.' From that period until now, their career has been marked not by feats, but by defeats; not by the vigilance with which they have watched over the interests of the empire, but by the care which they have exercised in the furtherance of their own. Their budget may justly be denominated a delicate and desperate expedient, clumsily, though craftily devised, to retrieve the credit and retard the downfall of a disgraced and discomfited Administration. But never did any unprincipled experiment experience a more signal failure. Even supposing for a moment that it was either intended or calculated to be a boon to the working classes, they assured to receive it from a party by which they had been so long neglected, and so singularly betrayed. When I heard the Ministerial leader introduce a pathetic allusion to the distresses of the people of Bolton, I could not help exclaiming, 'Now I am sure that the game is up with the Whigs; they must certainly be at the last gasp, for they never think of the people's sufferings until they stand in need of the people's aid.' I remember a very astute and experienced stage-manager, who, being patronized by the Court, and having a strong party both in the boxes and in the pit, attacked little or no imperiance in the sallies of those who are frequently denominated the lower orders, but who, in point of local position, constitute the higher classes at a theatre. At length, however, a change took place in the society

manager's situation. He still retained the patronage of royalty, but a strong party was formed against him both in the pit and in the boxes. Then, and not till then, did he bethink himself that there were such places as the one and two shilling galleries, and he got up two or three farces, for the express purpose of propitiating the 'gods.' They, however, had too much sagacity to be imposed upon by this tardy and reluctant homage; they heartily joined in the hootings and howlings which resounded from all parts of the house, until, amid shouts of 'Off, off!' the astonished and mutilated manager was compelled to leave the stage. Yes, gentlemen; the people, who have so often been the victims of the Whigs, will never consent to be their dupes. Where was the Whig sympathy for the people when they proposed such profuse and exorbitant grants for the different members of the Royal family, or when they proposed that vote for the Royal stables, which it is impossible that the suffering people of this country can either forget or forgive? I believe that there is no event to which the working classes look forward with such unmingled satisfaction as the total extinction of the Whig party, whose existence I am persuaded will terminate with that of the present Administration, and its members will find themselves compelled either to advance into the ranks of the Radicals, or to recede within the pale of Conservatism. Why, gentlemen, I contend that I myself have manifested a much earlier, more cordial, and more consistent sympathy for the industrious classes than ever was evinced by Her Majesty's Ministers. I had the honour to be one of that majority which effected an inquiry into the condition of the hand-loom weavers some years ago, on the motion of my friend, Mr. Maxwell, in defiance of the wishes and suffrages of the Government. I formerly voted for the recall of the Dorchester labourers, and more recently supported an address to the Crown on behalf of the imprisoned Chartists, because I thought that their conduct and sentiments were far more excusable than those of some powerful and influential adherents of the Administration by which these motions were opposed. I stated last year at great length, and not without incurring some obloquy, my opinions as to the extent of the sufferings of the operatives, and the necessity of paying an immediate attention to their complaints; and in the debate on the budget in April, 1833, I observed, that 'the people expect, and are entitled to, a far larger measure of relief than it is now intended to bestow. What will they say, if this is to be the only result of that reform, which they mainly owe to their own firmness? Of what consequence is it to the working or middling classes whether Garton and Old Sarum, or Leeds and Manchester, are represented, or whether any places are represented at all, if their sufferings are not alleviated, and their grievances redressed? The feelings of the people cannot be trifled with' . . . 'unless the rich are prepared to make great sacrifices for the relief of the poor, I anticipate that the general discontent will reach its height, and be productive of convulsion, if not of revolution.' Her Majesty's Ministers, however, continued for some years to bask so securely in the sunshine of Royal favour, that they altogether neglected the precaution of taking any steps to promote the comfort and earn the gratitude of the people, so as to secure their cordial assistance in less propitious times. What can be more preposterous than, after considering the various items expended by an economical Government in such grants as I have enumerated, as well as in commissions, established or prolonged merely to stop the mouths of needy and importunate dependents, in contrast with their enormous amount the paltry sum annually doled out for the education of many millions throughout the empire? I know of no parallel, except that which is afforded by the account which Prince Henry parloined from the pocket of slumbering *Falstaff*, in which, after, *item*, a capon, 2s. 2d.; *item*, sauce, 4d.; *item*, sack, two gallons, 5s. 8d.; *item*, nucleosies and sack after supper, 2s. 6d.; we find the whole wound up by, *item*, bread, a halfpenny. Well might the Royal pickpocket exclaim, 'O, monstrous! but one halfpennyworth of bread to this intolerable deal of sack!' and if for bread we substitute education, and consider sack as the type of commission-ship, the sagacious and indignant operatives may, with still greater justice, inveigh against a contrast far more anomalous, and far more disgraceful. Although I have both heard and read many very able exposures of the fallacies and delusions involved in the Whig budget, I have nowhere met with so concise and convincing a demonstration of its hollowness and absurdity, as in a document which I perused a few weeks ago in the *Morning Herald*, signed by some of the leading delegates to a Chartist convention in the metropolis, of which I regret I have it not in my power to furnish you with some extracts. You, I am sure, gentlemen, will at once have perceived how little direct benefit could accrue to the working classes from an alteration in the timber duties—an alteration which, at the same time, by greatly injuring, if not ruining our Canadian countrymen, would, no doubt, tend to cement the union amongst themselves, but *against their injusta nocentia*, Great Britain; whilst the general interests of the country would suffer most palpable and grievous disadvantage from the diminished demand for British manufactures, the curtailed employment of British ships, and the decay and desolation of those colonies to which so many thousands of industrious families would otherwise be induced to repair, in the hope, or rather with the certainty, of finding prosperous homes, and profitable employment. The change, too, in the sugar duties would, I admit, prove of incalculable benefit to the operatives—incalculable, however, not from its magnitude, but from its minuteness; and would soon prove fatal to the welfare, not only of our West India planters, but of their emancipated apprentices, and of the merchants and manufacturers by whom these numerous classes are at present supplied with British goods. No persons of any rank or degree are more tenderly alive than the British operatives to the duties of humanity and the principles of justice. Although cheap sugar would undoubtedly be conducive to the comfort of their families, I am sure they would not exclaim '*Sucri bonus est oder ex re Qualibet!*' and if they knew that any luxury, or even necessary of life, were furnished for their use at the expense of encouraging the horrors of the slave trade, and perpetuating the evils of slavery, many of them would do as David did when the 'water of the well of Bethlechem, after which he had longed, was brought to him.' (2 Samuel, xxiii., 15—17.) 'He would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the Lord; and he said, be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this; is not this the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore he would not drink it.'

(To be continued.)

THE FLEET PAPERS.

LONDON, PUBLISHED BY
JOHN PAVEY, 47, HOLYWELL STREET, STRAND,
AND
BENJAMIN STEILL, 20, PATERNOSTER ROW.

THESE Papers are principally intended for the perusal of the friends of Christianity and the Constitution; particularly the Clergy and the Aristocracy, and of all persons who are possessed of Property. The object of the writer will be to explain the reason for the present alarming state of English society, and the consequent loss of life and property; also, to offer some remarks upon the folly and wickedness of attempting to uphold our Institutions, particularly that of Private Property, by the unconstitutional means of Centralization, Commissioning, Bepotage, and Force; finally, to state his own views on the best mode of restoring Peace, Union, Security, and Prosperity, to every rank of the people of England.

The author is perfectly aware of the fact, that every Parliamentary leader is now only attempting to legislate for the present moment—putting off the evil day—making laws “from hand to mouth,” in the hope that some unforeseen, fortunate event may enable succeeding Statesmen to legislate for permanency. He is also convinced that there is a mode of successfully re-establishing our Institutions upon their original foundation—Christianity;—and that that is the only way to preserve them from the encroachments of political partisans, who are now only paving the way to universal Ruin, Anarchy, and Despotism.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MR. DARTER is “At Home” on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays.—Mr. Darter’s hours of reception that he should courteously refrain from receiving the visits of his friends on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

MR. DARTER is obliged to the friend who has sent him the Liverpool Mercury of Oct. 23. 1841. It is evident that the Editor of that paper is totally ignorant of Mr. Darter’s principles, speeches, and writings. When a writer is disposed to quarrel with a political opponent, and inserts tales which never had existence in fact, it is natural that he should express opinions respecting that individual, at variance with the truth. Such an unfairness may make a great noise, but he can do no harm. Mr. Darter is happy to find that a copy of the *Wicks*, of the New Poor Law, and of the Factory System, is sent him in great numbers. When he does so, and asserts that which is truth, Mr. Darter will send him nothing in reply, but not fill them.

THOMAS MAULE, St. Leonard’s.—His very interesting letter is received, and will be inserted next week.

FRANCIS ALMOND, Ormsdon, near Halifax.—Will Mr. Maule inform Mr. Darter if he is certain that the facts are all correctly stated?

W. N. WALMS.—Mr. Darter has sent the “*Report* in an Address of the Honourable the House of Commons” on the case of *William* at Bolton. To Mr. Darter it seems to be unnecessary with the re-examination of the witness who attended *William* in prison, and the re-examination of *William* and Thomas Halton. Believing of fact and reports are very important witnesses for the New Poor Law Commission, and Mr. Darter is of opinion that Mr. Maule would have acted more fairly by publishing the evidence of independent witnesses.

MR. OASTLER.

"We are glad to learn that the friends and admirers of this gentleman are about forming a committee in this town to collect subscriptions to place him and his family in comfortable circumstances. He well deserves all that can be done for him. Were there more such 'Tories' as Mr. Oastler, there would be fewer discontented Radicals. We will willingly lend all the aid we can, and our columns shall be at the service of the committee to do what can be done to aid in so good a work."—*Sheffield Patriot*, Oct. 16, 1841.

"The *Leeds Intelligencer* states that 'a public effort is about to be made in behalf of Mr. Richard Oastler.' The public effort will be, to get by means of public subscription, such a sum of money as may enable him to continue uninterruptedly the promulgation of those ideas and principles which he has put forth in the *Fleet Papers*."—*The Courier*, Oct. 18, 1841.

NOTICES OF THE "FLEET PAPERS."

"The FLEET PAPERS.—The shamefully persecuted Richard Oastler, in the last number of his *Fleet Papers*, addressed the following remarkable passages to Mr. Thornhill. Read, learn, and inwardly digest them:—

"Every word of this is true as the gospels. The mill-owner does not want cheap corn, for the purpose of providing more food for the wretched slaves in his mills. What he wants are LOWER WAGES to enable him to sell his twist and cotton goods at a HIGHER PROFIT in the European markets, and reduce the value of land in this country. We must prevent him from carrying this flagitious project into effect. For the sake of the poor operatives themselves, this abominable scheme must be defeated; and it shall be defeated. A sweeping reform of the mill system—which is a compound of filth, immorality, and obscenity—must be commenced forthwith; and while the hired myrmidons of the 'League,' are calculating the cost of corn at Dantzic, Odessa, and other foreign ports, we must be consulting the bills of mortality in Manchester and all the factory districts. We must be counting bones, and weighing the remains of sinews, and examining the returns of coroners and sextons, whilst the 'League' are coming over the corn circulars of Amsterdam, and of Dantzic. We must place the mills in more holy keeping. The whole system must undergo an entire change. The good work is begun, and, with the blessing of God, it shall be carried out. The mill-owners began the war; we shall not lay down our arms until the victory over the factory tyrants, and their pernicious system, which we have long looked upon with horror, as a system of iniquity and crime in a Christian land, shall have been achieved."—*Liverpool Mail*, Oct. 12, 1841.

"The FLEET PAPERS, FOR SEPTEMBER.—The *Little Flecters* are still despatched, on their voyage of good, throughout the length and breadth of the land. We have left ourselves no room for extract this month; but we cordially recommend all who wish to read the sentiments of a true-born and true-hearted Englishman to procure the *Fleet Papers* of Richard Oastler."—*Hull Packet*, Oct. 15, 1841.

The following letter, copied from the *Morning Herald*, exhibits the working of the New Poor Law in the Pet Union. Give the Commissioners rope enough and ———.

TYRANNY UNDER THE POOR LAW COMMISSION.

"MR. EDITOR,—Did I not consider it a duty owing to the public, from whose heavily taxed pockets are wrung an annual 60,000*l.* for the maintenance of that objectionable commission—the Poor Law Commission, I should not trouble you or your readers with the following instances of tyrannous and otherwise most unaccountably inconsistent conduct committed under its unconstitutional and despotic power by its administrators, the Poor Law Commissioners.

"It has already been pretty generally announced that, after nearly four years of hard fighting with the Commissioners for a separation of Chelsea from that oppressive union—the Kensington union, during which the Commissioners having indulged in the grossest Jim Crowism imaginable, by denying, as they have done, at one time, on two occasions, the bad working of the union towards this parish; then, on two subsequent occasions, admitting it; then, again, on a variety of occasions, most stoutly again denying it, they have been compelled to grant the separation, which event took place in July last, thus again admitting the wretched working of the union.

"Consequent on the separation have been the appointments of various officers under the new administration, the Board of Guardians for this parish, amongst the rest that of auditor has had to be made. Accordingly, on the 11th of August last, the Board proceeded to the election of this officer, the election falling on Mr. Williams, a resident in the parish. This appointment was duly despatched to Somerset House for the usual 'sanction,' but their high mightinesses graciously condescending to withhold their approval have most resolutely refused to assent to it, on the following grounds:—

"1st. That Mr. Williams is a parishioner.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddleburgh, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 44. LONDON, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1841.

PRICE 2s.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—You have had three wedding days—I have had one. You have three anniversaries—this is mine. A prison, darker than this, separates you from "the wife of your youth:" this prison, dark as it is, but adds to the tenderness and affection of mine.

How many pleasing thoughts have occupied my mind this day! (I am writing on the 16th of October.) Twenty-five years ago, my Mary and I took each other "for better, for worse—for richer, for poorer—in sickness and in health, till death us do part." Time has but sanctioned that vow—experience has strengthened it—imprisonment has rivetted our loves. Wonder and gratitude to God crowd upon the past, for mercies great and innumerable; trust and confidence open with calmness the evening of our loves, whilst we cast all our care for the future upon our faithful Friend; intreating the great I AM, to guide us by His unerring wisdom—to protect us by His Almighty power—and to grant that we may abide yet more and more in His love, by strictly and unceasingly obeying His Holy will, and seeking only His glory, through His Holy Spirit given unto us, for the sake of that Saviour, His Son, who was *once* Himself a prisoner. You may *guess*, but it is alone reserved for those who suffer persecution to *know*, the strength and power of love. The heart of woman is not susceptible of fear, when revenge and malice *unjustly* war upon it; it is strong and firm as adamant against the *tyrant's* power. It is your reward to know, that you have *rainly* striven to shake a woman's love, to move her soul to anger, whose every aspiration is prayer that your heart may be softened, and its beatings tuned to truth and justice. Such, Sir, are some of the cogitations of my mind this twenty-fifth anniversary of my wedding day, without exception, the most profitable anniversary of that day I have ever enjoyed.

My thoughts also turned, of course, to your anniversaries; one, two, three. Those ruminations I will, however, for the present, keep to myself, and immediately proceed to the consideration and exposure of the diabolical plot which was laid by the Malthusians to carry the New Poor Law—a law that undermines the sacredness of the marriage knot, save where the parties have property; and plunders the poor of their rights, in order to feed the hangers-on of the Whigs out of the poor-rates. I am not unconscious of the number, and wealth,

and power of the foes which I shall encounter, when I essay to vindicate the character and the rights of the poor against that phalanx of their enemies, who, in one shape or other, have aided in first entrapping, then defaming, and afterwards betraying and plundering the poor of England. Rank, power, talent, property, and learning, have all combined in that impious warfare. For awhile, even the rage and clangour of contending political parties were hushed, that each might join in that crusade against the poor man's character and rights! All that was hypocritical in nominal Christianity, was then amalgamated with what was savage and brutal in false philosophy; and, when the conspirators put on the cloak of charity, it was not surprising that, in many cases, they "deceived even the elect."

It is, Sir, that motley host of powerful and malignant foes I now would dare to the conflict. Think not, that I rush heedless to the fight: I have counted the cost. No human being can be more aware of the power and the malice of the "men without hearts," than myself; no one is more sensible of the force of prejudice in some, and the power of interest in others, than I am. But, Sir, I am invincible in truth; and, fearless, from this cell, I challenge the whole host of MALTHUSIANS, (by what other names they please to call themselves, I heed not—Tory, Conservative, Whig, Radical, Chartist; Churchman, Roman Catholic, Dissenter, or Infidel,) I call them all to listen to me, whilst I unravel the blackest and deepest plot that human agency ever worked for angry demons. I charge them to listen, and contradict me, if they can; but if I state the truth, (and I will entrench myself among documents and facts which none can shake,) then I advertise them, that neither dignities, rank, titles, wealth, nor talent, shall be able to shield them from that condemnation which is the inheritance of full-grown sin.

I am aware that many persons of excellent character, noble birth, and nobler actions, were entrapped and deceived by the *hurry* and the cunning of those who *managed* the New Poor Law. Those confiding men supported and voted for that atrocious measure, believing that the leaders of their different parties (being men in whom they were accustomed to confide,) had investigated the whole subject, and could not be deceived. Such persons (and I know that their number is very great,) will read this exposure of the deep-laid plot without prejudice; they will mark how grossly they have been deceived, and hasten to wash their hands of the foul deed. Nay, I am mistaken, if some Tory *leaders* have not been beguiled—nor can I doubt, that the exhibition which I am about to make will convince them of their error, and urge them to redeem their names from that curse which the sanction of such villany invokes. ————— I am about to repeat the blackest tale of England's history—to tell of the foulest schemes, devised for the most hateful purposes—the robbery and murder of the poor, by men who have acquired a reputation for rank and learning—the crackmen of "the liberal and enlightened school."

The tyrants have conquered, but truth shall make them yield! They hold the spoil, but hold it tremblingly!—soon they shall disgorge! They are powerful and many; but whilst I approach to battle with them, my heart faints not; I cannot fear or tremble, neither am I terrified because of them. I know that the God of the poor will aid me in the struggle, and save me from His enemies and

theirs. I crave your patience, for the tale is long and wearisome.—

—You must now, Sir, prepare to hear that which must, if you have human feelings, make your nerves shake, your blood curdle, and the flesh creep upon your bones; for such a scheme of downright cowardice and black villainy was never yet unravelled since man was man.

All that is deceitful and cowardly, and malignant, and covetous, and despicable, and hypocritical, and atrocious in our fallen nature, had full play in that war against the poor—that plunder of their rights, which it is now my duty to describe.

Great names were infamised in that conflict: the proud crest of England's nobility lowered itself, and crouchingly joined with the sordid, selfish, rampant Moloch of the Factories, in that war of might against right. They obtained a conquest, when victory was disgrace! Black as the tale must needs be, it shall be founded, all the way through, on fact. Proofs irrefragable, proofs strong as Holy writ, shall meet you everywhere; and giant as the foe-man is, the force of truth shall make him yield, and force him to release his prey.

I pray for patience whilst I write. Although I hate the sin, I vain would love the sinners; but love impels me to shame them from their crimes. I would not offend the most tender and delicate ear; but sins as black as those which I am about to describe, must not be glossed over with polished phrases and terms obsequious. Real light will be thrown upon the whole investigation, if, by any means, I can arrive at the *original design* of the projectors of the New Poor Law. I know how difficult it is for man to discover the hidden motive of another's action. It does, however, sometimes please the Searcher of hearts, by facts impregnable, to throw the light of truth into the darkest recesses of the human mind.

In my last letter, I have stated, "it is obvious, from parliamentary proceedings, that it was the desire of the projectors of the New Poor Law *to bring the people of England to lie upon a courser sort of food.*" I grant that such a declaration demands the most positive and undeniable proof—proof which it is utterly impossible to shake—proof that must be admitted in a court of justice—proof which the most prejudiced, the most sceptical, the most interested, must accept—proof from the force of which there can be no retreat.

If I am able (and I think I am) to produce such proof of the unheard-of iniquity of the projectors of the New Poor Law, I shall then be in a condition to demand, not only the instant repeal of a law which I believe to be grounded on such an atrocious motive, but also the immediate impeachment of its projectors. I shall then, too, have laid the foundation of credibility for such a scheme of cold, calculating villainy and cruelty, as never, till false philosophy had brutalized the minds of our governors, was dreamt of, either in barbarous or civilized society.

To the proof then of the allegation, that the desire of the projectors of the New Poor Law was "*to bring the people of England to lie upon a courser sort of food.*"

There shall be no mistake about this matter—it shall not rest on evidence. I will bring the accuser and the accused face to face, and leave both friend and foe to be the judges. The accusation was not whispered in secret—it was not made behind the back of the delinquents. Proof of the truth, or falsehood of the damning charge, was held by the accused, and, being demanded, was by them

refused! The scene alluded to was in a place where no secrets can be kept—the House of Commons. There, every sentence is caught up, as it is uttered, and is reported to the whole world. The accuser was not dismayed by the silence of the powerful accused, but gave it all the publicity which, by his peculiar position, he could command. He was not content to repeat it once or twice, but constantly, in his wide-spread writings, referred, most circumstantially, to the subject. Had CORBETT not known that all he said on that affair was true, Sir ROBERT PEEL would have been the last man to whom he would have repeated it. Had there been any mistake in the matter, scores of witnesses would have been ready to have contradicted the infamous fact. No fact so hateful was ever before charged against any Government; the bloody wish imputed to NERO was more manly, but not more deadly.

The *motive* of the projectors of the infernal New Poor Law being once discovered and admitted, the whole debate on that measure must turn upon the right or wrong of their intentions.

Bring, then, your calm reflection to bear upon the following facts. That you may be satisfied I make no mistake, I will quote from the late WILLIAM CORBETT, Esq., M.P. for Oldham, out of that great man's best and noblest work, his "Legacy to Labourers"—a work, Sir, which every Englishman and every Englishwoman ought to read, and without which every English library is incomplete. The book is dedicated to Sir ROBERT PEEL: it would be well that the Premier should now read it; and I pray that in doing so, its arguments may furnish his head, while its constitutional and Christian principles warm his heart. At pp. 20, 21, and 22 of that book, Mr. CORBETT says:

"To the Searcher of hearts only can man's motives be known, except by confession, or by collateral or circumstantial evidence. I will, therefore, not attempt to assert what were the motives of the projectors and pushers-on of this bill (the New Poor Law), or the motives from which it was supported by the Duke of Wellington, by Lord Radnor, by you, (Sir Robert Peel,) and other great landlords. I should not think it just to impute motives which I cannot substantiate by proof. I will say, therefore, nothing about the *motives* to the projecting and pushing-on of this measure; but I will say plenty about the *natural and inevitable tendency of the measure*, first, however, stating a circumstance, *to the truth of which there is a whole House of Commons full of witnesses*, and which is as follows:

- "1. That, during my opposition to the bill, I positively asserted, that *printed instructions* were given to the barrister who drew the bill; that these instructions told him that it was *intended* to erect about *two hundred workhouses* for the whole of England and Wales; that they also told him, that one thing desirable to be accomplished was, *to bring the people of England to live upon a coarser sort of diet.*
- "2. That I moved for the laying of these instructions upon the table of the House; and that the minister and his majority rejected the motion.
- "3. That neither Lord ALTHORP, nor any other man in the House, said one single word in *contradiction to my statement.*
- "A change of circumstances now enables me to say, that I had *SEEN* the instructions."

It is impossible to describe the horror which overwhelms me, when I think of the wickedness of those Whig Ministers, who, having obtained the confidence of the people, and having risen to power by their influence, were base, and mean, and wicked enough, to avail themselves of that influence and of that power, to devise, adopt, and enforce a scheme which was calculated and *intended* to force that self-same grateful, affectionate, and confiding people "*to live upon a coarser sort of food!*" in order that they (the Whig Ministers) might be enabled to provide situations for a host of hangers-on, who had been instrumental in inducing the people to confide in such monsters!

That what Mr. CORBETT here relates so distinctly, is *true*, can, I presume, be questioned by nobody except those anonymous scribes for the New Poor Law,

whose business and profit it is to deny anything that is true, and assert anything that is false; those scribes who have pronounced these sentences—(for the *Morning Chronicle* has pronounced them both,) that “the New Poor Law is the *sheet-anchor of England!*” and that “the poor man must be made to feel that pauperism is a disgrace.” The *Morning Chronicle*, indeed, did once say that it believed the statement of Mr. COBBETT to be false; and very likely the *Globe* may have expressed the same “*honest*” want of faith half a dozen times. No wonder! for the fact is a damning one, and one to which there never can be an answer (admitting the fact), but what must be full of shuffling, and plunge the answerers still deeper into the mire. But, supposing Mr. COBBETT to have been such a fool as to have challenged “a whole House of Commons,” as he says, to deny his statement—assuming that it is a falsehood, and supposing that he could have encountered the danger of this folly before the face of millions of his countrymen—what can the *questioners* of the fact say, when they read it recorded in the impartial pages of the Parliamentary Debates? I have not the works of all the reporters before me: I cannot, at this moment, stop to look into the *Mirror of Parliament*, or *Northcroft's Chronicle*; but I can refer you, and I do refer you, to *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* for the year 1834, in which year, under the several dates, 6th June, 9th June, and 1st July, will be found notices of what was said by Mr. COBBETT on the one hand, and by Lord ALTHORP on the other, respecting this very point! That the Whig press should, knowing this, express a *disbelief* of the fact, is, I repeat, not at all astonishing, because there is nothing that they do that need astonish. Why should it? It is peculiarly in their way of business—it is a part of their most arduous and well-paid duty. After what Mr. COBBETT has said, and what I have here added, no one else can doubt the *fact* for one moment.

But I shall not let this fact, damning as it is of itself, rest here. The recognized authority to which I have referred, (*Hansard*, 1st July, 1834.) does not merely report Mr. COBBETT as speaking of such “instructions,” and Lord ALTHORP as speaking in answer, but it actually reports the noble carrier-through of the infernal bill as *admitting*, implicitly, that Mr. COBBETT's description of the “instructions” was perfectly true, and that those “instructions” did contain the “*coarser-sort-of-food*” prescription; for, in place of denying that any such thing as that charged against the Government had ever been issued by them, he contented himself by telling the House, simply, that the provisions of the bill were *not the same* as those of the Report of the Poor Law Commissioners; thus confessing, I say, if he uttered the word “*those*” with any meaning at all, that there was a something somewhere, having all the character that Mr. COBBETT had attributed to the document in question. We all know very well, that the New Poor Law is only a first step towards the scheme propounded by the Poor Law Commissioners, or, as Earl Fitzwilliam has told us, “towards a Poor Law at all.” Lord Brougham also spoke of “*ulterior projects*,” no doubt meaning the self-same thing. No, no; strong as were the Whigs, at that time, in the confidence of the people, they dared not to push out the *principles* which were recommended by the Poor Law Commissioners; but asserting this fact, that the provisions of the bill were not the same as those of the Commissioners' Report, is not denying Mr. COBBETT's charge!

To prove, however, that the charge was a true one, that implied admission is really superfluous. We have the fact, clear enough, that the *challenge to produce* was made. We have the fact also, that no *production* of that which would have settled the matter to demonstration ever took place. And then we have this again, that, if the charge had been *false*, there was nothing to render it necessary to keep the means of proof in the dark, but, on the contrary, there were the strongest, the most goading inducements, to bring it forward at once, and, by so doing, refute the heaviest accusation of all, and give the accused a triumphant acquittal. The bill was at that date creeping step by step, clause by clause, through the Committee of the whole House. The "honest" lord, surrounded by the opponents of the savage measure, was much attacked on all sides, driven here and driven there, and worried and bothered as any bull ever was at a "running." At that moment, the most critical of all, it would have been quite a God-send for him to have had so serious an accusation made *falsely*, and to have been able to *show* that it *was* false. That accusation, left unrepelled, was, in fact, of itself alone, a perfect death-blow to the whole New Poor Law scheme, the instant it came to be printed and laid before the public. Think you, then, that our "honest Lord Althorp," knowing this but too well, as he did—think you, that he would have evaded the question, and have preferred an unaccountable, an utterly needless withholding of the evidence, to the production of that which (if he had it to produce) would, upon the grand point of all, have at once silenced the accuser, drawn down general discredit upon all such accusations, insured the loudest and most exulting cheers from the "majority," and rendered the character of their "honest" leader even more honest, if possible, in the opinion of all the foolish out of doors, than they had ever thought him before? Aye, and have destroyed at one blow the credibility of his most powerful and talented opponent! If Lord ALTHORP had not known, that the production of those "instructions" would have proved the guilty *intentions* of the Government, he would have hastened to have placed them on the table of the House. There, mark once more, was no reason upon earth for withholding the proof that Mr. COBBETT was *wrong*. Why, then, withhold it? What do you say of the man who, being accused of a crime, and being innocent, and being able to establish that innocence, and being inevitably to suffer if he does not do so, still prefers to suffer, and refrains from showing all the world, as he might, that he is innocent? What would you think of witnesses who, smarting under a cross-examination as to their own character, and affecting their own conduct, and who were about to be degraded in the estimation of standers-by, if they did not answer, by sufficient explanation that which had been imputed to their shame and disgrace, declined to answer when called upon? What would all the world think of men thus situated, acting thus? Why, all mankind would conclude, to be sure, that they were *guilty men*; except, perhaps, the few of their acquaintance who might happen to know, or to have heard, that they were *mad*, and for that reason, but that reason alone, believed or suspected that they were unjustly dealt with. More words are useless; by every rule of evidence it is clear that the *motives* of the projectors of the New Poor Law were, by their refusal to produce that document, proved to be such as Mr. COBBETT imputed to them.

Having thus irrefragably established the fact that the atrocious object of the

projectors of the New Poor Law was "to bring the people of England to live on a coarser sort of food," so one can be surprised that such men as "the man without a heart" were employed in that work of death—that crusade against the poor; or that Mr. Assistant Poor Law Commissioner Mott should have assured the Board of Guardians at Halifax, that "If THE COMMISSIONERS WERE TO LISTEN TO KIND-HEARTED PEOPLE, THE NEW POOR LAW WOULD NEVER BE CARRIED INTO EFFECT." Why, Sir, the accursed law needs no further condemnation than this avowal of Mr. Mott. He knows all the ins and outs of the measure—he has no interest in representing it to be blacker than it is—nay, his interest is in its continuance: still, truth forces itself from his lips, when he brands it with cruelty, stamps it with barbarism, and proves, that, in a Christian land, it cannot be "carried into effect," for, after all, nothing is more certain, than that all true Christians must be "kind-hearted people."

If we had been Christians indeed, the New Poor Law could never have stained our statute-book—were we so, it would not be endured one single day. Nor will it be, when the "perfect law of love" obtains its seat in Britons' hearts! When the God of Love is sole Monarch there, the law which "kind-hearted people cannot carry into effect" will no longer disgrace our Christian land.

After seven years' experiment, what has been the result? Have the concoctors of that measure been disappointed? No, surely there is misery enough. Have its projectors obtained their expected, their hoped-for object? Yes, verily for "the people of England HAVE BEEN BROUGHT to live on a coarser sort of food!" And what then? Of course, the Finances are deranged, the Revenue has fallen, and the Exchequer is in debt; such are the natural consequences of the poverty of the people—which poverty was designedly created (as evinced in their instructions) by the concoctors of the New Poor Law! They hoped to feed their hangers-on out of the plunder of the poor! When they found themselves overwhelmed by the success of their war upon the poor, they determined to push the principle of NO PROTECTION (for that is the principle of the New Poor Law) a little further, in hopes to replenish their Exchequer, by depriving the landlords of the protection of the Corn Law! Now, Sir, if the New Poor Law is just, so is the repeal of the Corn Law. But the landlords, who aided the Whigs in reducing the condition of the poor, resisted them, when the same principle was applied to their rents. Mark that fact—the people know it, they cannot forget it. The result of the whole affair is, the Whigs were entrapped by their own cunning, the wicked are fallen into their own net, and the plotters against the poor have been hurled from their high offices, amidst the execration of an insulted, betrayed, and indignant people!

A speedy retribution has overtaken the proud oppressors of the poor! And, after all, we are told, by one of Her Majesty's Cabinet Ministers, that "the present Government is conscientiously pledged to the principle of the New Poor Law, from which they will not recede!" He might as well have said, "We are conscientiously pledged to the principles which have ruined our predecessors and the people, from which we will not recede!"

Sir James Graham was one of the promoters of the New Poor Law; he must have read the original instructions, and have been aware of the deadly plot which I have undertaken to expose: he knew the motives of the projectors, the

instruments which were employed by them, and the dastardly means by which the scheme was to be effected. He may, for what I know, suppose, that his present colleagues, as were his former, "are without *hearts*;" but he should be aware that they have *heads*, and that no Minister whose reason is not extinguished by prejudice, or blinded by avarice, would ever hope to replenish our exhausted Exchequer by dismantling our cottages, and "bringing the people of England to live on a coarser sort of food."

That insane project has been tried by the Whigs, and it has succeeded, so far as the people are concerned: their food is now both coarse and scanty enough; but what is the consequence to their rulers? The minds of the people are thereby estranged from their governors; our towns are garrisoned, our fields are prowled over by police; our bankers tremble, our manufacturers are ruined; our merchants are bankrupts, our shopkeepers are without customers; our artisans and labourers are in rags, nay, thousands are starving in our streets; our farmers and landlords are assailed by the infuriated cotton lords, who are embarked in a crusade as deadly against them, as was the war against the poor; our Finances are embarrassed, our Exchequer is in debt. And for all this misery and wretchedness, we have no equivalent, but the huge and hideous New Poor Law Bastiles, and the new-fangled law-makers at Somerset House! Never before did any nation exhibit such demonstration of the folly and wickedness of any *principle*; but still we are assured, that "Ministers will not recede."

Sir James Graham will, I hope, find himself mistaken, and very soon discover that there are those in the Cabinet whom it will be difficult to persuade, that a measure which was intended and calculated, and which has succeeded, "in bringing the people of England to live upon a coarser sort of food," is the most likely means to improve the finances and replenish the public coffers.

The foolish fellow who killed the goose which laid the golden eggs, was as wise as is that statesman who thinks to improve the Revenue by reducing the condition of the people.

Space forbids that, in this letter, I should return to the work which I have set myself—the exposure of the New Poor Law Plot. Next week I shall pursue that subject, and not desist until I have satisfied every reasonable mind, that a law which was suggested by those who were resolved "to bring the people to live upon a coarser sort of food," which was carried by hurry, falsehood, and fraud, and which, on the showing of Mr. Assistant Poor Law Commissioner Mott, is incapable "of being carried into effect by kind-hearted people," must be instantly repealed by any Government which is resolved "to walk in the light of the Constitution."

It is an insult to Christianity, humanity, and the Constitution, to attempt to amend such a law. Nature demands that it must be removed, root and branch.

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—Thanks to my kind, benevolent friends, the Operative Cotton-Spinners of Manchester! Their liberal bounty and their important letter are received. Next week their letter shall be inserted, and so shall my reply.—R.O.

ERRATA.—In a part of the impression of No. 43, p. 344, 26th line, read *begat*, instead of *beget*; and line 32, for *promoters*, read *projectors*.

" 2d. That he is a member of the 'Rate-payers' Association!' a society established here for the purpose of assisting in the separation struggle, and for the correction of parish abuses.

" 3d. Because he is clerk to another board, called the Highway Board, in the parish which connexion the Commissioners represent would " expose him to the imputation of local feeling or being swayed by improper influence," and thus incapacitate him for an upright and due performance of the duties of his office! They then direct the Board to proceed to another election, threatening that if it did not do so they should themselves appoint an auditor. Accordingly on the 25th of August another election was gone into—the successful candidate, this time, being Mr. Osborne, also a parishioner, and, above all, a member also of the dreaded association.

" Now, Sir, I repudiate this doctrine of the Commissioners, and deny its validity. What! because a man is a resident in the parish—because he belongs to a society of a character of the one above named, and because he may happen to be clerk to another board in the same place, he must necessarily be an unfit individual for the office of auditor. I know not what Mr. Williams's feelings may be on the subject; but this I know, that I consider these reasons of the Commissioners to be fraught with a most libellous reflection on that gentleman's character and integrity. A pretty doctrine, at least as it appears to me, this, to lay down! Why, one would think that these reasons, so far from militating against a man, ought essentially to qualify him for this office; for who can feel a deeper interest, if only on his own account, in the parochial expenditure than a rate-payer? Mr. Williams is a rate-payer, and who is more likely to subject the parish accounts to a most scrupulous examination than an individual belonging to a society, one of whose special objects is the correction of parish evils and abuses? None, one would think; but the 'wise men' of Somerset House think and say otherwise. The association, no doubt, has annoyed them; and well it may, for, being a powerful and well-directed engine, it has signally assisted in the attainment of the just purpose of its creation, the dismemberment of this parish from the extensive and unmanageable union—the aforesaid Kensington union—their pet union—a union intended as a grand monument of Somerset House Poor Law Unionism, and of Somerset House Poor Law Legislation.

" Admitting, however, that the views of the Commissioners are sound and good—that a man, to be auditor, ought to be unconnected in every respect with the parish, how comes it to pass—how comes it to pass, I ask—that the Commissioners (and this you won't believe, the world will not, I am sure, believe it) have sanctioned Mr. Osborne's appointment? He who it is even in obnoxious to two out of the three grounds urged by them as insuperable objections to Mr. Williams. Yet this [they have done, a letter, a few days ago, having been received conveying their sanction.

" Surely such conduct, such unpardonable inconsistencies as those now stated, must convince the public of the utter futility of suffering this expensive and worse than useless institution, the Somerset House establishment. But this scourge cannot long endure; the clouds are beginning to disperse; and with the new Ministry I hope I see the dawn of that day which is to bring with it sweeping curtailments of their arbitrary powers, if not a complete annihilation of the Commission itself.

" I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant.

" J. B. RYDER.

" One of the Guardians of this Parish."

" 159, Sloane Street, Chelsea, Oct. 7. 1844."

CONCLUSION OF THE ADDRESS OF SIR GEORGE SINCLAIR, BART. TO THE CONSERVATIVE ELECTORS OF CAITHNESS-SHIRE.

" I cannot conclude, gentlemen, without congratulating you upon the triumphant result of the late appeal to the people. Her Majesty was pleased to say, when proroguing the Parliament, 'In the exercise of my prerogative I can have no other object than that of securing the rights and promoting the interests of my subjects; and I rely on the co-operation of my Parliament, and the loyal zeal of my people, for support in the adoption of such measures as are necessary to maintain that high station amongst the nations of the world which it has pleased Divine Providence to assign to this country.'

" An overwhelming majority of the constituencies throughout the empire have most nobly responded to Her Majesty's appeal, and I trust that the agricultural interest, by sustaining in any with united energy, may long continue to ward off the desperate efforts which are made for its annihilation by itinerant orators out of doors, whose object is rather to impoverish the rich than to enrich the poor, and by cheapening both land and labour, to enable a few grasping and insatiable capitalists, by diminishing the wages of their workmen, to purchase the cheapened properties of the landed aristocracy. I am persuaded that it is the great object of foreign countries to render Great Britain dependent upon them for food, and, at the same time, to render themselves independent of us for manufactures. I have no doubt that the foreign corn-grower, as my very intelligent friend Spooner has demonstrated, would, in exchange for his grain, take our unneeded gold in preference to our taxed manufactures. Nay, even if he intended ultimately to purchase British manufactures, it would be well worth his while to take gold in the first instance so as to drain the coffers of the banks, and to compel its directors to take such steps for the purpose of buying the gold back again as would greatly reduce the price of all manufactures, and enable the foreigner to obtain, in a very short time, for the same sum of money, a much larger quantity of goods than he could have originally procured.

"Although, gentlemen, I shall not have the honour of concurring in those votes which, in a House of Commons convened under their own auspices, and amid the most lavish and unconstitutional use of Her Majesty's name, will, I trust, ere long, expel the Government from office, I think that their speedy downfall may with confidence be predicted. I have great consolation in reflecting that on the Conservative side the losses have, on the whole, been not nearly so numerous or so important as their opponents anticipated. True it is that the country has (I trust only for a time) been deprived of the services of Herries, one of the best informed and most profound of our financiers; and of Colquhoun, one of the most eloquent and accomplished of our orators—

*'At Messapus erit, felixque Tolumnis, et quos
Tot populi misere duces;'*

whereas, although the Whig Cabinet Ministers have (as I understand) carried one sent in London by intimidation, one at Nottingham by bribery, and one at Devonport by Government influence, they have witnessed the unlooked-for discomfiture of many of their ablest, as well as many of their most insignificant adherents. Of defeat, it may be said that, in their ranks, *Sartilur insignis et miser*. They number amongst the 'missing,' their Morpeths, their Humes, their Handleys, their Stanleys, their Evanses, their Gillons, their Hodgeses, their Wilbrahams—

*'Alexandrumque, Haluinque, Noemonaque,
Prytaninque.'*

"Can they point out any class of the great British community by a majority of which they are respected or confided in? In the House of Peers, notwithstanding the unparalleled multitude of titles, created or renewed by themselves, they are every day at the mercy of their opponents, who can at pleasure reject or mutilate every measure which they propose. Even in the late House of Commons they received so many broad hints to walk out at the door of resignation, that no course remained but to point, with presumptuous politeness, to the open window of a no-confidence vote. By the working classes they are regarded with contemptuous suspicion for having so long treated them with insulting neglect, after having been reinstated through their co-operation. By the farmers they have long been numbered amongst the open and bitter foes, or (what is worse) the insincere, lukewarm advocates of agricultural promotions. By many of those who agitate for an entire repeal of the Corn Laws, they were taxed with having introduced their present scheme, under a perjured conviction that they could not succeed in carrying it, and for the mere purpose of acquiring an ephemeral and spurious popularity. To the Church their intentions are so such a subject of dread that the bishops whom they appoint are only venerated or trusted by their clergy in proportion as they disclaim the principles and oppose the schemes of the very Ministry by which they were promoted. By the Dissenters they are charged with having abandoned all the pledges on the ground of which alone their support was solicited and obtained. In Scotland they have not even attempted to allay the unhappy dissensions which have prevailed throughout the length and breadth of the land, as to the limits between the civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions—dissensions which have now reached such a height as to threaten the speedy disruption of that link which connects the Church with the State. In Ireland we find Popery encouraged, by their impudence and pusillanimity, to ravage the most exploded pretensions, and cherish the most extravagant superstitions, allowed with perfect impunity not only to assail the Protestant Church with menaces and invective, but even to demand, by the almost unanimous voice of its priests and prelates, what both parties in the House contend in denouncing as a virtual dismemberment of the empire. I entertain, however, no doubt that the whisper of an intriguing faction will, ere long, be silenced and overborne by the voice of an independent nation, which will neither be intimidated by their threats nor exalted by their promises; and that they can no longer be propped up by the blind partiality of a Court, to whose profusions they have obsequiously pandered. I have no doubt that, were they to resume their position at the left hand of the Speaker, they will constitute a very desperate and formidable opposition—a much more active opposition than the present—which, until lately, I have often heard described by many knowing politicians of all parties as no opposition at all—opposing a *non oppositum*—but when the new Parliament assembles, I trust that our virtuous and energetic Conservative leaders will be found prepared to take the helm, although the political horizon beyond shows their heads, with dark and dismal clouds, and the main vessel rocks and trembles on the surface of the agitated billow. The Ministerial attempt to regain influence over the minds of the industrious population, through the medium of a defective Budget, has, to a great majority of our countrymen, avowedly and signally failed—all classes throughout the empire have manifested their unequivocal conviction that, from the accession of the Conservatives to power, they have some advantage to expect, whilst from the continuance of the Whigs in office they have every evil to apprehend—and I therefore cordially hope, that, in the course of a few weeks, when the Government shall have been reluctantly and disgracefully driven to the degraded and depressed alternative of resignation, they will find that on the Conservative side of the House, 'gentlemen will be pleased to take their places.'

"I have to apologise to you, gentlemen, for having troubled you at such greater length than I had intended when I commenced my address. There are many other subjects upon which and time permitted, I should have gladly submitted some remarks to your consideration; but I have already so unconsciously transgressed upon your notice, that I shall content myself with offering my best wishes for your health and happiness, as well as for the prosperity and independence of that country to which I am attached by so many ties, and to the inhabitants of which I am under obligations which no lapse of time can ever adequately repay. I have the honour to be, gentlemen, your most devoted and grateful servant,

"GEORGE SINCLAIR."

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."
"The Husbandman that laboreth, must be first partaker of the fruits."
"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

VOL. I.—No. 45. LONDON, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 1841.

PAPER 24.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—I speak after mature deliberation: I have well weighed the words I am going to utter. Of gigantic schemes, this coarser-food project is one of the most cold-blooded and atrocious that ever were concocted in the mind of man or demon! If it has any meaning at all, it means this: that he who before the passing of the New Poor Law had *occasionally* partaken of a wholesome joint of meat, should, by the gradual diminution of wages, come down to a little salted fish, or an entirely vegetable diet.

That he who before that period could get good wheaten bread, should in future be compelled to substitute for it bread made from the coarser grains; and that he who had been accustomed to bread made from the coarser grains, should be driven to the fare of the poor Irish bog-trotters, potatoes.

That he who had been fortunate enough to get a little beer, cyder, or milk, should be driven to "swipes," or water.

These enemies to their species, (the originators of those "instructions,") doubtless had in their contemplation the *black bread* and the *soupe maigre* of France and Italy, and the train oil of Russia, and deemed them luxuries for "the lower classes."

But is what I have stated, *all* that is implied in the coarser-food project?—Far from it; this coarser *food* means worse clothing, worse furniture, worse lodging, worse medical attendance, worse everything. The family of a married labourer has not *one* purse or money-bag to go to for food, and another to go to for other demands. Out of one little food, the husband must endeavour to provide for all the wants of his wife and children, and for his own wants. He has ordinarily no other resource: drive him to "coarser food," and you will soon dismantle his cottage of its beds, chairs, tables, crockery, and cooking utensils: compel him, and his wife and children, to wear their clothes until, in spite of patching and piecing, they are in tatters, and finally force him to exchange his comfortable stone or brick cottage for some mud hovel, "open to all the winds of Heaven," or drive him into that bastille, the Union Workhouse.

Judge, Sir, whether or not I used the words of truth and soberness when I said, that of gigantic projects, *this* is one of the most cold-blooded and

atrocious that ever were concocted in the mind of man or demon. It has for its object wholesale robbery, and that of the most accursed kind, the robbery of the poor.

This project, however, has been carried out; the New Poor Law has "worked well!" By it, "the people of England HAVE been brought to live upon a coarser sort of food!" Famine, in defiance of the beneficence of the Creator, has, by that diabolical law, been forced upon the poor of England. Everywhere they are flying from that man-created scourge, or they are dying under its operation; or, what is worse, they are reduced to the condition of slaves by becoming the inhabitants of dens which are prepared for them by the three tyrants, whom the Reformed Parliament has empowered to make starvation laws, and has thus enabled them, in defiance of every constitutional principle, to destroy the liberty and the stamina of our people.

I little thought, when I was writing my last letter, that I should so soon receive a confirmation of the *successful* operation of the New Poor Law in our agricultural districts. It has, indeed, "worked well!" It has brought the people "to a coarser diet!" If you, or any man, can read the following letter without being horrified, I am deceived. The facts contained therein are of such a character, that one is left to wonder at the patience of a people who will suffer themselves thus to be coerced into banishment, starvation, or slavery, by a power which is foreign to the constitution and the religion of their country.

It will no longer avail to shelter such cruelty and injustice under the sacred name of law—it is usurpation—a wanton interference with the dearest rights of Britons by a banditti of freebooters, under the sanction of "an Act of Parliament," which, being contrary to the common law, "*is utterly void.*" Start not at this assertion: the time is now arrived when Englishmen must remember, that in the judgment of Lord COKE, "in many cases the common law will controul Acts of Parliament, and sometimes adjudge them to be utterly void; for, when an Act of Parliament is against common right and reason, or repugnant, or impossible to be performed, *the common law will controul it, AND ADJUDGE SUCH ACT TO BE VOID.*" (4 *Coke's Reports*, p. 375, Ed. 1826.) We must also not forget, that the above has been confirmed by Lord Chief Justice HOLT, who, respecting that judgment, asserts, "what my Lord COKE says, is far from any extravagancy;" to which the Lord Chief Justice adds, "Parliament sometimes does things which are *pretty odd.*" (12 *Modern Reports*, p. 688.)

You know how anxious I have always been, that the institutions of England should be inviolably maintained, and that I have, from the very moment that the New Poor Law was proposed to Parliament, warned you, "that it was an axe laid to the root of the institution of private property." I know how anxious the people of England are to maintain her institutions, and how much they will endure rather than place themselves in opposition even to "an Act of Parliament which is against common right and reason, or repugnant, or impossible to be performed;" but, Sir, I know also, that their forbearance has its constitutional bounds, and I have no hesitation in assuring you, that the people of England know where those bounds are fixed by the constitutional charter. They have already used their authority to drive the projectors of *that* treason from

office, and although one of the successors of the defunct Ministers has declared that the present Government will not recede from the principle of the hateful New Poor Law, you may depend upon it, that if Sir Robert Peel's Government are resolved to stand by that "Act of Parliament," the people of England will have no difficulty in getting rid of them; for, in that case, a cheat will have been practised upon the nation. Nothing is more certain, than that the New Poor Law was the cause of the rejection of the Whigs; nothing more clear, than that if the New Poor Law is a good measure, the Whigs are good governors. When any of the present Ministers praise the New Poor Law, they raise the question, "Then why have the Whigs been ousted? Do you not see, Sir, upon what a ticklish tenure they then hold office? Are they wise, thus to cling to a measure which will very soon extinguish itself by its own demerits? The Constitution of England indignantly rejects the impudent intrusion of these despotic Commissioners; "for the legislature is empowered only to make laws, and not to make legislators." (*Locke on Government*, c. xii, s. 141, 2). Nor can the legislative and executive powers be held by the same body; for "wherever these two powers are so found together, there is an end of public liberty." (*Blackstone's Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 146).

I will not at present trouble you with more authorities on this subject. I thought it needful to entrench my opinions thus far, in order that I might satisfy every lover of the constitution and the laws, that the war against them is not carried on by the opponents of the New Poor Law, but by those persons and that Government who pertinaciously resolve to abide by that measure.

If there ever was "an Act of Parliament against common right and reason, or repugnant, or impossible to be performed," it is the New Poor Law, which was intended to reduce the condition of the people, instead of protecting and nourishing them, and is thus manifestly "against common right and reason." It requires force of the most revolting kind to compel the people to submit to it—it must therefore be "repugnant"—and, after all, it is manifest that the Commissioners dare not enforce it in populous districts. Were they to resolve upon establishing it as the universal law of the land, rebellion would—they know that it would—be the result; thus it is proved to be "impossible to be performed." It follows then, (and I defy any one to shake either my premises or my conclusion,) it follows, I say, that "the common law will controul it, and adjudge such Act to be void." Why, then, should a constitutional Ministry cling to such "an Act of Parliament?" Sir, I am not blameable for hitting at the important judgments of Lords COKE and HOLY. These are times and circumstances when the hidden strength of the constitution must be unveiled.

The dread of being charged, as I dare say I shall be, by the enemies of my country, with exciting my readers against "an Act of Parliament," shall not hinder me from boldly denouncing, under the protection of the constitution, that abortion of legislation, the New Poor Law Act! I shall thus, I hope, prove to the legislature the rottenness of any scheme of English Government which is founded on the New Poor Law. If the liberal and enlightened philosophers think to undermine the rights of the people by "a pretty odd" Act of Parliament, I shall not fear to show that the constitution and the common law appoint

limits to a tyrannical House of Commons, and prescribe bounds to the power of the legislature itself. The time is arrived, when it is dangerous any longer to suffer "the philosophers" to trifle with constitutional principles. "THE BOOKS," as the lawyers call them, are not lost; "the Books" which guard *your* property, are those which guard *our* rights! Henceforward, the war against innovation must be boldly maintained, else what remains of the liberty of the subject will be bargained away for more cotton twist. Read what I was reading last night about Free Trade and Malthusian philosophy, at p. 173, vol. 1, in 'Letters, Conversations, and Recollections, by S. T. Coleridge.'

"What is to be said of a science (so called) which tends to the destruction of all that has hitherto been associated with the pure in thought and act, and which has declared, through one of the most favoured and influential of its organs, THAT IT WOULD BE OF THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE ADVANTAGE TO GREAT BRITAIN, IF ITS COUNTRY WERE WHOLLY DESTROYED BY A VOLCANO, SO THAT ITS FACTORIES AND TOWNS MIGHT BE COMPELLED TO HAVE RECOURSE TO OTHER LANDS FOR FOOD, AND THUS SELL SUNDRY ADDITIONAL BALES OF COTTON."

Now, Sir, when I see that destructive spirit pervading "Acts of Parliament," and watch the effects of it upon our population, I will not shrink from referring to the wise *saws* of our most learned and upright judges, as I find them recorded in "the Books."

These remarks have been forced from me by the perusal of a letter which I have received from a working man, to which letter I request your most serious attention. Mark the tyrannical and unconstitutional means used to compel the people to submit to the power of the New Poor Law Commissioners; contemplate the altered, the slavish condition of that people, and how "well the New Poor Law works," in bringing them "to live on a coarser sort of food."

Mark the *reduction* of wages, the diminution in the *quantity* of work, and the *increase* in the prices of the necessaries of life.

Put all these things together and say, is it *possible* that the people of England, who revere their constitutional rights, and whose ancestors died to purchase them, can long endure the infliction of such tyranny and injustice at the hands of Commissioners whose very existence the constitution rejects? Say, if it were possible that the people of England should be thus degraded—is it *desirable*? Nay, ask yourself further, is it *even safe*, as regards the institution of private property? Having prepared your mind by these observations and questions, I now request you most attentively to peruse the following letter, remembering that it is not from a manufacturing district—that it is not the recital of a case of individual suffering—but that it gives the general facts needful to the apprehending of the condition of the whole class of labourers in a district where the New Poor Law Commissioners, after having subdued the people, reign triumphant; thus you will be enabled to form a correct estimate of the "GREAT BOON" which the Reformed Parliament has conferred on the working people, and, through them, on the revenue of the country. Read this letter three times.

"1, Maze Hill, St. Leonard's, Oct. 18, 1841.

"To Mr. Richard Oastler, Fleet Prison, London.

"Respected Sir,—I received a letter from John Perceval, Esq., dated the 13th inst., in which he wishes me to forward to you the statement which I gave him when I was in town in June last, showing the difference in the price of provisions and labour in these parts before the introduction of the New Poor Law and at this time, now that the said law is in full operation. In the year

1835, the New Poor Law was not acted upon in these parts, although the Act had passed; but the opposition to its introduction was so great, and the views of the labouring classes so firm, that our tyrants were kept in awe, and it was not until their spies and money succeeded in sowing the seeds of dissension among the united working men that they dared to attempt an introduction of the detestable law; and when they did introduce it, it was by force. For it was preceded by troops (backed by the blockade, or preventive force, who were called out on several occasions at public meetings), and the police watching the motions of those who took an active part, with a view to entrap them. The men were turned out of their employ by the farmers, and bondswife were wandering in the streets; threats and intimidations were not wanting; and at last, by dint of force, backed by treachery, they succeeded in dividing us; and then, but not till then, did they dare to bring in their hated measure, and, even then, every opposition that was in our power was given to it. The relieving officers were led out of the parishes by women; in other instances their banks were closed, and they were requested to desamp, with a caution not to come again on the same errand. In other cases they were more roughly used, having their coats torn, water thrown over them, with mud and filth. But, Sir, they at length succeeded, by force, intimidation, bribes, imprisonment, and loss, in establishing this devil's law, and hundreds have left their native land rather than submit or come under its power! I am, however, digressing from my object, although what I have said will, I hope, not be considered as altogether irrelevant or foreign to the subject. Now to the information which I am requested to forward, and which I feel much pleasure in doing, independently of feeling it my duty to do all in my power to oblige that good man and friend of the distressed poor, John Perceval, Esq.

PRICE OF PROVISIONS IN 1835.

Flour.....	from 10d. to 1s. per gal.
Beef and Mutton	4d. to 6d. per lb.
Bacon.....	4d. to 6d. ditto
Potatoes.....	10d. to 1s. per bush.
Sugar.....	5d. to 7d. per lb.
Butter.....	8d. to 10d. ditto
Cheese.....	5d. to 8d. ditto
Coals	1s. 2d. to 1s. 4d. per cwt.

* The price of the clothing about the same, except cotton goods, which are a little cheaper,* the average price of wheat for the quarter ending Christmas, 1835, was 36s. 8d.

PRICE OF LABOUR IN THESE PARTS IN 1835.

Farmers' Labourers	2s. to 2s. 6d. per day.
Tradesmen's Labourers	2s. 6d. to 3s. ditto
Carpenters.....	4s. to 5s. ditto
Plasterers.....	4s. to 5s. ditto
Bricklayers.....	3s. 6d. to 4s. ditto

* And at that time there was but little trouble to get work, and but very few out of employment; now, about one half can get nothing to do! or, more strictly speaking, the average of labour in 1835 would be five days in the week, and in 1841 not more than three days; and I am ready to prove that this has been brought about by the working of the New Poor Law Bill!

* You will perceive, Sir, by this, what is the difference of the condition of the working population in these parts now, and before this detestable law was brought into operation. I have given this statement unbiassed by prejudice, for it can be proved by hundreds, and by the banks of numerous tradesmen. I trust, Sir, it will be of service to you; and any information I can give, I shall be most happy to send you. With great respect and thanks for your bold advocacy of the distressed millions of your fellow-countrymen,

"I remain, Sir, your obedient,

"THOMAS MAULE."

* P.S.—A man in 1835 was considered as independent of his employer as his employer of him, for if discharged he could then get work elsewhere, but now he is a complete slave; he dare not on any account oppose his master, let him be ever so great a tyrant; or attend a public meeting, sign a petition, or give utterance to any sentiment not approved by his employer, for fear of being discharged, in which case the Union-house is sure to be his lot!—T. M."

* This cheapness is drained out of the life-blood of my poor Factory children.—B.O.

Respecting this letter I must say a few words. You will observe that it is useful, not by giving an account of an individual case of hardship, but by supplying us with the relative condition of the working classes, in an agricultural district, under the Old and the New Poor Laws.

You are aware that, notwithstanding the fact that the projectors of the New Poor Law "intended to bring the people of England to live on a coarser sort of food," they had the effrontery to pretend that their object was to elevate the condition of the working classes, and to make paupers into independent labourers! Nay, they have even now the brazen impudence to affirm that it has elevated the condition and character of the labourers, and promoted their independence!

Mr. Maule's letter is useful, because it gives the lie to these false assertions; and it proves that the New Poor Law has answered the end of its projectors, by reducing wages, say one-fifth, whilst the articles required for the use of a family are advanced in price about 20 per cent, and the employment of labourers is at the same time decreased two-fifths, making the fall in wages so much the greater. Thus has the New Poor Law answered the diabolical object of its projectors, by "bringing the people to live on a coarser sort of food!"

No one can read Mr. Maule's account of the cowardly and base means which resorted to for the purpose of enslaving the people, without disgust and abhorrence; it is impossible to contemplate the present degraded and miserable condition of the people without indignation.

It is thus that the silken cord is broken which, in olden times, bound the aristocracy and the working classes together! That union must be again restored, or the aristocracy will fall before the "League." Do not smile, Sir; there is a power in that "League," which nothing but justice to the working classes can successfully resist.

Let the New Poor Law Commissioners prove my correspondent Maule to be in error, if they can. I shall, however, require more independent witnesses than relieving officers, paupers, &c. &c.; I know too well the hateful tyranny of the New Poor Law Commissioners—I cannot confide in reports got up by Assistant Commissioners from the lips of their slaves and hangers-on—I have seen too much of such jobbing, to be deluded thereby.

Permit me now, Sir, to call your attention for a few moments to a most important letter which I have received from Manchester. You will there see that my kind friends, the Operative Spinners, out of their poverty are resolved to administer to my comforts. Ah, Mr. Thornhill, that was an evil day for England when the "philosophers" persuaded the landlords that their estates were in danger from such men as these! when they were made to believe that the labourers and artisans of England were a race of vicious, lazy, desperate vagabonds! Until the eyes of the aristocracy are opened to the beauty of the character of the working classes, they will never regain their father-station in this sea-girt Isle!

Mark the kindness of these good men! then turn to the awful fact disclosed by these workers in the Factories—the absolute robbery of labour by the abuse of machinery! Next, permit me seriously to ask you—shall this system be allowed to progress? Shall the men be thus driven out of employment, and no

notice be taken of that ruinous fact by Government? Why, Sir, a friend of mine was talking the other day to a very large Cotton Factory Lord, who said—"We have now got the machinery in our works so perfect that we require no Men; we shall soon, I hope, be able to do without the women and children. You may then manage with the poor as you can—we shall be rid of them!"

Is it not time to look into this matter? Remember, that the owners of these machines hope to be the future possessors of the soil! These remarks will prepare you for the perusal of the following letter:—

"Manchester, October 16, 1841.

"Beloved and respected Friend,

"The Operative Cotton Spinners of Manchester have entered into a voluntary subscription, and have succeeded in collecting the sum of *six pounds, eight shillings*, which we now forward to you as a token of our respect for your very valuable and strenuous advocacy of the cause of the still oppressed Factory children. I assure you that we have the most sincere and heartfelt good feelings towards you, and shall never forget you; but the reason why our subscription is so very small is, because our money-hunting and grasping employers are still continuing to reduce our numbers and our wages by what they improperly call improvements, but what in reality are nothing more or less than an enlargement or augmentation of our labour. I can prove it to be a *fact*, that in the year 1835 there were upwards of 2000 Operative Spinners in Manchester; and such has been the rapidity of self-acting, double-decking, triple-decking, and long-wheel making, that we are not more than 600 in number, and those 600 are actually receiving less wages than they were previous to their labour being so much augmented.

"You would much oblige me by acknowledging the receipt of the money, as our men will expect it.

"I remain, yours truly, and with the best wishes of our Society,

"WILLIAM ARROWSMITH,

"Secretary to the Friendly Associated Cotton Spinners of Manchester."

"To Mr. Oastler, Fleet Prison, London."

I do not know what impression the reading of such a letter has on your mind; on mine, such kindness has a soothing, softening effect. I cannot receive such bountiful proofs of the love of my fellow-creatures—and particularly from the working classes—without feeling the tenderest emotions of gratitude towards my kind benefactors.

When I read of the encroachments which machinery is making on their profitable labour, I resolve to continue every lawful effort to obtain such a regulation for the use of machinery as shall make it a blessing to them, instead of a curse. The following is what I said to my friends, in reply to their kind epistle:—

"The Fleet Prison, Oct. 20, 1841.

"To Mr. William Arrowsmith, Secretary, and the Friendly Associated Cotton Spinners of Manchester.

"My Friends,

"Permit me to express my gratitude to you for your kind donation of 6*l.* 8*s.*, which I have duly received.

"It is impossible that I can convey to you the true expression of my feelings when I receive such substantial tokens of affection from men whose love I so highly prize.

"To be kindly remembered by you when I am condemned to imprisonment, not by the laws of the land, but by a 'fiction of law,' (for no jury of my countrymen has sentenced me to imprisonment,) to gratify the malice of one for whose interest and in whose service I have lavishly devoted my property, my talents, and my health—I say, my friends, to be kindly remembered by you under such circumstances, would be refreshing and animating to my spirits; but, to be fed by your bounty—to receive that bounty from your necessities—to be the victim of a revengeful man of wealth—

and to be 'ministered to' by the oppressed and the poor, excites in my mind feelings which deny utterance, gratitude which words cannot express. Thank you, my affectionate benefactors; you have my prayers,—grant me yours.

"The knowledge that you, *who are confessedly the best judges*, approve of my 'advocacy of the cause of the still oppressed Factory children,' conveys to my mind a satisfaction which the approbation of no other persons can impart. The fact of *your* approval is, of itself, an answer to all my opponents, *for you are the witnesses of all the cruelties which I have described, and endeavoured to remove.*

"Your astounding declaration, that, in consequence of the immense increase of machinery, and of the number of factories, 'there is, since the year 1835, a reduction in the number of Operative Spinners in Manchester of from 2000 to 600, and those receiving less wages than they were before their labour was so much increased,' is enough to alarm any thoughtful man who loves his country, and must *force* our legislators to take the whole question of *the use or abuse of machinery* into their most serious consideration.

"I never can believe, that the All-wise would communicate inventions to man, the intention of which should be to prevent the industrious having the power to obtain their 'daily bread.'

"You know that I am of opinion that laws can be, and ought to be made, so as to enable the operatives to be *blessed*, instead of being *curse*d, by the *use* of machinery.

"In the hope that soon such will be the case, allow me to subscribe myself,

"My kind friends,

"Your most grateful and faithful servant,

"RICHARD OASTLER.

"P.S.—Mrs. Oastler begs that she may be permitted to add her thanks to mine.

"Nothing is more certain, than, that if the law cannot regulate the *use* of machinery, in a very few years the *abuse* of machinery will undermine the law, and disorganize society. Soon, this great enigma *must be solved*—R.O."

I am perfectly aware of the objections which are urged by the "economists" against any interference with machinery. But, Sir, I also know that their whole theory is Error; *they* aim at unbridled liberty,—*Nature* has ordained proportion and restraint.

What! is a kingdom to be depopulated because inventions are increased? If so, science and machinery are the greatest curses of mankind! Such, however, is the theory of the economists;—how much wiser were our ancestors!

They were not afraid to regulate the use of machinery. The steam-engine seems to have made babies of our legislators. Answer this question—Was England a great, powerful, independent, and happy nation *before* the discovery of the steam-engine? Then say—Shall we suffer that invention to enslave her?—You mistake, if you think that I shall leave the matter here.

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—More good news!—Another deputation of operatives with Sir Robert Peel!—No Commissioners intervening!—Factory-masters subscribing for the Ten Hours' Factory Bill!—More on these pleasing subjects next week.—R.O.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

“The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage.”—“Property has its duties, as well as its rights.”

“The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits.”

“He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.”

Vol. I.—No. 46. LONDON, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1841.

Price 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—How strangely different are your circumstances and occupations as compared with mine. You, the *responsible* possessor of an immense estate, having the care of more than a thousand tenants and their families, who are depending for many of their comforts and necessaries on your will—I, your prisoner, dependent on thousands, who, out of their necessities, minister to my wants! You have a great stake in the weal of the country; I have none. If the affairs of the nation were to become unmanageable, and a disorganization of society should be the consequence, (and who knows how suddenly that day may come,) you would be driven to poverty, and, most likely, to despair, whilst I could not be injured, or at all reduced in circumstances thereby. Yet, Sir, how different is our employment! You are enjoying yourself in gaieties, luxuries, and sports, whilst I am engaged in trying to make my cell as comfortable as possible, and am occupied in the most important matters of the State. This contrast of our respective conditions and employments was forcibly illustrated the other day.

One of your friends had been informing me of your gay doings at Riddlesworth, where you had assembled, after “the Newmarket October Meeting,” Dukes, Duchesses, Lords, Ladies, and many “influential” leaders on the Turf, whom you were entertaining in famous style. No sooner had your friend left me, than I, and my fast friend Chemery, were devising a plan to prevent the chimney of my cell from smoking, (I can assure you, when a man has only one room for all purposes, night and day, a smoky chimney is a great evil,) so we were doing our best to remove the nuisance. I had cut out a piece of brown paper in the form of an arch, to fix on the front of the fireplace; we were in the act of applying the paste to it, when we were interrupted by a rap-tap at the door. Mr. Chemery opened it, and immediately announced “A deputation.”—“Never mind them,” said I, “we *must* get this job finished; they can talk to me whilst we proceed.” The deputation entered; seated themselves, as well as they could, and immediately entered upon their important business, whilst Chemery and myself continued our operations with the paste and paper, and at length succeeded in attaching the latter to the jamb and mantel of the fireplace; we have no disposition, no time for ceremony here. May be, some

one may ask, why I occupy my space with the recital of such apparent trifles as your doings and my own? Trifles are sometimes important, and it cannot be unimportant in the present state of ourselves and the nation, to notice the occupations of yourself and your prisoner; for thereby it will be manifest how we are each endeavouring to perform our several duties to ourselves, our generation, and our common country.

But who, think you, were the parties in attendance at my cell that morning? They were my own dear Yorkshire "lads" from Huddersfield, Leeds, and Dewsbury; some of them had fruitlessly waited upon you at Fixby to beg for the "King's" release: now they had been to the Prime Minister to ask for the release of the "King's little subjects," the factory children. If they should succeed in the latter, we shall not be much troubled about their failure to obtain my liberation. I can then be well spared; and the certainty that my efforts in behalf of the little factory slaves have been crowned with success, will more than repay me for all my labours and for the loss of liberty.

The deputation came to tell me all about their interview with Sir Robert Peel: you shall not long be ignorant of the proceedings of these clever, honest, patriotic, loyal Yorkshiremen and the Prime Minister, for their mission to London is most important to you and your "order," as well as to my poor factory children. I told you, in a former letter, that a deputation from the Ten Hours' Bill men of Lancashire; had waited upon Sir Robert Peel, and how kindly he had received, listened to, and conversed with them. I also expressed a hope, that soon Sir Robert would receive other deputations of working men, and I stated my conviction, that by such interviews, the Premier and the working classes would arrive at a good understanding with each other; and that thus the deep-laid plots of cunning and wicked Commissioners, who have hitherto prospered by lying, deceit, and fraud, would be exposed, and that hereafter their occupation would be gone.

I am almost in ecstasies when I ruminate on the interviews which these good Yorkshiremen have had with Sir Robert Peel and other members of the Cabinet. There can be "no mistake" now, Sir; there were no Commissioners to deceive and betray: the truth has been told, and I thank God that it has been listened to with marked attention and with the kindest feeling. I cannot doubt that the conduct and reasoning of these operatives have produced a conviction on the mind of Her Majesty's Prime Minister, that the working classes are not the idle, lazy, ignorant, dissolute, and disaffected monsters, which the New Poor Law Commissioners have represented them to be. I rejoice to know that the manner in which these good men have been received by the highest officer of State, has removed many prejudices from their minds. Oh! Sir, I am thankful that I have lived to see this day! May prejudice be dispelled—mutual good will be established—Commissioners no longer poison the ears of our Governors—and Old England be herself again!

"Well, old 'King'," said the deputation as they entered this cell, "Sir Robert Peel *has* a heart!" and then they told me, nearly word for word, what had passed between them and the Prime Minister. Oh! how my heart bounded with thankfulness to Almighty God for answering my prayers, and thus far crowning my efforts with success! The aristocracy and the people *have now* met together;

they *have* communion as friends; I hope that they understand each other!—How much cheaper, safer, and wiser is it then to obtain the truth, than to be oppressed, deluded, and misled with the false, voluminous, and costly “Reports” of Commissioners!

Methinks I now see the death-blow to that hateful, expensive, delusive, and bewildering system of commissioning, and with it, a return to better days for my native country. It is impossible to overvalue the benefit to society of the extinction of that race of vermin! Well, I will leave them in the grave which common sense has dug for them, and tell you somewhat of those good men from Yorkshire, whose visit to Her Majesty’s Prime Minister has caused me so much heart-inspiring pleasure. Prefacing my recital with that, which I am sure is the truth, an assurance that the information which has been conveyed to Sir Robert Peel by these strong-minded, intelligent, dispassionate, and honest operatives, is worth more to the governors of this nation than all the “Reports,” (including the 17,000*l.* worth of rubbish compiled by “DE NIG QUACK,”*) which have been produced by Commissioners, since those national scourges were first inflicted upon us.

The origin of the deputation of operatives was this: Lord Ashley having, as you are aware, refused office because Sir Robert Peel was not prepared to support the ‘Ten Hours’ Factory Bill (his opinions on that question being not yet matured), the friends of the factory children resolved to send deputations to reason with the Premier on the subject. It was natural that the Yorkshiremen who were deputed, who had for so many years consulted and acted with your prisoner, should wait upon me before they went to Sir Robert Peel—they did so: we had a very interesting consultation on the best mode of condensing the argument, so as to take up as little of the Premier’s time as possible.

I suggested that they should lay their foundation on that most important paper which was presented to “the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the state of children employed in Manufactories,” by the late Sir Robert Peel, Bart., on the 21st of May, 1816. The Premier’s father, when he produced that document, said,

“I beg leave to hand in a paper, as the substance of what I know respecting the state and management of cotton manufactories within the scope of my acquaintance, which is not less than five and forty years.”

I conceived that a statement which had been carefully prepared by such a person, on a subject with which he was so well acquainted, must have great weight with his son, to whom the settlement of the factory question is now referred. I pointed out one particular paragraph in that “paper,” which I caused to be transcribed for the deputation, and which I insert here, because I think that that declaration of the late Sir Robert Peel, on the use and abuse of machinery, cannot be too often repeated. Strong as my opinions may seem to be on the subject of regulating the use and restraining the destructive tendency

* A friend of mine, who is an M.P., was travelling, the other day, in company with two foreigners. They were conversing about Dr. Bowring. The Doctor had sojourned at the house of one of the gentlemen, who was Mayor of his district, or town. “What opinion do your countrymen form of Dr. Bowring?” inquired my friend. The foreigners looked at each other, shrugged their shoulders, and seemed unwilling to reply. Being pressed, one of them answered—“De Doctor make out his own case—he reject all witness vich no suit dot case—he be de *DE NIG QUACK*.”

of machinery, I rejoice to be supported by such authority. That declaration, from such a man, will surely force those who are of opinion, that these "improvements" cannot safely be interfered with, to doubt the soundness of their judgment, and cause them seriously to reconsider the subject. The late Sir Robert Peel, Bart., in that "paper," said,

"Such indiscriminate and unlimited employment of the poor, consisting of a great proportion of the inhabitants of trading districts, will be attended with effects to the rising generation, so serious and alarming, THAT I CANNOT CONTEMPLATE THEM WITHOUT DISMAY, and thus that great effort of British ingenuity, whereby the machinery of our manufactures has been brought to such perfection, *instead of being a blessing to the nation, WILL BE CONVERTED INTO THE BITTEREST CURSE.*"

Mark, Sir, these were not off-hand words, spoken in the fever of enthusiasm, in the course of a debate by a mere declaimer, but they were the cool, deliberate opinions of a practical man of forty-five years standing, whose attention had been necessarily directed to the subject, for he was not only a mill-owner, but he was also a legislator, and, to use his own words, "was the first person that was employed in bringing the measure [meaning a Factory Bill] into Parliament," fourteen years before he presented that important document to the Select Committee of the House of Commons.

Is it not fearful, Sir, that a question so important, which was introduced to Parliament by such a man, now nearly forty years ago, should remain till this day unsettled? It is the consequence of the power of wealth to awe and mislead mankind. Every man who has undertaken to release the poor factory children from the power of their tormentors, has been denounced as an enemy to improvement, and a destructive! It is the same power, and the same spirit which makes you believe that I am your enemy, and persuades you that Justice requires, that you should shut me out of the pale of society. Well, machinery has hitherto defied the power of the legislature; it has gone on enriching the rich, and impoverishing the poor, until society heaves from its base—the Government is staggered—and the question now forces itself, shall we proceed to certain ruin by permitting this "new element" to destroy; or shall we, by wise and well-directed efforts, endeavour to make its mighty power administer to the well-being of the nation?

But to return to my conference with the deputation.

I informed my friends that it would be necessary to frustrate the attempts of those cruel factory masters who, still clinging to their hold on the Life-blood of the children, and knowing that something must now be done to appease the outraged feelings of the nation, are attempting to obtain an ELEVEN, or, in other words, (if meal times are to be allowed,) a THIRTEEN Hours' Factory Bill!

I was perfectly aware of the proceedings of Mr. Saunders, one of the Inspectors of Factories, who would have been much better employed in attending to the duties of his office, than in endeavouring to prevail upon the factory operatives to be content with an "ELEVEN Hours' Bill," as he calls it. I had read his "Quarterly Report," and had observed how cunningly he therein performs the duties of a jackal to the Lion of the Factories, (instead of diverting him from his prey,) by clinging with such tenacity to the hour of blood—the killing—the ELEVENTH hour! These are his own delusive words, copied from pp. 15, 16 of "Reports of the Inspectors of Factories," for the half year ending June 30, 1841.

"The same operation (the limitation of the hours of factory labour,) of the Factories' Act, is

frequently urged by the advocates of a Ten Hour Bill, in favour of a further reduction in the hours of labour for young persons; to a certain extent I am prepared to agree with them, but the difficulty lies in ascertaining how far this principle can be beneficially carried into operation.

"If there was no limit to the application of the principle, it would prove that a reduction of the labour of all persons to six hours in each day would be both practicable and beneficial; a proposition I have never heard advanced by the most enthusiastic advocate for short time.

"On a careful review of the arguments I have heard used for or against any change, I am of opinion that a reduction of the hours of labour to eleven hours in each working day, would be a safe and moderate reduction, as regards the manufacturer, and a most beneficial one to the young persons. It would, at the same time, be received, on the part of the well-constituted operative, as a great boon, by affording him increased opportunity for improving his health, and enjoying reasonable recreation."

How beautifully these *Inspectors* can gloss over their death-warrants. What a shame it is that such men should be paid out of the exhausted Exchequer of England! Having read the above, and having been informed of Mr. Saunders' proceedings amongst the operatives in the North, I thought it needful to urge the deputation, to prove to Sir Robert, that whatever doubt there might be as to the *minimum* of the hours of labour in factories, there could be none as to the *maximum*, when it was proved by more than twenty-one of the most eminent medical authorities, that stretching the factory labour over ten hours per day, (exclusive of meal times,) was destructive of the life of children and young persons! To establish this point, I handed to them a synopsis of the valuable evidence which was given before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the 4th of August, 1832, by JOSEPH GREEN, Esq., F.R.S., Surgeon of St. Thomas's Hospital, Professor of Surgery at King's College, and Clinical Lecturer at St. Thomas's Hospital; and I desired that it might be presented to Sir Robert Peel, and that he might be referred to that unanswerable body of medical evidence, which is to be found in the Report of Sadler's Committee of 1832.

I cannot doubt that Mr. Green's opinions, supported as they are by the most eminent medical men in the world, will be read with deep and solemn interest by all persons whose feelings have been awakened to the awful results of the unrestrained factory system; I therefore make no apology for inserting them here. That eminent, clear-sighted, and judicious professor and lecturer says:

"The period of growth is one of weakness; the purposes of growth necessarily require a more than ordinary supply of nutriment; children require not only a large supply of food, but that it should be nutritive, and given frequently. Assimilation cannot be perfectly formed without air and exercise. Children should be allowed long rest, in the horizontal position, and sufficient sleep; eight or nine hours at least; under many circumstances twelve hours. Children are extremely susceptible of vicissitudes of temperature. The muscles have not acquired that tone which enables them to perform actions which require strength and persistency of action. Their exercises should be varied, not long-continued, nor disproportioned to their strength. Their bones and joints are soft and spongy in their texture. Children are not fitted by nature for laborious or stationary occupation. Subjecting them to business or work which requires strong exertion, or which, even being comparatively light, demands uniform, long-continued, and, therefore, wearisome exertion, must, ultimately, have an injurious effect on their health. But if, in addition, their food is scanty, supplied only at long intervals, their occupation is not alternated with amusement and exercise in the open air, and their clothing is not warm, disease must be the inevitable consequence of this violent counteraction of all that nature suggests and demands. If you were to subject the healthiest child to the causes which I have enumerated, it is impossible that it should not become weakly, emaciated, stunted in its growth, dull, sluggish, and diseased. I fear that this country will have much to answer for in permitting the growth of that system of employing children in factories,

which tends directly to the creation of all those circumstances which inevitably lead to disease. I am quite sure that the results will be, in regard to the health, most destructive, and, I think I may venture to add, in regard to morals most injurious, and that the consequence of this culpable inattention to the physical and moral welfare of the manufacturing class *will be, a population weak and diseased in body, feeble and degraded in mind, and vicious and dangerous in conduct.* Children were not designed for labour; but if some labour must be permitted, *both our conscience and our feelings equally demand, that the labour of children should be under such restrictions as will ensure them against their being made the victims of avarice and disease, and as will render it compatible with their physical and moral welfare.* TWELVE HOURS LABOUR, INCLUDING THE TIME FOR MEALS, IS THE UTMOST AVERAGE PERIOD OF LABOUR FOR THE FULL-GROWN, STRONG, AND HEALTHY MAN. I am of opinion, *that the deterioration in the human frame caused by this system will become hereditary, and even increase from generation to generation,* if the causes are to be continued. I should suppose that such results of the shortening of human life, as are shown to be the case in the factory districts by the official documents before the Committee, would be the results of such a system. *Manufactories and machinery, so long as they procure employment for the labouring poor, render the necessaries and comforts of life cheap and easy of acquirement, and are the means of the poor bettering their condition,* must be regarded as blessings, and in every way conducive both to the physical and moral welfare of the people. In order to obtain this desirable object, it is, however, *necessary that the labourer should participate in the advantages and benefits arising from the employment of machinery;* and in diminishing human labour by its use, the only legitimate purpose must be admitted to be, that of substituting a machine for the performance of that labour which would reduce man to a mere mechanism, *to the end that he may devote the time and leisure acquired thereby to his moral cultivation.* It is indispensable, I say, in regulating a manufacturing system, that the labourers employed should never be considered as merely the means to its success, but that their condition, moral and physical, *should constitute an essential object of the system;* AND ITS SUCCESS, AS THE SOURCE OF WEALTH AND POWER, BE SUBORDINATE THERETO. But if, instead of this legitimate object, and this wholesome restraint, ruled by the insatiable avarice of gain, the manufacturing system is without check, *and has no bound but the possible means of creating wealth,* and of making the rich richer; and wages be lowered, *till it be simply calculated upon how little, life and the motion of a pair of hands can be supported;* if we find that these human beings (the factory workers) *are only regarded as parts of the machinery which they set in motion, and with as little attention to their moral welfare;* if we find that these, *even at the tenderest age,* and without respect to the distinction of sex, and without regard to decency, are crowded together under all the circumstances that contribute to disease and vice, *and all this to add to the wealth of their employers, to minister to the luxuries of the rich, and to make overgrown capitals still more vast and oppressive,* whilst the labourers themselves are degraded into the mere negro slaves of Europe; then, I say, that these and all the physical evils incident to such a state require no medical opinion, BUT DEMAND UNSPARING MORAL CORRECTION, or they await the punishment due to depriving man of the birthright of his humanity, of *degrading him into the class of MEANS AND THINGS to be USED; instead of recognizing, as the end, HIS HAPPINESS AND DIGNITY AS A MORAL AND RESPONSIBLE AGENT."*

(It must not be forgotten, that no mention is here made of the inconceivable cruelties which are inflicted upon the children to force them to perform their killing labour.)

To the foregoing most important and conclusive evidence of Mr. Green, a few observations which I had written before I came to this prison, were, by some oversight, appended, and, in order that we may have no secrets, I think it may be as well to insert them in the *Fleet Papers.* They were the following:

"I venture to affirm, that there lives not a man who will dare to question these views of Mr. GREEN. They are self-evident, and bring conviction to every mind; and yet, revolting as is the fact, it is true, that hitherto all the benefit which has been derived from the great modern inventions, has been to make *some few RICH MEN,* to reduce tens of thousands of middle-men to beggary! and to impoverish, demoralize, and shorten the lives of millions of industrious artisans! I speak with certainty; the repeated investigations into this matter have furnished irrefragable proof; and yet in an age which boasts of its "enlightenment," in a country which is called

"Christian," and "the Land of Bibles," the men who have dared to require that this system of cruelty should be ameliorated and restrained, have been persecuted, traduced, maligned, and defamed as "firebrands," "madmen," and "incendiaries!" and this too, by a Government which proudly boasts of having spent twenty millions of money in ameliorating the condition of the Negro Colonial Slaves! Thank God, the delusion is dispelled—the obstinacy of the tyrants has forced conviction upon the mind of the public! The national, the universal resolve is—THIS TYRANNY SHALL CEASE? Yes, yes, there is now no question on the subject; machinery can no longer be allowed to be the instrument of "making the rich richer," and of "degrading the labourers into the class of *means* and *things* to be used;" its day of tyranny, plunder, and murder, is passed away! It must now, either be utterly destroyed, treated as a pest and a scourge, or be made "beneficial to the labourers by enabling the poor to better their condition, and to devote their time and leisure acquired thereby to their moral cultivation." If the tyrants still remain obstinate, the question is now in small compass—shall we try by such means to make these men richer, or shall the race of man be preserved from extinction? Let the owners of machinery look to it. If they still resolve to oppose restriction and to retain their hold on the Life-blood of the people, terrible will be the conflict which must ensue. Nature demands, religion insists, that man shall no longer be treated by his fellow-man as "a thing to be used" without regard to "HIS HAPPINESS AND DIGNITY AS A MORAL AND RESPONSIBLE AGENT."

I advised the deputation, if they should be met by the cold and delusive theories of the free-trade school, to exhibit the fallacy of those nostrums, by fearlessly tracing the inevitable results of that experiment, and proving that the universal competition implied therein, must terminate in reducing the *successful* competitors to less profits and lower wages, whilst the unsuccessful must necessarily sink down to destitution; and by such reasoning, I exhorted them to satisfy the Premier, that, without a check upon the destructive power of this "new element," neither capital nor labour can *eventually* receive their due reward.

After a most pleasing consultation with my friends, they left my cell, and forthwith proceeded to Sir Robert Peel; giving me, before we parted, the delightful information, that the most wealthy and respectable mill-owners in the neighbourhood, are now subscribing to the funds of the Short-Time Committee at Huddersfield, "in order that the question may be fairly discussed with the new Government, and that, in all its bearings, it may be fairly entered into." Sir, this last piece of intelligence gives me more pleasure than words can convey to my readers! As the Duke of Wellington says—"I now see daylight."—

I cannot conclude this letter more acceptably, than by giving you the copy of a communication which one of the West Riding deputation (my kind friend Fleming,) has sent to me. It is as follows:

"London, Nov. 2, 1841.

"My dear Sir—As one of the deputation from the Short-Time Committee of the West Riding, which has recently waited upon the leading members of the Government respecting the introduction, in the ensuing session, of a simple and efficient Ten Hours' Bill, I think it my duty to report progress to one whose long-continued earnest and disinterested exertions in behalf of the young labourers of Britain, have justly earned for him the title of 'King of the Factory Children.'

"The deputation have resolved upon publishing a detailed account of the conversations they have had with the different Ministers they have had the honour of meeting in the discharge of their duties; and I feel certain that, taking into consideration the present state of the country, the causes of which have been very fully discussed by them in the various interviews they have had, and the sentiments expressed by most of the influential members of the Cabinet, that the document will prove of universal interest to all classes, and of national importance at the present crisis of affairs.

"In the meantime I have much pleasure in informing you, that we have waited upon Sir R. Peel, Sir J. Graham, Lord Wharncliffe, the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, the Duke of Buckingham, the Lord Chancellor, and Lord Stanley, in the order here set down. The deputations were in every case

most flatteringly received, their statements most attentively listened to, and the nature, extent, and bearing of the measures they recommended, very fully and freely canvassed. The impression left upon the minds of myself and the rest of the deputation is, that the present Government are fully aware of the real cause of the present wide-spread national distress, and most desirous of discovering a safe and efficient remedy. The workings of machinery have never yet been fairly investigated with a view to its application to produce general benefit; and, we have reason to believe, that the derangement its unregulated and misdirected use has hitherto occasioned, has now produced in the highest quarters a deep conviction of the necessity for such an inquiry.

"In the course of our interviews we have availed ourselves of the opportunity of speaking out, boldly and truthfully, on other matters connected with the general well-being of the labouring classes. We have avowed ourselves sick of party nicknames and party contests, and prepared to award our confidence and esteem to any party or men who will honestly examine into the real condition of the producing classes, and apply a timely remedy; and have, farther, pressed upon the attention of the Government the adoption of a series of measures, which, in our estimation, would secure for it the support of the moderate and well-meaning of all parties, and ensure the prospective permanent welfare of the country.

"A full report of these most interesting and important conversations will speedily be issued, for the satisfaction of our numerous constituents; in the interim, this hasty communication will apprise them and you, respected Sir, of the nature of our proceedings, and the degree of success which has attended our exertions to lay before the Government the real state of the manufacturing operatives of Britain.

"One thing we are especially entitled to rejoice in, which is, that no third party, no well-paid commissioner, has interfered between us and those in whose hands the governing power of this country is at present placed. There has been no glossing nor concealment of facts; no getting up of special cases, or evasion of the question. For, perhaps, the first time in the history of this country, the working classes have been permitted to state their own case to the Government, and it has given a kindly, attentive, and respectful hearing to that statement.

"Whatever may be the ultimate result of the labours of this deputation, I may, at all events, be permitted to congratulate you and your numerous 'subjects' on the growing influence of the views you have so long and faithfully advocated. How long we have yet to wait ere we see them carried into practice, I know not; but of this I feel assured, that the period cannot now be far distant, when a sense of self-interest will induce even those who have heretofore most strenuously opposed, to join our ranks.

"With every wish for your health, and release from the prison which now prevents you from joining your friends in their exertions for the well-being of the people of our native land,

"I am, my dear Sir, most respectfully yours,

"*Mr. R. Oastler, Fleet Prison.*"

"GEO. A. FLEMING."

When the report of the deputation is completed, I will see to it that you have a copy.

That "Report" will, if I mistake not, contain more "useful knowledge," than has hitherto been "Report"-ed.

The great mistake of all our leading politicians has of late been, that to interfere with and regulate the use of machinery, would be cramping the energies of the human capacity. The truth is just the reverse. It is certain that the first duty of a government is to conform to the principles of natural law by adopting plans to maintain Proportion, and thus to prevent the inventions of man becoming, for want of regulation, the means of his destruction.

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—I am informed that the Malthusian and Anti-Corn-Law people are raving. No wonder that they should be angry. The days of false philosophy are numbered!—R.O.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

AND

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people. He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

Vol. I.—No. 47. LONDON, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 1841.

Price 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—My last letter was one of heart-felt gratulation on account of the bright gleam of hope or the future prosperity of our common country, which enlightened the political horizon when Her Majesty's Ministers and Her Majesty's working people, for the first time, met together in friendly converse. I pray God that the anticipations which I indulged may not be blighted; I will fondly cling to the hope, that now, the great barrier which prevented the rich and the poor from holding conference being removed, a good understanding will obtain between the parties, and that measures founded on good will to all will be adopted.

Painful as it is to leave that pleasing subject, and once more to grapple with the New Poor Law monster, I must not forget my duty. I was interrupted by the arrival of the Yorkshire deputation, whilst tracing the progress of that war upon the poor man's rights, which was undertaken by the Whig Government, aided by all those who are selfish among their political opponents.

I had proved that the diabolical *intention* of the enemies of the poor was, "to bring the people of England to live upon a coarser sort of food." I demonstrated, also, that they had succeeded in their wicked designs.

Perhaps some persons may think, that, having established the truth of the evil *intentions* of the projectors of the New Poor Law, it is unnecessary to proceed with the exposure of their further villany, by tracing the methods with which they succeeded in accomplishing their malignant purposes. When it is remembered that the theory of MALTHUS, who is the great authority of all those who admire the New Poor Law, and whom they delight thus to apostrophize,—

"Before quitting the subject of population, may I step aside for one moment, and do justice to a most learned, a most able, and most virtuous individual, whose name has been mixed up with more unwitting deception, and also with more wilful misrepresentation, than that of any man of science in this Protestant country, and in these liberal and enlightened times? When I mention talent, learning, humanity—the strongest sense of public duty, the most amiable feelings in private life, the tenderest and most humane disposition which ever man was adorned with—when I speak of one, the ornament of society in which he moves, the delight of his own family, and not less the admiration of those men of letters and of science, amongst whom he shines the first and brightest—when I speak of one of the most enlightened, learned, and pious ministers whom the Church of England

ever numbered amongst her sons—I am sure every one will apprehend that I cannot but refer to Mr. MALTHUS." — (*Lord Brougham's Speech on the second reading of the New Poor Law Bill.*)

When it is remembered, I say, that the theory of Mr. Malthus (or, as Lord Brougham calls it, "one of the greatest additions to political philosophy which has been effected since that branch of learning has been worthy the name of a science,") refuses all right to food of any kind, or in the smallest quantity, to the destitute; and impiously interferes with the beneficent arrangements of God himself, by proclaiming that Nature has not provided a seat at her feast for *them!*—and when it is known that the organ of the Malthusian school, the *Edinburgh Review*, asserts that the people are too many for the country; that they must be diminished, but that to do so at once might be *supposed* to be cruel, and *provoke resistance*; and that, therefore, it must be done gradually and *covertly*;—when we know, also, from one of the most strenuous supporters of the New Poor Law, that it is only a step to no poor law at all; and from Lord Brougham, that the New Poor Law Government "picked their way slowly and carefully through facts and documents, rejected somewhere about one-half of the suggestions that had been made [by the Commissioners], a portion of that half *being precisely the part most important* in the eyes of the men from whom they proceeded;" and that his lordship added, he "thought that, in a practical point of view, it was better to postpone them, at all events, *for the present*;" and said, "I shall say nothing *at present* respecting the Poor Law itself; I shall, *for the present*, assume that the statute of Elizabeth cannot *now* be dealt with:"—when we remember that the Lord Chancellor made this farther declaration, "but I beg leave distinctly to state, that hereafter, when time shall have been allowed for inquiry and consideration, and when this measure shall have paved the way for the reception of ULTERIOR PROJECTS, they will, should experience warrant their adoption, *receive my assent*:"—when we also reflect that the *right* to relief from the poor rate is virtually denied by the Commissioners, and that the old Poor Law is by them denounced as "a check to industry, a reward for improvident marriages, discountenancing the industrious and honest, and protecting the idle, improvident, and vicious—destroying filial, parental, and conjugal affection; preventing the accumulation of capital, and destroying that which exists, &c.;"—and, finally, when we are reminded that Lord Brougham declared, on moving the second reading of the New Poor Law Bill, that "every permanent fund set apart for the support of the poor, from whomsoever proceeding, and by whomsoever administered, must needs multiply the evils it is destined to remedy; this *right* to share in a fixed fund *is the grand mischief of the Poor Laws*:"—when, I say, we seriously reflect on the heart-chilling principles of these men, as avowed in the foregoing declarations, although we may cease to wonder at their cruel intentions, (for the extension and adoption of their principles would necessarily be the utter extinction of all the poor, seeing that, in their sight, charity, as well as poverty, is a crime,) still, it becomes more needful that we should watch their method and their progress, and thus prove that their *actions* are as revolting as their *intentions*.

If the foregoing declarations do not prove that the intention of the projectors of the New Poor Law is, eventually, to do away with all relief for the

poor, and thus relieve property of all claim whatever from poverty, or, in other words, to repeal all the laws of God and man, and break up the very institution of society—if, I say, you should still doubt the intention of the Malthusians, read the following from Lord Brougham, and those doubts must be dispelled:—

“The [old Poor Law] system has ended in the destruction of all independent character in the English peasantry.”

“By the construction not unnaturally put upon those *unfortunate* words in the Act, [the 13th of Elizabeth,] requiring the overseer ‘to take order for setting the poor to work,’ a construction which, at the same time, conveyed to the pauper the right of calling into action the power, in other words, of compelling the parish ‘to find work for the pauper and if work could not be found, to feed him,’ all self-reliance, all provident habits, all independent feelings, were at an end, and consequently the most pernicious speedily followed to the community, as well as to the poor families—consequences more pernicious, I will venture to say, than ever flowed from the enactment or from the construction of any human law.”

I have said, that, in the estimation of the projectors of the New Poor Law, charity is a sin; say, do I bear false witness? The following is copied from Lord Brougham’s speech:—

“The safest, and perhaps the only perfect charity, is an hospital for accidents or violent diseases, because no man is secure against such calamities—no man can calculate upon, or provide against them; and we may always be sure, that the existence of such an hospital will in no way tend to increase the number of patients. Next to this, perhaps, a dispensary is the safest; but I pause upon that, if I regard the rigour of the principle [of population], because a dispensary may be liable to abuse, and because, strictly speaking, sickness is a thing which a provident man should look forward to and provide against as part of the ordinary ills of life; still I do not go to the rigorous extent of objecting to dispensaries.”

Here, the expounder of the new “principle of population” starts at the ghost which his own principle has raised, and proves its unsoundness, by asserting its “rigour.” His lordship, however, takes courage, and, in defiance of the kindest feelings of humanity, asserts—

“But when I come to hospitals for old age, as old age is before all men,—as every man is every day approaching nearer to that goal,—all provident men of independent spirit will, in the vigour of their days, lay by sufficient to maintain them when age shall end their labour. Hospitals, therefore, for the support of old men and old women, may, strictly speaking, be regarded as injurious in their effects upon the community. Nevertheless, their evil tendency may be counterbalanced by the good they do.”

The “Philosopher” waxes a little bolder, but finds it needful again to draw in his horns. At length, he works up his courage, and boldly renews his attack upon our charitable institutions, in the following words:—

“But the next species of charity to which I would refer, is one which stands vitiously against all sound principle—I MEAN HOSPITALS FOR CHILDREN, whether endowed by the public, or by the charity of individuals. THESE, with the exception of Orphan Hospitals, are WERE EVILS; and the worst of all is a Foundling Hospital.”

Say, do I libel such men, when I charge them with believing that charity is a sin?

Such, then, are the avowed, the blood-freezing principles of the Malthusians, solemnly pronounced by the High Priest of that unchristian crew—the Lord High Chancellor of England! But what saith the Scripture?

“Charge them that are rich in this world that they be ready to give, and glad to distribute.” —‘To do good, and to distribute, forget not:—’ If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen into

decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with thee;—and again, ‘Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor and to thy needy in thy land.’”

How reviving are these commands of JEHOVAH, after being chilled by the preceding exposition of Malthusianism by its inhuman High Priest!

Having determined to rob the poor, the Malthusians proceeded to defame them, and, by misrepresenting the character of the working people, they succeeded in alarming the landlords and the Reformed Parliament.

It is a fact, that they charged the working people of England with idleness, and with a desire to live out of the poor rates, rather than by their labour!

One would have thought, that the knowledge of the fact that the industry of the people of England was above suspicion, was demonstrated by the amazing amount of wealth which they are constantly creating. The face of the country—the revenue—the rents—the exports—all testify to the industrious habits of the people of England. The fact, that not only men, but women and children, nay, even infants, are occupiers of the market of labour, and are regularly worked to death in our factories, one would have thought, might have answered the allegations of the people’s foes; but no, the prowling Assistant Commissioners, being “men without hearts,” were dispatched into the provinces to make out a case against the working classes, and finding an idle fellow here and there, magnified him into tens of thousands, and then, scowling upon the people, declared, “Ye are idle, ye are idle!” This lie was believed by the Reformed Parliament, as was that also, that the working people of England preferred parish pay to wages!

Now, Sir, I have mixed, from my youth up, amongst the poor; it has been my habit, from childhood, to visit them in their homes, and elsewhere; I know them well, and I know that where *one* improper applicant for parish pay demands it, *many*, who are justly entitled to it, refuse to apply for it. Yes, Sir, I have known poor people, in the extremity of starvation, shudder at the idea of becoming “paupers!” We do not hear of such delicacy in their accuser, Lord BROUGHAM; he takes his pension quarterly, and has no qualms of conscience, or tenderness of repulsive feeling; yet, *his* claim to *his* pension is no better than is that of the traduced indigent poor of England to their *rightful* relief! It mattered not, however; the Commissioners invented, and Lord Brougham repeated, the monstrous lie, and the Reformed Parliament believed, or affected to believe, that the working people of England were more wishful to live on parish pay than out of their hard-earned wages! The New Poor Law, being avowedly intended for the government of lazy drones, may well cause discontent amongst an industrious population.

The poor were denounced as a race of dissolute, immoral, unnatural beings, unworthy of receiving parish pay; that lie was also believed.

Perhaps, Sir, you will think that I am bearing false witness against the traducers, the enemies, the destroyers of the poor. I grant that it is hard to believe that men should be found so wicked as thus to conspire against and calumniate the poor!—nay, even denounce Charity as a sin, and punish Poverty as a crime! That such, however, is the truth, has been demonstrated from first to last in this crusade against the rights of the poor.

Lord Brougham was the great Parliamentary deceiver. Hear him addressing

the Barons of England. In better days, no treason against the poor of England like what he spoke would have been listened to in their House—the House of Lords! How the man who had so recently been lifted up to the woolstack by these very poor people, could so soon forget their kindness, and contemplate their destruction—how the same man can “have the face” now to pocket FIVE THOUSAND POUNDS a year from the earnings of these “lazy vagabonds,” can only be understood by such men as “have no hearts.” Listen to his lordship, whilst, instructed by the Commissioners, he rails against the poor, and against the law which, he said, had degraded them:—

“The [old] Poor Law leaves nothing in the character of the country that can claim for it a continuance of the respect which the character of the English peasant always in all times commanded, and which, with the loss of that character, the multiplication of miseries, and the increase of every species of crime, has brought about a state of things in which we behold industry stripped of its rights, and the sons of idleness, vice, and profligacy, usurping its lawful place, property no longer safer than industry, and—I will not say an agrarian law, for that implies only a division of property, but—the destruction of all property, as the issue of the system that stares us, and at no great distance, in the face; a state of things, in fine, such that peace itself has returned without its companion plenty, and in the midst of profound external tranquillity, and the most plentiful blessings of the seasons ever showered down by Providence, the labourer rebels, disturbances prevail in districts never before visited by discontent, and everything betokens the approach of what has been termed an agrarian war. Such is the state in which matters are now come, and such are the results of that pernicious system which you are now called upon to remedy.”

It was thus that Lord Brougham inveighed against a law which had been in existence nearly two hundred years, under the operation of which England had risen to be the first of the nations, and her character for honesty and industry had been successfully, nay, unprecedentedly, maintained. Hear his lordship again railing against the working classes of England:—

“The poor immediately calculate upon it [parish pay], and become less provident, forsaking every habit of frugality, taking no care to provide against the ordinary calamities of life, or the inevitable infirmities of old age. They no longer strive for the means of maintaining their children, but heedlessly and recklessly count upon that fund, out of which—whether in sickness or in health, in youth or in age, in impotence or in vigour—they know that they may claim the means of support; and, setting the pains of labour against those of a scanty sustenance, they prefer idleness and a bare subsistence to plenty earned by toil. Hence men’s minds become habituated to the fatal disconnexion of livelihood and labour, and, ceasing to rely upon their own honest industry for support, their minds become debased as their habits are degraded.”

Having resolved to rob the poor, having obtained “a case” against them, Lord Brougham was resolved not to misce matters; and, lest his hearers should suppose that his lordship was thus picturing only a few of the working classes, he immediately launched out the following *universal* anathema against the labourers of England:—

“We have a constant, and I may say almost a regular proof, in every part of the country, in districts agricultural, manufacturing, and even commercial—and whether the people are superabundant or scarce, increasing, stationary, or diminishing in numbers, that able-bodied men prefer a small sum in idleness to a large sum in wages by labour.”

“But are these persons only idle? are they really doing nothing? do they work no mischief? My Lords, it is idle in me to put such questions. These persons are making the parish pay to maintain the constant promoters of crime, the greatest workers of mischief in the country; men, who, when they happen not to be the ringleaders, are the ready accomplices and followers in every depredation, every outrage that is perpetrated in their neighbourhood. But these facts are not confined

to agricultural districts, or to inland places, and to lazy rustics. Look to the hardy sailor, who never used to know what danger was—look to the very boatmen of the Kentish coast—they who would formerly rush to a wreck, without looking to the waves any more than to the reward—who would encounter the most appalling perils to save a life with as much alacrity as they would dance round a maypole or run a cargo of smuggled goods, in the midst of tempest or in the teeth of the preventive service—those men, who, if you had ever said, ‘Surely, you do not mean to launch your boat at this tempestuous time of the year?’ would answer by instinct, ‘Time of year! we take no count of seasons—by our boats we live; from the sea in winter as in summer we must seek our sustenance; fair weather or foul, our vessels must be afloat, else how could we keep our families from the parish?’ No such answer will you get now. The same spirit of honest and daring independence inflames them no more.”

It was by such assertions as these that Lord Brougham persuaded the House of Lords, that the Poor Law which had been passed in the 43rd year of Elizabeth, had, in the year 1834, destroyed the industry, honesty, and bravery of our “hardy sailors”—of British Tars! It was well for the Lord Chancellor that the hero of the Nile and Trafalgar was not that day a member of that House! Is it not too bad, that such charges should be brought against thousands of persons in their absence, and that, too, by a Lord Chancellor? Lord Brougham next describes the English “pauper,” as he claims relief. Judge, ye who have witnessed him trembling before your vestries, if the “Lord Chancellor” does not grossly libel the “paupers” of this land. This is Brougham’s portraiture:—

“No doubt he comes with a firm gait—with a manly air; but rather let us say, he comes with a sturdy gait, and a masterful air. He presumes to domineer over the honest and hard-working rate-payer, and the servant of the rate-payer, the overseer, whom he insults and tramples upon. Secure in the protection of the law, he demands his allowance, not as a man, but as a master; his tone is imperative, for he knows he must be obeyed.”

Is it not base, cruel, and cowardly, for a Lord High Chancellor, in high places, thus to indulge himself in libelling absent “paupers?” But, so besotted was Lord Brougham that night with his enthusiastic worship of MALTHUS, that, instructed by the Commissioners, he said—

“The pauper glories in his dependence—if, indeed, he does not consider the land as his own, and its nominal proprietor as his steward. Nay, instances are to be found of the shame being, by a marvellous perversion of feeling, turned the other way; and the solitary exception to the rule of parish relief under which a whole hamlet lived, ‘being ashamed,’ as a female said, ‘out of her singularity, and forced like her neighbours to take the dole like themselves.’”

Supposing that tale to be true—but I do not believe one word of it—I ask any sane individual, if that were not the *exception* which would establish the reverse to be the *rule*?

I am really ashamed to follow the Lord Chancellor in his ravings against nature and the poor; but I have essayed to meet the Malthusian monster, and I must not be scared by his indecency. On the following subject I have heard it averred that *Mr. Brougham* was well instructed. The *Lord* of that name said—

“I am afraid that the present law [of Bastardy] raises up a motive in the breast of a woman rather to yield than to resist. I much fear it co-operates with the frailty of the sex; I fear that the seducer of the woman—the man who is laying siege to her virtue, who has ALWAYS [!!!] one ally in the garrison, ready to beat a parley, her own passions—finds another ally provided for him by the law, and ready to counsel a surrender; that ally is, not her passions, but her reason—her calculation of interest! From the provisions of the law comes the suggestion —————”

—No, no; I cannot consent to quote what followed from the lips of the *noble!* the *learned!* traducer of English women!—the Lord High Chancellor of England!—Despicable being!—How humiliating to rank, station, talent, and learning, to be thus degraded in such a person!

That there might be no mistake whence Lord Brougham derived his evidence against the working people of England, his lordship, pointing to the Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, said—

“The dispensation of wrath, which appointed toil for the penalty of transgression, was tempered with mercy, which shed countless blessings upon industry—industry, that sweetens the coarsest morsel, and softens the hardest pillow;—but not under the [old] Poor Law! Look to that volume [the Report of the Poor Law Commissioners], and you will find the pauper tormented with the worst ills of health—listless and unsettled—wearing away the hours, restless and half awake, and sleepless all the night that closes his slumbering day,—needy yet pampered—ill-fed, yet irritable and nervous. Oh! monstrous progeny of this unnatural system, which has matured, in the squalid recesses of the workhouse, the worst ills that haunt the palace, and made the pauper the victim of those imaginary maladies which render wealthy idleness less happy than laborious poverty! Industry, the safeguard against impure desires—the true preventive of crimes;—but not under the [old] Poor Law! LOOK AT THAT VOLUME, THE RECORD OF IDLENESS, AND HER SISTERS, GUILTY, WHICH NOW STALK OVER THE LAND. Look at the calendar, which they have filled with overflowing, notwithstanding the improvement of our jurisprudence, and the progress of education.—Industry, the corner-stone of property, which gives it all its value, and makes it the cement of society—but not under the [old] Poor Law! for it is deprived of its rights and its reward—finds its place usurped by indolence, and sees wrong and violence wear the garb, and urging the claims of right; so that all property is shaken to pieces, and the times are fast approaching when it shall be no more!”

When reason shall have resumed her place on the woolsack, it will not be credited that its former occupant could have thus railed against a law and a people who were “the envy and admiration of surrounding nations.” Hear again the noble dreamer:—

“A state of things, which has made industry and idleness, honesty and knavery, change places, and which exposes the property of the community, and with its property every law—every institution—every valuable possession—every precious right—to the ravages of that remorseless pestilence, before whose strides you, the guardians of the social happiness of those who live under your protection, have beheld the peasantry of England abased to a pitch which I am at once afflicted and ashamed to contemplate—which I shudder to describe.”

That selfishness was the ruling passion of the fevered, frenzied Chancellor, is, however, manifest; for at length he arrives at the climax of his insanity, and exclaims—

“Thus stands the case: Suppose I am a Westmoreland pauper—as I CERTAINLY VERY SOON MAY BE IF THE PRESENT SYSTEM CONTINUES!”

If it were not too serious a matter, it would be truly ridiculous to hear a learned Chancellor, who had only just been elevated from the ranks, under “the present system,” talking thus querulously of that very “system” under which he had been elevated to the highest office of the State, next to the throne. It is melancholy to witness talent, influence, and office thus prostituted to the basest purposes.

Were there any truth in Lord Brougham’s Poor Law opinions, deductions, and inventions, of course he would, by this time, have been found correct in his anticipations of the result of this avowedly “unconstitutional” measure. The law against which he railed so furiously, had, on his own showing, taken two con-

turies to bring this nation to the brink of ruin! Let the increased number of the police, the consequent diminished security to life and property, the state of our calendars and prisons, the wide-spread discontent, the almost universal pauperism, the falling-off of the revenue, the legalized propagation of the itch, the three-fold lyings-in in one bed, the frequent deaths hastened by the want of food and medical attendance, the suicides committed rather than brave the torments of the union workhouse, let all these calamities testify, whether, after seven years' trial, the New Poor Law has not utterly failed to produce that prosperity which Lord Brougham promised their lordships should be the result, if they would but pour contempt upon all former wisdom and experience, and sail with his lordship on a Malthusian cruise in search of the "preventive check," which should be established upon a law which would deprive the poor of any right to sit down at Nature's feast—in a word, if the Barons of England would wander with the Lord Chancellor after a will-o'-the-wisp outside the constitutional bulwarks, his lordship assured them, that they would never rue the act!

On condition that their lordships would comply with this impertinent demand, they are promised (on the word of a man, who, in my hearing, solemnly declared, in the presence of many thousands of Yorkshiremen, that he would never be Lord Chancellor,) that the New Poor Law would be—

"A safe and effectual remedy; restoring to industry its due reward, and visiting idleness with its appropriate punishment; reinstating property in security, and lifting up once more—God be praised!—the character of that noble English peasantry to the proud eminence where, but for the [old] Poor Laws, it would still have shone untarnished,—the admiration of mankind, and the glory of the country which boasts it as its brightest ornament!"

Seriously, I ask you, Sir, after seven years' experiment, whether do you think that Lord Brougham or Richard Oastler had formed a proper estimate of the effects of the New Poor Law on the state of England!

I, Sir, had been taught by a wiser schoolmaster than Lord Brougham. I believed the truly learned and venerable Earl of ELDON, when he pronounced the New Poor Law to be "the most execrable and atrocious law that was ever enacted in a Christian country;" and when he further assured me, that "it was unconstitutional," and that "there was no authority to empower the legislature to pass such a law."

Experience has proved that ELDON was a wiser man than BROUGHAM. The question forces itself upon me, Will the Conservative Government consent to be bothered with the bewildering blunders of Lord Brougham, by attempting to nourish his unconstitutional abortion, which was evidently founded upon the foulest misrepresentation of the character of the people for whom it was intended? or, will they listen to the sages of British jurisprudence, and, by returning to the ark of the Constitution, and restoring to the poor their rights, make England once more the happy home of the hardy sons of skill and industry?

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P. S.—In my next, I shall prove to you, that the wisest and most learned of our countrymen were represented by Lord Brougham, as "blind" and foolish, because they were ignorant of "MALTHUS's preventive check!"—E. O.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

Of Riddleburgh, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."
"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits."
"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break
in pieces the oppressor."

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THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—If you think that I hope to induce the dissatisfaction which now (in consequence of the misgovernment of the Whigs) universally pervades every rank of society, to vent itself in the destruction of property, or in revolt against the authorities of the State—I say, Sir, if for one moment you suppose that the exposure which I am, in these letters, making of the frauds which have been practised upon the people of England by their governors, is intended to stir up, in the minds of that people, a spirit of insubordination and riot, you are greatly mistaken; my object is the reverse. I am a lover of order, and an ardent admirer of the ancient institutions of my beloved country. I have observed that, for many years, there has been a spirit of innovation abroad, which, from its first appearance, I suspected to be that of Revolution. I have narrowly watched its progress, when it was the popular spirit of the age, having deluded the masses under the specious names of "Reform and retrenchment," "Liberal and enlightened principles," &c. I did not then fear, amidst groans, hisses, brickbats, and bludgeons, to explain to the masses, that it was a "Lying spirit," seeking to delude them, in order that it might afterwards have the power to betray and sacrifice them; and shall I, who feared not when my life was endangered, because I resisted that foe to God and man, now, when the monster has furnished me with proof that all my prognostications were correct—now, when his dishonesty has nearly destroyed him—now, when I am safe from harm, lodged securely in this prison; shall I now fear to avail myself of the advantage which retirement from the busy scenes of political warfare, and the relief from the anxious care of your vast estates afford me, to trace him through all his devious windings, and explain to all my readers the schemes he has devised, the plans he has adopted, to create jealousy between the Government and the people—to destroy the liberty of the subject—to disorganize society—to remove the only safe protection to private property—to prepare the way for anarchy, civil strife, and universal confusion? Shall I be afraid thus to perform my last duty to the country which gave me birth, which I love with a fervour which your persecution cannot abate, and which, when you have wreaked your vengeance to the death of your victim, will find me a grave? Shall I, who never was wanting when the battle of Principles raged most furiously, now flinch from the post of duty, when Victory,

smiling, waits to crown my efforts—shall I now play the coward, because here and there a timorous trembler fears that the exposure of such sins may cause excitement? My unsubdued spirit answers, No! Victory is very near, but we are not yet free from danger; nor shall we be, whilst a single enemy to the Constitution remains entrenched in the very heart of the citadel.

In Sir James Graham is incorporated the very essence of the soul of “liberal principles,” as they are nick-named; he is sworn, “in conscience,” to uphold the principle of that system which has almost reduced England to a lazaret-house! He was partner in all the iniquity which I have already exposed, and to all that I shall exhibit in the further “liberal” schemes which it will be my duty to detail. Sir James has told us what his purpose is, if he remains in power. He has insulted and defied the spirit of the Constitution; he has laughed at the warning which the nation has given to the fallen Ministers; he boasts that the Conservatives will maintain the most destructive principle of the Whigs; he has thus declared war against a constitutional Government and a loyal people; he has forced the nation to choose between him and a repeal of “the most atrocious and execrable New Poor Law;” he has thereby secured his own rejection, or the removal of that Ministry which, in retaining him, will prove that they are blind to the best interests of the nation, and deaf to the warning already given to the Government, by the people and the constituency.

It is no fault to accept the challenge of Sir James—it would be a crime in me were I to shuffle or evade his point. He has chosen his ground; this is the position in which Sir James Graham has placed himself; he is the representative of the lying spirit which has disgusted the whole island: the only question is—Shall he fall alone, or shall he sink the Ministry? The subject is distressing; that I grant. A difficulty is to be overcome; no doubt of that. But a nation is to be saved or ruined; the New Poor Law must be confirmed, or Sir James Graham must be discarded; and such a trifle, as the fall of that man, must not stand in the way of England’s restoration! He has signed his official death-warrant. If Sir Robert Peel has not the nerve to proceed to execution, he will prove that he is not the minister whom England requires to set her right again. No doubt a successor might easily be found for the Home Office, possessed of all the necessary qualifications.

It is needful, then, that I should still sound the alarm to those who have mixed in *council* with him, and to the people whom he has aided to betray. Why or wherefore Sir Robert Peel has called his late accuser* to his aid, I know not. It is, however, clear that Sir James Graham must be thrown overboard, or that the Conservative vessel will sink. Do not think that I am mischievous; that I wish to cause dissention in the Conservative ranks. No, Sir, I am far from medi-

* I never heard Sir James and Sir Robert but once. It was when Sir Robert Peel was in office, and Sir James Graham was in Opposition. George IV. was dead—but not buried. Sir James Graham chose that particular period to charge the Government, of which Sir Robert Peel formed a part, with fraudulently pilfering, for their own uses, some 80,000*l.* from the revenue connected with the West Indies. I shall never forget the indignation of Sir Robert at the charge, and “at the *unmanliness* of making it, when the King laid dead in his palace.” “It is too bad,” three times reiterated the insulted Baronet; and then he flogged his accuser. I thought he had made an end of him. How little did I then expect that those two Baronets would ever meet at the same council-board!—R.O.

tating evil towards the present Government; I wish to aid it, by separating from amongst it an individual who is of a different spirit; and, released from that incubus, I hope that it will flourish for the good of all. I recognize in Sir James the *evil spirit* which has so long deluded, and has at last betrayed, the people—the spirit of liberalism!—that principle which has destroyed the late Government, and in company with which no Ministry can ever “walk in the light of the Constitution.” Sir James Graham has aided in all those attacks on the rights and liberties of the people which have marked the progress, and secured the downfall of Whiggery, and he has assured us that he is still “conscientiously resolved not to recede from them.”

Some people think that he is a friend to the Church; if they knew as well as I do about the Church property which Sir James holds, and about the singular bargain which he has made with the Rector of Arthuret, they would be able, as I am, to appreciate his attachment to the Church.

I am aware that some will blame me. I am often a year or two in advance of my Tory friends. I warn them now, that the principles which Sir James Graham has propounded since he accepted office, and of which he is the representative, will, if embraced by the Conservative Government, be its destruction; and, because I wish well to the present Government, I deem it my duty, thus early, to caution them, in the hope that I may prevent their fall.

It is now too late to strive for a middle course. The eyes of the people of England are opened; they are sick of “liberal” innovations; they yearn to shelter, once more, under the canopy of the Constitution. If any Government shall, following in the wake of the fallen ones, be so foolish as to push on the exploded theories of the “liberal and enlightened” school, they will feel, to their cost, that the Constitution is too strong for them. There can no longer be any evasion—subterfuge is exploded. The antagonist principles of Christianity and Infidelity—the Constitution or Liberalism—have now fairly entered the battle-field. The sword on each side has been drawn; both have thrown away the scabbard. The battle is no longer between parties: the contention is not for expediency; it is national, and for principle. That principle, being backed by the Constitution and the nation, must prevail against all opposers. The New Poor Law is the rampart of liberalism; it is the citadel of infidelity, against which Christianity and the Constitution war. At such an epoch, in such a contest, it is treachery to be faint-hearted; it is sinful to hold back the truth. Sir James Graham has been deaf to the national monition. He vainly thought that the discontent of the people was personal against the men who formed the late Government; he has arrogantly despised a nation’s will; he has recklessly defied a nation’s power. The principle of the New Poor Law he will maintain. A defamed, insulted, but indignant and powerful people, in thunders proclaim their will,—“It is unconstitutional—it is unjust—it is tyrannical; the ‘execrable and atrocious’ thing shall be repealed.”

What inducement can be offered to continue this innovation? What has the new system done for England? Let our cottages, our shops, our warehouses, our factories, our banks, our revenue, our exchequer, tell. In one loud voice the answer is, “It has ruined us.” On their own showing, it is clear that Sir Robert and Sir James cannot act together. The former has declared, “I will walk in

the light of the Constitution ;" the latter vociferates, " I will not recede from the principle of the New Poor Law," which is *avowedly* " unconstitutional." " If you will retain my services," says Sir James, " you shall have the New Poor Law !" Now, Sir, nothing is more certain, than that the nation can never have rest under that iniquitous law. The peace, the prosperity, the happiness of the country, require the dismissal of that minister, who, in spite of every warning, prefers his own whim to the well-being of the nation and the principles of the Constitution. The truth is, Sir, that the theory of the English Constitution is as perfect as the wisdom of man can devise ; and every departure from it, in theory or practice, is a step towards poverty, tyranny, and anarchy. The people know this, and they are heartily sick of " DE BIG QUACKS !"

Sir James Graham is one of that school which taught the people that the wisdom of our ancestors is folly ; and having obtained power to bless or to curse the people, they called them " idle ;" frightened you, the landlords, out of your senses, by thundering in your ears that your estates were in danger ; and thus contrived, by your aid, to disinherit the working people !

Shame on them ; they *did* say that the people were " idle !"—a people amongst whom even infants are worked to death ! I wish that I could see if they blush when they read the following. I had it, word for word, from the lips of a Government officer :—

" An infant, in the parish of Sninton, near Nottingham, was taken from a free school which was kept by benevolent ladies. She was put to work by her mother, at home, being employed in ' drawing lace,' when only TWENTY-ONE MONTHS old ; she continued at that work two years, and is now at such work ; working daily from 6 o'clock in the morning to 8 o'clock at night, being allowed only a quarter of an hour each for breakfast, dinner, and tea. The mother pays this infant one penny at the end of the week, by way of encouragement. She has three or four children, and, when excusing herself for thus treating her infant, she said : ' If I do not thus make my infant work, I SHOULD HAVE TO GO TO THE WORKHOUSE !'"

Oh, the cursed workhouse test ! But, I dare not trust myself to express my feelings and thoughts on such inhuman cruelty. Sir, it is too bad that a people who, in their sucking time, are forced to such extremes of labour, should, by well-paid Commissioners and Chancellors, be represented as " idle," and be legislated for as thieves and vagabonds ! Some day, when my feelings are a little subdued, I may draw a contrast between *that* laborious infant and her noble (!) trader, who now receives 5,000*l.* a-year for doing little or nothing, a part of which is created by that infant girl !

I am sick of contemplating the *cowardly* cruelty which has been practised towards the poor of England. What has been done, and is doing, is perfectly monstrous. I cannot help exclaiming, with the excellent and pious Dr. Gilly—

" Oh, when will the law of love be felt in its supremacy ? When will it be felt that there is no security for property like the *AFFECTION* of those *whose labour is our wealth* ?"

I have hopes that that day is dawning, but not under the auspices of Sir James Graham ! The Rev. Doctor adds :—

" Oftentimes when I see ornamental lodges and pretty dairies, like fairy bowers, in a cool, sequestered corner of the park—and gardeners' houses, decorated without, and full of accommodation within—and dog-kennels, which may be called canine palaces—and stables, like sacred temples, so totally free from every pollution, that you would suppose it profanation to suffer a particle of filth to remain one moment on the pavement—often when I see these things, do I indulge the

ardent hope, that the time will come, when the peasantry on a property will have as much taste and forethought expended on them, and that snug seats and happy-looking inmates will be considered the chief ornaments of an estate." (*The Peasantry of the Borders: an Appeal to their behalf, by W. S. Gilly, D.D., Vicar of Northam, and Canon of Durham. Greenwich-Town Walker Office.*)

To that happy consummation, all my labours tend!—But to return. In my last letter, I exhibited the Lord High Chancellor of England yaving against the poor. It was they whom he had resolved to plunder of their rights. Those rights were, however, maintained by such high and weighty authorities, that it was needful, before he could hope to succeed against the poor, to prove that all the brightest names in English jurisprudence were names of fools and idiots, because they lived before the famous patent was obtained by Malthus, for "a preventive check!" Thus did the destroyer, hoping only to rob the poor, remove security from the rich, by destroying the authority of those "Books" which asserted the rights of each. "If there be no law for the poor, there can be no law for the rich."

It is needful that I follow the Chancellor in his attack upon our sages. For, as I have said, the working classes of England are not the only parties who were defamed by the *learned* libeller. Our most "experienced statesmen, wisest legislators, upright judges, independent magistrates, the most distinguished individuals that this land can boast, and the first authorities in the country," were all the subjects of his lordship's ridicule. In fact, every law-giver, from Moses downwards, was declared (not proved) to be blind and incompetent, until, *forsooth*, "MALTHUS arose to enlighten mankind!" Lord BACON and his compeers were, if Lord BROUGHAM is any authority,—

"Not adepts in political science—they were not acquainted with the true principles of population—they could not foresee that a MALTHUS would arise to enlighten mankind upon that important, but as yet ill-understood branch of science, [the principle of population.]—they knew not the true principle upon which to frame a preventive check!! To all that they were blind!"

Thus did Lord Brougham rail, in the House of Lords, from the woolack, against men whose shoe-latchets he is not worthy to unloose. Mr. PITT's opinions respecting "the right of every poor man to be made comfortable in his own dwelling, himself and his family," were unsparingly pronounced to be "frantic, absurd, and extravagantly wild." Nay, even the Judges were universally charged with having, by their decisions, increased "the mischief" caused by the old Poor Laws, and the magistrates are only excused because they had been misled by the judges; for, says the LEARNED Lord,—

"Magistrates have the decisions of the Judges to back, and even to guide them. As often as questions have been raised relative to the administration of these laws, the courts have never, in any one instance, applied themselves to lessen the mischief, by narrowing the liberal construction which the magistrates put upon the statutes, but have uniformly decided, so as to give them yet larger scope. That they have erred, then, in such company as the legislative and judicial powers of the country, is to be regarded with neither wonder nor blame. But the magistrates have had equal countenance from the names of eminent individuals, some of them the most distinguished that this land can boast of."

And yet, notwithstanding all the legal and constitutional learning, the practice and mental force of the most eminent statesmen, the most learned and upright judges, and the most distinguished individuals, still, poor ignorant creatures, whilst they were hoping "to serve their day and generation," under the guidance and approval of these seers, the magistrates were only producing "mischief,"

which "the judges would not apply themselves to lessen," because they could not foresee that a MALTHUS would arise to invent a preventive check, and to shut out the poor from Nature's feast!!

Sir, what I have just written is truth and wisdom, if the assertions upon which Lord Brougham founded his argument against the old Poor Law have any foundation. It was by such impertinence as this, that the Lord Chancellor *reasoned* (!) their lordships into a consent to pass the New Poor Law; and thus they deprived the poor of England of their RIGHT! No, I make one mistake—he also appealed to their lordship's selfishness, by assuring them, that, if they suffered the old Poor Law to remain, they would all be reduced to pauperism; for, said the Chancellor,—

"ALL PROPERTY IS SHAKEN TO PIECES, AND THE TIMES ARE FAST APPROACHING WHEN IT SHALL BE NO MORE!"

To my mind, it is clear, that, except on the assumption that selfishness had blinded the nobles, and overcome their reason, they could not have endured to listen to any person who had dared to pour such contempt on the "Legislature," "judges," "the first authorities in the country," "the most learned jurists," "the most experienced statesmen," and "the most distinguished individuals that this land can boast of." In the House of Lords, the wisdom of our forefathers and of the ancient seers, is generally treated with respect; but on this occasion, their lordships listened to, and were guided by, the folly of a man who declared that wisdom had not visited this world, until "MALTHUS arose to enlighten mankind upon the true principle of population upon which to frame a preventive check!"

When England regains her senses, that speech, which was so much to the taste of the New Poor Law Commissioners, that it was circulated all over the country at the public expense, will only be remembered to be execrated.

It is, however, a very serious matter thus to treat our best authorities with derision. Persons possessed of property, as are their lordships and yourself, ought to be the last thus to aid in loosening the ties which are bound together by those learned decisions which have for two centuries sustained the poor man's right, and the rich man's title to his property. If the opinion should happen one day to be established, that Malthus was indeed, as Lord Brougham said he was, the inventor of wisdom, and that the opinions of all who preceded him were of no account, why then, Sir, I shall be able to prove to you and to their lordships, that, on the showing of Malthus, your and their right to receive rents, or pensions, or interest, is void. Our legislators were easily persuaded, by Malthus's reasoning, that the poor had no right to "parish pay;" they thought thereby to pocket the paupers share in the land, and thus to increase their rent-rolls. I told you, at the time, that "that act was an axe laid to the root of private property;" I now inform you, that, by the principle of Malthus, as enforced by Brougham, their lordships can have no right to receive their rents! It is a serious subject, but they who are most interested in upholding the old authorities, have raised the question; they have listened to the twaddle of Brougham, whilst he told them how blind and ignorant were our wisest statesmen and most learned lawyers; it is, therefore, of no use referring us to laws and decisions to prove their right, for what is law against one right, must soon be established as law against another.

If the invention of the "preventive check" abrogates the right of the poor, and idiotizes all our former sages, it will be impossible to prove that the same

invention does not destroy the title of the rich. More on this subject another day. Meanwhile, I would recommend the noble lords, and all landlords and men who think that they have property, seriously to ask themselves, "If, by laughing at our old laws, and deriding the decisions of our judges, the poor have lost their rights, how can we long maintain ours?" Depend upon it, Mr. Thornhill, this New Poor Law affair, if it is persisted in, will turn out a very serious concern to another class, as well as to the poor. The Commissioners will prove to be very troublesome intruders, if we do not get rid of them. —

I have just been told, that the Poor Law despots are coaxing my old friend, William Beckett, Esq., M.P., to assist them to let their wedge into Leeds, "nicely and easily at first," as they say. I smiled when I heard of it, and said, "I think I can trust *him*; he knows too well the value of social peace, to be instrumental in bringing these troublers of the people to the town of Leeds." I have still one comfort, when I reflect that my native town is not contaminated by the presence, nor enslaved by the power, of the Poor Law Commissioners. I have no doubt that Mr. Wm. Beckett will use his influence not only to *keep* them out of Leeds, but also to *drive* them out of Somerset House. He knows, as well as I do, that the great question now is,—Shall the Ministers, or shall the Poor Law Commissioners, go out? The nation has answered that question, and expects her will to be complied with; she trusts to the Prime Minister who has declared his resolution "to walk in the light of the Constitution."

This digression has been a long one. I deemed it my duty to you and my country to exhibit the utter impossibility of retaining Sir James Graham amongst a constitutional Ministry; and also to remark, in strong terms, upon the danger there is to the title to property, when we are taught to despise the wisdom of our ancestors, of our most learned judges, and our wisest statesmen; and are required to believe that Malthus was the first wise man, that his "preventive check" is the only safe foundation for our national prosperity! It is time that I returned to the exposure of the tricks which were resorted to, by the projectors of the New Poor Law, to deceive the Parliament and the public.

It was charged, that the *farmers* were likely to be ruined by the old Poor Law; the charge was proved to be untrue; but that proof was held back until Parliament were pledged to the accursed law.

The late Mr. Cobbett, M.P., in the excellent little book to which I have before referred you, places that special trick of the friends of the New Poor Law so lucidly before his readers, that I shall make no apology for transcribing his whole account of that most extraordinary and impudent procedure. At pages 16, 17, 18, and 19 of 'Cobbett's Legacy to Labourers,' you will find the following:—

"But, the minister told us, and so told us my Lord Raynon, that the bill was wanted to relieve the farmer, and that the farmers and tradesmen were very anxious to have the bill passed! It is very curious that not one of these petitioned for the bill, while, as you well know, thousands of them petitioned against it. This is curious enough, to begin with. But, if we had had time given us before we had passed the bill in our House, we should have found evidence of the following facts:

- "1. That the poor-law commissioners sent a circular into all the counties of England and Wales, addressed to lords, baronets, 'squires, parsons, overseers, and great farmers, whom they selected, as persons likely to suit their purpose.
- "2. That this circular contained the following two questions: FIRST, 'Has agricultural capital

- increased, or diminished, in your neighbourhood?' SECOND, 'Do you attribute such increase or diminution to any cause connected with the poor-laws, or their mal-administration?'
- " 3. That these questions were addressed to 1717 persons; and that out of these, there were only SEVEN who did not say, that the agricultural capital *had diminished*.
- " 4. But that, out of the 1717, *four hundred and one* said, that the cause *was not at all connected with the poor-laws*, or the administration of them, *eleven hundred and twenty-nine* assigned *other causes*, wholly unconnected with the poor-laws, for the decrease of agricultural capital, while only *a hundred and fifty-nine*, out of the 1717, had the hardihood to say, that the poor-laws, or their administration, *had been the cause of the decrease*; and, even of these hundred and fifty-nine, fourteen were *anonymous*, and one was MAJENDIE, the poor-law runner; and one of the anonymous was certified to be good by BLOMFIELD, Bishop of London, one of the poor-law commissioners; and further, that, amongst the *seventeen hundred and ten* who said that the agricultural capital had decreased, but that the decrease was not at all to be ascribed to the poor-laws or their administration, was my Lord RADNOR himself; though this very lord supported this bill on the ground that it was wanted *to relieve the farmer*.
- " 5. That a great number of the persons who answered these questions, particularly farmers, said that the poor-rates were *no burden to the farmer*; for that, if they did not pay the money in rates to the poor, they must pay the same amount in *additional rents* to the landlords.
- " 6. That, from the parish of BROADWAY, in Worcestershire, the enlightened Bishops of London and Chester, and those paragons of light, STURGES BOURNE, SENIOR, COULSTON, and BISHOP, and penny-a-line CHADWICK—from the parish of BROADWAY, in Worcestershire, these men got the following answer: 'Agricultural capital *is diminishing*; but not on account of the poor-laws, which rather *tend to keep capital in the parish*; but because the great landowners spend less in the parish, by carrying the great bulk of their incomes annually to London, where it accumulates in the hands of usurers, stock-jobbers, and the like, and consequently does not return to the parish.'

"Now, sir, how came we, of the House of Commons, to pass the bill with this evidence even of these poor-law fellows before us? Was it not a shame for us to read this bill a second time, having this evidence before us? It is but justice to those who supported this bill to put upon record the fact, that the bill had gone through the committee, *before the whole of this evidence was delivered to any of us!* The majority of the House were committed by their votes long before they could possibly see this evidence! And let my Lord ALTHORP, who is now a peer, take into his hands all the credit due to this transaction, and parcel it out in due proportions amongst himself and his colleagues."

If any additional proof were needed of the unfairness of the men who proposed and carried the New Poor Law, it is the hurry in which they pushed it through Parliament. They did not give the members time to read their own evidence; they were afraid of the people reading it; they took advantage of the confidence which was just then reposed in them, and, without affording time for reflection, they got rid of a law under which, for two centuries, the nation had flourished, and the people had been happy! How different was that *hurry* to the *tardiness* which they evince in the repeal of their own "most atrocious and execrable law," which, in seven years, has almost ruined the nation, and has actually destroyed the reputation and power of its projectors! Three years following have they been unable to "consider" about its repeal!! But, Sir, *the time has now come when delay will be found very dangerous*. These last words are as true as that

I am, your Prisoner,
RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S. — I had written a P.S. about the kindness of my friends, but the printer's answer is "no space."—R.O.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.,

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

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His Prisoner in the Fleet.

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"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break
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THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—I remember, a short while after the New Poor Law was passed, when Lord Brougham's speech on the second reading of that "most execrable and atrocious" bill had taken the place of the Bible in the houses of the Norfolk and Suffolk landlords and farmers, (aye, Sir, and, in too many cases, of the clergy also,) I had, at that time, been spending a few weeks with you at Riddlesworth. It so happened, that, on one occasion, I passed some hours at the Bell Inn, Thetford. There were a few farmers and landlords there, who were loudly extolling the New Poor Law, and most vociferously denouncing and defaming the labourers of that district. The farmers and gentry on that occasion, actually, *à la Brougham*, worked themselves up to a state of frenzy, and positively declared, that "It was utterly impossible to get a labourer to do anything. The labourers," one of these farmers declared, (and no one contradicted him,) "were too idle to lift a spade, to load a cart, to guide a plough, or to do any kind of work whatever. They were," he said, "all become poachers, vagabonds, or thieves; laying in bed all day, and prowling about at night!" Oh, how that farmer did rail against the labourers! Nor was there one to stay his ire. Still, his farm was in very good order, his land was clean and well tilled, his crops were growing and healthy, and all his "stock" were thriving! Everything was right upon his farm, in that respect. All was happy, prosperous, and comfortable at his home. He had that day been delivering some waggon-loads of corn; but, still his delusion was so complete, so bewildered was his imagination with "philosophy," so hampered was he, and perplexed with visions of "lazy vagabonds," and "sturdy beggars," that, he could do nothing but rail against the "idle" labourers, and insist that it was not possible to make them do a single stroke of work: "If anything is to be done," he exclaimed, "we must do it ourselves."

The fact was, that farmer had been reading Lord Brougham's speech, and, in spite of his flocks, herds, ricks, and growing crops, he was sure,—

"That the Poor Laws had succeeded in wholly disconcerting the ideas of labour and its reward in the minds of the people; that they had encouraged the idle and the profligate, at the expense of the honest and the industrious; that they had destroyed the independence of the peasant, and made him the creature of a pernicious and hurried charity."—(*Lord Brougham's Speech on the second reading of the New Poor Law Bill.*)

There was no one to reply to his railing accusations, save myself. It was of no use reasoning with a man in such a frenzied state of mind. He was a "philosopher," who had studied the "preventive check." Lord Bacon was a fool to him! I, therefore, seemed to admit all that he had said; thanked him for the information which he had given; and assured him that he had conferred a great kindness on me, by setting me right on a subject upon which I had, till then, been entirely misinformed. I stated, that "I had visited that district many years; had observed the crops growing, or being reaped or sown, as the case might be; that I had regularly met waggon-loads of wool and corn constantly making their way to Thetford and other towns; and had remarked the prosperous, healthy, and improving number and quality of the flocks and herds; but I had never seen the crops rotting for want of reapers, or the flocks neglected for lack of shepherds." I told him that "I had noticed many improvements, and enjoyed many comforts in that neighbourhood, having, when visiting any place, whether inn, farm-house, or mansion, always found every attention paid to myself and horse. Till that moment," I assured him "I had fancied that those hard-working men in smocks, whom I had seen in the fields, folds, farm-yards, and roads, so busily engaged, so civil and attentive, were the *labourers* of the district. I was glad to be corrected, and to find that those industrious persons were the farmers and their sows, who were working to save their labourers the trouble of doing so, and that these smock-frock *gentry* were not only thus industriously engaged for their own profit, but were so benevolent as to endure considerable hardships to eke out a livelihood for the lazy, idle vagabonds of labourers, who were all snoring in bed, whilst their betters were so actively employed in doing their drudgery!"

————— I do not know how it was, Sir, but it did so happen, that no further question was, at that time, mooted on *that* subject. The conversation immediately turned upon general politics, one gentleman remarking, with a smile, "Mr. Oastler is too many for us on that question; we had better say no more about the New Poor Law while he is here."

Shame on the farmer, the landlord, or lawyer, who will, for the purpose of robbing the labourers of England, dare to charge them with idleness and dishonesty! There was not a farmer or a landlord present, that afternoon, who did not feel the reproof which I administered, by seeming to admit the truth of the false charges which were brought against the labourers. The extreme folly and wickedness of their "philosophy" was thus exhibited, when the propounders thereof were confounded by the simple admission of their boasted facts. The truth is, Sir, there is not a fact or principle stated in defence of the New Poor Law, which does not thus break down with its own weight.

Take those never-ending declarations of the Malthusian philosophers about "increasing poor-rates," "absorbing the entire property of the kingdom," &c.; or, as Lord Brougham (in the famous speech of which I have already given you some samples,) classically, philosophically, and logically termed it,—

"A swarm of sturdy beggars depriving the honest labourer of his hire, AND THE RENTAL CRUMBLING DOWN DAILY AND HOURLY INTO THE POOR'S BOX, always filled and always empty!"

Take that lying declaration of "the sturdiest beggar" who ever craved "an advance of relief" at the hands of an "overseer," and try it by the test of truth;

then see how its own weight of falsehood deprives it of any meaning, and proves how base, how dishonest, that man must have been, who dared to make such an assertion. "Sturdy beggars"—did Brougham rail against!—Himself, the "sturdiest" of the tribe! Did ever pauper approach an *overseer*, to demand an increase of parish pay, when out of work, with such "a sturdy gait and masterful air," "domineering, insulting, and trampling upon" his betters, as did this same Chancellor, when demanding an advance of One Thousand Pounds a-year, (upon Four already granted,) when he himself should be an Ex?

"Rental crumbling down into the poor's box!" Were these, indeed, the words of the alarmist, who, in his own person, presents an excuse for every "sturdy beggar" after him? How stands the case? He was the Lord High Chancellor, in duty bound to protect the poor. Did he bring figures to his aid? and thus prove his bold assertion? Exhibiting the DECREASE of *rents* against the vast INCREASE of *rates*? Not he! Figures, he knew, would have disproved his word, demolished his case, and stamped the traducer of the poor with infamy! It was not figures that he wanted, but "philosophy," and declamation, and bold assertion; of those he had good stock, and spared them not.

I was conversing with one of these "philosophers" the other day, and when I attempted to convince him that his theory must inevitably destroy the monarchy, and uproot our Christian institutions, he laughed, and said, "Philosophy admits not of patriotism, loyalty, or feeling."—"What, then, is the basis of your science?" I inquired.—"The beginning and the ending of all true political science," rejoined the philosopher, "is, to get what we can, and to keep what we get." Well might the benevolent SADLER exclaim, respecting such like, "Neither right, nor reason, nor revelation, can make the least impression against their selfishness!"

Had Brougham been any other than a mere "philosopher"—a visionary, devoid of sense and reason, he would have backed his word by tables showing the amount of *rents* and also of *rates*, at some former period, and then he would have compared their respective amounts with what they relatively were when he asserted that "the rental was crumbling down into the poor's box!"

Had he, by such exhibition of figures, proved that *rents* were much decreased, and that the poor-rates were greatly increased, then, in the absence of better reason, he might have blamed "the swarm of sturdy beggars." But, what is the truth? Precisely the reverse! The *rents* have risen more than the *poor-rates* have advanced!! And yet, Sir, it was upon such "enormous lying," upon the false declarations of the Lord High Chancellor Brougham, that "the rental was crumbling down into the poor's box"—that "all property was shaken to pieces, and the times are fast approaching when it shall be no more!"—that "the destruction of all property is the issue of the system that stares us, and at no great distance, in the face;" and "suppose I am a Westmoreland pauper, as I certainly very soon may be, if the present system continues:"—I say, Sir, it was upon these false, infamous, and scandalous assertions of the Lord High Chancellor of England that the Constitution was dismantled—the landmark of the poor was removed—nature was outraged—religion was insulted—charity was disowned—decency was abolished—justice was trampled upon—and "our laws were changed!"

It is appalling to think—but, Sir, it is true—that "enormous Lying" has cost

England her rank amongst the nations — those wicked Lies will, if not atoned for, soon cause that her name will be blotted out from the roll of empires — the measure founded upon those impious Lies have sapped the foundations of her religion and her institutions! How many sons and daughters of England have perished in consequence of those “atrocious and execrable” Falsehoods!

“THE RENTAL IS CRUMBLING DOWN INTO THE POOR’S BOX!” So said Lord Brougham. But how stands the case? Of the entire rental of the nation I have no means of judging. I am well acquainted with your own. I know no reason why your estates should not be considered a fair average of the whole kingdom. I believe, if there be any difference, the general average would be higher than your own. I am not about to reveal your secrets. It is a well-known fact, that, since 1770, the rental of your Yorkshire estates has increased *more* than five-fold. I will, however, leave out the odds; I have no need to trouble myself with fractions; FIVE times will answer my purpose of comparison, the overplus in advance, will make the proper allowance for the year which I am obliged to select, as the earliest in which there is any data on which to found a comparison between the relative increase or decrease in the amount of rents and poor-rates.

The late Mr. Gilbert is the best authority on the subject of the amount of poor-rates; he stated, on the 27th of March, 1775, that “the poor-rates amounted to 2,000,000*l.* a-year at least.”*

Now, Sir, if the poor-rates had increased in the same proportion that your rents have advanced, they would have amounted to more than 10,000,000*l.* a-year. Instead of the fact being so, the Poor Law Commissioners inform us, that, in 1834, (the year when Brougham made his furious speech, to which I am referring,) the whole amount of the poor-rates was 8,338,079*l.*, out of which, the Commissioners tell us, that only 6,317,255*l.* were “expended for relief of the poor!”

Such, then, is the fact which gives the lie to Lord Brougham’s declaration. The very reverse of his assertion was the truth! And yet, Sir, by the measure which was founded upon that wicked lie, the kingdom has been shaken to its centre! And still we are threatened by Sir James Graham that the principle which has its foundation in that falsehood, shall be maintained by the Conservative Government!

I have not any documents here, by which to calculate the relative advance of taxes and poor-rates. Without reference to books, I know, however, that if the taxes, and those who live out of them, were subjected to the same reasoning (!) as Brougham’s on the poor-rates, and if the same conduct were pursued by Parliament, the taxes would at this moment be “put in commission,” with a view to “no taxes at all!” And where, think you, on the same principle, would RENTS be?

* I am well aware that documents have been published varying from the calculation of Mr. Gilbert: many of them are manifestly erroneous. Even some of the early parliamentary reports are declared, by parliamentary authority, “to err materially;” and Mr. Gilbert, who devoted his parliamentary and private labours to the subject of the Poor Laws, both in Parliament and in his publications, asserted, that some of the reports which he had obtained were “grossly defective.” Many parishes made no returns whatever. I adopt the estimate of Mr. Gilbert, because he is acknowledged to be the best authority on that subject.—R.O.

We have an old proverb in Yorkshire, on which it would be well that the friends of the New Poor Law would ponder. "What is sauce for the goose, is sauce for the gander;" and again, "Water will find its level."

Believe me, Sir, it is very dangerous to nibble at our Constitutional institutions, and to remove the *Constitutional prejudices* of "the common people!"

Read a little more of Lord Brougham's *romancing*—

"I will not say, that as yet the system has so worked as to lay waste any considerable portion of territory; that it has a *direct and necessary tendency to do so*; that unless its progress be arrested, it *must go on till it gain that point, that ere long we must reach the brink of the precipice, towards which we are hurrying with accelerated rapidity*; that the circumstance of one parish being thrown out of cultivation, inevitably and immediately leads to lay three or four others waste; and that this devastation, gathering strength as it proceeds, must needs cover the land. OF THESE FACTS NO MAN, WHO CONSULTS THE BODY OF EVIDENCE BEFORE YOUR LORDSHIPS, CAN ENTERTAIN THE SHADOW OF A DOUBT. *Stand where we are, we cannot*. I might say with others, whose lands are filled with despair and the dread of coming events, that I could be content never to have things better; so I *were assured that they would never be worse*. But this—*even this wretched compromise*—is impossible, *with the frightful scourge that is scourging our country*. The question is, shall we retrace our steps, or shall we be pushed forward, and down the steep we stand on, by the *momentum* of this weight which we have laid upon ourselves? That *such is our position*—that such is the course we are pursuing—that *such is the gulf towards which we are hastening*, no man living, gifted with an ordinary measure of sagacity, can deny. *Thus, then, is the picture of our situation*; harsh in its outline, dismal in its coloring—in every feature sad and awful to behold. This is the aspect of affairs, assuring the peace of society, undermining the safety of dominion, and assailing the security of property which the system, as now administered, exhibits to the eye."

Such, Sir, is "the graphic sketch," as Lord Brougham termed it, which he drew of England, under the old Poor Law; with which he frightened their lordships "from their propriety."

Excuse me, if for a moment I digress. I never can read this part of Brougham's speech, which he preceded by an assurance that he would "point to the quarter from which they might expect a cure;" and followed by the declaration, "I could not bear to think of the ravages of that remorseless pestilence, which I shudder to describe, if I did not know that *the same hand* which lays it bare to your eyes, and makes its naked deformity horrible in your sight, will be enabled, by your assistance, to apply to *the foul disease a safe, an effectual remedy*."—I say, Sir, that I never read this ranting of Brougham's, without being forcibly reminded of the "eloquence" and impudence of a certain quack-doctor, who, when I was a boy, used regularly to visit Leeds on "fair-days."

The empiric went to station himself just above the Old Cross, in the Market Place, opposite to the White Swan yard; there he was, on a small elevated platform, in front of his dwelling—a little yellow caravan. His figure was tall, he was very thin, his face was hank and pale, his features harsh, but indubitably characteristic of his calling. There was a sly leer on his countenance, which told you that he was conscious of the deceptions which he was practising upon his gaping audience. He never failed to exhibit his long, brass-headed cane, with which he alternately tickled his ugly nose, or grazed his powdered wig. His dress was second-hand black silk, with white buckles to his knees and shoes; a huge half-washed frill covered his breast; his old cocked hat was more frequently under his arm than on his head.

On his left was placed a small table, covered with pill-boxes, plasters, powders, and bottles. There that quack stood, "laying bare to the eyes" of his hearers the dreadful consequences of all the disorders under which they were suffering, or inevitably would suffer, if they refused to buy his nostrums. Corns on the feet, scabs on the head, worms in the bowels, and ring-worms in the skin; itch, scurvy, scrofula, and all other diseases, were by that old rogue exposed in all their "naked deformity horrible to our sight." His "eloquence" was so touching and persuasive, that, if we had none of those maladies, he made us think and believe that we had; and then, "*with his own hand*, he was ready to apply to the foul diseases a safe, an effectual remedy!" Next came the demand for boxes, bottles, powders, and plasters. This plaster was "an effectual remedy" for corns; that ointment never failed to cure the itch; those pills were safe and certain for the worms; this tincture was efficacious for the tooth-ache; those powders were a specific for the gout; this lotion was the only "safe and effectual remedy for that foul disease," the scald-head!—That old shrivelled quack was just, for all the world, like Brougham; he was never ending in his abuse of all the regular practitioners; the more eminent they were, so much the more did that quack abuse them; whilst, for the "remorseless pestilence" itself, HE (like Brougham) had an "infallible cure," ready "to be applied by *his own hand!*"

I never can read the speech made by the Lord High Chancellor Brougham, in the House of Lords, on the second reading of the Poor Law Amendment Act, without thinking of that Leeds old quack, and of his doings.

Had the Lord High Chancellor not appealed to their lordships' SELFISHNESS, such ravings as his would have disgusted his noble hearers, and the political empiric would have been left to spout and storm to empty benches. But, was the fact as Brougham said it was? No, surely. Instead of the poor-rates hurrying the country *down* that imaginary "precipice," and proceeding "to absorb all the property of the country," *at that very moment* they were *diminishing* in amount after the rate of 7 per cent. per annum! This truth is demonstrated by the Poor Law Commissioners themselves, who state that, in 1834 (it was in the same year that Brougham made these false assertions) "there were expended for the relief of the poor 473,545*l.* LESS than had been expended for their relief in 1833!"

Yet, Sir, that lie of Brougham's was believed by the Lords, and it formed the foundation-stone on which to build that "most execrable and atrocious" enactment—the Poor Law Amendment Act.

It is, I acknowledge that it is, painful to speak of the doings of a man so highly stationed, in terms so reproachful. But, Sir, it was Brougham who was careless of the rank and honours conferred upon him; it was he who, by impudently fancying himself wiser than all the sages who had preceded him, degraded the highest office which his King could confer upon him.

When I reflect on the consequences of that lying speech, I think that it is not possible to find language severe enough in which to speak of it. It was that speech which beguiled the Lords, and induced them to pass a law which has caused widows to drown themselves—mothers to rid their children of life—whole families to waste away by starvation, rather than sacrifice their liberty and social ties in the cursed

Bastiles—it has poisoned its hundreds in those horrid dens; now, while I write, tens of thousands of my fellow-creatures are existing under the curses which that law has gendered!

When I think of the widows—the mothers—the families who have been murdered by that law—of the heavings of *their* hearts—the sorrows which have been their portion—of the bodily, as well as mental pangs, when dying of starvation—of the loud calls for vengeance of those agonizing victims, on this blood-guilty land, I think that it is impossible too severely to denounce the speech which was one great means of causing all that woe.

It is impossible to vent the rage which such unblushing falsehood, (used, as it was, by a Lord High Chancellor, for the purpose of robbing the poor,) kindles in the heart! Language cannot depict the villany of that deed! The fact that the conscience-keeper of Majesty was thus guilty of lying against the poor, but aggravates the offence! Until Brougham held the Seals, we were not wont thus to be stunned by such barefaced falsehood, issuing from that high officer! That speech of his, so full of deception, misrepresentation, fraud, and false accusation, has done more to degrade the dignity of office, than all the efforts of the most powerful and the bitterest foes of the Monarchy have produced since the Conquest. That speech has slain its thousands! I had expected that a Conservative Government, taught by experience, and attached to the Constitution, would have rejected the unholy thing, and have cast off the hateful incubus! I would hope so still, despite the declaration of Sir James Graham. I would rather give implicit credit to that of Sir Robert Peel, when he asserted, “We will walk in the light of the Constitution!”

I am far from having completed my exposure of the delusions practised by the projectors of the New Poor Law.

When a grand scheme was being invented for the robbery and murder of the poor, it would indeed have been strange if the factory masters had not panted for their share of the plunder. I shall, in an early number, exhibit those monsters, “sitting in the lurking-places of the villages, lying in wait secretly, as a lion in his den, to catch the poor, and draw them into his net.” I shall expose the means which they resorted to, the self-convicted instrument (Dr. Kay) whom they employed, and then proceed with “a graphic sketch” of the heart-rending scenes which followed.

Those matters will occupy too much space for the conclusion of this letter, and, as I have another communication to make, I need not apologise for leaving the projectors of the New Poor Law and the factory masters, for the present, taking their greedy glance at your agricultural labourers, and thus whetting their appetites for their intended prey, (to use the words of Mr. Ashworth, of Tarton, near Bolton,) “the surplus population of the agricultural counties, in every respect well qualified for our manufacturing districts.”

I can, however, delay no longer to ask you, and, through you, every landlord in England—nay, I would solemnly appeal to the Prime Minister himself.—Is it prudent, wise, or safe, to uphold a system which was projected by selfishness, promoted by misrepresentation, lying, and fraud, which is founded on injustice, and which, in its execution, has caused such heart-throbbings as never beared in

a nation before?—A measure which sneers at the tenderest feelings of our nature, ridicules our wisest seers, and laughs at the precepts of our Holy Religion?—A law which *teaches* the people, in self defence, to loosen their attachment to all law and order; which *forces* them to look with hatred upon the institution of private property!—A statute which, if just, proves every other law to be founded in error!—An act of Parliament, acknowledged even by its projectors and supporters to be unconstitutional! I ask, Is it prudent, wise, or safe, any longer to retain such a law upon our statute-books?

I have no interest in the question, save the love which I bear to our common country, whose custom—but not her constitution—makes me your prisoner! From this cell I solemnly exhort you all, who have an interest in maintaining your own rights, to tear from our statute-book every vestige of that accursed act of Parliament, which, by removing the poor man's landmark, calls loudly for the curse of Almighty God upon this guilty land! Excuse the warmth of this appeal; I believe in God, and in the truth of His most Holy Word. "I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the RIGHT of the poor;" and I remember that He hath said,—

"Rob not the poor, because he is poor; neither oppress the afflicted in the gate: for the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them." "Remove not the old landmark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless, for their Redeemer is mighty; He shall plead their cause with thee." And "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong." Again, "Because he hath oppressed, and hath forsaken the poor; because he hath violently taken away a house, which he builded not; surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly, he shall not save of that which he desired. In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits; every hand of the wicked shall come upon him. When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of His wrath upon him, and shall rain it upon him while he is eating. He shall flee from the iron weapon, and the bow of steel shall strike him through."

Believe me, Sir, despite the proud pratings of philosophy, and the vain confidence which wealth and power give, those words are true.

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—What shall I hear of next?—The worse than brutal horrors of this accursed New Poor Law system, harrow up the finest and the strongest feelings of the human soul! Shall such outrages on our nature be permitted to be offered by man upon his brother man, until men are maddened to revenge? Is there no one to stand in the gap, and stay this scourge of oppression, of cruelty, of torture, which the dogs-in-office, under that accursed law, now dare to inflict upon the free-born sons of Britain, upon the brethren of our Saviour, Christ? Shall an Englishman—a Christian—93 years of age, afflicted with rupture, lay for several days together, unattended, on a rotten bed, which stinks worse than dung in a pig-stye, with the accumulation of his own excrecence mixing with the rotten chaff of which his bed is made, till the poor creature becomes so sore, and the filth is so congealed on him, that he can scarcely bear to be touched; himself and his bed swarming with maggots, until the stench becomes absolutely intolerable, *and, at last, PIECES OF FLESH DROP FROM HIM, LIKE CARRION WHICH DOGS HAD BEEN GNAWING?* Suffice, *at present*, the knowledge of that fact. It is most horrible, but IT IS TRUE! The scene was FAREHAM UNION WORKHOUSE;—the time, last August;—the victim, John Hughs!—R.O.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.,

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL CORRESPONDENCE FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage"—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth, must be first certifier of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people. He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break
in pieces the oppressor."

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LONDON, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1841.

Price 3d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—There are two questions which must be put to Sir James Graham, whenever Parliament meets, upon the answers to which his character,—I had almost said his very existence as a public man,—will depend. They are suggested by the memorable speech which, as an organ of the Government, and in his official capacity, as Home Secretary, the Right Hon. Baronet delivered in the House of Commons on the 28th of last September. On that occasion Sir James Graham had laconically moved that the House should go into Committee on the Poor Law Commissioners' Bill; and it was not until Mr. Perrand, the newly returned member for Knaresborough, had given utterance to a powerful and slashing speech, calculated to make the Commissioners wince, that Sir James, shy and taciturn until then, was drawn out.

The *first* question which the new member for Dorchester (for he has hitherto, from some cause or another, been knocked about like a shuttle-cock*) will have to answer, in consequence of this speech, which he, with such visible reluctance, made on that night, will be this: Was the Right Hon. Baronet—when in the course of that speech he read over what, as he said, "appeared to him a list of most important relaxations in the *extreme stringency* of the order relative to out-door relief," aware that those "most important relaxations" (seven, in number) which he represented as having been issued for the first time during "the last six weeks," had formed part of an "Amended Prohibitory Order" which had been issued in the autumn of the year 1840; in other words, about twelve months before?

The *second* question will be this: Was Sir James Graham, when he so highly commended the conduct of the Poor Law Commissioners for having issued an "Amended Prohibitory Order," containing those seven "most important relaxations,"

* The following statement of Sir James Graham's "migration," has been furnished to me by a correspondent, and I believe may be depended upon. "Hull, St. Ives, Colchester, Cumberland, East Cumberland, and Pembroke, have, each in their turn, adopted and cast off the Right Honourable Baronet. He has lately been allowed to perch upon the little town of Dorchester; but where he will be permitted to alight next, I believe he has not himself 'the slightest idea.'"

tions in the extreme stringency of the order relative to out-door relief," aware that there had been two "Instructional Letters as to Amended Prohibitory Orders;" one bearing date August, 1840, and the other, the 2nd of August, 1841; in which the Guardians had been told, as plainly as words could convey a meaning, that a principal relaxation—that in favour of widows with children—to which Sir James most particularly called the attention of his hearers, "was meant only to be talked about, *but not to be acted upon?*"*

In reference to these matters, Parliament and the Country will have a fearful account to settle with the Home Secretary. Whether Sir James Graham has merely been the dupe of the Poor Law Commissioners, will be known when those questions have been answered. If Sir James, shrewd as he proverbially is, has really been the dupe of the Commissioners, if he has suffered himself to be used as a mere puppet in their hands,—a parrot repeating implicitly the lessons they have taught him,—why then, he will only stand convicted of an utter incompetency for office. If, on the other hand, he has not been any one's dupe, but has actually been a party to this "thimble-rig" work, to this gross and scandalous deception practised upon Parliament and the public, then he richly deserves impeachment: to be struck off the roll of privy councillors would, in that case, be the least punishment that he would deserve.

However dry the investigation may be, I must revert back to the Amended Prohibitory Order. A form containing the seven "relaxations," on which the Home Secretary laid such stress, appears as part of No. I., in Appendix A, attached to the Seventh Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners. It has no date affixed, but it *precedes* another document called "Instructional Letter as to Amended Prohibitory Order," and which forms a second part of this same No. I., and bears date "August, 1840." This second document, therefore, having a date, goes far towards settling the date of the former, *to which it evidently refers*. But still a document may be supposed to have borne a particular date, or even be known to have had one, and the public may yet be in the dark as to when it was issued. This important link in the evidence is, however, fortunately supplied by the second paragraph of the Commissioners' Seventh Annual Report. The passage is as follows:—

"In our Report to your Lordship, dated the 31st of December, 1839, we explained the provisions of our order for prohibiting (with certain exceptions) the out-door relief of the able-bodied, and the relief of persons not resident within their Union; and we stated the counties to which the order had been then issued. Having, since the date of the Report alluded to, carefully revised this order, we issued it in *last autumn*, to a considerable number of unions," &c. &c.

And the Commissioners refer to Appendix A, No. I., as furnishing the "carefully revised" order.

But is there not an Amended Prohibitory Order, bearing date the 2nd of August, 1841? Certainly there is; and that order, though not falling exactly within the six weeks mentioned by Sir James Graham, is undoubtedly the one to which alone he thought proper to refer. It was, with the exception of some trifling additions, and one alteration, all quite immaterial to the question now in

* See a very able article on this subject, in the *Times* of Nov. 2.

hand, nothing more than a REPRINT (with the simple alteration of a date) of the order issued in the autumn of 1840, "to a considerable number of Unions." A more barefaced piece of trickery was never palmed upon the public. Who was the trickster?

I pass over the substitution of "six weeks" for eight weeks or thereabouts; that inaccuracy might be the result of a momentary inadvertence or negligence. But did Sir James know of the prohibitory order issued in the autumn of 1840? and that it was all but identical with the one upon which he commented with such expressions of pleasure and satisfaction, when he attempted to make it appear that some new and extraordinary light had broken in upon the Poor Law Commissioners: that they had, *at length*, yielded to public opinion, and, as the Right Hon. Baronet professed to think, "most judiciously!" &c. &c.

"But a quibble may be raised by some ingenious apologist, and it may be said, 'You have misunderstood Sir James.' It is true he did lay stress upon 'the last six weeks,' once and again, as a period within which a marvellous change had come over the minds of the Poor Law Commissioners: '*there had been an evasion of the most essential provisions in the original enactment [pretty fellows these Commissioners!] by multiplying special orders in particular unions to an immense extent, thereby evading the provisions which rendered the passing of general orders necessary; as it was only to those general orders, that the approbation of the Secretary of State was necessary;*' and it was with reference to a cessation from these evil-practices, and these only, that Sir James Graham used the phrase, 'within the last six weeks.'"

To convince you, Sir, and my readers, that I am not unfairly handling this part of Sir James's speech, and that those words, and that period, applied to my Amended Prohibitory Order of Relief, as well as to those evil-practices, I proceed to give a considerable extract from his speech as reported in the *Times* newspaper. I shall divide it into paragraphs, for greater distinctness; and also for the facility it will afford of making an occasional remark or two. In the first paragraph observe how skilfully the Right Hon. Secretary claims the confidence of the House "for a short time." There may be a deficiency of merit in the Commission; but it is the Commission as controlled by the Executive, for which he pleads. And there being, in the department over which that important personage the Home Secretary himself presides, a superfluity of merit, (it being composed of *the best possible materials**—Eh, Sir James!) have I not hit the mark? he trusted the House of Commons would "*reject*" the instructions to the Committee (moved by Mr. S. Crawford, the Member for Rochdale), and "*pass the measure.*"

"He thought that taking that discussion under the pressure which then existed, would be prejudicial to the measure (hear, hear), and he, therefore, could give no such pledge; but he would the House to extend the operation of the measure at that time and under those circumstances. If they believed that the Commission controlled by the Executive could act so imprudently for the short time to which it was proposed to be extended, then he said, 'Do not deal with this question in

* The Right Hon. Baronet, when Sir Robert Peel came into office, in December, 1834, did not hesitate, publicly, to stigmatize the administration then formed, as composed of "the worst possible materials."

the shape of an instruction, but refuse the passing of the bill.' If, however, they had confidence in the commission controlled by the Executive, then he would say, 'Reject the instructions, but pass the measure.'

The next paragraph is as follows—I have already alluded to it:—

"He would then call the attention of the House to one or two remarkable circumstances which ought not to be overlooked. And first, with respect to this commission. *This commission had yielded to public opinion*, and, as he thought, most judiciously, and quite in accordance with the spirit in which the measure was enacted. He said, *the commission, WITHIN THE LAST SIX WEEKS, had marked its sense of the pressure of public opinion, and had yielded most judiciously, and in a manner which he highly approved.* When the act was discussed incidentally last session, he (Sir James Graham) did point out *errors of judgment* in carrying the original act into execution. *THERE HAD BEEN AN EVASION OF ONE OF THE MOST ESSENTIAL PROVISIONS IN THE ORIGINAL ENACTMENT, by multiplying special orders in particular unions to an immense extent, thereby evading the provision which rendered the passing of general orders necessary; as it was only to those general orders that the approbation of the Secretary of State was necessary.*"

In the next paragraph we find it broadly admitted, that it had only been "within the last six weeks" that the Commissioners, who at the time Sir James spoke, had put forth no fewer than Seven Annual Reports, had acted "from a proper sense of duty." What an admission!

"Now, what had been the conduct of the commission upon the vital point of forbidding out-door relief? (Hear, hear.) *WITHIN THE LAST SIX WEEKS,—YIELDING TO PUBLIC OPINION,—on a re-consideration of all the circumstances, and from a proper sense of duty, they had put into one general order all the scattered, individual orders prohibiting out-door relief, and submitted them to his predecessor at the Home Office. That order had not been negatived, and the prescribed period within which the Secretary of State's disapprobation should have been signified being just on the point of expiring, it was to be concluded that the sanction of the department had thus indirectly been given. He repeated, that the Commissioners had brought under one general order all the special orders touching out-door relief, and had brought it under the general executive. So much for their conduct on that head. (Hear, hear.) They had shown a disposition to do away with any consideration of the act of Parliament, and to bring their conduct directly under the control and into conformity with the spirit of that act.* (Hear, hear.)"

To the next paragraph I solicit special attention, because it is upon its close connection with the preceding quotations, which it immediately follows, that I rely for proof of the truth of my allegation that Sir James Graham intended to convey the impression, that the "important relaxations in the extreme stringency of the order relative to out-door relief," had originated within the short space of "six weeks."

"**BUT WAS THAT ALL?** He thought it his duty, and he hoped the House would pardon him for so doing, to read what appeared to him a list of most important relaxations in the *extreme stringency* of the order relative to out-door relief. These relaxations were many of them in direct conformity with recommendations of the committee over which Mr. Fazakerly had presided, and in which he (Sir J. Graham) had the honour of acting. First, he would read the order itself.—'Every able-bodied person, male or female, requiring relief from any of the said parishes shall be relieved in the workhouse, and shall, together with such family as may be resident with him or her, and who may not be employed,' &c., be resident in the workhouse,—'save and except the following cases.'"

It is clear, then, according to the *Times'* Report, that Sir James Graham, in this memorable speech of his, laboured to propitiate public opinion to the commission, on account of two things in which it had, as represented by Sir James, very recently "marked its sense of public opinion;" one, being the bringing

under one general order all the special orders touching out-door relief; and then allowing and enabling (1) the executive to have a control over the conduct of the Commissioners:—the *other* recent proceeding of theirs, which Sir James was anxious to place in a favourable light before Parliament and the public, was the relaxing of the Prohibitory Order which the Commissioners had issued when they made their Report, dated the 31st of December, 1839. The claims of the Commissioners in both these respects, were founded, according to Sir James, upon changes in their conduct "within the last six weeks." To the first, therefore, of the questions with which I started, I again recur: Was Sir James Graham aware that the seven important relaxations which he read over in the debate of the 28th of September, and which he (according to the *Times*' Report) represented as having been issued for the first time, "within the last six weeks," formed part of an Amended Prohibitory Order which had been issued in the autumn of 1840?

I now proceed to the excepted cases (still adhering to the *Times*' Report), which Sir James enumerated, one by one, commenting upon some of them as he passed along, evidently with a view to effect. The Right Hon. Barrow thus proceeded:—

"First, where such person shall require relief in consequence of sickness or urgent necessity."

"Secondly, where such person requires relief on account of any sickness, accident, or bodily or mental infirmity affecting such person, or any of his or her family." Here was a very wide limit opened in our-door relief, certainly, in the case of "sickness" or any other "urgent necessity." (Hear.)

"Thirdly, where such person requires relief for defraying the burial expense of any part of his family."

"Fourthly, where such person, being a widow, shall be in the first six months of her widowhood, *even if childless*." [The words "even if childless," appear to be Sir James's gloss.]*

He begged the House to observe how this was extended.—Fifthly, in case such person, being a widow, shall have a legitimate child or children dependent upon her, &c. &c. In that case, the widow shall, *without stint or limit*, receive relief out of the workhouse, and in her own home. (Hear.)

"Sixthly, when such person shall be confined in any goal or place of safe custody." This form was adopted in consequence of words in the original act referring to the rule which should be adopted towards members of a family in the absence of the head; and thus a door was opened for the relief of the wife and children in their own homes. (Hear, hear.)

* The *Herald* gives this clause rather more at length.—"4. In all cases where such relief shall be required by a widow within the six months next ensuing upon her widowhood, or for the first six months next ensuing upon the delivery in childbed of such widow." This is, probably, Sir James's amplification of the order. The *Times* has given the precise words of the official Circular; with the addition of the words, "even if childless."

† The *et cetera*, in this last paragraph, should have been filled out with the following words, copied from the Amended Prohibitory Order: "and incapable of earning his, her, or their livelihood, and no illegitimate child born after the commencement of her widowhood." The *stanzas* beginning "then, in that case," is Sir James's explanatory addition.—The words "without stint or limit," deserve particular notice. They also form part of the *gloss* which the House Summary thought proper to put upon this part of the Amended Prohibitory Order. To me, they appear very important, as showing the *colouring* and complexion which he endeavoured to give to the order. How he "touched it up" with a view to greater effect. I therefore quote the *Herald's* report of this, the fifth relaxation, entire. It shows that the words, "without stint or limit," were used.—"5. In all cases where such widow shall have a legitimate child (and no illegitimate child), which shall be incapable of work, the administration of out-door relief shall continue without stint or limit of time, during the incapacity of the child."

“ ‘ Lastly, where relief was required by the wife and child, or children, of any able-bodied man who shall be in the service of Her Majesty, as a soldier or sailor.’ ”

“ Now, these were, assuredly, most important relaxations, as he stated, in the stringency of the rule as laid down originally. (Hear, hear.) ”

It was necessary to go thus, step by step, along with Sir James Graham, that my readers might be able fully to appreciate the importance of relaxations which were to form an epoch in New Poor Law transactions; and allay the impatience of the public until the next assembling of Parliament.

The *second* of the two questions which were suggested in the early part of this paper, has reference to an “ Instructional Letter as to Amended Prohibitory Order,” which, from the first of its emission, had accompanied that order, and rendered it little better than a bit of mere waste paper. It forms the *second part* of No. 1, Appendix A., in the Commissioners’ Seventh Annual Report. Adverting to the fifth exception or relaxation, which I request my readers to re-peruse, as given above, the Commissioners, in their first “ Instructional Letter,” say,—

“ The exception in favour of widows with children, so far as it relates to able-bodied widows in employment, is one respecting which the Commissioners themselves ENTERTAIN STRONG DOUBTS, and they [Lefevre, Nicholls, and Lewis] request that the Guardians will exercise *great circumspection* in applying it in practice.”

Now, be it known to all whom it may concern, that up to this hour, the “ Instructional Letter” which accompanied the “ Amended Prohibitory Order” which was issued in the autumn of 1840, remains *unrecalled*. Is Sir James Graham, or is he not, aware of the fact, that that “ Instructional Letter,” in which (using once more the words of the *Times*) “ the Guardians are told, as plainly as words can convey a meaning, that this particular relaxation is meant only to be talked about, but not to be acted upon,” is not only unrecalled, but that it has been followed up by another of precisely similar import, though worded with a greater degree of caution (they are sly rogues, these Commissioners!) in which, *waiving all doubts about the matter*, they say: “ The exception of widows with children,” &c., “ is one respecting which the Guardians ought to *exercise great circumspection* in applying it *in practice*’ And this is the particular relaxation of all others, which the Home Secretary accompanied with his own elaborate gloss and comment, to the effect that “ then, in that case, a widow should, WITHOUT STINT OR LIMIT, receive relief *out* of the workhouse, and *in* her own house.”

So anxious and determined am I to make this subject plain and intelligible to the humblest of my readers, that I will here recapitulate (availing myself of double columns) the facts of the case, and refer again to the documents.

EXTRACT from “ Amended Prohibitory Order,” issued in the autumn of 1840, and accompanied by an “ Instructional Letter,” dated August, 1840. The following is one of the principal “ relaxations,” or excepted cases:—

Exception 5. “ Where such person shall be a widow, and have a legitimate child or legitimate children dependent upon her, and incapable of earning his, her, or their livelihood, and an illegitimate child born after the commencement of her widowhood.”

EXTRACT from an “ Instructional Letter as to Amended Prohibitory Order,” dated August, 1840, and which accompanied, and was intended to nullify the fifth relaxation (printed in the left-hand column of this page):—

Exception 5. “ The exception in favour of widows with children, so far as it relates to able-bodied widows in employment, is one respecting which the Commissioners themselves ENTERTAIN STRONG DOUBTS, and they request that the Guardians will exercise *great circumspection* in applying it in practice.” [Dated August, 1840.]

The "General Prohibitory Order" of the Poor Law Commissioners, bearing date Aug. 2, 1841, is, in the main (in all its essential clauses), nothing more than A REPRINT of the "Amended Prohibitory Order," issued about twelve months before. The relaxations which Sir James Graham quoted from this last document, as novelties—every one of them, including this "fifth relaxation"—formed part of the old stale order, which, in the most important particular, had remained a dead letter, having been nullified by the "Instructional Letter," dated August, 1840; and which, to make the whole clear and intelligible to my readers, to the very utmost of my power, I have had printed in Italics, in the right-hand column:—

EXTRACT from the new Prohibitory Order, re-printed under the new title of a *General Prohibitory Order*, and with date, Aug. 2, 1841. Though this extract is precisely the same as the one just given, I here repeat it for greater distinctness:—

Exception 3. "Where such person shall be a widow, and have a legitimate child or legitimate children dependent upon her, and incapable of earning his, her, or their livelihood, and no illegitimate child born after the commencement of her widowhood."

EXTRACT from "Instructional Letter," issued to accompany the "General Prohibitory Order" referred to in the left-hand column of this page, as dated August 2, 1841; this nullifying letter being dated on the same day, viz. 2 August, 1841:—

Exception 3.—"The exception of widows with children, so far as it relates to able-bodied widows in employment, is one respecting which the Guardians ought to exercise great circumspection, in applying it in practice."

Of these neutralizing passages in the two "Instructional Letters" (see the extracts in right-hand column), Sir James Graham kept the House of Commons in total ignorance; and the impression he left, and intended to leave, upon the public mind, was, that the order issued on the 2nd of August, 1841, with its series of relaxations, was the *first* order of the kind; that it had never gone forth until within "six weeks" of the time at which he spoke, and was then put forth *ingenuously*, and in real deference to public opinion. We have here a specimen of consummate tact and skill in the noble art of "thimble-riggery," by practised and experienced hands. Was Sir James himself the dupe or the adept? Plain answers to the two questions started at the commencement of this paper, will enable the public to come to a safe conclusion on that most important point.

And now, Sir, I have completed the task I had assigned myself. The only *unofficial* documents to which I have referred, have been the public journals; the *Times*, more especially. As I have been most anxious, in the course of this inquiry, to do full justice to Sir James, I have studiously compared all the passages which I have had occasion to quote from that paper with the *Herald*, the *Chronicle*, and the *Post*. If I could have got at higher authority, I would gladly have done so; but I am not aware that any authorized report of the speech in question has issued from the press.

I have, for some time past, made no secret of my opinion, that Sir James Graham, by his adhesion to the principle of the New Poor Law—to which he has told us he is conscientiously pledged, and from which he will not recede,—has inflicted a very serious injury upon Sir Robert Peel's Government. I "conscientiously," if Sir James will allow me the use of the word—I conscientiously am pledged to resist the principle of the New Poor Law by every lawful and constitutional means in my power. I, in my conscience, believe that no govern-

ment in this country can be stable, which is founded upon Malthusian principles; those principles upon which not only Lord Brougham and Vaux, but the biographer of Malthus himself, tells us that Bill is founded. That is *my* creed. I believe that the laws of Malthus, and the laws of God, cannot stand together. The "house" will be "a house divided against itself," and such a house (I have the authority of divine inspiration for saying it) must eventually fall; its doom is inevitable. "If Jehovah be God, serve *Him*; but if Baal, serve *Him*." I have laid the two authorities, the Book of Jehovah, and the Book of Malthus, side by side again and again. I have compared them; I have pondered over them; and I have found their principles to be at variance, to be utterly incompatible. They cannot *both* be paramount in the same breast. One or other set of principles must have the supremacy.

Christianity, in spite of all the fostering which infidelity has had in high places, has still a far stronger hold upon the people of this country, than some of our statesmen are aware. And woe will be to that government, call it by what party name you please, which tramples under foot, or casts aside as *obsolete* God's Book. Upon the proudest edifice such statesmen may attempt to rear, there will soon be visible to the eyes of the whole world, "Ichabod,—the glory is departed!" I wish, therefore, to put my readers upon their guard in reference to the particular points to which I have directed their attention in this paper. I pray them dispassionately to investigate and judge for themselves. *I have a bias*: there is no doubt of it. On public grounds, and for reasons of which I make no concealment, I have a fear of Sir James Graham. Let my readers, then, retrace every step in the progress of my argument; and see that I do him no injustice. If I mistake not, I have, at least, established a *case for inquiry*. If Sir James can satisfactorily answer the questions I have propounded, then the criminality will rest upon the heads of the Commissioners only:—but if it should, unhappily, *not* be in his power to answer them satisfactorily, then his claims to a share in the confidence of his Royal Mistress and the country, will be for ever annihilated.

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—My attention has been very opportunely drawn to a letter of a correspondent of the *Times* newspaper: Mr. Charles Edward Lefroy, of Westham, Basingstoke. That person, writing so late as the 22nd ult., says: "I cannot find that Sir James Graham's assertion, as quoted by you, of a relaxation in favour of widows, is acted upon at all in this large Union" [meaning the Basingstoke Union.]

The inquiry into the Sevenoaks Union gives a further most alarming corroboration, that my belief is but too well founded, that the Commissioners' "Instructional Letter," have had the effect which no one can doubt they were intended to produce; and that those functionaries have been "blowing hot and cold" at the same time, *to some purpose*. I look forward to mendicity and starvation, during the present winter, upon a far more extensive scale than this country has witnessed for many a day. I observe that the London Mendicity Society has already sounded an alarm. The applications to the office in Red Lion Square, are staid, to be TREBLE what the Society has experienced at similar seasons, in any former year. That tortuous, that pettifogging, that iniquitous system, which it has been my endeavour to expose on this occasion, must be abandoned—abandoned instantly—or Sir Robert Peel's Cabinet will go to pieces "in an hour when he looks not for it." If, instead of building upon the Rock of Truth, he should be so infatuated as to build upon the sands of Infidelity and Malthusianism, to his Government will soon be applicable those emphatic words of the greatest of all Teachers: "The rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell: and great was the fall thereof."—R.O.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.,

Of Riddlesworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet.

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that in harvest, must be first sower of the seeds."

"He shall judge the poor of the people; He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

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LONDON, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1841.

PRICE 2d.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—I think that it was Lord Stanley who accused the Whig Government of "thimble-riggery," and who gave that as one reason why he and Sir James Graham withdrew from *their* councils.

It was to have been expected that any one who was so disgraced with the craftiness of his *quondam* friends, would be careful not to play any of *their* tricks amongst his new associates.

In my last letter, I faithfully described the conduct of Sir James Graham with reference to a most important subject. That he endeavoured to convince the House of Commons, that some "extremely stringent rules of the Poor Law Commissioners" had been very recently "relaxed," whilst he kept the House in entire ignorance of the "instructions" appended to those relaxations, is evident. If there be any meaning in Sir James's speech, it is this,—the minister, finding, from the spirited speech of Mr. Ferrand, that there was likely to be a very strong party on his own side, who were resolutely determined to oppose the New Poor Law, in order to secure their votes, felt it necessary to do something to quiet the apprehensions of his friends, and quench the zeal of his untrammelled supporters, by convincing them that there was no need to be alarmed, seeing that the three Commissioners had already begun to relent, and that "relaxations of the extreme stringency of former rules" were *recently*, "properly" and "judiciously" granted, in deference to public opinion, so that there could seem be no harm in continuing the Commissioners six months longer. Whether his conduct on that occasion was the result of simplicity or cunning, the Home Secretary will, I hope, very soon be required to prove. It is, however, certain, that in either case, his competency to fill even a subordinate office can no longer remain matter of doubt.

I am not aware that I ever felt more disgust than when I perused that speech of Sir James Graham. Only conceive a minister of the Crown becoming the apologist of three men, who, by his own showing, had been guilty of "STANDING, TO AN IMMENSE EXTENT, ONE OF THE MOST ESSENTIAL PROVISIONS IN THE ORIGINAL ENACTMENT!" These culprits, for in no other character can I con-

sent to consider them, having espied the little cloud "no bigger than a man's hand," the majority of *one*, had had the sagacity, the *instinct*, or whatever you please to call it, to know that it betokened a coming tempest, and, as experienced mariners, they had trimmed their bark accordingly. To think of a minister of the Crown boasting before the British senate, that, after seven years of despotic rule and gross evasion of the very act which created them, "the Poor Law Commissioners had shown a disposition [mark the words!] to bring their conduct directly under the controul and into conformity with the spirit of that Act!"—What! has the Legislature of Great Britain allowed, during all this time (a period of seven long years), three as insignificant and obscure men as may be met with in a summer's day,—men whose names would scarcely have been heard of beyond the circle of their own firesides, if they had not been disciples of that empyric, Malthus, that dexterous dealer *in the romance of Statistics*, as a Frenchman happily describes such pretenders to science—has the Legislature of Great Britain allowed three nondescripts, bearing the cognomens of Lefevre, Nicholls, and Lewis, systematically to trifle with the spirit of an Act of Parliament, and exercise upon it all the ingenuity and special pleading of Old Bailey lawyers? Nay, such is the license allowed to these men, that even at last, it is not the Legislature which interferes to check or controul them in the remotest degree, but it is left to *them*, the wrong-doers, (how they must laugh in their sleeves!) "to bring their 'own' conduct under the controul, and into conformity with the spirit, of that act." Why, old Comus was a fool to these enchanters, when he said,

"Thus I hurl my spells into the dusky air,
Of power to cheat the mind with blear illusion."

The Home Secretary is under their spell, and he is powerless.

The Knight of Netherby, with an apparent frankness, which not even Joseph Surface himself could have surpassed, admits that the Commissioners, for whom he had just claimed a limited confidence, (as they would be checked and controlled hereafter by the Executive Government,) have been bad boys; very bad boys. But before he described their offence, which he immediately did, in terms which, taken alone, designated conduct which loudly calls for impeachment and disgraceful dismissal from their appointments, the tender-hearted knight interceded for them, as it were, intimating, that after all, they are only chargeable with "errors of judgment," forsooth,—

"Fallible man
Is still found fallible, however wise!"

Paragons of wisdom these Commissioners undoubtedly are; for if they were not, the Legislature, in the face of all the objections which that class of men that we have been accustomed to call "constitutional lawyers" have raised to their appointment, would never have felt itself justified in delegating to them powers more than regal. It is, indeed, humiliating to witness a statesman thus "shifting the peas" for three political swindlers, and then, with a great parade about what "his sense of duty had imposed upon him," and reiterating his declaration that he would give no pledge for the future conduct of the Executive Government,

actually attempting to obtain credit with the House—on what account will my readers suppose?—Why on this; that “those powers which were given by the Act of Parliament [and which, on his own admissions, had been so grossly abused] were not sought then to be altered *in the least degree*,” powers all but omnipotent; and with which, in the only particular in which they were not so, these “arrogant men” (thanks to Lord Granville Somerset for teaching me that word,) had so dealt with the exception, as virtually to set at defiance the intentions of the Legislature, Queen, Lords, and Commons. A modest disclaimer indeed! “he did not ask for any alteration of that law, but only [only!] for the *continuance* of the controlling power vested in the commission by that law,” &c. &c. A cool request, this, for a constitutional minister! What honourable members might feel under such an infliction, I know not. Disgust, unutterable disgust, *overcomes* me, when I see a high official so mean, so truckling.

I am an old-fashioned Englishman—I have not been used to recognize a power above the Legislature. The laws of England were not wont to be the playthings of a triumvirate. Even in my private intercourse, my blood boils when I hear any one say that the Poor Law Commissioners are “relaxing,” “relenting,” “allowing,” “sanctioning,” “permitting,” and talking of their power to make and unmake the laws of England! It is so unlike the England of former days. I involuntarily ask, who are these intruders? On what authority do they claim my allegiance? The spirit of old England answers—They are usurpers!

I am disgusted to know that the rate-payers of England have so long submitted to ask *three strangers* if they may give their old neighbours, or servants, or tenants—Sally This, and Billy That—a trifle of their own money; or rather, of money which they hold in trust for those poor individuals? or, whether they shall imprison and poison them, because they are poor? or, leave them to rob, or to “die of the want of the common necessaries of life?” or, force them, in despair, to commit murder and suicide? I cannot express the indignation which I feel—indignation almost amounting to revenge—when I know that the rate-payers of England have consented to give to each of these heartless, cold-blooded men, 2000*l.* a-year, to teach how to poison, or smother, or fashish, or drive to desperation, their fellow subjects, by wholesale! Sir, I do not exaggerate. The daily records of passing events, now furnish incontestible proofs of the truth of what I assert:—verily, blood-guiltiness is upon this wicked land! If, indeed, the Poor Law Amendment Act be law, then does the law of Christian England sanction wholesale robbery and “cold, slow, sly murder!”

Sir, it is time to speak out, else the very stones will rise up as witnesses against me. Hear what that cautious, prudent, circumspect weekly organ of the Wesleyan Methodists, the *Watchman*, says of these murderous proceedings:

“We fear it will turn out, on full inquiry into the defects and vices of the system, that the niggard economy that has been practised in the workhouse dietary, in many instances, has *SLAIN ITS THOUSANDS, and want of space ITS TENS OF THOUSANDS!*”

The writers in that journal are not hot-brained enthusiasts; they are calm, reflecting persons, who know well what they are doing, and fear not to speak the truth. But, shame on the Conservative Government, when these wholesale murders are to be inquired into, the very men who have planned, contrived, and

executed these crimes, (as a proof of the "well-working of the New Poor Law,") are appointed their own judges, or sit as jurymen.

Truly, Sir, I had hoped better things would have been the result of the exertions of those, "who, from an earnest and hearty sympathy with the better feelings of the humbler classes of society, placed the present ministers in office."

But to return. In my last, I had no room to express how keenly I felt at the official conduct of the Home Secretary. I would now give vent to my feelings as a Briton, and express, as far as words will enable me, the indescribable disgust which I always feel when I am driven upon a discussion in which the discretionary powers of any set of men to play fast and loose with the laws of England are forced upon my attention.

My bosom is ready to burst with the indignation, the unutterable scorn and contempt, which I feel at the spectacle of a British senator, a statesman, a minister of the Queen of England, in the British senate, degrading himself and his high office, by becoming a palliator and apologist of such men and of such a system—a system so unconstitutional, so arbitrary, so despotic, that if, at such doings, the bones of the immortal ALFRED were to start from the tomb in which they were interred, I should hardly be amazed:—a minister of the Crown of England congratulating the senate and the country, that three men—three such men—had kindly, humanely, and considerately, consented "to relax the extreme stringency" of our laws—in plain terms, the accursed tyranny of that yoke under which, for well nigh eight years, their High Mightinesses had kept the necks of sixteen millions of the descendants of a British, Saxon, and Norman ancestry! If there be not another Englishman to protest, I will, against such an impudent assumption of power! Yes, Sir; and if the spirit of England is not departed, I shall not in vain demand the impeachment of any minister of the Crown who assists and maintains this unconstitutional tyranny!

It may be, that these three men, being frightened by the angry feelings which their brutality had created in the public mind, were forced "to relax the extreme stringency of their orders:" still, as an Englishman, I protest against any three human beings having the power, *under any circumstances*, to change the laws which I am required to respect and obey.

Our old laws were universally respected, and our judges were always wont to put "the most liberal construction" on them. I demand, then, in the name of the Constitution of England, on what authority these three despots have dared of their own will, as Sir James Graham expresses it, "TO EVADE, TO AN IMMENSE EXTENT, ONE OF THE MOST ESSENTIAL PROVISIONS IN THE ORIGINAL ENACTMENT," thus assuming the power to make the laws of England "extremely stringent," and then "relaxing" them at their pleasure? If these Commissioners show so little respect to the law, how can others be expected to obey *their* edicts?

Think again of a minister of the Crown palliating, in Parliament, the unconstitutional and arbitrary powers and conduct of any officials!

For the present, I leave this subject, and turn to a letter which a very dear kind friend of mine has addressed to Sir Robert Peel. I would earnestly entreat

all clergymen and magistrates to read the following with care, and mark well its contents. I rejoice that the son of a Prime Minister has honoured me, by permitting the insertion of this letter in the *Fleet Papers*. Its contents are, at this period, of the utmost importance, and will command themselves to the consciences of all those who respect the clergy and the magistracy, and who wish that they should be esteemed and honoured by the people. It is, indeed, true, that the New Poor Law is not more surely levelled against the rights of the poor, than it is calculated to destroy the influence of the clergy and the magistracy. The following is the excellent letter to which I have alluded:—

“ *To the Rt. Hon. Sir RICHARD PEEL, Bart., First Lord of the Treasury, &c. &c.*

“ REFLECTIONS ON THE NEW POOR LAW.

“ In as much as the Psalmist, speaking of the Almighty, the King of Kings, saith,—

‘ But there is mercy with Thee, therefore Thou shalt be feared;’ so, necessity requires, that for the establishing of the authority of temporal Sovereigns, their thrones should be the fountains both of justice and of mercy; and it follows, as a natural corollary, from this principle, that all the channels through which the kingly power is administered, should, in their several degrees, dispense the same properties of justice and mercy, and be endued with power alike to chastise the evil, and to protect the innocent among the people. Otherwise, it is to be feared, that the king’s officers, and the kingly authority vested in them, must become hateful, and fall into contempt.

“ Now, under the Old Poor Law, the magistrates had the power both to punish the delinquent, and to protect the deserving but unfortunate, by ordering suitable relief to be afforded to them; and, certainly, under the old system, the readiness of the people to obey the civil authorities, and the easy submission of large bodies to the enforcement of the law, even by one parish constable, was a characteristic feature of the excellence and of the stability of our former mixed government, and often excited the surprise and admiration of persons from foreign nations.

“ But under the New Poor Law, our magistrates are deprived, in a great measure, of the power they formerly possessed to protect and to befriend the people. They have no authority, except as ex officio members of the Board of Guardians; the exercise of their interference, under those circumstances, must always be a question of considerable delicacy; and even if they interfere, they are liable to be outvoted. To use the words of a barrister, commenting upon this law, after mentioning guardians, overseers, and paid officers, under the head of Justices of the Peace, he says,—‘ *I cannot class Justices of the Peace among the officers appointed for the management of the poor.*’ It cannot be expected, then, that the magistrates can have the same influence over the populace which they formerly possessed; and it is not surprising if the Government had it necessary to introduce, throughout the rural districts, a new and useless system of police, which are despotic in character, and foreign to our habits and institutions—that *Honourable* should be expounded by *Force*.

“ That the ‘ Liberal,’ that is, the infidel and revolutionary party in this country, who have no attachment to our ancient institutions, but who desire rather to overturn them, and to remodel them in any manner that may further their speculative opinions—that they who have openly expressed a desire to take away from the aristocracy and the gentry the influence and consideration they have hitherto derived from administering the laws in the several counties, and to substitute paid magistrates in their stead—that those writings, and that portion of the middle classes who support them, and who would arrogate to themselves that consequence which belongs properly to the aristocracy and gentry, should delight in and uphold a law, that, by bringing the magistracy into disrepute, tends to further their views, by diminishing the usefulness of that magistracy, and also by rendering them contemptible—is not, I consider, surprising, but the natural and necessary result at which they aim: but I conceive it behoves those who are of the Conservative party, and who possess a reverence and an attachment for our ancient institutions, so much the more to consider well what they are about, and what is the too probable tendency of this law, and to open their eyes in due season.

“ The abuse of their power by the magistracy, and the laziness with which they enjoyed relief,

was pretended as a necessity for depriving them of their protective power altogether. There may be a saving clause in respect of cases of utter destitution, in enforcing which, the magistrates even of the metropolis have met with much slight evasion and opposition; but, practically, this is the case. Now, I would remark, generally, that it is dangerous to meddle with the accustomed channels of power in the country—and certainly to so great an extent as by the New Poor Law;—next, I would question whether the abuse of this power was general, or the entire abrogation of it necessary; and whether a wise legislature would not have allowed the civil government to run in its former course, introducing a local or a central court of appeal from the decision of the magistrates, both for the overseers of the poor and for the paupers, and this in conformity with our whole system of jurisprudence.

“That the Board of Guardians is not such a board of appeal, is evident, inasmuch as they *are the representatives of the rate-payers*; and under the old law, the power of the magistrates was exercised to counteract the injustice arising from the want of charity and proper liberality of the rate-payers, and of their representatives, the overseers; and although in several unions, by gentlemen and men of liberal education and feelings being elected as guardians, the law may be administered mercifully, *yet this is not the case throughout*; sometimes it is effected *by a complete disregard of the orders issued from Somerset House*; and in some unions, on the contrary, even the provisions of the orders which are in favour of the poor are eluded, and the poor do not obtain the protection provided by law. But supposing, practically, all unions did happen to be administered by liberal men, *yet this would be no excuse to a legislature, if they did not foresee, and provide against the contrary possibility*. Men of integrity could not be satisfied to leave so important a consideration to ‘chance.’ Chance, really there is none—but God cannot be mocked with impunity; and if mankind will not be fellow-workers with His providence, HE WILL ALLOW OF AND SUPERINDUCE MISRULE, TO THEIR DISTRESS AND CONFUSION.

“I look upon the New Poor Law as a law of the most revolutionary tendency that has yet been passed in these days; and for that reason, whilst I do not feel surprised at, but consider it as the proper offspring of a ‘liberal’ Government, supported by the majority of the middle orders—that is, by new men—I am, day by day, more astonished at the blindness of statesmen, and of their followers—of the monarchical, of the Church, and of the Conservative party, conceiving it to be their duty to pledge themselves to support it.

“At the same time that the magisterial power has been weakened, that a slight has been passed upon the gentry, and that the subject has been deprived of that protection which so flowed to them from the Crown, the clergy, which is, in my opinion, of far more importance, have been completely set aside and despised. They are not even *ex officio* guardians, and they, whose advice about the distribution of any public relief ought to be first attended to, *have, unless they are casually elected guardians, no title to any vote whatever*. THIS CANNOT BE RIGHT. Let it not be supposed, that I confound the administering of charitable contributions with what is called legal relief—I mean, that a State, pretending to be founded on Christian principles, will, if sincere, combine the clerical with the civil dispensation co-ordinately, in all measures such as this, where civil and moral regulations are required to go hand in hand. If it be a question, whether the ministers of religion are enlightened enough for their situation, that question ought to be frankly met, and, if it be proved they are not so, the proper remedy should be applied. As it is, at the same time that the poor are deprived of civil protection, they are also deprived of the spiritual protection of their pastors, and of that merciful protection which must always, more or less, accompany the recognized exercise of the influence of a Christian ministry. That this influence may still be exerted indirectly, is true; but it does not appear much to be so, and it seems to me degrading to the Church, and to the office of minister, that his constant interference is not sanctioned by law.

“Under the present state of things, the ministers of parishes may have less influence in the relief and spiritual consolation of their pauper parishioners, than Dissenters or Dissenting Ministers, or Infidel or Papist guardians, residing in the same. (Perhaps there are among them men who have as little interest as they have influence, and it may be convenient for our statesmen to encourage and co-operate with such a state of apathy; if so, it is time for those who have better principles to inquire how this ministry are appointed.) The ministers may be rejected as guardians, and Dissenters or enemies to their faith elected. Nay, the whole Board of Guardians, or the whole of the guardians of a parish, may be composed of Dissenters or enemies to the national church. These

Boards have the power to elect or to discharge the chaplain; and where there are chaplains to the Unions, the ministers of parishes can claim no right to enter—they are *only admitted on sufferance*. The Church, under this law, is certainly not in a proper position; that it is not so, is evident from the events that are continually taking place in workhouses, from various regulations therein tending to demoralize the juvenile inmates in them, and from the slight put upon one of the chief ordinances of the Church, and on the Word of the Gospel on which it is founded—a slight for which it is degrading that the formation of a few chaplaincies should be accepted as a compensation.

“ Surely, that law deserves to be looked upon with suspicion, and may be justly styled a revolutionary law, whereby the magistrates are rendered contemptible, being deprived of their protective power, and consequently of their influence as guardians of the public peace; and whereby the pastors of the people are entirely passed over, and made subordinate to mixed Boards of Infidels, Roman Catholics, or Dissenters—at any rate, to boards of the laity; whereby also these ministers, if they take any part in the execution of the law at all, are obliged to sanction indecent regulations, and a departure from the Word of the Gospel and from the ordinances of the Church, whose doctrines they preach. Surely, not only are they, as citizens and as ministers, but with them their religion is rendered an object of suspicion and of contempt; and can those who desire a revolution in the State desire better?—can anything serve their ends better than such a revolution in opinion? Have not those who have supported this law, been evidently sowing the seeds of disaffection, and of ulterior destruction of the framework and of the very principles of society: some unwittingly, but others, no doubt, wittingly?

“ And not only so, but at the same time, *the accustomed channels of relief, and of distributing the poor-rates, the office of overseer, has been restrained*—the boundaries of parishes have been enlarged—the people are now classed in enormous unions—their attachment to neighbourhood and to place—to the soil on which their infant steps were first established—where their parents and forefathers worked and sported—are cruelly torn asunder. Nay, they are taught, under the administration of this law, a new philosophy with regard even to social and moral ties. They are to imbibe the sophistical absurdities of the French school, and become citizens of the world. Their views are to be enlarged, whilst their bodies are thrown into a blank prison. What law can be more revolutionary than one that thus wars with prejudices, with principles, and with affections—that overthrows all settled respects and reverences—that diminishes or casts down all accustomed powers, offices, and privileges; and, at the same time, spreads far and wide misery and discontent, such misery as was never known before,—that fathers should murder their own children—that mothers should throw from their withered bosoms their sucking babes, into the cold, cold wave;—by which the ministers of Divine Grace are shorn of their glory—by which a magistracy, supinely submitting to a betrayal of the Sovereign’s authority, are curtailed in their power—and by which the officers of the people are thrown into disrepute.

“ Sir, as you are one of those statesmen and legislators who have been duped into fancying—for you cannot believe—that this law will improve the moral condition of the people, or whose sincerity and integrity I must otherwise—which I am loath to do—call in question, I have the honour of addressing these reflections to you. I would ask you, Sir, are you, too, one of the French school who pretend that patriotism can flourish, when the links by which a man’s feelings are bound to his country, his attachment to home and to neighbourhood are severed, and when his reverence and his gratitude to the laws and establishments under which he has been protected are overthrown? Can you suppose that obedience will be rendered more secure, and behaviour be improved, by the destruction of natural affections, and by disrespect to conjugal rites? Or what is that moral improvement, the seeds of which you are sowing, and which you expect future governments to water, in the bosoms of those who are separated in infancy from their parents—who are made to curse the hour in which they were born, and to rejoice when their father dies; and who, when they grow up, must mistrust their spiritual teachers, and hold in doubt the principles of their religion?

“ I have the honour to be, Sir,

“ Your obedient, humble servant,

“ JOHN PERCEVAL.”

I have not been more surprised at any event, than that one single magistrate or clergyman should be found to support a law which so much insults and de-

grades their "orders." I hope, most fervently, that the perusal of the foregoing may convince them and the Premier, that it is impossible to maintain the authority of the Poor Law Commissioners, and at the same time to retain in their ancient positions the established orders of society. The Constitution of England cannot make room for such persons as the Poor Law Commissioners to lord it over the clergy and the magistracy; the occupations of the former are totally irreconcilable with the existence of the latter. Yes, Sir, time will prove to the most firm friends of the New Poor Law, that, if it is to continue "part and parcel of the laws of England," our Institutions must be re-modelled, our Constitution must be altered, and our Religion must be changed!

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—I have hoped, for many weeks, to have the pleasure of furnishing you with the list of tokens of friendship which I have received while I have been your prisoner; I allude to such as I have not noticed before in the *Fleet Papers*. Matters of public concernment have, hitherto, occupied my space, and deprived me of that pleasure; I find it useless to wait for an opportunity of naming all these offerings in one letter. I have therefore resolved to occupy a page or two when I can spare room, until I have overtaken the kindness and bounty of my dear friends, to all of whom I beg to return my most grateful and heartfelt thanks. Never was there a man more comforted by friends! Ah! Sir, you did well to send me to prison! It is *here* that we learn to know and feel what *Friendship* means! See how God has moved the hearts of my friends to aid and comfort me! I have often laid before you your own rent-roll; read now a part of mine, the remainder shall follow when I can find space.

- April 15th—Mr. Torras, Printer, London, gave me four pounds of Spanish Chocolate. Two friends, from Yorkshire, brought me a ham and a Wiltshire cheese, and desired me,—If I should be in want of five or ten pounds, to write to them for it.
- 16th—An Essex Clergyman sent me twenty new laid eggs. My lamented friend, Condy, gave me his portrait.
- 17th—Two unknown Hertfordshire friends adorned my windows with two choice plants.
- 21st—A very kind aristocratic friend left a box of cigars in my cell. The wife of a fellow-prisoner presented me with an Indian work-box and a plate of shrimps.
- 22nd—My kind, though unknown friend, Joseph Oughton, Coventry, sent a ribbon for my wife and another for my child.
- 23rd—Chemery gave me a lock of poor Edwards's hair!
- 24th—An author sent me one volume. A very dear friend brought me a pot of tongue. In all human probability I should not have known *that* friend, if I had never known *the Fleet*: and truly, imprisonment for any length of time is well repaid, by the friendship of that man.
- 25th—A prisoner gave me a piece of Yorkshire "Parkin."—I am very fond of *Yorkshire* fare! A few kind operatives in Leeds sent me, by John Flockton, 1*l.* 1*1s.*

If I can find room, you shall have a copy of Flockton's letter in my next, also with the continuation of my "Rent-Roll."—R.O.

ERRATUM:—Last number (50), page 398, left-hand column, last line but one, for *an illegitimate child*, read *no illegitimate child*.

THE FLEET PAPERS;

Being Letters to

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.,

Of Riddleworth, in the County of Norfolk;

FROM

RICHARD OASTLER,

His Prisoner in the Fleet,

WITH OCCASIONAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM FRIENDS.

"The Altar, the Throne, and the Cottage."—"Property has its duties, as well as its rights."

"The Husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits."

"He shall judge the poor of the people, He shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor."

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LONDON, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1841.

PRICE 2s.

THOMAS THORNHILL, Esq.

The Fleet Prison.

SIR,—I think I am, indeed I really think that I am the happiest man alive. My little bark has safely finished her first cruise. I have "spoken with" many friends—I have witnessed the flight of my foes—I have suffered no damage on the voyage. I have driven against no rocks—shoals have not impeded my course—I have kept good reckonings—I have had fair winds—my track has ever been onward, and, if a little mist just now obscures me from my friends, the morning's sun will dispel it. I shall then be seen with British pendant and local streamers waving, safely moored under the rock of the Constitution, ready for another cruise against the foes of THE ALTAR, THE THRONE, AND THE COTTAGE. Truly, I am thankful. Here, I will raise my *Ebenzer*, for it is God who has helped me!

I told you, when I set sail, that "you had made a great mistake;" you have not yet discovered it, though others have. I said, that "your hope to bury my principles would fail," and "time would prove to you, that Truth is immortal, that it would burst the barriers of this tomb." I have kept the promise which I made to you when I launched my little *Flectera*. I have "assisted to release you (the aristocracy), as well as the paupers of England, from the unconstitutional grasp of the Poor Law Commissioners." I have waged a steady war against "the proud, blaspheming, modern Gollah, who so impiously defies the armies of the living God," and, "guided by His unerring hand, I have aided in bringing down the impious monster to the dust." I see him bend and crouch already, and soon the shout of victory will be heard through all the length and breadth of this, our native land. The firm basis of the Constitution I have asserted, against the muddy and slippery foundation of Liberalism. I have shown, that under the shelter of the Constitution, all may repose in safety,—that, fed by her nutriment, plenty will be found for every rank; that she is no niggard to her sons, but freely offers space and food for all. I am well pleased with my success; and, after God, I am thankful to those friends whom He has given to me. They rank amongst peers and peasants,—they are to be found in the factories and the bastiles,—they occupy the hall

of our universities, and the benches of our Sunday schools—they traffic on the royal and the stock exchanges, and in all other marts, down to that at Fixby, where cabbages are bought and sold in your gardens—they are depositors of “thousands” in the Bank of England, and of pence in the Savings’ Banks—they dwell in royal and episcopal palaces, and find their homes in humble cottages,—so numerous and so diversified are my friends. They have all British ears and British hearts; each will understand me when I speak the words of gratitude, and say to one and all—I THANK YOU!

But how shall I express the feelings which well nigh overpower me, when I am touched by the friendship of those so kind, so numerous, who have honoured my little venture with their kindly notice in the press? Metropolitan and provincial of all parties, in the four divisions of the British Isles, nay more, my friends extend beyond the limits of these islands, the *Fleet Papers* have, as well, obtained the flattering observation of the Continental periodicals—how can I adequately convey to such a world of friends, the gratitude which I feel? I wish that I could speak to my literary friends in terms befitting them; but, I am a plain, blunt, unlearned Englishman—to them, as to my other friends, I must pour out my heart-felt gratitude in words, though few, yet full of meaning, and say to them, as to the rest—I THANK YOU!

I cannot, on this happy day, a day which once I spent so merrily with you and yours at Riddlesworth, refuse the leading of my heart, and, though not for your *intention*, yet for your *deed*, repeat the words again—I THANK YOU!

To one and all of my kind friends, no less to you, right heartily, I wish “a merry Christmas, and a happy new year!”

Oh, what a year of mercy has this one been to me, your prisoner! In this prison I have found the presence of my God—His arm has sustained, His bounty has provided for me—His Holy Spirit has been my comfort and my guide; peace and plenty have been present in my dwelling and on my board. A year so happy, I have never spent before. The feeble frame of my dear Mary, has sustained your persecution without damage; my daughter’s cheerful countenance has not been saddened by affliction. My health, which was so shaken in your service, has been renewed by your imprisonment. With us, all is well. Our friends have thickened round us, our lack is only *one*, besides yourself; but many new ones fill that gap to overflowing.

’Tis strange that man should, for embitterment, condemn his brother man to prison, where all he meets, he meets as friends! How futile is your vengeance! It cannot harm a soul sustained by Omnipotence.

We are all friends here, officers and prisoners. No jarring strings are found to mar my happiness. My “outside friends” would seek for my discharge—on that point I have no thought. *My best Friend keeps the key*, and when He wills, the gates shall open. Till then, I would not wish to move.

My “home” looks comfortless to the thoughtless passenger, as you will see by the picture which accompanies this letter; ’tis strange that it should be to me “a home” so comfortable, that even Fixby’s charms, (the most loved spot on earth,) cannot force me to wish for change. True, it is wonderful—to myself a wonder most of all. To a soul so fond of liberty as mine, a heart so strong in

its attachments to rural scenes and occupations, bound by ties so tender to my once loved "outside" home, bathing in that sea of bliss so many years before my banishment, it does seem strange, that happiness should greet me here! When all those joys were snatched from me, when every domestic tie was severed, and my very heartstrings quivered; when your revenge compelled me to choose that my wife should be a prisoner, (and thus, with her delicate frame, should find a grave prematurely in this cell,) or, submit to separation!—I say, Sir, when, overwhelmed by such bereavements, and subjected to such a conflict, I should have thought no prison could have formed "a home" for me. The secret is thus explained; "He tempereth the winds to the shorn lamb." His grace is sufficient for me, for he saith, "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be." To this hour, I have found Him true—what your anger has torn from me, His favour has replaced—to my death I will trust His goodness and His power. Now, then, and in eternity, He shall have all the praise, the glory shall be His!

At the close of this year, I have to rejoice that many, who at its commencement believed that I was a "turbulent fellow," scarcely fit to live, are now persuaded that the object I aim at, is, peace, upon a sound and Christian basis: and that others who then supposed I was a mere partizan, are convinced that my objects are all national. Of the truth of these assertions, I have many, very many proofs, even from the ranks of my political opponents.

I know also that many of your friends who justified your conduct, when you sent me here, now pronounce that you were foolish. For myself, I am convinced that no other place than prison could have afforded me the opportunity of at once testing and explaining my principles; so that I am constrained to be thankful to God, who has thus permitted my enemy to befriend me.

Then, as to my little *Fleeters*, they have been the faithful chroniclers of my heart-breathings. In them the rights of all have been asserted and maintained. The church, the throne, the aristocracy, and the people, have alike received that aid which I could render them. The pauper and the factory child, no less than the bishop and the peer, have, in their pages, been respected. I have been a foe to none but those who fain would feed on other's provender.

It is natural, that, in an age so crooked, a course so straight as mine should sometimes startle my dearest friends. That has been the case—it is so now. I told you of the mist, and of the sun. Hear now my explanation.

There are two antagonist spirits abroad, the evil and the good. The one is that of Anarchy, the other—Order. The first gives itself the nickname of "liberal and enlightened," and its opposing spirit it calls "tyranny and monopoly." The former abjures all restraint; the latter knows that restraining limits are assigned to all the operations of men.

Class these spirits politically, and they are named Whig and Tory. The disciples of the first think they have discovered that the constitution of England was the work of very foolish men, ("our grey-bearded ancestors," as they term them in derision,) and that the principles upon which it is founded are no longer suited to this "enlightened age." The Tories, on the contrary, believe that the men who founded our institutions were wise, and that, being taught by the

records of God, the principles upon which they acted are those of truth; and consequently, no time can change them, and that they are adapted, as far as any human establishments can be, for all ages.

These antagonist spirits have been long at war: sometimes the good, at others the evil has met with national favour. The consequence has been, that great encroachments have been made upon the fundamental principles of the Constitution, and much of political bewilderment has been the result.

For some reason or other, why or wherefore, I cannot tell, the leaders of each party have recently and advisedly changed their political names; the followers of one are now styled *Reformers*, of the other, *Conservatives*.

The former have recently fancied, that, in nature, a great discovery has been made, and that the people, now-a-days, increase so rapidly, that if, very soon "a preventive check" is not adopted, the inhabitants of this country, being so numerous, vast numbers of them must either be transported or destroyed. It is very strange, but it is true, that no reasons, founded on fact, have been assigned for this new discovery. The melancholy truth must, however, be told, — *some* of the leaders of the Conservatives have also imbibed that strange, unnatural notion. The result is, that, except on a few mere technical questions, (just weighty enough to keep up the fever of faction, but so trifling as to give no warmth to patriotism,) it is difficult to discover a difference between them and the Reformers. Hence, we find amongst both, Free-traders, New Poor Law and Emigration supporters, who are quite certain, even without having made any inquiry, that the land can no longer maintain the inhabitants! The old notion, that a numerous and a prosperous people constitute the strength and the wealth of a nation, is, with them, exploded, and these men have agreed, that the only way to strengthen and enrich this nation, is, to spend large sums of money annually, in removing hundreds of thousands of the most active, robust, industrious, and intelligent of our people, to the other side of the globe!

The late Mr. Huskisson led the way, on the principles of free-trade, although he afterwards, (as I showed you in a former letter,) recanted, having proved the fallacy of his novel schemes. Still, he is always quoted as a great authority.

The Whigs were but too happy to embrace doctrines so congenial with their anti-English feelings, and having emblazoned them with the nicknames "liberal and enlightened," and branded their antagonists with "tyranny and monopoly," they made great way. The late change of ministers has, however, placed the question of Free Trade in a very singular position. It so happened, that the Whigs, finding that their hold of office was slackening, resolved upon an endeavour to regain the forfeited affections of the people, by a sudden advance in the road to Free Trade.

The singularity of the matter is this—the Free Trade ministry were beaten on a Free Trade question, by an opposition, whose leader [Sir Robert Peel] had once declared, that "The principles of Free Trade were *sound principles* of commercial policy, known to be *irrefragable*."

Of course, Sir, this state of political affairs is very odd. It places many men in strange positions — particularly when it is known that "the Cash Payment Bill" is founded on the antagonist principle; for, if "Free Trade is a sound

principle and irrefragable," why limit the trade in currency? say people of merely common understanding. The consequence of this sudden change, is, that many of our politicians are wandering about in mists, and for the life of them they cannot, at the moment, escape from their bewilderment, and find their proper places. So that we, even now, discover the antagonist principles in the same cabinet; and those persons who have hitherto, instead of being guided by principles, looked only to their leaders, scarcely know which side to take. It is natural that in such a case, one who has never changed his principles,—one of the old Tory school,—should, by many, be misapprehended and considered "injudicious." Such is, just now, the case with me. At this moment, that mist obscures me from many of my friends. Hence I find, that at a meeting in Barnsley, the other day, the Hon. John Stuart Wortley, M. P. for the West Riding of Yorkshire, is reported, in the *Leeds Intelligencer*, to have said:—

"Lord John Russell took occasion to tell me, that having obtained an advantage over my Lord Morpeth by means of the New Poor Law, when I came into the House of Commons I did not venture to include it among the topics which I charged against the late administration, and urged as grounds for their dismissal. That charge was taken up and repeated by others; and, I am sorry to say, by one for whom, in spite of what he has said of me, I have much respect—a man of distinguished talent—a man in the purity of whose motives I have the strongest confidence, but who is, unfortunately, too much in the habit of refusing credit for pure motives to those who differ from him; still, he is a person for whom I entertain respect, and who enjoys the confidence of a large portion of my constituents. The person I allude to is Mr. Oastler. He has told you that I blinched the question of the Poor Law in the House of Commons; that I shrunk from touching it. And why does he say so? He tells me that I did not venture to dilate upon it, because I was afraid to implicate Sir Robert Peel. Gentlemen, Sir Robert Peel knows me better, I dare say, than Mr. Oastler, and he never would ascribe my conduct to any such motive."

The *Halifax Guardian* gives the following version:

"Others also raised charges against me, and one person whom I highly respect has thought right to attack me, a man of great talent, but who is sometimes injudicious—I mean Mr. Oastler."

Mr. Wortley then explained, that his reason for not introducing the subject of the New Poor Law in his speech on the address, was, "because it was not a party question." He added—

"Did I not know that whether they [the late ministers] agreed in that measure [the New Poor Law] with me or not, they agreed with many around me, who had a share in passing that measure? And how could I charge against them, as a party, the passing of that measure which many gentlemen, on both sides of the House, had supported."

The honourable gentleman afterwards said—

"They tell me that I owed my election to the cry upon the New Poor Law. Gentlemen, without disparaging, for one moment, the interest which the great body of the people feel upon that question, I deny the allegation."

The observations of mine, referred to by Mr. Wortley, were those in my 38th Number. These were my words:—

"I say, Sir, it is not easy to explain how it happened that the honourable gentleman, thus circumstanced, having his mind all the while fixed upon his constituents, and 'the sentiments which they entertained,' and being, 'first' of all, anxious that his own parliamentary declarations should be 'in unison with the unequivocally expressed opinions of his constituents,' should so soon have forgotten the flags, mottoes, and arguments which were used during his canvass and election with reference to the New Poor Law; and should have been so little impressed with his responsibility to the 13,165 Yorkshiremen who sent him to Parliament, as never to utter one single word

upon that all-important subject, when he was communicating 'their answer to Her Majesty, which might serve as some guidance to her in the future conduct of the Government,' and was telling her what he had learned from the country, in order that she might be relieved, as soon as possible, from any further state of delay and uncertainty.' If Mr. Wortley 'learned' anything during his West Riding canvass, it was, that the people there are resolved, some how or other, to get rid of the accursed New Poor Law. Mr. Wortley knows full well, that if it had been known in Yorkshire that he approved of the New Poor Law, he could never have obtained his present high and honourable station. It was not generous, on such an occasion, when he 'ranged' all over the world to rake up the crimes of the Whigs, that he should withhold the opinion of his constituents on this, their master sin. If any change had come over his mind upon the subject of the New Poor Law, it was still his duty to tell *what his constituents thought about it*. True enough, if he had done so, he would have thrown a heavy stone at the leaders of his own party. That fact leads me to suppose, (as I understand that on such occasions the *leaders* are consulted as to what shall be said,) that Sir Robert Peel had enjoined *silence* on that particular topic. I grieve that Mr. Wortley had more *dread* of Sir Robert Peel, than *respect* for his constituents and the Queen."

If I have done Mr. Wortley injustice, I am sorry. When he has denied having received any direction from Sir Robert Peel about "silence" on that occasion, I will most sincerely ask his forgiveness. If Mr. Wortley had not been entrusted by his constituents with their "answer to Her Majesty, which might serve as some guidance to her in the future conduct of the government," and "had not been telling her what he had learned from the country, in order that she might be relieved, as soon as possible, from any further state of delay and uncertainty,"—I say, Sir, had Mr. Wortley been merely the representative of a faction, he might have been justified on such an occasion if he had confined that "answer" to mere "party questions;" but, as the representative of the West Riding of Yorkshire, I think it was his duty fully to inform Her Majesty what his constituents thought on every important question, and most of all on that upon which they felt most keenly.

Mr. Wortley says, and sure I am he believes what he asserts, 'That he does not owe his election to the cry upon the New Poor Law. My information was from all parts of the Riding, from leading electioneers of both parties, and their reports were uniform—"That Lords Milton and Morpeth lost their election, in consequence of their support of the New Poor Law." Of course, that question is one of opinion; from all that I have heard, (and truly, I think I was told as much as any man,) I should suppose that Mr. Wortley, himself, is the only person in the West Riding who is of opinion, that he does not owe his election to the cry upon the New Poor Law.'

A mistake on this point may be of most serious import, much more than the seat in Parliament. Should ministers be of Mr. Wortley's opinion, and act upon it, it may cost them their places. The West Riding of Yorkshire has, more than once, been the pulse of England. It behoves our governors to know truly how that pulse beats.

No one rejoiced more, no man's spirit was more exhilarated, than was mine, when the Honourable John Stuart Wortley was returned for my native county. But, however painful, I must speak the truth. I think Mr. Wortley should not have permitted "party" to cause him to forget the county. The member for the West Riding of Yorkshire should be more than a partizan. What Mr. Wortley styles an "attack," was a serious admonition. I know full well what

spirit sent him to Parliament—it was the old spirit of the Constitution, rising, like a young phoenix, out of the ashes of the Whig anarchists—and, because I wished to see him hold his seat, until at a distant period he shall be called to “the Upper House,” I permitted truth, unmystified by flattery, to leave my pen, and warned him of his danger. I should not be a Yorkshireman if I did not respect him; but, Sir, whether the declaration be welcome or no, I know, that Yorkshire seeks to be released from the domination of that power in which the Whigs, by fraud, by spies, police and troops, have bound her; and if her representative has her feelings, he will not need that I once more remind him of her will.

Hear another proof that, just now, friends meet in mists. A very kind Yorkshire Tory friend of mine, wrote as follows, the other day, to one in London:—

“That Mr. Oastler has done great good to the Conservatives by teaching them the value of cultivating the friendship of the working classes, is beyond question; and that, in turn, he has done equal good to the industrious classes by bringing them in beneficial contact with the middle and upper classes, is quite indisputable.

“I am, however, afraid that the last number of the *Fleet Papers* will be injurious, because its tendency is to weaken the Government, which, at present, requires nursing rather than cudgelling.”

How strangely different men see things in a mist! If I wished ill to Sir Robert Peel's government, I would hold my peace, or urge them onwards, towards the precipice down which the Whigs have fallen. When I warn them of their danger, my friend mistakes, and thinks that I am “cudgelling.” Fain would I “nurse” the ministers in the lap of the Constitution; but that good old dame rejects all union with the “liberal and enlightened” New Poor Law and all its accompaniments; hence I urge them to abandon it, and all its progeny.

Again, a friend of Sir James Graham, of his rank also, who has honoured me by very many proofs of kindness, when writing to a mutual friend, said,—

“How sorry I am that our friend, [Oastler] attacked my friend, Sir James Graham! Does he wish to break up the Conservative Government, and bring back the Whigs? For there is no alternative!”

No, indeed; the Whigs are gone, I hope, for ever. My object is, in the true spirit of honesty and friendship, to warn the Government of their danger, knowing, as I do, that Whig measures will be their speedy ruin.

I do not despond; the sun of the Constitution is rising and will soon dispel the mist which party-strife has gendered! it will then be seen by all, as it has been before, that Truth is always true.

If I thought that there was “no alternative,” save having back the Whigs, I should, indeed, despair. I would then give my country up for lost, because I should be sure that some plausible, cunning, and crafty spirit of his Satanic majesty, had been permitted by Almighty God, as a punishment for our sins, to be (as in the case of Ahab) a lying spirit in the mouth of the ministers of our Queen. But, when I am certain that there is still, in the soul, and the heart of the people, a seeking and a yearning after the true principles of the Constitution, as founded on Christianity, I cannot thus despond, and give up all for lost: nay, on the contrary, methinks I see my country rising in all the majesty of

Truth, bidding faction cease, and, pointing to the Rock of the Constitution, she proclaims—My strength is there! At all hazards, I must, according to the light and strength which God has given me, continue to bear a steady and unflinching testimony against the lawless spirit of the times. "Liberal and enlightened principles" have had their day—the New Poor Law was to have been the crown of the "liberal" faction—it has proved to be its grave. If the dogmas of the novel school of philosophy were true, then, the New Poor Law, and much more stringent measures—even "painless extinction"—would be just! Their magic spell is however, broken—their wizard spirits fled! We must have none of their foul schemes embodied in Conservatism: if she parleys with that foe—her days are numbered.

I am, your Prisoner,

RICHARD OASTLER.

P.S.—My kind friend, Flockton, accompanied the present of the Leeds Operatives with the following letter:—

"To Mr. Richard Oastler, Fleet Prison.

"Dear Sir,—Although personally unknown to you, I scarcely think it necessary to make any apology, being one of the industrious classes, for whose special benefit your active and energetic life has been spent, under the most trying circumstances.

"It was under this consideration, that I resolved to consult a few of my fellow operatives, with a view to show our respect for you, and to transmit our mite, humble as it is, urged on by the cherished remembrance of the departed worth of the late ever-to-be-lamented Michael Thomas Sadler, and the no less indefatigable and unceasing exertions of the Reverend G. S. Bull, now of Birmingham.

"Honoured Sir.—I beg to congratulate you upon the accession of another powerful and eloquent advocate of the working classes, in the person of Dr. Holland, of Sheffield, long may your lives be spared to use those talents which a Divine Providence has so eminently endowed you with to aid and support the cause of the poor and friendless, against that species of mock liberality, which is too much practised at the present day. Sir, that you, and your family, may long enjoy the blessings of health and happiness, is my sincere wish, and may your future years be marked by a temperate and unwearied zeal for whatever is likely to promote the welfare of the working classes, and at length may you descend to the grave, at your full age, like a shock of corn in its season.

"I remain, dear Sir,

"Your sincere well-wisher,

"Leeds, April 15, 1841."

"JOHN FLOCKTON."

April 27th—Mrs. Griffiths and family, London, brought me nine beautiful nosegays for my cell, and four plants for my window. A friend from Nottingham, a nosegay and a relic.

28th—Friend Oughton, a loaf of home-baked bread.

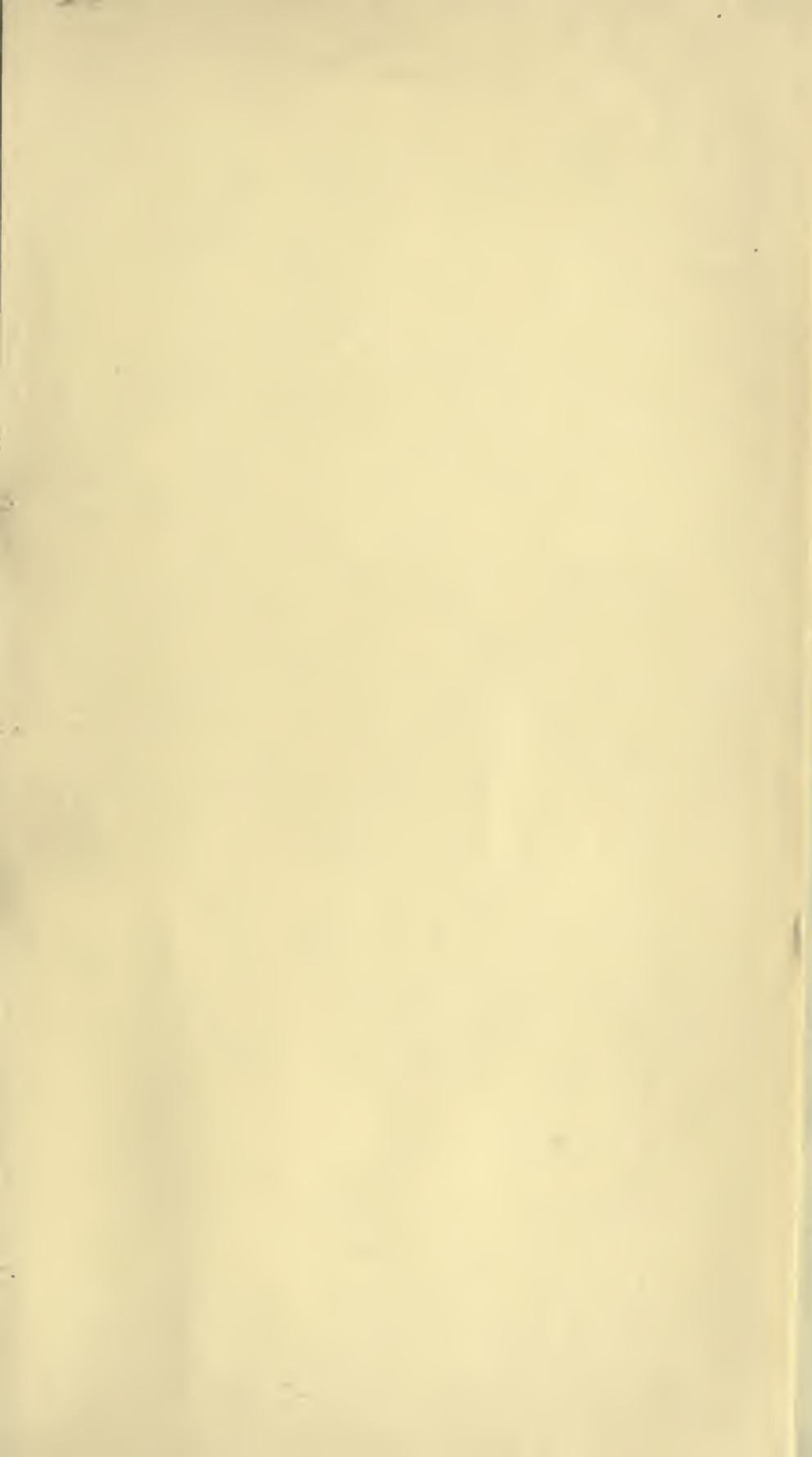
May 1st—My fast friend, Cotsell, Portsea, 5s., a book for Mrs. O., and another for Maria. A reader of the *Fleet Papers*, 1s.

3rd—Mr. Joseph Barber, a Fixby neighbour, 1l. 14s. 6d. Mr. Gaskell, Liverpool, a quantity of cigars.

7th—A Manchester friend, a side of bacon, and a "cheek."
Mr. Bass, London, a bottle of ink.

10th—My true friend, Squire Auty, from the Bradford Operatives, 11l. My highly esteemed friend, Robert Perring, Esq., Leeds, "Pickwick in the Fleet." Mr. Batley, Dewsbury, (unknown before), 10s. and some tobacco. Found, in my cell 11b. of tobacco.

So much, this week, for your prisoner's "Rent-Roll."—R.O.







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Oastler, Richard
The Fleet papers

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