

An Inquiry into the Permanent Causes of the Decline and Fall of Powerful and Wealthy Nations. eBook

An Inquiry into the Permanent Causes of the Decline and Fall of Powerful and Wealthy Nations. by William Playfair

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AN

INQUIRY,

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===== Book I. =====

Chap. I.

Introduction and Plan of the Work.—Explanation of what the Author understands by Wealthy and Powerful Nations, and of the General Causes of Wealth and Power.

One of the most solid foundations on which an enquirer can proceed in matters of political economy, as connected with the fate of nations, seems to be by an appeal to history, a view of the effects that have been produced, and an investigation of the causes that have operated in producing them.

Unfortunately, in this case, the materials are but very scanty, and sometimes rather of doubtful authority; nevertheless, such as they are, I do not think it well to reject the use of them, and have, therefore, begun, by taking a view of the causes that have ruined nations that have been great and wealthy, beginning with the earliest records and coming down to the present time. {5}

— {5} Dr. Robertson very truly says, “It is a cruel mortification, in searching for what is instructive in the history of past times, to find that the exploits of conquerors who have desolated the earth, and the freaks of tyrants who have rendered nations unhappy, are recorded with minute, and often disgusting accuracy, while the discovery of useful arts, and the progress of the most beneficial branches of commerce are passed over in silence, and suffered to sink in oblivion.” Disquisition on the Ancient Commerce to India. ==-

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I divide this space into three periods, because in each is to be seen a very distinct feature.

During the first period, previous to the fall of the Roman empire, the order of things was such as had arisen from the new state of mankind, who had gradually increased in numbers, and improved in sciences and arts. The different degrees of wealth were owing, at first, to local situation, natural advantages, and priority in point of settlement, till the causes of decline begun to operate on some; when the adventitious causes of wealth and power, producing conquest, began to establish a new order of things.

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The second period, from the fall of the Roman government till the discovery of America, and the passage to the East Indies, by the ocean, has likewise a distinct feature, and is treated of by itself.

The rulers of mankind were not then men, who from the ease and leisure of pastoral life, under a mild heaven, had studied science, and cultivated the arts; they were men who had descended from a cold northern climate, where nature did little to supply their wants, where hunger and cold could not be avoided but by industry and exertion; where, in one word, the sterility of nature was counteracted by the energy of man.

The possessors of milder climates, and of softer manners, falling under the dominion of such men, inferior greatly in numbers, as well as in arts, intermixed with them, and formed a new race, of which the character was different; and it is a circumstance not a little curious, that while mankind were in a state at which they had arrived by increasing population, and by the arts of peace, slavery was universal: but that when governed by men who were conquerors, and owed their superiority to force alone, where slavery might have been expected to originate, it was abolished. {6}

— {6} This fact, which is indisputable, has, at first sight, a most extraordinary appearance, that is to say, seems difficult to account for; but a little examination into circumstances will render it easily understood.

In warm and fertile countries, the love of ease is predominant, and the services wanted are such as a slave can perform. The indolent habits of people make them consider freedom as an object of less importance than exemption from care. While the rulers of mankind were indolent and luxurious, they were interested in continuing slavery, which must have [end of page #2] originated in barbarism and ignorance. But the northern nations were different; with them, neither the moral character, the physical powers, or the situation of things, favoured slavery. The services one man wanted of another were not such as a slave could be forced to perform: neither are men who are fitted for performing such offices disposed to submit to slavery. Shepherds may be reduced to the situation of slaves, but hunters will not be likely to submit to such a situation, even if their occupation admitted of it. Slaves can only be employed to perform labour that is under the eye of an overseer or master, or the produce of which is nearly certain: but the labour of a hunter is neither the one nor the other, it is, therefore, not of the sort to be performed by slaves. The athletic active life necessary for a hunter is, besides, unfriendly to slavery, if not totally at variance with it. What does a slave receive in return for his service? Lodging, nourishment, and a life free from care. A hunter is obliged to provide the two former for himself, and the latter it is impossible for him to enjoy. The same thing goes even to hired servants. In the rudest state of shepherds, there are hired servants, but men in a rude state never hunt for wages: they are their own masters: they may hunt in society or partnership, but never as slaves or hired servants.

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The progress towards wealth in this new state of things was very slow, but the equality that prevailed amongst feudal barons, their love of war and glory, and the leisure they enjoyed, by degrees extended the limits of commerce very widely, as the northern world never could produce many articles which its inhabitants had by their connection with the south learnt to relish and enjoy.

The intermediate countries, that naturally formed a link of connection between the ancient nations of the east and the rough inhabitants of the north, profited the most by this circumstance; and we still find the borders of the Mediterranean Sea, though no longer the seat of power, the places where wealth was chiefly concentrated.

The impossibility of the inhabitants of the northern countries transporting their rude and heavy produce, in order to exchange it for the luxuries of the south, gave rise to manufactures as well as fishing on the southern confines of the Baltic Sea; from whence arose the wealth of Flanders, Holland, and the Hans Towns. This forms an epoch entirely new in its nature and description, and its termination was only brought on by the great discovery of the passage to Asia, by the Cape of Good Hope, and to America, by sailing straight out into the Atlantic Ocean.

The nations that had till those discoveries been the best situated for [end of page #3] commerce no longer enjoyed that advantage; by that means it changed its abode; but not only did it change its abode, it changed its nature, and the trifling commerce that had hitherto been carried on by the intervention of caravans by land, or of little barks coasting on the borders of the Mediterranean Sea, (never venturing, without imminent danger, to lose sight of the shore,) {7} was dropt for that bold and adventurous navigation, connecting the most distant parts of the world; between which since then large vessels pass with greater expedition and safety than they formerly did between the Grecian Islands, or from Italy to Africa.

Three inventions, two in commerce and the other in war, nearly of equal antiquity, formed this into one of these epochs that gives a new feature to things.

The discovery of the magnetic power of the needle improved and totally altered navigation. The art of printing gave the means of extending with facility, to mankind at large, the mode of communicating thoughts and ideas, which had till then been attended with great difficulty, and confined to a few. This placed men nearer upon an equality with respect to mind, and greatly facilitated commerce and the arts. The invention of gun-powder nearly at the same time changed the art of war, not only in its manner, but in its effect, a point of far greater importance. While human force was the power by which men were annoyed, in cases of hostility, bodily strength laid the foundation for the greatness of individual men, as well as of whole nations. So long as this was the case, it was impossible for any nation to cultivate the arts of peace, (as at the present time), without becoming much inferior in physical force to nations that preferred hunting or made war their study; or to such as preferred exercising the body, as rude nations do, to

gratifying the appetites, as practised in wealthy ones. To be wealthy and powerful long together was then impossible.

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Since this last invention, the physical powers of men have ceased to occupy any material part in their history; superiority in skill is now the great object of the attainment of those who wish to excel, {8} and

— {7} It was forbidden by law, formerly, in Spain, to put to sea from the 11th of November to the 10th of March.

{8} In the divine poem of the Iliad, Nestor, for experience and wisdom, and Ulysses, for [end of page #4] cunning, are the only two heroes whose minds gave them a superiority; but they make no figure compared to Achilles and Hector, or even the strong, rough, and ignorant Ajax. To bear fatigue, and understand discipline, is the great object at present; for though, of late years, the increased use of the bayonet seems to be a slight approximation to the ancient mode of contending by bodily strength, it is to be considered, on the other hand, that artillery is more than ever employed, which is increasing the dissimilarity. Again, though the bayonet is used, it is under circumstances quite new. Great strength enabled a single man, by wearing very thick armour, and wielding a longer sword or spear, to be invulnerable to men of lesser force, while he could perform what feats he pleased in defeating them. As gun-powder has destroyed the use of heavy armour, though with the sabre and bayonet men are not equal, they are all much more nearly so. No one is invulnerable, even in single combat, with the *arme blanche*, and with fire arms they are nearly on an equality. The changes that this makes, through every department of life, are too numerous to be enlarged upon, or not to be visible to all. ==-

men may devote themselves to a life of ease and enjoyment without falling under a real inferiority, provided they do not allow the mind to be degraded or sunk in sloth, ignorance, or vice.

Those discoveries, then, by altering the physical powers of men, by changing their relations and connections, as well as by opening new fields for commerce, and new channels for carrying it on, form a very distinct epoch in the history of wealth and power, and alter greatly their nature in the detail; though, in the main outline and abstract definition, they are still the same; having always the same relation to each other, or to the state of things at the time.

This last period is then very different in its nature, and much more important than either of the others that preceded it; yet, in one thing, there is a similarity that runs through the whole, and it is a very important one.

The passions and propensities of mankind, though they have changed their objects, and the means of their gratification, have not changed their nature. The desire of enjoyment; and of enjoyment with the least trouble possible, appears to be the basis of all the passions. Hence, envy, jealousy, friendship, and the endless train of second-rate effects, appear all to be produced by that primary passion; {9} and as from

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— {9} The very learned and ingenious author of the Inquiry into the Origin and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, traces all this to an innate propensity to barter. But barter is only a means, and not even the means to which mankind shew the greatest pro-[end of page #5] propensity; for, wherever they have power to take by force or pillage, they never barter. This is seen both in an infantine and adult state; children cry for toys, and stretch at them before they offer to exchange; and, conquerors or soldiers never buy or barter, when they can take, unless they are guided by some other motive than mere natural propensity. A highwayman will pay for his dinner at an inn, as willingly as a traveller, because he acts from other motives than propensity, but he will strip the inn-keeper when he meets him on the road. ==

this originate the wealth as well as the decline of nations, the history of the revolutions in wealth and power, during the two first periods, are by no means unimportant; besides, as their duration was much longer than that of the latter, they lead to a more certain conclusion.

The review of what has taken place will occupy the first book; and serve as a data for an inquiry into the nature and causes of the fall of nations.

The first part of the second book will be dedicated to investigating the internal causes of decline; that is to say, all those causes which arise from the possession of wealth and power, operating on the habits, manners, and minds of the inhabitants; as also on the political arrangements, laws, government, and institutions, so far as they are connected with the prosperity or decline of nations.

The latter part of the same book will treat of the exterior causes of decline, arising from the envy of other nations; their advancement in the same arts to which the nations that are rich owe their wealth, or their excelling them in other arts, by which they can be rivalled, reduced, or subdued.

After having inquired into external and internal causes; and the operation of each and of both, (though they never act quite separately,) accidental causes, will make an object for consideration, which will bring the general inquiry to a conclusion.

The third book will begin with an application of the information obtained to the present state of England: by comparing its situation with that of nations that were great; and, by endeavouring to point out a means by which its decline may be prevented.

Though we know that, in this world, nothing is eternal, particularly in the institutions of man; yet, by a sort of fiction in language, when the final term is not fixed, and the end desirable, what is known to be [end of page #6] temporary is considered as perpetual. Thus, the contract between the king and the people, the constituent laws of a country, &c. are considered as permanent and of eternal duration.

In this case, though the final decline of a nation cannot be prevented; though the nature of things will either, by that regular chain of causes which admits of being traced, or by their regular operation of coincident causes which is termed accidental, sooner or later put an end to the prosperity of every nation, yet we shall not speak of prolonging prosperity, but of preventing decline, just as if it were never to happen at any period.

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Before entering upon this Inquiry, it may be well, for the sake of being explicitly understood, to define what I mean by wealthy and powerful nations.

In speaking of nations, wealth and power are sometimes related to each other, as cause and effect. Sometimes there is between a mutual action and re-action. In the natural or ordinary course of things, they are, at first, intimately connected and dependent on each other, till, at last, this connection lessening by degrees, and they even act in opposite directions; when wealth undermines and destroys power, but power never destroys wealth. {10}

Though wealth and power are often found united, they are sometimes found separated. Wealth is altogether a real possession; power is comparative. Thus, a nation may be wealthy in itself, though unconnected with any other nation; but its power can only be estimated by a comparison with that of other nations.

Wealth consists in having abundance of whatever mankind want or desire; and if there were but one nation on earth, it might be wealthy; but it would, in that case, be impossible to measure its power.

Wealth is, however, not altogether real; it is in a certain degree comparative, whereas power is altogether comparative.

The Romans, for example, may very justly be called the most

— {10} Till a nation has risen above its neighbours, and those to whom it compares itself, wealth and power act in the same direction; but, after it has got beyond that point, they begin to counteract each other. --

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powerful nation that ever existed, yet a single battalion of our present troops, well supported with artillery, would have probably destroyed the finest army they ever sent into the field. A single ship of the line would certainly have sunk, taken, or put to flight, all the fleets that Rome and Carthage ever sent to sea. The feeblest and least powerful of civilized nations, with the present means of fighting, and the knowledge of the present day, would defeat an ancient army of the most powerful description. Power then is entirely relative; and what is feebleness now, would, at a certain time, have been force or power.

It is not altogether so with wealth, which consists in the abundance of what men desire. The Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, had wealth; and this, though, perhaps, not consisting in the same objects, was, perhaps, not inferior to ours at the present time; but as wealth, purely and simply, no comparison between different nations was necessary, farther than that men's desires are augmented, by seeing the abundance possessed by

others; and therefore they become comparative, as to wealth. Without, however, entering into a long examination respecting the various possible combinations of wealth and power, which are something similarly connected in states, as health and strength are in the animal body, {11} let both be considered

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only in a comparative way; the comparison either being made with other nations at the same time, or with the same nation at different times. Thus, for example, in comparing the wealth and power of Britain now, with what they were at the latter end of Queen Elizabeth's reign, we find that the merchants of Liverpool, during the first three years of last =sic= war, fitted out a force of privateers equal to the Spanish armada; and consequently superior to the whole naval force of England at that time; there can be no doubt, then, that both the wealth and power of the nation are increased. Again, if we find that our ships block up the

— {11} A man may be very feeble, yet in very good health for his whole life-time. He may also have great strength, though he may not enjoy a very good state of health; yet nevertheless, health and strength are very intimately connected, and never can be completely separated. -=-

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ports of Holland, and prevent their navy from venturing to sea, we must conclude, that the relative power of the two nations is altered, since the time that the Dutch fleet rode triumphant in the river Thames. But, if we want to make a comparison between the naval power of England and that of France and Spain, we must not compare it with the strength of their navies in the year 1780, when they bid us defiance at Plymouth, but take things actually as they are at this present time.

When a nation is upon an equality with others, for wealth, it may be considered as neither deserving the name of a rich or a poor nation, whatever its real wealth or poverty may be. The same thing holds with power. When a nation is merely able to protect itself, but fully equal to that, though unable to make conquests, or aggrandize itself, against the will of other nations, it may be said to be neither weak nor strong. Thus, for example, Denmark as a nation is upon a par with others; and neither to be called wealthy and powerful, nor weak and poor, though it certainly has both more actual wealth and power than it had in the eighth century, when the Danes burnt London, Paris, and Cologne.

Thus, then, with respect to my reasoning, the whole is to be considered as applying to other nations at the same time; and the degree they are above or below par, is the measure of wealth and power, poverty and weakness. {12}

But, with respect to a nation itself, wealth is comparative in the progression of time. In speaking of power, we compare nations at the same period, and, in speaking of wealth, we may either compare a nation with itself at different periods, or with others at the same time.

We shall not find any example of a nation's becoming less wealthy whilst it increased in power; but we shall find many instances of nations becoming wealthy whilst they were losing their power, though,

— {12} According to this definition, if all the nations on earth were to increase in wealth and power equally, they would be considered as stationary; their relative situations would remain the same; like those of the fixed stars, or those of soldiers who march in a regiment with perfect regularity, and retain their relative portion in the same manner as if they stood still. But this case, among nations, is only an imaginary one; therefore, the definition given answers the true purpose of investigation. ==-

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together with the power, the wealth always, a little sooner or a little later, vanishes away.

Sometimes nations owe their wealth and greatness to accidental causes, that, from their nature, must vanish away; and sometimes to causes which, depending upon the nations themselves, may be prolonged. In general, both the two sorts of causes have united to render every nation great that has been distinguished amongst others for riches or power.

The causes, then, divide themselves into two of distinct kinds;—those which are independent of the nation itself, and those over which it has some degree of influence and controul.

In early ages, when knowledge was but little advanced, and when the small stock that had been accumulated was confined nearly to a single spot, the first description of causes were the principal ones.—Local situation, priority in discovery, or in establishment, gave to one nation a superiority over others, and occasioned the accumulation of wealth, and the acquisition of power and territory. {13} As in the early stages of human life, a few years more or less occasion a greater difference, both in physical powers and mental faculties, than any difference of innate genius, or adventitious circumstances; so, in the early days of the world, when it was young in knowledge, and scanty in population, priority of settlement gave a great advantage to one nation over others, and, of consequence, enabled them to rule over others; thus the Assyrian and Egyptian empires were great, powerful, and extensive, while the nations that were beyond their reach were divided into small states or kingdoms, on the most contemptible scale.

Time, however, did away the advantages resulting from priority of establishment.

Local situation was another cause of superiority, of a more permanent nature; but this, also, new discovery has transferred from one na-

— {13} It is not meant, by any means, to enter into an inquiry, much less controversy, respecting the antiquity of mankind; but it is very clear that the knowledge of arts and sciences can be traced to an infant state about two thousand years before the Christian aera. —

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tion to another. Qualities of the soil and climate are counteracted by the nature and habits of the inhabitants, which frequently, in the end, give the superiority where there was at first an inferiority.

If ever the nations of the world come to a state of permanence, (which in all probability will never be the case,) it must be when population is nearly proportioned to the means of subsistence in different parts; when knowledge is nearly equally distributed and when no great discoveries remain to be made either in arts, science, or geography.

While the causes from which wealth and power rise in a superior degree, are liable to change from one nation to another, wealth and power must be liable to the same alterations and changes of place; so long any equal balance among nations must be artificial. But when circumstances become similar, and when the pressure becomes equal on all sides, then nations, like the particles of a fluid, though free to move, having lost their impulse, will remain at rest.

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If such a state of things should ever arrive, then the wealth and power would be only real, not comparative. The whole might be very rich, very affluent, and possess great abundance of every thing, either for enjoyment or for defence, without one nation having an advantage over another: they would be on an equality.

But this state of things is far from being likely soon to take place. Population is far from come to its equilibrium, and knowledge {14} is farther distant still. Russia and America, in particular, are both behind in population, and the inhabitants of the latter country are far from being on a par in knowledge with the rest of Europe; when they become so, the balance will be overturned, and must be re-established anew.

The great discoveries that have taken place in knowledge and geography have been connected.

While navigation was little understood, the borders of the Mediterranean Sea, and the islands in it, were naturally the first places for wealth and commerce.

The discovery of the compass, and others that followed, rendered

— {14} By knowledge is only meant the knowledge of the arts that make men useful, =sic= such as agriculture, manufactures, legislation, &c. -=-

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the navigation of the open ocean, more easy and safe than that of the circumscribed seas. This laid a great foundation for change and discovery; it brought Britain into importance, ruined Italy, Genoa, Venice, &c. and has laid the foundation for further changes still.

As for discoveries in arts, it would be bold and presumptuous indeed to attempt to set any bounds to them. Discoveries, however, that alter the relations of mankind very materially, are probably near at an end. In arts they give only a temporary preference. {15} If a method should be discovered to cultivate a field with half the trouble, and to double the produce, which seems very possible, it would be a great discovery, and alter the general state of mankind considerably; but it would soon be extended to all nations, as the use of gunpowder has been. New produce, or means of procuring the old more easily, are the things chiefly sought after. Potatoes, coffee, tea, sugar, cotton, silk, distilled spirits, are new productions, unknown to the Romans. Glass, gunpowder, printing, windmills, watermills, steam-engines, and the most part of spinning and weaving machines, are new inventions, but they can be extended to all countries. The mariners compass changed the relative position of places, and no new invention of the same importance, as to its effects on nations, probably can take place. Navigation does not admit of a similar improvement to that which it has received. If goods could be conveyed for a quarter of the present price it would not produce the same sort of effect.

To render navigating the ocean practicable was a greater thing than any possible improvement on that practicability.

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As for new discoveries in geography, they are nearly at an end. The form and the extent of the earth are known, and the habitable regions are nearly all explored.

We have, then, arrived at a state of things where many of the causes that formerly operated on reducing wealthy nations can never again produce a similar effect. But still there are other causes which ope-

— {15} The end of all discovery is to supply men with what they want; and, accordingly, all nations that are considered as civilised find the means of participating in the advantage of a new discovery, by imitating that which possesses the invention first, and that is done almost immediately. It was very different formerly. -=

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rate as they did formerly; accordingly, wealth and power are very unequally distributed amongst nations at this moment; and, in Europe, there is not one nation that is not either rising or on its decline. (see Appendix A.) =sic—there is none.=

The purpose of the present Inquiry is, by tracing those causes that still continue to operate, to discover how nations that now stand high may be prevented from sinking below their level: a thing to which history shews they have a natural tendency, and which history shews also is attended with very distressing consequences.

We do not labour in Utopia on schemes, but in Britain on real business; and the inquiry is, how a nation, situated as this is, and having more than its share of power, importance, and wealth, may prolong their possession?

In this Inquiry we shall begin with taking a lesson from history, which will serve as some guide.

As to the rise of other nations, we neither can nor should attempt to impede that; let them rise to our level, but let us not sink down to theirs. [end of page #13]

CHAP. II.

Of the General Causes that operate, both externally and internally, in bringing down Nations that have risen above their Level to that assigned to them by their Extent, Fertility, and Population; and of the Manner in which Wealth destroyed Power in ancient Nations.

Without considering the particular causes that have raised some nations greatly above others, there are some general causes of decline which operate in all cases; but even the general causes are not always similar, they vary their way of producing the effect, according to circumstances.

If a nation excels in arts and manufactures, others acquire a taste for what they make, and imitate them. If they excel in the art of war, they teach their enemies to fight as well as themselves. If their territories are large, the unprotected and far distant parts provoke attack and plunder. They become more difficult and expensive to govern. If they owe their superiority to climate and soil, they generally preserve it but a short time. Necessity acts

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so much more powerfully on those who do not enjoy the same advantages, that they soon come to an equality.— In whatever the superiority exists, emulation and envy prompt to rivalry in peace, and to frequent trials of strength in war. The contempt and pride which accompany wealth and power, and the envy and jealousy they excite amongst other nations, are continual causes of change, and form the great basis of the revolutions amongst the human race.

The wants of men increase with their knowledge of what it is good to enjoy; and it is the desire to gratify those wants that increases necessity, and this necessity is the spur to action.

There are a few natural wants that require no knowledge in order to be felt; such as hunger and thirst, and the other appetites which men have in common with all animals, and which are linked, as it [end of page #14] were, to their existence. {16} But while nations satisfy themselves with supplying such wants, there is neither wealth nor power amongst them. Of consequence, it is not into the conduct of such that we are to inquire.

Excepting, however, those wants which are inseparable from our existence, all the others are, more or less, fictitious, and increase with our knowledge and habits; it is, therefore, evident that the nation that is the highest above others feels the fewest wants; or, in other words, feels no wants. She knows nothing that she does not possess, and therefore may be said to want nothing; or which is the same thing, not knowing what she does want, she makes no effort to obtain it.

Thus necessity of rising higher, does not operate, on a nation that sees none higher than itself; at least, it does only operate in a very slender degree. {17} Whereas, in the nation that is behind hand with other nations around, every one is led by emulation and envy, and by a feeling of their own wants, to imitate and equal those that are farther advanced.

— {16} A child cries for food without knowing what it is; and all the other natural appetites, though they may be increased by habit, by knowledge, and fancy, are independent of the mind in its first state.

{17} The necessity, no doubt, continues to preserve what they have; and, therefore, tends to keep them in a permanent state. Some individuals again, in less affluence than others, endeavour to equal them; by which means some progress is still making in the nation that possesses the greatest share of wealth and power; but it is only partial and feeble. Those who live in the nation that is the most advanced are contented and have all they wish; they possess every thing of which they know, they can have no particular desire for any thing they have not got, that will produce great energy and exertion. A man may wish for wings, or for perpetual youth; but, as he can scarcely expect to obtain

either, he will make little exertion. With things really attainable, but not known, the case is less productive of energy still. The

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people of Asia found silk a natural produce of their country; till the Europeans saw it, they never attempted to produce so rich a material; but no pains has since been spared to try to produce it, in almost every country, where there was the least chance of success. We imitated the silk mills of Italy, and the Italians (as well as many other nations) are now imitating our cotton mills. In the case of a nation that follows others, it always knows what it wants, and may judge whether it can obtain it; but the nation the most advanced, gropes in the dark. -=-

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Thus it is, that necessity acts but in a very inferior degree on the nation that is the farthest advanced; while it operates in a very powerful way on those that are in arrear; and this single reason, without the intervention of wars or any sort of contest or robbery, would, in the process of time, bring nations to a sort of equality in wealth and refinement; that is, it would bring them all into possession of the means of gratifying their wants.

War, excited by the violent and vile passions,—by the overbearing pride and insolence of one, and the envy and villainy of another, derange this natural and smooth operation, which, nevertheless, continues to act in silence at all times, and in every circumstance, and which, indeed, is in general the chief cause of those very disorders by which its operations are sometimes facilitated; sometimes apparently interrupted; sometimes, their effect for a moment reversed; but their action never, for one instant, totally suspended.

The desire of enjoyment makes all mankind act as if they were running a race. They always keep the goal in view, though they attempt to be the foremost to arrive at it by various means. But the greatest exertions are never made by those who have got the advance of their competitors. Amongst the wants of mankind, ease is one of very permanent operation; and whenever the necessity of supplying other wants ceases, the desire of supplying that, leads to a state of inaction and rest. {18} To seek ease, however, does not imply necessarily to seek total inaction or rest; a diminished exertion is comparative ease; and this is always observable in a state of prosperity, either of an individual or of a nation, after the prosperity has been long enough

— {18} The truth of this may be disputed by those who look at mankind in an artificial state; because a variety of their actions seem without any particular motive. But not the smallest exertion is ever made without it. The man who walks out and takes exercise, wants health or amusement as much as the working man does bread. Even those who toil in the rounds of pleasure, are always in pursuit of something. Their not finding the object is another part of the consideration; but they always have one in view. As to

savages, and the poorer classes of people, they shew their propensity by a more simple process; that is, merely by resting inactive, when they are not compelled to labour. ==

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enjoyed to create a certain degree of lassitude and indifference, which it does on every nation. {19}

Whatever may be the accidental circumstance which first raises one nation above others, or the train of adventitious ones that increase for a while and continue that superiority, nothing can be more clear and certain, than, that they have a natural tendency to come back to a level, merely by the exertions of men in the direction of acquiring wealth by industry, and without any of those causes which arise out of war, or interrupting the career of each other.

When, from the conduct of one nation towards another, or from whatever other cause war, =sic= becomes the means by which the superiority of two nations is to be decided, there are many things in favour of the least wealthy nation.

It has less to protect and to lose, and more to attack and to gain; the task is much easier and more alluring. There is a sort of energy in attempting to obtain, that is not to be found in those who are only exerting themselves to keep, of which it is difficult to explain the cause, but of which the existence is very certain.

Where natural strength, and the struggle with want is great, as is the case with nations who have made but little progress in acquiring wealth, the contest with a people more enervated by ease, and less inured to toil is very unequal, and does more than compensate those artificial aids which are derived from the possession of property. {20} From this cause, the triumph of poorer over more wealthy nations has generally arisen, and, in most cases, has occasioned the contest to end in favour of the more hardy and poorer people.

Of the revolutions that took place in the ancient world; whether operated by degrees or by violence and suddenly, those may be ge-

— {19} Doctor Garth, in his admirable poem of the Dispensary, says;—

“Even health for want of change becomes disease.”

This is the case with nations sunk in prosperity.

{20} Why men should have been less tenacious to keep that which is fairly theirs, than rapaciously to obtain that which is not, is a strange thing; but nothing is more certain; and the effects of that propensity are very great, and its existence very general. In the ruin of nations, it is a most active and powerful cause. ==

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nerally traced as the causes. In those ancient nations any considerable degree of luxury and military success were incompatible with each other; but, in the present age, the case is greatly altered. Military discipline is not near so severe as formerly, and bodily strength has but little effect, while the engines of war can only be procured by those resources which wealth affords; by this means, the decline of nations is, at least, now become a less natural and slower progress than formerly; the operations of war have now a quite different tendency from what they formerly had, and this effect is produced by the introduction of cannon, and a different mode of attack and defence; to carry on which, a very considerable degree of wealth is necessary. {21}

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In former times, the character and situation of the people, the object they had in view, their bravery and the skill of their leaders, did every thing; but now the skill of leaders and the command of money are the chief objects; for there is not sufficient difference between any two nations in Europe as to counterbalance those: and, indeed, (except so far as military skill is accidental,) it is to be found principally in nations who have a sufficient degree of wealth to exercise it and call it into action.

We shall see that the first revolutions in the world were effected by the natural strength, energy, and bravery of poor nations triumphing over those that were less hardy, in consequence of the enjoyment of wealth, until the time of the Romans; who, like other nations, first triumphed by means of superior energy and bravery; and, afterwards by making war a trade, continued, by having regular standing armies, to conquer the nations who had only temporary levies, or militias, to fight in their defence.

The triumph of poor nations, over others in many respects their superiors, continued during the middle ages, but the wealth acquired by certain nations then was not wrested from them by war, but by an accidental and unforeseen change in the channel through which it

— {21} An idea has gone abroad, since the successes of the French armies, that money is not necessary to war, even in the present times. It will be shewn, in its proper place, that the French armies were maintained at very great expense, and that a poor country could not have done what France did. —

flowed. At the same time that this change took place, without the intervention of force, the art of war changed in favour of wealthy nations, but the changes took place by slow degrees, and the power of nations now may almost be estimated by their disposable incomes.

This change, however, has by no means secured the prosperity of wealthy nations; it has only prevented poor ones, unable by means of fair competition to do by conquest what they could not effect by perseverance in arts and industry; for, in other respects, though it makes the prosperity of a nation more dependant =sic= on wealth, and more independent of violence; it prevents any nation from preserving its political importance after it loses its riches. It does not by any means interrupt that progress by which poor nations gradually rise up and rival richer ones in arts. It has not done away the advantages that arise from superior industry and attention to business, or from the gradual introduction of knowledge amongst the more ignorant, thereby lessening their inferiority, and tending to bring nations to a level; on the contrary, by increasing the advantages, and securing the gradual triumphs gained by arts and industry, from the violence of war, it makes wealth a more desirable object, and the loss of it a greater misfortune. It tends to augment the natural propensity that there is in poor nations to equal richer ones {22}, although it, at the same time, augments the difficulty of accomplishing their intentions.

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The superior energy of poverty and necessity which leads men, under this pressure, to act incessantly in whatever way they have it in their power to act, and that seems likely to bring them on a level with those that are richer, is then the ground-work of the rise and fall of nations, as well as of individuals. This tendency is sometimes favoured by particular circumstances, and sometimes it is counteracted by them; but its operation is incessant, and it has never yet failed in producing its effect, for the triumph of poverty over wealth on the great scale as on the small, though very irregular in its pace, has continued without interruption from the earliest records to the present moment.

— {22} The present inferiority of Poland, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, and Portugal, compared with the rank they held in former times, is easily accounted for by looking at the scale of their revenues. --

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CHAP. III.

Of the Nations that rose to Wealth and Power previously to the Conquests in Asia and Africa, and the Causes which ruined them.

Previous to the conquests made by Alexander the Great, the history of ancient nations is confused, incomplete, and inaccurate.

During the contests of his successors, the intricacy and confusion are still continued, but materials are more plentiful, more accurate, and more authentic.

During the first period, excepting what is contained in sacred history, a few detached facts, collected by writers long after, are our only guides in judging of the situation of ancient states, some of which consisted of great empires, and others of single cities possessed of a very small territory.

Add to this, that great and striking events occupied almost exclusively the attention of historians. The means by which those events were produced were considered as of lesser importance.

So far, however, as the present inquiry can be elucidated, although materials are few, yet, by adhering to a distinct plan, and keeping the object always before us, we may arrive at a conclusion.

The countries that appear to have been first inhabited were Syria and Egypt, {23} both of them situated on the borders of the Mediterranean Sea; and as early as any authentic records extend, those were great and powerful countries in which agriculture and population had made great progress, and into which commerce had already brought many of the luxuries of the East.

The Phoenicians, a people differing in name from those who were subjected to the Assyrian monarchs, occupied that part of Syria, now called the Levant, directly on the borders of the Mediterranean Sea; they were the first who rose to wealth and power by arts and com-

— {23} Reasons have been given in the preface for not taking any view of the situation of India, though, by its produce, it appears, at least of equal antiquity. -=-

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merce. Tyre and Sidon were the abodes of commerce long before the arrival of the Jews in the land of Canaan, situated in the adjacent country, with whom, in the days of David and Solomon, the Phoenicians were on terms of friendship and alliance, {24} assisting the latter to carry on commerce, and enrich his people. (See Appendix B.) =sic —there is none.=

The whole coast of the Mediterranean lay open to them for navigation, as did also the Grecian islands, and as their own soil was barren, they purchased the necessaries of life, giving in exchange the rich stuffs they had manufactured, and the produce of the East of which they almost exclusively possessed the commerce.

The Egyptians were possessed of the most fertile soil in the world, bounded by the Mediterranean Sea on the north, and on the east and west by barren deserts. Their country was of a triangular form, and watered by the Nile, which, passing through it in its greatest extent, runs nearly down the middle.

Thus situated, in the country depending on the Nile for its fertility, and on all sides protected from enemies, it was exceedingly natural to cultivate the arts of peace, and it was not possible that it should be divided into many different nations, as in other countries in early times was the case, when sovereignty rose from parental authority, and when there was no natural bond between the heads of different families.

The great abundance with which the inhabitants were supplied, in years when the Nile overflowed in a favourable manner, and the uncertainty of future plenty were inducements for accumulation and foresight, which are not equally necessary in countries where the important circumstances of plenty or want do not depend on one single event over the whole face of a country, separated, besides, from others by a sea, which they could not navigate, and by deserts not very easy to pass over.

The difficulties of transporting corn, which were sufficient to deter the Egyptians from depending on a supply from other parts, did not, however, prevent other nations from applying to them in times of scarcity, and accordingly it was the granary of the ancient world.

— {24} For farther particulars of this commerce see the Digression on the Trade to India. --

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To those natural advantages, the Egyptians added some others, different in their nature, but not less precious.



They enjoyed a mild government, and an admirable and simple code of laws. Their docility and obedience have never been equalled, and as one maxim, was, to admit of no person being idle, it is evident that the population must have increased rapidly, and that there must have been an impossibility to employ the whole labour of so many hands on the means of providing subsistence in a country, where the manners were simple, the soil fertile, and the wants few.

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The surplus of the industry of Egypt appears to have been at the disposal of the sovereigns to whom all the lands belonged, and for which they exacted a rent in kind, as is the custom among the native powers on both peninsulas of India to this day. By that means, they were enabled to produce those stupendous works which have been the admiration and wonder of all succeeding generations, and of every nation. The city of Thebes, with the labyrinth; Memphis, the canals, and the pyramids would all be incredible, had not their singular structure preserved those latter efforts of industry from the ravages of time, and left them nearly entire to the present day.

The Phoenicians were a colony from that great country; for the Egyptians in general had a dislike to the sea. It is well known, however, that people who live immediately on the coast have a propensity to navigation, and it is probable that those Egyptians who left their own fruitful land to settle on the barren borders of Syria, were from the delta of Lower Egypt, which lies on the sea coast, and is intersected by a number of branches of the river Nile. {25}

It is not surprising that such a colony, following the natural propensity to naval affairs, and carrying with it the arts of dying and weaving, together with whatever else the Egyptians knew, should become under the influence of necessity, and in a favourable situation for arts and commerce, as much celebrated for commercial riches, as their mother country had long been for agriculture and the cultivation of the sciences.

— {25} That the Phoenicians were from Egypt is not doubted, and their becoming a totally different people from being on a different soil and in a different situation, is a strong proof of the influence of physical circumstances on the characters of nations. ==

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Tyre accordingly is the first example of a city becoming rich and powerful by arts and commerce, and though few details are known, yet those are of a very decided character.

The pride of the Tyrians appears to have been the cause of their fall, and that pride was occasioned by the possession of wealth, far beyond that of any other people then in the world. While they were great they aimed at monopoly, and were partly the cause of the rapid decay of Jerusalem. After the death of Solomon, they founded a colony, well situated for the extension of their own trade, which consisted chiefly in bringing the rich produce of Arabia, and India, into the western world. Carthage was placed on the south coast of the Mediterranean to the west of Egypt, so as never to have any direct intercourse with India itself, while it lay extremely well for distributing the merchandize, brought by the Tyrians, from thence in the interior of Africa, Spain, Sicily, Italy, and the parts that lay distant from the mother city. {26}

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From the extent of its territory and situation, Tyre could only be wealthy; it never could be powerful, as the great Assyrian monarchy, which lay immediately to the eastward, prevented the possibility of its extention; and, as to power at sea, there was =sic= at that time no contests on that element; the most then that could be expected was, that it should have sufficient strength to protect itself, which, being on a small island, very near the shore, was not difficult. If Alexander the Great had not joined it to the land by an earthen mound, or mole, Tyre could never have been taken till some other power got the superiority by sea; which could not have been till after the Romans had conquered Carthage.

Babylon, which was the centre of the Assyrian empire, and commu-

— {26} The best account of the commodities in which the commerce of the Tyrians consisted, as well as the best description of their wealth, and the cause of the downfall is to be found in Ezekiel, chap. xxvi. and the two following. It is perfectly distinct and conclusive with respect to the principal points of wealth, pride, and luxury founded on wealth.

The Tyre here spoken of is not the same taken by the king of Babylon, or Assyrian monarch long before Alexander's time, which only appears to have been a settlement on the main land belonging to the same people, and subject to the same prince. --

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nicated with the eastern part of Asia, by the river Euphrates, and by the Persian Gulf with India, was, as Memphis, of Egypt, a capital; but the Assyrians were not protected on all sides, like the Egyptians, from foreign inroads; they consequently did not cultivate the arts of peace and the sciences so much. On the east, were the Medes and Persians; on the north, the Scythians and Partheans; but, as the territory was fertile and extensive, under one of the finest climates of the world, the monarchs became rich and luxurious, which was the cause of their subjection, and they were always subdued by people less advanced in luxury than themselves.

The whole of these countries, Egypt, Syria, Phoenicia, and Greece, fell under the arms of Alexander. This was the first great and general revolution in that part of the world, from which Carthage alone, of all the ancient seats of wealth and greatness, escaped.

The triumph of Alexander was, no doubt, that of a great captain; but, except the destruction of Tyre, and the foundation of Alexandria, which changed the principal seat of commerce, there was nothing durable in his conquests. The reigning families were destroyed, and the dynasties altered; but, under his immediate successors, the Egyptians, the inhabitants of Syria, and the Greeks, had different masters.



It was after the foundation of Alexandria, and under the successors of Alexander, that Egypt became really a commercial country. Its wealth had hitherto arisen rather from the great population and fertility of the country, than from any participation in the trade to the East; but after Alexandria was founded, the seat of empire, which had always been in Upper Egypt, was established in Lower Egypt, canals were dug, and every means taken to make the passage from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean as commodious as possible.

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Carthage began then to decline. Tyre was no more: and Alexandria was situated on the same side of the Mediterranean Sea, in a much more advantageous position for receiving the productions of the East, and equally advantageous for distributing them.

The Phoenicians never recovered their importance; and indeed it was not the interest of the Persian monarch to encourage trade by [end of page #24] the old channel of the Red Sea and Rhinocolura, but rather to come directly through the Persian Gulf, ascend the Euphrates, and cross the country to the borders of the Mediterranean, which was a way not much more expensive than by the old rout =sic=. As the greater part of the produce imported was to be consumed at the luxurious court of Persia, and in the numerous rich cities with which that empire was filled, there is no doubt that the way by the Persian Gulf was by much the least expensive; for even Solomon, King of Jerusalem, long before, though he lived at one extremity of the journey, and had ships for trading by the other channel, had carried on trade by this way; and, in order to facilitate it, had laid the foundation of the magnificent city of Palmyra, nearly in the middle between the Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf of Persia.

Whilst those revolutions were effecting amongst the ancient nations on the continents of Asia and Africa, the Greeks, who had been the most barbarous of all, became, by degrees, the most refined; their learning and arts were all founded, originally, on the Egyptian learning; and though at last they carried them to a higher pitch than their masters; yet Egypt, for many centuries, was looked up to, even by the Greeks, as they were afterwards for a number of centuries by the Romans, and the other nations of the world.

The education of the Greeks; very different in some of the states from what it was in others, had, however, the same tendency in all; that tendency was to invigorate the body, and instruct and strengthen the mind. While this continued, we see them at first resist the Persians, though in very unequal numbers; and, at last, the Grecian vigour, discipline, and skill, subdue the whole of the then civilized world.

After the conquests of Alexander, the wealth and luxury of Asia were introduced into Greece, and indeed the Greeks refined on that luxury. At Athens and the other cities which might be said to give manners to the rest, shews, and theatrical representations were after that more attended to than the military art; and cabal, intrigue, and corruption, were introduced in the place of that manly, pure, and admirable love of their country, for which, in less wealthy, but in better [end of page #25] times, they had been so highly distinguished above every other people.

This was the situation of things when a nation, less advanced in arts, and uncorrupted with the possession of wealth, but which was still considered by the Greeks as barbarous, prepared at once to subdue the whole of them, and give a still more striking proof of the triumph which vigour and energy obtain over those who have only wealth; the possession of which, undoubtedly, gives a certain means of defence, though one

very unequal to resisting a nation when excited by the desire of sharing its possessions, and yet vigorous and strong, not being unnerved by the enjoyment of ease and luxury.
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CHAP. IV.

Of the Romans.—the Causes of their Rise under the Republic, and of their Decline under the Emperors.—the great Error generally fallen into with respect to the Comparison between Rome and Carthage; Proofs that it is wrong, and not at all applicable to France and England.

In the rise and greatness of Rome, there was nothing accidental, all was the effect of the most unrelenting perseverance in a plan, at first, of petty robbery; which, as it extended, was honoured with the title of conquest; and, as it succeeded, has been considered as deserving the appellation of great.

It is true, that there were talents exercised, and methods practised, which deserve the highest praise, and are worthy of imitation. It is impossible to withhold admiration at the recital, but the end in view, from the beginning, cannot be justified.

Although neither the end in view, nor, generally speaking, the means employed, are deserving of imitation, yet we shall find more advantage from examining them than from the history of any other nation.

In the first place, so far as prosperity depends on good conduct, and good conduct depends on the state of the mind, the Romans are a most striking example. While they preserved the manners that first occasioned their rise, they continued to become more powerful; as they forsook these manners, their power abandoned them; and they, after having conquered all with whom they ever contended, because they had more skill or less corruption, were themselves overcome, by men infinitely inferior to what they had been, before they became enervated and corrupt.

The smallness of the territory, which the Romans at first possessed, laid them under the necessity of extending it, and drawing resources from their neighbours; who, being brave and hardy, could not be easily either robbed or subdued. [end of page #27]

The Romans began with robbing, and finished with subduing them all, but the modes they practised deserve attention.

It is in vain to think that superior bravery or skill would alone have done the business; those are often triumphant, but occasionally defeated. The Romans owed their gradual aggrandizement to a line of conduct that, whether in good or ill fortune, tended to make them the sovereigns of the world. A line of conduct in which, if it had been in human nature to persevere, they would have preserved the situation to which they had elevated themselves.

Along with this decided conduct, which seems to have arisen from something innate in themselves, or to have been occasioned by some circumstance that is not known, the

Romans possessed a number of methods, in addition to personal bravery, by which they advanced the end they had in view.

When the kings were abolished, Rome was only a small, rude, irregular place, and a receptacle for plunder; inhabited, however, by men who had great strength of mind, and who possessed a great command over themselves.

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Their moral code was suitable to their situation. To rob, plunder, and destroy an enemy was a merit; to betray a trust, or to defraud a fellow citizen, was a crime of the greatest magnitude. With the Romans, oaths were inviolable; and attachment to the public was the greatest virtue.

As they had neither arts nor commerce, and but very little territory, plunder was their means of subsistence; it was to them a regular source of wealth, and it was distributed with perfect impartiality; they were in fact an association; the wealth of the public, and of the individual, were, to a certain degree, the same; they were as an incorporated company, in which private interest conspired with the love of their country to forward the general interest.

Plundering and pillage, as well as the modes of dividing the spoil, were reduced to system and method; and the religious observation of oaths was conducive to the success of both. Every soldier was sworn to be faithful to his country, both in fighting its battles, and in giving a rigid account of whatever might be the fruits of the contest. [end of page #28]

The moveables and lands taken from an enemy were sold for the benefit of the public; the former went wholly for that purpose, and the latter were divided into two equal portions; one of which, like the moveables, went into the general stock, the other was distributed to the poorer citizens, at the price of a small acknowledgement.

The consequence of this system was, a perpetual state of warfare; in which it was clear that the armies must obtain a superiority over neighbours, who but occasionally employed themselves in acts of hostility.

From such a plan of operations it naturally followed that they must either have been subdued altogether, or come off in general with some advantage, otherwise it would have been impossible to proceed. Of this they seem to have been fully sensible; for, with them, it was a maxim never to conclude peace unless they were victorious, and never to treat with an enemy on their own territory.

Acting in this manner, and engaging in wars with different nations, unconnected with each other by treaties of alliance; without any common interest, or even any knowledge of each others =sic= affairs; ignorant, in general, even of what was going on, the Romans had, in most cases, a great advantage over those with whom they had to contend.

There were in Italy some very warlike people, and those were nearest to Rome itself. The contest with those was long obstinate, and repeatedly renewed; but still the system of conquest was followed; and at last prevailed.



The consular government was favourable, also, for perpetual warfare. Those temporary chief magistrates did not enjoy their dignity long enough to become torpid or careless, but were interested in distinguishing themselves by the activity of their conduct while in office; whereas, in hereditary power, or elective monarchy, the personal feelings of the chief, which must have an influence upon the conduct of a nation, must sometimes, happily for mankind, lead him to seek peace and quietness. {27}

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— {27} During the interruption of consular government, by the decemvirs, though they did not reign long, the energy of the people was suspended, and their enemies found them much less difficult to resist. --

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Even when the Gauls burned the city, the Romans yielded no advantages in treaty; they abandoned it to its fate, retired to Veii, and renewed the war.

In the art of war, the Romans had those advantages which men generally possess in whatever is the natural bent of their genius, and their constant occupation. Every thing that continual attention, experience, or example, could do to increase their success was attended to; and their hardy manner of education and living, with constant exercise, enabled them to practice =sic= what other men were unable to perform.

They accustomed themselves to heavier armour than any other nation. Their rate of marching was between four and five miles an hour, for four or five hours together, loaded with a weight of above 60lb. Their weapons for exercising were double the usual weight, and they were inured to running and leaping when completely armed.

The success of the Romans in Europe was not sufficiently rapid, nor were the nations they conquered sufficiently rich to bring on that luxury and relaxation of discipline, which were the consequences in those victories obtained in Egypt, Syria, and Greece; nor were the soldiers the only persons inured to such exercises, for the Roman citizens practised the same at home, in the Campus Martius.

No people educated with less hardiness of body, or a less firm attachment to their country, could have undergone, or would have submitted, to the terrible fatigues of a Roman soldier, which were such, that, even at a very late period of the republic, they were known to ask as a favour to be conducted to battle, as a relief from the fatigues they were made to undergo in the camp. {28}

In addition to this unremitting and very severe discipline, and to the inventions of many weapons, machines, and stratagems, unknown to other nations, they had the great wisdom to examine very carefully, if they found an enemy enjoy any advantage, in what that advantage consisted. If it arose from any fault of their own, it was rectified

— {28} This happened under Sylla, in the war against Mithridates, which immediately preceded the fall of the republic. --

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without delay; and if it arose from any new mode of fighting, or superior weapons, they adopted methods with such promptitude that the advantage was only once in favour of the enemy. {29}

The Asiatic methods of fighting with elephants, though new, never disconcerted them twice. If they knew of any superior art that they could imitate, it was done; and when the advantage arose from natural circumstances, and they could not themselves become masters of the art, they took other methods. Expert slingers from the Balearian Islands, and bowmen from Crete, were added to their legions; as, in modern times, field-ordnance and riflemen are added to ours.

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It is impossible not to view with astonishment and admiration such wise conduct in such haughty men, whose simple citizens treated the sovereigns of other nations as equals; but that greatness of mind had a well-founded cause. They knew that the physical powers of men are limited, and that to obtain a victory with the greatest ease possible it was necessary to join together all the advantages that could be obtained; they knew, also, that war is altogether a trial of force, and a trial of skill, and that neither of the contending parties can act by rule, but must be guided by circumstances and the conduct of the enemy. {30}

This conduct of the Romans in war was supported by the laws at home. The equal distribution of lands, their contempt for commerce and luxury, preserved the population of the country in that state where good soldiers are to be obtained. The wealthy, in any state, cannot be numerous; neither are they hardy to bear the fatigue. Their servants, and the idle, the indolent, and unprincipled persons they have about them are totally unfit, and a wretched populace, degraded by want, or inured to ease and plenty are equally unfit.

— {29} This conduct appears the more admirable to those who live in the present times that in the revolutionary war with the French, who invented a number of new methods of fighting, and had recourse to new stratagems, the regular generals opposed to them never altered their modes of warfare, but let themselves be beat in the most regular way possible. One single general (the Archduke Charles) did not think himself above the circumstances of the case, and his success was proportioned to his merit.

{30} The copying the form and structure of a Carthaginian galley that was stranded. ==

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It has been a favourite opinion among many writers on political economy that artists and workmen are cowardly and unfit for soldiers; but experience does not warrant that conclusion; though it is certain that, according to the manner the Romans carried on war, the bodily fatigue was greater than men bred up promiscuously to trades of different sorts could in general undergo.

So long as the Romans had enemies to contend with, from whom they obtained little, the manners and laws, the mode of education, and the government of their country, remained pure as at first. Their business, indeed, became more easy; for the terror of their name, their inflexibility, and the superior means they had of bringing their powers into action, all served to facilitate their conquests. But when they conquered Carthage, and begun =sic= to taste the fruits of wealth, their ground-work altered by degrees, and the superstructure became less solid. {31}

Wealth, as we have already seen, was confined to Asia and Africa, and of it the Carthaginians possessed a great share. It has long been the opinion adopted by writers

on those subjects that the Carthaginians, as being a commercial and a trading nation, were quite an unequal match for the Romans; that in Rome all was virtue, public spirit, and every thing that was great and noble, while at Carthage all was venal, vile, and selfish. A spirit of war and conquest reigned, say they, in one place together with a spirit of glory, in the other a spirit of gain presided over private actions and public counsels.

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This is all very true, and very well said, with respect to the fact, but with respect to the cause there is one of the greatest errors into which a number of men of discernment and ability have ever fallen. {32}

The true state of the case is easily to be understood, if we only

— {31} It will be seen, in the subsequent part of this inquiry, that, in the present mode of warfare, the Romans would not have had equal advantage.—Skill, and not personal strength, is now the great object, and money to purchase arms and ammunition is the next.

{32} M. Montesquieu, notwithstanding his very superior knowledge, accuracy, and acuteness, enlarges upon this subject; and never takes any notice of the corrupt, mercenary, and degraded state into which Rome fell when it became as rich as Carthage. --

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throw aside, for a moment, the favour for the brave warrior, and the dislike to the selfish trader. The fact was, that Rome, in the days of its vigour, when it was poor, attacked Carthage in the days of its wealth and of its decline; but let us compare Carthage before its fall to Rome in the time of the Gordians, of Maximus, or Gallus, and see which was most vile, most venal, or most cowardly. This would at least be a fair comparison; and nothing relative to the two cities is more certain, than that Rome became far more degraded, in the character both of citizens and soldiers, than ever Carthage was.

Wealth procured by commerce, far from degrading a nation more than wealth procured by conquest, does not degrade it near so much; and the reason is easily understood. Whenever a commercial nation becomes too corrupted and luxurious, its wealth vanishes, and the evil corrects itself. Whereas, a country that lives by tribute received from others, may continue for a considerable while to enjoy its revenues. This is so evident, that it would be absurd to enlarge on the subject.

The reduction of Carthage, and the wealth it produced at Rome, soon brought on a change in the education, the nature, and the manner of acting, both in private life and public concerns. The conquest of Greece, Syria, and Egypt, completed the business; and the same people who had conquered every enemy, while they retained their poverty and simplicity, were themselves conquered, when they became rich and luxurious.. =sic=

After the fall of Carthage {33}, Rome was fundamentally changed; but the armies still continued to act. Their ambition was now strengthened by avarice, and became ten times more active and dangerous to other nations. They then carried on war in every

direction, and neither the riches of the East, nor the poverty of the North, could secure other nations from the joint effects of ambition and avarice.

But the Romans did not only get gold and wealth by their con-

— {33} Considering circumstances, it is wonderful that the Carthaginians made so excellent a stand against the Romans: for a long time they were victorious; they fought excellently, even at the battle of Zama. The Romans could not say so much for themselves, when afterwards they were attacked by the barbarians. ==-

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quests; they became corrupted by adopting the manners of the inhabitants of countries that had long been drowned in every voluptuous pleasure. Then it was that they ceased to trust so much to their bravery for their conquests; they began to employ politics and intrigue to divide their enemies. With the poorer states, they found gold a very useful weapon, and, with the richer, they employed weapons of iron.

The terror of the Roman name, the actual force that they could exert against a powerful enemy, and the facility with which a weak one could be silenced, till a proper opportunity arrived for his destruction, were all calculated, and force and fraud were both called into action.

Whatever truth or honour the Romans had amongst themselves, they at least had none towards other nations. They, in the most wanton manner, interfered in every quarrel between strangers; and, whenever it suited their conveniency to make war, they begun without almost being at the pains to search for a pretext. They set themselves up above all opinion, while, at the same time, they required all nations to submit to theirs.

In a city where all great offices were elective, the evil effects of the introduction of riches were soon displayed. The first great changes were, that the people became corrupted, dependent, and degraded; fortunes became unequally divided; the provinces groaned under the heavy contributions of generals and proconsuls; and, at last, the country splitting into factions, the government was overturned.

The splendour of Rome augmented, as a fiery meteor shines most bright before it falls; but the means by which it obtained the ascendancy over other nations had long been at an end.

The same laws that had been found excellent, when the state was small and poor, did not answer now that it had become great and splendid. The freedom of the city, and the title and privileges of a Roman citizen had been very widely extended; they were therefore become an illusion, and a very dangerous one for the public weal; they served as a foundation for cabal and intrigue of every description.

Towards the latter days, after all those internal causes of decline, which are common to other nations had rendered Rome feeble, several [end of page #34] external ones began to act.

The provinces became exhausted, and those who ruled them gradually retained more and more of the money. {34} Thus, while the oppression of the provinces was augmenting, the resources of the state were daily on the decline.

The first effect of conquests had been to free the people at home from taxes; and when, in a state of poverty and simplicity, the effect was advantageous and tended to preserve that spirit by which the Roman empire aggrandized itself. After wealth flowed in from the destruction of Carthage, donations and shews were in use. The Roman populace, idle and degraded, clamoured for corn and public games. It is almost as difficult to conceive the degree to which the character of the people was degraded, as it is to give credit to the wealth and luxury of the great, in the latter days of the empire.

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Agriculture was neglected; and the masters of the world, who had obtained every thing for which they contended, while they preserved their purity of manners, now became unable either to govern others, to protect themselves, or even to provide food. Sicily and Africa supplied the Roman people with bread, long before the empire had become feeble, and even at the very time when it is reckoned to have been in its greatest splendour in the Augustan age. {35} The cause of its decline was fixed beyond the power of human nature to counteract: it began by unnerving the human character, and therefore its progress was accelerated and became irresistible.

Of all the nations, into which luxury is introduced, none feels its effects

— {34} The detached facts related of the wealth of the governors of provinces, compared with the poverty of the state, are, if not incredible, at least, difficult to conceive. They are, however, too well attested to admit of a doubt, though the details are not sufficiently circumstantial to enable us to know exactly how they happened.

{35} In the time of Augustus, the people depended on the supplies from Sicily and Egypt, in so complete a manner, that, if those failed, there was no remedy; and, at one time, when there was only a sufficient quantity of grain for twenty-four hours, that emperor was determined to have put an end to his existence: but the supply arrived in time. Such is the terrible situation into which a people is thrown, when agriculture and industry are abandoned, and when the population becomes too great for the production of the country!! This, however, was a very recent change. Till some time after the conquest of Egypt, Greece, and Sicily, it could not have happened. --

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so severely as one where it comes by conquest. A people of conquerors, who are wealthy, must, at all events, be under military authority, and that is never a desirable circumstance; depending also on revenues which come without the aid of industry, they must become doubly degraded.

With such a people, it would be fair to compare the Carthaginians before their fall; for, to say nothing more than that the principle of traffic and commerce is founded on morality and virtue, in comparison to that trade of pillage which robbed and ruined all nations; the physical situation of the Carthaginians was preferable to that of the Romans in the days of their decline. This is evident, from the noble struggle that the former made, and the contemptible manner in which the mistress of the world terminated her career.

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Montesquieu bewails the fate of a monarch, who is oppressed by a party that prevails after his fall. His enemies are his historians; and this reflection is employed in mitigation of the crimes imputed to Tarquin; but, surely, if true, on that occasion, it is no less so with respect to Carthage. All the historians that give us the character of the two nations were Romans and of the victorious party; yet most of them are more equitable than the historians of modern times, for they had not seen their own country in its last state of degradation and misery. Those who now make the comparison have proper materials; and it is the business of the writers of history to free it from the errors into which cotemporary =sic= authors fall, whether from prejudice, or from want of knowing those events which happened after their days.

In the case of the Roman historians, the error arose from a combination of three different causes. In the first place, they compared Rome in its healthy days and its vigour, to Carthage in its decline.— They were, next to that, led into an error, by not knowing that all countries that have been long rich are liable to the same evils as Carthage. And, last of all, they wrote with a spirit of party, and a predilection =sic= in favour of Rome. These three causes are certain; and, perhaps, there was another. It is possible they did not dare to speak the truth, if they did know it.

It is true, that the human mind is not proof against the effect pro-[end of page #36] duced by what is splendid and brilliant; and that success in all cases diminishes, and, in some, does away the reproach naturally attached to criminality. It is also to be admitted, that in the Roman character there was a degree of courage and magnanimity that commands admiration, though the end to which it was applied was in itself detestable. Even in individual life (moral principle apart) there is something that diminishes the horror attendant on injustice and rapacity, when accompanied with courage and prodigality.

It is no less true, that the manners of commercial men, though their views are legitimate and their means fair, are prejudicial to them in the opinion of others. Individuals, gaining money by commerce, may sometimes have the splendour and magnanimity of princes; but nations that depend only on commerce for wealth never can. No nation, while it continues great or wealthy, can rid itself of the characteristic manners that attend the way in which it obtains its wealth and greatness. Merchants owe their wealth to a strict adherence to their interest, and they cannot help shewing it.

The cruelties of the Spaniards have not excited the detestation they deserved, because they were accompanied with courage, and crowned with success; and that nation found means, in the midst of the most horrible of human crimes, to preserve an appearance of greatness and dignity of character. But the Dutch, who have gained wealth, like the Carthaginians, and though they were conquerors, never quitted the character of merchants, and they never possessed dignity of character, though they triumphed by virtue, perseverance, and bravery, over that very Spain which did preserve her dignity.

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It is much more difficult to reconcile the character of trading nations with the qualities that are improperly called great, than that of any other. A commercial nation naturally will be just; it may be generous; but it never can become extravagant and wasteful; neither can it be incumbered with the lazy and the idle; for the moment that either of these takes place, commerce flies to another habitation. {36}

— {36} It follows, from this, that a commercial people never become so degraded as those who obtain wealth by other means; but, then, it also follows, that they exist a much shorter time after they become so, and that wealth and power leave them much more speedily. --

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The purpose of this inquiry being, to examine the effects of wealth, and its operation in the decline of nations; it appears to be of considerable importance to remove the error, in which historians and other writers have so long persevered, relative to the two greatest republics of antiquity; particularly as their example applies the most readily, and is the most frequently applied to two rival nations of modern times; although the parallel is extremely imperfect in almost every particular, and in some directly inadmissible. {37}

It cannot but be attended with some advantage to set this matter right. It may, perhaps, tend in some degree to prevent the French from attempting to imitate the Romans, when we shew them that a state, whether a whole people, or a single city, exempted from taxes, and living by the tribute of other countries, must, at all events, be dependent on its armies. In short, military government and tributary revenue are inseparable. We see how closely they were connected in ancient Rome. It is fit that its imitators should know at what rate they pay (and in what coin) for those exemptions from taxes, occasioned by the burthens imposed upon other nations.

In general we find, that all nations are inclined to push to the extreme those means by which they have attained wealth or power; and it will also be found that their ruin is thereby brought on with greater rapidity.

— {37} The reader must see the allusion is to England and France; but, in point of time, their situation is absolutely different. France is farther advanced in luxury than England. Rome was far behind Carthage. The Romans exceeded their rivals in perseverance; in following up their plans, and in attention to their liberty. The contrary is the case with France and England.

The French, indeed, resemble the Romans in restlessness and ambition; but not in their mode of exerting the former, or of gratifying the latter: the resemblance, therefore, is a very faint one, even where it does hold at all. The English, in whatever they may resemble the Carthaginians, such as they have been represented, neither do it in their

want of faith and honour, nor in their progress towards decline. The different wars with Rome, in which Carthage came

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off a loser and became tributary, though only for a limited time, were not the only causes of its decline. The trade of Alexandria, which was better situated for commerce, had diminished the resources of Carthage; so that it was, in every sense of the word, a falling nation. It will be seen, in the subsequent part of this inquiry, how, from the different modes of making war and also the different effects of wealth in the present times, the comparison is still less founded. --

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Had the Romans stopped the career of conquest at an earlier period, they probably would not have so soon sunk into a state of corruption. It is very probable, that if Caesar had never attempted the useless conquest of Britain, he never would have succeeded in conquering the liberties of his own country. The reputation of having conquered an island, and the passage of the British Channel, made way for the passage of the Rubicon, and the battle of Pharsalia.

Conquerors must be paid as well as common soldiers: and though every man may have his price, and money and dignities may be a sufficient reward for the most part, there are some who despise any reward under that of royal power.—Caesar was one of those men; and both ancient and modern history shew, that though, perhaps, in his abilities, he has had no equal, there have been others who have rated theirs at as high a price.

The Romans at last became sensible, when too late, that they had pushed the spirit of conquest too far; and, as they had something great in all they did, they had the magnanimity to retract their error.

The greatest extent of the Roman empire being from the north of England to the Gulf of Persia, they consequently abandoned Britain, and those conquests in Asia, which were the most difficult to keep. The river Euphrates became the boundary, the Emperor Adrian having, in a voluntary manner, given up all the country to the north of that river, situated on its left bank.

The decline of the empire might have been as regular as the rise of the republic, had it not been for the different characters of the emperors; some of whom did honour to human nature, from their possessing almost every virtue, while others were such monsters, that their crimes excite the highest degree of horror and indignation, and are almost beyond credibility.

It is but justice to the Romans to observe, that though they robbed and conquered, yet their policy was to instruct, improve, and civilize those whom they had robbed and conquered, wherever they stood in want of it. They aimed, in every case, at making the



most of the circumstances in which they were placed, and they very truly conceived, that it was more profitable and advantageous, to rule over a civilized than a rude people. [end of page #39]

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After the great influx of wealth had corrupted Rome, its public expenses increased at an enormous rate, till at last that portion of the tribute exacted from the provinces, which it pleased the armies and the generals to remit to Rome, became unequal to the expenditure. Taxation of every kind then became necessary, in Italy itself, and the evils that attend the multiplication of imposts were greatly augmented by the ignorant manner in which they were laid on, by men who understood little but military affairs, added to the severe manner in which were they =sic= levied by a rude, imperious, and debauched soldiery.

The characters of soldier and citizen, which had been so long united, ceased to have any connection. Soon after this, the corruption of manners became general; and, at last, the Romans unable to find soldiers amongst themselves, were obliged to retain barbarians to fight in their defence, {38} and to bribe the Persians, and other nations, to leave them in a state of tranquility.

No nation that ever yet submitted to pay tribute, has long preserved its independence. The Romans knew this well; and if any one, having had recourse to that expedient, has escaped ruin, it has been from some other circumstance than its own exertion; or it has sometimes been the effort of despair when pushed to extremity.

Though, in many respects, Montesquieu's opinion of the affairs of Rome is by no means to be taken, yet his short account of the whole is unexceptionally just.

"Take," says that able and profound writer, "this compendium of the Roman history. The Romans subdued all nations by their maxims; but, when they had succeeded in doing so, they could no longer preserve their republican form of government. It was necessary to change the plan, and maxims contrary to their first, being introduced, they were divested of all their grandeur."

This was literally the case; but then it is clear that this compendium, only includes the secondary causes, and their effects; for the perseverance in maxims till they had obtained their end, and then changing

— {38} This is exactly one of the charges brought against the Carthaginians in the last Punic war. -=-

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them, which was not an act of the will, must have been occasioned by some cause inherent in their situation, which had gradually changed.

In searching for this cause we shall be very much assisted, and the conclusion will be rendered more certain, by observing in what particular circumstances, they resembled other nations who had undergone a similar changes. =sic=

In doing this, we find the inquiry wonderfully abridged indeed, and the conclusion reduced nearly to a mathematical certainty, by observing that the change of maxims, that is to say, the change in ways of thinking, whenever it has taken place, has followed soon after the introduction of wealth and refinement, which change manners, and consequently maxims.

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Wealth, acquired by conquest, was incompatible with that austere virtue and independent principle which form the basis of republican prosperity.

As all public employments were obtained by the favour of the people; and as all wealth and power were obtained by the channels of public employment; bribery and corruption, which cannot take place in a poor republic, became very common in this wealthy one; so that this republican government, so constituted, lost all those advantages it possessed while it was poor.

Had the murderers of Julius Caesar, either understood the real corruption of the commonwealth, or foreseen that a new master would rise up, they would never have destroyed that admirable man. Had Rome not been ready to receive a master, Julius Caesar, with all his ambition, would never have grasped at the crown.

In nations that obtain wealth by commerce, manufactures, or any other means than by conquests, the corruption of the state is not naturally so great. The wealth originates in the people, and not in the state; and, besides that they are more difficult to purchase, there is less means of doing so, and less inducement; neither can they, being the sources of wealth themselves, become so idle and corrupted. {39}

— {39} The wild and ungovernable direction that the French revolution took originated chiefly in the creation of assignats, which not only exempted the people from taxes at first, but had the effect of producing an artificial and temporary degree of wealth, that [end of page #41] enabled vast numbers, either in the pay of others, or at their own expense, to make cabals and politics their whole study. Rome never was in such a licentious state, because, before the citizens got into that situation, the military power was established. ==-

In the ancient nations that fell one after another, we have seen the young and vigorous subdue the more wealthy and luxurious; or we have seen superior art and skill get the better of valour and ignorance; but, in the fall of the Roman empire, the art and skill were all on the side of those who fell, and the vigour of those who conquered was not so powerful an agent as the very low and degraded state into which the masters of the world had themselves fallen.

It is by no means consistent with the plan of this work, nor is it any way necessary for the inquiry, to enter into the particular details of the degraded and miserable state to which the Romans were reduced; insomuch, that those who emigrated previously to its fall, and settled amongst barbarous nations, found themselves more happy than they had been, being freed from taxation and a variety of oppressions.

Though the Roman people are, of all others, those whose rise and fall are the most distinctly known; yet, in some circumstances, their case does not apply to nations in general. Had they cultivated commerce and the arts, with the same success that they

pursued conquest, they must have become wealthy at a much earlier period, and they would not have found themselves in possession of an almost boundless empire, composed of different nations, subdued by force, and requiring force to be preserved.

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The decline of nations, who become rich by means of industry, may be natural; but, the fall of a nation, owing its greatness to the subjugation of others, must be necessary. Human affairs are too complicated and varied to admit of perfect equality, and the relative situations of mankind are always changing; yet, in some instances, perhaps, changes might be obviated, or protracted, by timely preventives. But there is no possibility of keeping them long in so unnatural a situation, as that of a nation of wealthy and idle people, ruling over and keeping in subjection others who are more hardy, poorer, and more virtuous, than themselves.

Before the western empire fell, the following causes of its weakness were arrived at a great height. [end of page #42]

Manners were corrupted to the highest degree; there was neither public nor private virtue; intrigue, cabal, and money, did every thing.

Property was all in the hands of a few; the great mass of the people were wretchedly poor, mutinous, and idle.

Italy was unable to supply its inhabitants with food. The lands were in the possession of men, who, by rapacity in the provinces, had acquired large incomes, and to whom cultivation was no object; the country was either laid out in pleasure grounds, or neglected.

The revenues of the state were wasted on the soldiers; in shews to keep the people occupied, and on the purchase of corn, brought to Rome from a distance.

The load of taxes was so great, that the Roman citizens envied the barbarians, and thought they could not be worse than they were, should they fall under a foreign yoke. All attachment to their country was gone; and every motive to public spirit had entirely ceased to operate.

The old noble families, who alone preserved a sense of their ancient dignity, were neglected in times of quiet, and persecuted in times of trouble. They still preserved an attachment to their country, but they had neither wealth, power, nor authority.

The vile populace, having lost every species of military valour, were unable to recruit the armies; the defence, against the provinces which rebelled, was in the hands of foreign mercenaries; and Rome paid tribute to obtain peace from some of those she had insulted in the hour of her prosperity and insolence.

Gold corrupted all the courts of justice; there were no laws for the rich, who committed crimes with impunity; while the poor did the same through want, wretchedness, and despair.

In this miserable state of things, the poor, for the sake of protection, became a sort of partizans or retainers of the rich, whom they were ready to serve on all occasions: so that, except in a few forms, there was no trace left of the institutions that had raised the Romans above all other nations. [end of page #43]

CHAP. V.

Of the Cities and Nations that rose to Wealth and Power in the middle Ages, after the Fall of the Western Empire, and previously to the Discovery of the Passage to the East Indies by the Cape of Good Hope, and of America.—Different Effects of Wealth on Nations in cold and in warm Climates, and of the Fall of the Eastern Empire.

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After the fall of the western empire, the Italian states were the first that revived commerce in the west of Europe, which they may indeed be said alone to have kept alive, with the single exception of the city of Marseilles.

Venice had begun to flourish when the barbarians took Rome; and Florence afforded a refuge for those of the nobility who escaped from their terrible grasp: but, for four centuries after, till the time of Charlemagne, there was, indeed, nothing that had either the semblance of power, wealth, or greatness, in Europe. The Saracens, as early as the seventh century, had got possession of Egypt, and had extended their ravages in Asia, to the borders of the Black Sea, having in vain endeavoured to take the city of Constantinople, and make themselves masters of the eastern empire, as their rivals, the Goths, had conquered that in the west.

The momentary greatness which shone forth in the reign of Charlemagne was, in many respects, like that during the reign of Alexander the Great. The power of each depended on the individual character of the man, and their empires, extended by their courage and skill, fell to pieces immediately after they were no more.

As the only permanent change that Alexander had effected was that of removing the chief seat of commerce from Phoenicia to the southern border of the Mediterranean Sea; so, the only permanent effect of the reign of Charles the Great was, his extending Christianity, and some degree of civilization, to the north of the Danube; {40} thus bring-

— {40} The people to the north of the Danube had never been subdued by the Romans. In the time of Charlemagne they were Pagans, and in a most rude state of barbarism. -=-

[end of page #44]

ing the borders of the Baltic Sea within the limits of the civilized world.

Charlemagne paved the way for the greatness of the Flemings, the Saxons, and the Hans Towns, which began to flourish a few centuries after his time; but his own country was never in a more abject situation than soon after his decease.

The Danes took and burned the city of Paris, and they conquered, settled, and gave its name to the present country of Normandy. {41}

It would throw no light on the subject of the present inquiry to notice the quarrels, the feuds, and revolutions, that took place during the dark ages, and the reign of the feudal system, previously to the time of the crusades; when a wild romantic spirit extended civilization a little more widely than before, and laid the foundation for a new order of things, and a new species of wealth and power, different from those of the ancient world, the extent of which was bounded by the fertile regions of the south.

The first holy war took place in the eleventh century, and commerce and industry were introduced into the north of Europe very soon after. The Danes, who alone had power by sea in those times, exercised it by piracies and seizing all merchant vessels; particularly such as passed the Sound, from the Baltic to the North Sea. This rendered it necessary for the cities that had commerce to carry on to associate for the sake of protection, as the Arabian merchants had formerly done by land, and do to this day, to prevent being robbed by those who live by hunting and depredation.

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This gave rise to the famous Hanseatic League, which began to become formidable towards the end of the twelfth century. {42}

As men living in northern countries have many wants unknown to those of the south, so the industry that began on the borders of the

— {41} They were equally successful in England, but that country was not then to be considered as making any part of that world, with the revolutions of which this inquiry is connected.

{42} There is a dispute relative to this: but, as no writers give it a later date, and some give it an earlier one, it is certain that it must have existed at that time. Many disputes never ascertain the point intended, yet clear up something else that is equally useful. --

[end of page #45]

Baltic was very different from that which had flourished in ancient times on those of the Mediterranean Sea.

In this new order of things, Flanders, for its fertility, might be compared to Egypt, and Holland to Phoenicia, from its want of territory: but clothing of a more substantial sort, and conveniences and pleasures of a different nature being necessary, industry took a different turn. Besides this, the nature of the governments, where men were more nearly upon an equality, made it necessary to provide for their wants in a very different way.

Instead of building pyramids for the tombs of kings, industry was employed in procuring comfort for those who inhabited the country; and instead of the greatest art being employed on the fabrication of fine linen, and dying of purple, making vessels of gold and silver, and every thing for the use of courts, the art of making warm clothing of wool, and of fishing and salting fish, occupied the attention of this new race of men.

The Flemish had three sources of wealth at one time: they possessed the depots of Indian produce, and dispersed it over the north of Europe; they were the first who excelled in the art of weaving, and in that of curing fish.

The towns of Flanders and Brabant were associated in the Hanseatic League, and continued rising from the twelfth to the middle of the sixteenth century, when several circumstances operated in bringing on their decline.

The Hanseatic association was one arising from the circumstances of the times and from necessity. It was an artificial connection or alliance, where towns, subject to different governments, acted as independent states, entering into a society which treated on a footing of equality with kings, and made war and peace like any single sovereign. It was not to be expected that such a sort of alliance could greatly outlive the

cause of its formation. But neither did the destruction of the league or federation, of necessity, draw along with it that of the towns of which it was composed. We shall see, however, that the general prosperity, and that of the individual members of the league, disappeared for the most part nearly together. [end of page #46]

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The Dutch were far inferior to the Flemings for natural advantages; but they acted under the influence of necessity, which spurred on their industry; and no nation ever shewed so well how powerful its operation is: so that, though they were at first behind the Flemings in commerce and manufactures, they got the better, and became more rich and powerful. While the persecution of Philip, who was King of Spain, while his brother Ferdinand, Emperor of Germany, was at the head of the Austrian dominions there, and was a dependant of the Spanish monarchs.

—While the persecution of Philip, uniting the authority of the hereditary dominions of Austria with that of Spain, compelled many of the most industrious artisans, of that portion of the Low Countries that has since been distinguished by the title of the Austrian Netherlands, to leave their country, the Dutch provinces were making preparations to throw off the yoke of Spain.

[Transcriber's note: possible partly duplicated section, here reproduced as-is from the original.]

Not only did the Dutch become more wealthy than their neighbours, but they became also more tenacious of their liberty, more patriotic and free; for the situation of their country required economy, union, and patriotic exertion, even for the preservation of its existence.

After Holland had already made considerable advances towards wealth, it obtained great superiority by a fortunate improvement on the art of curing herrings. Though herrings had been barrelled for exportation, for more than two hundred years, it was only towards the end of the fourteenth, or beginning of the fifteenth century, that the present method of curing them was invented by the Dutch, which gave them a decided superiority in that article. {43} This prepared the way for the downfall =sic= of Flanders; to which its pride, and the mutinous spirit of the manufacturers in the towns did not a little contribute.

The decline of the Austrian Low Countries was brought on entirely by three causes; the oppression of the government, the Dutch excelling and supplanting them in arts and industry, and their own pride and insolence. At one time, Bruges, at another time, Antwerp, took on them to act as sovereigns, and as if independent, while, at the same time, the people were almost constantly disobedient to their magistrates. They had first become industrious under the influence of

— {43} It was discovered in 1397, or soon after. -=-

[end of page #47]

necessity; but that was gone, and they could not continue in the same course, when in full enjoyment of wealth, and of every thing they wanted.

The Hanseatic Towns, from at first merely defending their trade against the Danes, became their conquerors at sea, and, in the years 1361 and 1369, they took and burnt Copenhagen, the capital, twice. Crowned heads became desirous of their alliance, and no power, at sea, was equal to oppose them; but their insolence to the Dutch, their oppressions of the English, of Spain, and other powers, laid the foundation for their decline in less than half a century afterwards. {44}

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As the first three centuries of this extraordinary and unexampled association, were employed in protecting commerce and protecting trade, all those concerned in its success were ambitious of being admitted members, or received as friends: but when they began to assume the pride and dignity of sovereigns, and to meddle in political quarrels, to become irascible and unjust, their numbers diminished; and of those members that remained, the wealth and prosperity gradually began to fall.

The Dutch, by great industry, by a strict attention to their interest, and by keeping down pride, continued to increase in wealth, while the Hans Towns and Flanders were considerably advanced in their decline.

While this was happening on the northern shores of the continent of Europe; to which and to Italy trade had been nearly confined, Spain and Portugal, France and England, began to see the advantages of manufactures and commerce, and to encourage them. If money was wanted to be borrowed, it was either in Italy or Flanders, or in some of the Hans Towns, that it could alone be found; so, that though the monarchs of those days rather despised commerce, yet, as a means merely of procuring what they found so indispensably necessary, they began to think of encouraging it.

Spain had taken possession of the Canary Islands, and Portugal had made conquests on the coast of Africa, and seized the island of

— {44} In 1411 they were compelled, by Henry iv. of England, to give him satisfaction for some of the injuries done. ==-

[end of page #48]

Madeira in the early part of the fifteenth century, and by an attention to naval affairs, and setting a value on possessions beyond seas, laid a foundation for those new discoveries which have totally changed the face of the world.

In Europe then, at the end of the fifteenth century, the nations were nearly in the following state. The Italians, possessed of the whole trade to India, were wealthy but feeble. They had more art, policy, and money, than other nations; but they had of themselves scarcely any effective power, except a little exercised by the Venetians and Genoese at sea.

The Hanse Towns, extending over the northern part of Europe and Flanders, which had become wealthy and powerful by their own industry, and a participation of the trade to India with the Italians, (though at second hand,) were on the decline, through pride and luxury.

Holland alone was advancing fast towards wealth, by industry, and an attention to commerce and economy. Spain and Portugal had turned their attention to new

discoveries; and France and England were endeavouring to follow, though at a great distance, those who, in this career, had gone before them.

Of the places that enjoyed wealth, all were declining in power from the abuse of it; and Spain, which alone had possessed much power without wealth, was abusing it, by banishing industry from Flanders, and the Moors from their own country. In one case, there was wealth without power; in the other, there was power without wealth; and, in both, mistaken views and unwise conduct had laid the foundation for decline.

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The other nations that had not yet either wealth or power were all seeking with great energy to acquire them; and they were successful in their attempts. Even Spain, which had unwisely banished the Moors, and thereby laid a foundation for its own decline and fall, found that event retarded for a century, by a most unexpected discovery: in consequence of which discovery it fell from a greater height at a later period. {45}

— {45} It would not be to the purpose to speak at present either of Poland, Sweden, or Russia, or of the German empire, in which many of the Hanse Towns were situated. [end of page #49] The history of the Hanse Towns is very curious, and well worth attention: perhaps, next to that of Rome, it is the best calculated to illustrate the subject of this inquiry; but it is too long to be entered on. —

As for the eastern empire; held up by a participation of the commerce of India, and retaining still some of the civilization of the ancient world, it had sustained the irregular, though fierce attacks of the barbarians till the middle of this century; when, having very imprudently made a display of the riches of the city, and the beauty of the women, the envy of the Mahomedan barbarians was raised to a pitch of frenzy, that it would, in any situation, have been difficult to resist, but for which the enervated emperors of the east were totally unequal.

This added one instance more of a poor triumphing over an enervated and rich people. Nothing could exceed the poverty of the Turks, unless it was the ugliness of their women. But the case was not the same here as when the Goths and Vandals, from violence and revenge, attacked Rome merely to plunder and destroy. The Turks were, comparatively, from a southern climate themselves; though poor, they had been living amongst the wreck of ancient greatness, and they conquered with an intention to occupy and enjoy.

Thus was extinguished the last remains of ancient grandeur, in the middle of the fifteenth century. About fifty years before, many new sources of wealth were discovered, and the old ones were entirely converted into a channel that was new also. Thus, those who had, from the earliest ages, been in possession of wealth were preparing the way for enriching poor nations, that, from their geographical situation and other circumstances, never could otherwise have participated in it. [end of page #50]

CHAP. VI.

Digression concerning the Commerce with India.—This the only one that raised ancient Nations to Wealth.—Its continual Variations.—The Envy it excited, and Revolutions it produced.

Before there are any authentic records, Syria and Egypt were populous; and the monarchs that ruled in those extensive countries had established their governments

upon the plan that has more or less been adopted by all countries. There were different ranks of people. The same offices did not fall indifferently upon all. Wealth was unequally divided; and, of course, a foundation was laid for that commerce which consists in supplying the affluent with articles of taste and luxury, which are only produced in some countries; whereas, articles of necessity are produced in every country that is inhabited.

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Commerce appears at first to have been entirely confined to the productions of the eastern and middle parts of Asia, which have, from the earliest periods, been sought after with great avidity by the people of other countries.

All that is most grateful to the taste, the eye, or the smell, is found in peculiar excellence in India. It is not to be wondered at then, if such objects of the desires of men were an abundant source of riches to those nations who had the means of obtaining them.

Egypt and Syria lay immediately in the road for this commerce. They were rivals, and many contests and vicissitudes were the consequence: for no commerce has ever created so much envy and jealousy. None has ever raised those who carried it on so high, or, on forsaking them, left them so low, as that which has been carried on with India.

Though at a very early period Egypt had a share of this lucrative commerce, yet the greatest part was carried on through Syria and Arabia, between the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea; that part now called the Levant, where Tyre and Sidon once stood. [end of page #51]

We shall examine briefly the changes of this commerce; the only one almost existing, in early times, or at least which gave rise to nearly all that did exist. {46}

As the common necessities of life are found in greater or less abundance in every country, and as the population is in some degree regulated by their quantity, they made no objects of trade, except in the cases of famine. The precious metals, spices, jewels, and aromatics, rare in their production, universally desirable and easily transported, were long the chief objects of commerce; and the changes which this commerce has undergone and produced, amongst those who possessed it, greatly elucidate the subject of this inquiry.

The distance from Babylon to the Persian gulf, down the Euphrates, to where Bussora now stands, was not great, and across the country to Tyre there was little interruption; the Assyrian empire extending to the sea-coast, and its monarchs being too powerful to have any thing to fear.

There was, however, at a very early period, another channel, by which the Tyrians obtained the productions of the East, namely, by sailing up the Red Sea, or Arabian Gulf, and across Arabia Petrea to Rhinocolura. {47}

The Egyptians, at that time, obtained the same sorts of merchandize, by sailing likewise up the Red Sea, and landing at the western extremity; from whence they were distributed through Lower Egypt.



Commerce was carried on in this manner, and was nearly all engrossed by Tyre, when Alexander the Great, bred up under his father, who had been educated at Athens, and travelled through Greece,

— {46} To carry on trade, capital is necessary; that is to say, there must be some means of getting an article before it can be carried away and sold. Spices, precious stones, and the other produce of the East, cost little or almost nothing amongst those who had more than they could use; and, as they produced an immense profit to merchants, they laid a foundation for those capitals that afterwards were employed in other sorts of business.

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{47} Rhinocolura was merely a sort of sea port for embarking the merchandizes that had been brought across the desert from the Red Sea, It was situated at the south-east extremity or corner of the Mediterranean Sea, and till Alexandria was built was the nearest port to the Red Sea. ==-

[end of page #52]

turned his arms against those countries in which there was the most to be got by conquest, and from whom there was the least danger of defeat.

Before this took place, the pride and insolence of the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon had displayed itself on more than one occasion. After having been on friendly terms with the Jews, under David and Solomon, they became their enemies, and excited the King of Babylon to take Jerusalem; by that means destroying a neighbouring and dangerous rival. The wealth of these two cities had afterwards induced the Babylonians to attack them also. Sidon was taken and destroyed; and that part of the city of Tyre fell, which was upon the main land; but the Tyre that was the place of real trade, escaped the rage of the Assyrian monarchs.

Alexander seems to have determined on destroying Tyre, in order to found Alexandria, which he placed indeed in a better situation for the eastern trade. His romantic expedition to India had in view the getting possession of the countries which had produced those gems and aromatics that were so much sought after in the other parts of the world.

Had Alexander lived, perhaps he would not have found it in his interest to depress Syria; but the division of his conquests amongst his generals gave to Egypt and Syria two different masters. They were rivals, and then every advantage that nature gave to Alexandria was improved to the highest pitch under the Ptolemys.

The river Nile, much more navigable than the Euphrates, was also better adapted for this trade, because, in coming from India, it was necessary to ascend the latter, while the other was descended. Besides this, the flat country of the Delta was cut into canals, which greatly facilitated this channel of commerce. {48}

This was the first great revolution in eastern commerce. It was brought on first by the envy of Alexander and the pride of the in-

— {48} It does not appear what returns were made to the Indians for their produce, therefore it must have been money. The trade then consisted in bringing from thence goods, comparatively weighty, and returning, as it were, empty. The current of the rivers being in different directions was then an object of importance. ==-

[end of page #53]



habitants of Tyre, and gave a very great superiority to Egypt, which was increased by the canals dug in that country, and the discovery of the regular monsoon, (a periodical wind,) which, at a certain time of the year, carried navigators straight from the mouth of the Red Sea to the Malabar coast. {49}

Under these disadvantages, flowing from superior prerogatives of Egypt, the commerce of Syria fell off almost to nothing, till, by another of those changes to which this commerce seems peculiarly liable, the Roman empire, which had swallowed up the whole of the civilized world, was itself divided into two, and one of the capitals fixed at Constantinople.

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The channel through Syria obtained then a preference for all the eastern part of the empire; and owing to some change, either in the politics or religion of the Persians, when conquered by the Parthians, they became willing to permit them the navigation of the Euphrates, which had long been shut up.

This continued to be the state of matters, particularly after the fall of the western empire, when barbarians got possession of all that part of Europe that used to be supplied with East India produce by the way of Alexandria. It continued till the middle of the seventh century of the Christian aera, when the Mahometan religion was established from the westernmost part of Africa to the confines of the Chinese empire; and as the followers of that religion were unfriendly to commerce, and none could be carried on with India that did not pass through their country, it was nearly annihilated, and was almost wholly confined to the caravans of pilgrims, who, going to visit Jerusalem and Mecca, under the cloak of religious zeal, exchanged the various articles of traffic which they had collected in their different countries and on their journey.

— {49} This passage, from the straits of Babelmandel to the point of the peninsula of India, saved a very long and dangerous navigation by the coast. It is almost due east, and with the advantage of being much shorter, and having a fair wind, was next to the discovery of the passage of the Cape of Good Hope, the greatest discovery for shortening the route to India. This was discovered during the time that Egypt was a Roman province. -=-

[end of page #54]

Such were the vicissitudes, changes, and variations of this commerce in early periods, and during the middle ages; and, when we come to treat of the same within the last two centuries, we shall find it equally liable to alteration.

Of all the spots on the face of the earth that have undergone revolution and ruin, they that are now the most completely sunk below their natural level, are those which were formerly the highest above it.

We have left uninterrupted the detail of the commercial greatness of those places, in order not to break the narrative; but as cities cannot be great without connection, it is necessary to notice, that Marseilles in France, and Carthagera, and some other places on the coast of Spain, were those, by which eastern luxuries came into Europe from Alexandria and Tyre. The Carthaginians, a Tyrian colony, had the produce from Tyre, and from Rhinocolura, and supplied Spain and the western portion of Africa; but when Alexandria arose, Carthage began to fall. Alexandria, situated near to it on the same coast, was a rival, not a friend, as Tyre had been, and the first Punic war, in which the pride of that republic had involved it with Rome, following soon after, hastened its decline. {50}

The nations of Greece, which had risen to power and wealth, owed these more to their superiority in mind, in learning, and the fine arts, than to any attention they ever paid to commerce; they had begun by being the most barbarous of all the people in that part of the globe, and got their first knowledge from the Egyptians, whom they long considered as their superiors in science, as the Romans afterwards did the Greeks; but when the barbarians broke down the western empire, learning as well as commerce was very soon extinguished.

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It was the share of Indian commerce, settled at Constantinople, that tended more than any other circumstance to preserve that empire so long. To that, and to the barbarians having other occupation, rather

— {50} Marseilles was founded soon after the city of Rome, but it was a government of itself, and made no part of ancient Gaul. The Gauls were warlike barbarians. The inhabitants of Marseilles were polished, like the inhabitants of other towns that enjoyed commercial wealth. They were always allies, and steady friends to the Romans, whom they never abandoned. --

[end of page #55]

than to any intrinsic strength of its own, did the eastern empire owe its long preservation.

A new channel for this varying commerce of the East, was opened, as civilization extended to the north of Europe, and this chiefly on account of the very small supply that was obtained through the Mahomedan countries.

Goods were transported by land from Hindostan and China, to Esterhabad, situated on the south-east corner of the Caspian Sea; from whence they were carried in vessels to the north-east corner of the same sea, and from thence by the Wolga and the Don; two rivers which rise in Russia, and, after nearly meeting together, fall into the Caspian Sea, and the Black Sea. By ascending the Wolga a short distance, and descending the Don, with only a few miles of land-carriage, the produce of India arrived at the Black Sea, and Constantinople became the emporium of the Indian trade. This was a great stroke to Venice and Genoa, {51} which rivalled each other in bringing the Asiatic commodities, for the supply of Europe, through the old channels. This jealousy of each other, and of Constantinople, was at its height when the crusades carried most of the princes and nobles of Europe to Venice and Constantinople. The Venetians, merely a mercantile people, with little territory or power, neither gave nor received umbrage from those warlike chiefs; but it was not so with Constantinople, the seat of a great empire; so that the crusaders and Venetians united against that power, and the eastern emperors were compelled to divide their city into four parts: the sovereignty of one part fell to the lot of the Venetians, who, for more than half a century, had by this means a decided superiority over both its rivals, and engrossed nearly the whole commerce of the East. The Genoese and Greek emperors now found

— {51} In the chart which I have given, Venice and Genoa are put together, as if one, though they were rivals, and the prosperity of the one injured the other; but as nearly situated the same, and neither being considered as a nation, but merely as an abode of commerce, I did not think it necessary to distinguish them in the general history more than the variations that take place between the different cities of the same country. If,

however, I should do the chart on a large scale, I should certainly separate them, and shew their rises and falls minutely. --

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it their interest to unite against Venice, and the Genoese, by supporting their ally with money, expelled the Venetians from Constantinople. The imperial family was reinstated, and the Genoese had the suburbs of Pera as a reward for their assistance. This quarter of the city the Genoese fortified, and the Venetians were compelled to return to their old channels by Egypt and Syria. {52}

During those contests, Florence arose, and became a rival both to Venice and Genoa; and some degree of civilization, or, at least, a taste for the luxuries and produce of the East was brought into the north of Europe by those who returned from the crusades. The consumption of Asiatic produce in the North, occasioned depots to be established, and Bruges and Antwerp became to the north, what Venice and Genoa were to the south of Europe. The Hans Towns rose to wealth and opulence just about that period; but the effects of wealth acquired by commerce in the north were found to be different from what they had been in southern climates. Italy was going to decay, while three of its cities were increasing in splendour; but, in the north, the riches acquired by the cities set industry at work: manufactures were improved, and affluence and the comforts of life became more generally diffused than they had ever before been, or than they are in the southern countries even at the present day.

While Constantinople was thus rivalling the cities of Italy, a new revolution took place there, which overturned the Greek empire, and established that of the Ottomans.

When Mahomet II. mounted the throne, the Genoese were expelled from Pera, {53} and Venice regained the preponderance in eastern

— {52} The depot of India commerce being in the Crimea, which is near the mouth of the Wolga, is a strong reason for believing the trade was carried on through the Caspian Sea; but it has been asserted, that the chief route was directly by land from the Tigris to the Black Sea. This seems a very good way; but, in that case, why cross the Black Sea to go to the Crimea? Any one who looks at the map will be able to judge that as being very unlikely. Doctor Robertson, however, has taken no notice of this difficulty. Two things are certain: that the depot was in the Crimea, and that merchants never go out of their road without having some cause for doing it. The reader must then determine for himself.

{53} Before the Genoese were expelled, their insolence and avarice had time to display themselves in their full extent; about the year thirteen hundred and forty, says an eye-witness, [end of page #57] (Nicepho[r/i]as [illeg.] Gregoras,) they dreamed that they had acquired the dominion of the sea, and claimed an exclusive right to the trade of the Euxine, prohibiting the Greeks to sail to the Chersonesus, or any part beyond the mouth of the Danube, without a licence from them. The Venetians were not excepted, and the

arrogance of the Genoese went so far as to form a scheme for imposing a toll on every vessel passing through the Bosphorous. ==-

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commerce, which she maintained, till the discovery of the passage by the Cape of Good Hope, which opened a new channel, more certain, much less expensive, and not so liable to interruption from the revolutions that nations are liable to. It is deserving of observation, that whatever alterations took place in the channel through which the India trade was carried on, whatever were the vicissitudes or the difficulties, the trade itself never was suspended; so great was the propensity of those who were affluent in the West, to enjoy the productions of the East. {54}

The vicissitudes of this eastern commerce were thus very great in former times. The wealth and arrogance which the possession of it produced, and the envy it excited, may, in general, be ascribed as the cause; indeed it is not certain whether the envy of the Genoese, at the success of the Venetians, did not make them, in an underhand manner, favour those attempts to find out a new channel which might destroy the prosperity of a haughty and successful rival. {55}

Whether it was so or not, it is certain that the discovery of the passage by the Cape of Good Hope was not accidental; but that the Portuguese were induced to listen to the proposal of trading to India by that route, under the certainty of rivalling the greatest commercial city of the world, if she should succeed.

Though no new channel can now be expected, and the present one is every day becoming more easy and frequented, yet the capricious shiftings of the India trade were not ended by this new discovery.

Instead of the contest being, as formerly, between cities situated on

— {54} The prices of Asiatic produce were exorbitant. Silk was sold for its weight in gold; and a Roman emperor refused his empress the luxury, or rather the splendour, of a silk gown.

{55} Amongst the passions that get hold of rivals in commerce, that of envy is so great, when avarice is defeated, that, to humble a successful rival, they will meet ruin themselves, without fear, and even with satisfaction. ==

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the borders of the Mediterranean Sea, those maritime powers who navigated the main ocean became the contending parties.

There are only two ways by which wealth is accumulated and brought into few hands; the one by compulsion and levying taxes, the other by producing or procuring objects of desire; for a small quantity of which, people give up a great portion of their labour.

Sovereigns have amassed wealth and possessed revenue by the first means, and the use they have put it to has been magnificence in building, or in great or useful works, for war, or for pleasure.

The wealth obtained by the other means, of which the trade to the East seems to have been the chief, produced a different effect. In Italy it occasioned the invention of bills of exchange, and gave encouragement to the fine arts, and to some manufactures. In the north of Europe it infused a general spirit for trade and manufactures; for the luxuries of the East only served to teach the people of the north the necessity of acquiring comfort by manufacturing the produce of their own country.

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To improve the arts of weaving, to make woollen and linen cloths of a finer texture, was very natural, after having seen the silks and muslins that came from India; particularly to people living in a cold climate, where a more substantial covering was wanted, and where the materials were in abundance.

It was, accordingly, in Flanders, and the adjacent country, that the modern spirit of manufactures rose up, nourished by the wealth which the ancient commerce of India had produced.

In the early ages, when the Tyrians had this trade, they amassed great wealth, though they had not any large countries to supply; for, probably, neither Egypt nor the eastern part of Syria would receive the produce by so circuitous a road. But, during the first ages, sacrifices to the gods and the funeral ceremonies consumed vast quantities of aromatics of every sort, as well as the enjoyments of the living. The two former causes of request for aromatics have long been at an end, owing to the changes in religion. They are now neither burned on the altar nor at the grave; and custom and taste, which are to a certain [end of page #59] degree variable and arbitrary, have lessened the consumption of some, and others have been supplied by the progress that we have ourselves made in manufactures. {56}

While this diminution of consumption took place, the western world was advancing in civilization, and the progress of wealth became vastly more extended; so that if the consumers of eastern luxuries were less profuse in the use of them, they were, at the same time, greatly increased in number.

The taste for tea, alone, which was introduced not much above a century ago, has alone, overbalanced all the others, and it is still augmenting in Europe; besides the discovery of a new quarter of the world rapidly increasing in population, into which the custom of drinking tea, as in Britain, has been introduced also.

The reasonable price at which an article can be afforded, always augments the consumption: and though we have no criterion to go by in judging of the prices in former times, yet it is certain they must have been very great. At the time when silk was sold for its weight in gold, that metal was compared with common labour of six times the value that it is now; silk was, then, at least three hundred times as dear as it is now; indeed, even that extravagant price scarcely accounts for the parsimony of the Roman emperor, who refused his wife a robe of that rich material. {57}

Though new discoveries have robbed Egypt and Syria for ever of the commerce of the East; and though the loss of trade was the proximate cause of the degradation, yet both countries had long been desolate and

— {56} Wrought silks, muslins, and porcelains. Cotton stuffs are now no longer bought as formerly, so that, except in porcelain, the raw material is the only object of

commerce. The silk worm was introduced into Italy during the time that the intercourse with the East was very difficult, and therefore had not the increase of wealth, and a taste for new articles extended the demand and brought a new one, the trade would at last have been nearly done away.

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{57} The carriage is 24 L. a ton backwards and forwards, or out and home, which is only equal to what is paid in England by land for 500 miles. Indeed, none but articles of a very great value and high price could pay for the carriage by any of the channels hitherto discovered but that of the Cape. ==

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degraded before this change happened; for though the commerce came through their countries, the riches it produced centred in Italy. Syria had long become a desert, and the ruined palaces were become the habitations of scorpions, reptiles, and beasts of prey, long before those discoveries which seemed to have sealed their doom. That discovery only completed what had long been begun, and rendered permanent and irrevocable what might otherwise have been altered. {58}

At the rate at which this trade now goes on to increase, all the gold and silver mines in the West, will soon be insufficient to afford enough of the precious metals to pay for produce from that country: for few European manufactures are taken in return. This is laying a foundation for a great revolution, either in manners or in nations at some future day.

It is extraordinary that, from the earliest ages, the inhabitants of India have been receiving gold and silver from all other countries, and yet, that those metals are not so abundant there as with European nations. As our demand for the produce of the mines increases in order to send remittances in specie to that country, the mines themselves diminish in their produce, so that whatever change this may bring on, can be at no very great distance. {59}

— {58} What Dr. Robertson says of Palmyra may be applied nearly to all the cities in Asia and Africa that shared in this commerce. “Palmyra, after the conquest by Aurelian never revived.” At present, a few miserable huts of beggarly Arabs are scattered in the courts of its stately temples, or deform its elegant porticoes, and exhibit a humiliating contrast to its ancient magnificence.

{59} If the taste of the Anglo Americans for tea continues, allowing one pound to each person in the year, which is very little, one hundred millions of pounds weight will be annually wanted in less than half a century. ==

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CHAP. VII.

Of the Causes that brought on the Decline of the Nations that had flourished in the middle Ages, and of Portugal, Spain, Holland, and the Hans Towns.

The trade with India, which had been almost the only one, and always an occasion for envy and contest, was sought for by the Spaniards and the Portuguese; who, as we have seen, were the first amongst modern nations that seemed to aspire at naval discovery.

The manner in which Spain discovered America; and Portugal, the passage by the Cape of Good Hope, both nearly at the same period, and at the beginning of the sixteenth century, is too well known to require the smallest detail.

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Europeans, with the superior degree of knowledge they possessed, and particularly that of the use of fire-arms: incited also by the love of gold; and careless of keeping their word with the unsuspecting natives, soon triumphed wherever they went, and the consequence was, that both nations brought home immense riches. The trade of Venice, Alexandria, and Aleppo, was all transferred to Lisbon, {60} and never was so small a country so suddenly enriched; and it may be added, more quickly deprived afterwards of the chief source of its wealth.

The Dutch had triumphed over the power of Spain, on their own soil, and they soon rivalled that of Portugal in the East. It was a very different thing to combat the natives, and to fight with the Dutch, who very soon deprived Portugal of the rich means of wealth she had discovered in India.

The prosperity of Portugal, arising from its possession =sic= in the East, continued at its height exactly a century. Its decline is accounted for by the following causes.

— {60} Lisbon had its depot for the north of Europe, at Antwerp, and the value of the consignments have been estimated at a million of crowns, annually; but this is, probably, an exaggeration. --

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Its domineering principles, too great an extent of conquests, which were widely scattered, and the haughtiness of the Portuguese, both towards the natives and Europeans; the envy and rivalry which brought the Dutch into the same countries; a great want of attention and energy; and, lastly, giving a preference to the trade to the Brazils. The Brazils had been first discovered by the Portuguese, afterwards seized upon by the Dutch, whom they, however, expelled about the middle of the sixteenth century; that is, about fifty years after its first discovery, and an equal period of time previous to the decline of their trade in India.

The possession of the whole of this lucrative trade, that had enriched so many great nations, and that by so easy a channel, and without almost any contest, for nearly a whole century, had so enriched the small kingdom of Portugal, that after being too eager, and grasping at too much, it was almost ready to resign the whole without a struggle, had it not been for some reasons of another sort. {61} So immense was the influx of wealth, from the united sources of India and the Brazils, that the former, which has been at every other period the object of ambition of all nations, and is so still, was considered as scarcely worth retaining.

It is almost unnecessary to add, that from that moment Portugal has been on the decline. If ever the cup of prosperity ran over, in large streams, it was then; and when the possession of the trade to India was scarcely thought worth preserving, it is clear that no great efforts could be made to encourage internal industry.

Spain, extensive and powerful before it discovered the Indies, did not so immediately feel the effects of the wealth imported, as the Portuguese had done; but its prosperity was of less duration, though the decline was not quite so rapid.

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The Dutch must have known the effects of wealth on a nation, else

— {61} It was debated in council, at Lisbon, whether it would be worth while to keep India, the wealth from the Brazils was so much more easily obtained. A scruple of conscience, least =sic= the missionaries should be destroyed, turned the scale in favour of retaining the trade of India!! -=-

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they would scarcely have tried to throw off the yoke of Spain, at the very moment when it appeared in its greatest splendour and power. {62}

Insolence and pride, we have too often had occasion to remark, accompany wealth; and Philip was no more proof against its effects, than those potentates who had gone before him.—There was a great resemblance between the project of invading England, with the invincible armada, as it was called, and the attack on Greece by the King of Persia. That monarch must have thought very meanly of England, to suppose that the island could be conquered by 30,000 men, even if they could have made good their landing. Indeed, to try such an experiment on a nation that had supported its claim to valour so well at Agincourt and Cressy, and which was not, in any respect, degenerated, manifests his being blinded by the effects of wealth and greatness.

The consequence was, a gradual decline of the affairs of his kingdom; so that, in little less than a century, England placed a king on the throne of Spain.

Though the effect produced on Spain was not so rapid as on Portugal, it was, in some respects, more irretrievable. The vast numbers of persons who quitted that country, in quest of gold, injured its population, already reduced by the expulsion of the Moors, who were the most industrious of its inhabitants.

The wealth that came to Spain, came in a very unequal distribution, which is a considerable disadvantage, and hastens on that state of things which is the natural forerunner of the decay of a nation. Wealth, arising by commerce, however great its quantity, must be distributed with some degree of equality; but the great adventurers in the gold mines only shared with their sovereign, and the whole of their wealth came in prodigious quantities, pouring in upon the country. {63}

— {62} Though the Dutch were subject to Spain, yet that had not prevented them from acting in an independent manner in their modes of following trade and commerce.

{63} We see an example of this in our own trade to India. Captains of ships, merchants, and all those who get money by that trade, come home with moderate fortunes; but the governors, and civil and military officers, who have been settled in the country, come home with princely fortunes, and eclipse the old nobility of the country. -=-

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Both Spain and Portugal, finding that wealth came with such ease from India and America, neglected industry. This, indeed, was a very natural consequence; and, when the sources of their riches began to dry up, they found, though too late, that instead of having increased in wealth, they had only been enriching more industrious nations, and ruining themselves. The gold that arrives from the West passes through the hands of its masters with almost the same rapidity as if they were only agents for the English and the Dutch; so chimerical an idea is that of wealth existing without industry.

The Dutch were the only rivals of the Portuguese in the East Indies; for though other nations came afterwards in for a share, yet the transition from wealth to weakness was already made by the Portuguese, before any of them had begun to set seriously to work, in acquiring possessions, or in carrying on trade with that country.

Portugal thus fell, merely from the rivalship of a more industrious and less advanced nation, after having embraced more territory than she had power to keep. Spain fell, because she had embraced a wrong object as a source of riches. {64}

The Hans Towns, which owed their prosperity, partly to their own wisdom and perseverance, in the beginning, and partly to the contempt with which sovereigns, in the days of chivalry, viewed commerce, might, with very little penetration, and much less exertion of wisdom than they had displayed, have seen that the spirit of commerce was becoming general, and that moderation and prudence were necessary to preserve them in their proud situation; but the prudence which they possessed at first had given way to pride, and abandoned them; and the first great stroke they received was from Queen Elizabeth. The ruin of so widely-extended a confederacy could not be astonishing, and, indeed, was a natural consequence of the changes in the manners of the times: but it was not so with Flanders. There was nothing to have prevented the Flemish from continuing to enjoy wealth, and follow up industry, except in the rivalship of other nations,

— {64} So short a time did the wealth remain in the country, that, when the famous armada was fitted out against England, a loan of money was solicited, from Genoa, for the purpose. -=-

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particularly of Holland and England; for, though France was farther advanced, as a manufacturing and wealthy nation, than England, yet it was not in the same line of industry with the people of the Netherlands, whose prosperity was not therefore injured by it in the same degree.

As for the Dutch, they continued to increase in wealth till the end of the seventeenth century, and their decline requires a more particular attention.



In addition to their great industry, the fisheries, and art of curing fish, the Dutch excelled in making machines of various sorts, and became the nation that supplied others with materials, in a state ready prepared for manufacturing: this was a new branch of business, and very lucrative, for, as the machines were kept a secret, the abbreviation of labour was great, and the materials had still the advantage in their sale that a raw material has over manufactured goods; so that the advantages were almost beyond example.

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Add to all this, that the Dutch were the first who established the banking system, (copying in part from the Italians,) on a solid plan. The advantages that Holland enjoyed were, indeed, all of its own procuring, but they were numerous and inappretiable, without counting the trade to India, of which it enjoyed a greater share than any other nation, for a considerable period.

No nation has shewn, so completely as the Dutch, how exterior enemies may be repelled, and difficulties overcome, while there is a true attention to the real welfare of the country. The exertions of the Romans, to conquer others, scarcely surpassed those of the Dutch to preserve themselves, when they were in a state of necessity; but, when they became affluent, energy and unanimity left them. The manufacturers became merchants, and the merchants became agents and carriers; so that the solid sources of riches gradually disappeared.

All this time, taxation increased, and though no nation ever allowed its manners to be less corrupted by the possession of wealth, yet there was a sensible change; but the change in the way of thinking was the most pernicious. Discontent with the government, and disagreements amongst themselves, completed their misfortunes, while England was [end of page #66] all the time endeavouring to supplant them in the most beneficial sources of their wealth.

The Dutch, fairly sunk by that rivalship, and natural change of things, which transfers the seat of wealth and commerce from one nation to another. There was no violent revolution, no invasion by an enemy; it was the silent operation of that cause of decline, which has been already mentioned in the Second Chapter, and will be farther and more particularly illustrated and explained.

The Dutch had a superabundance of capital; the interest of money was low; and wealth had begun to leave Holland long before the symptoms of decay became visible; by which means, the trade of other countries was encouraged, and, as always will be the case, capital emigrated, the moment it could find secure employment, and greater profits than were to be obtained at home. The leading causes of the decline of Holland may be distinguished thus:

The taxes were gradually increasing.

Its superiority in manufactures over other countries was continually diminishing; consequently, industry was not so well rewarded, and less active.

The merchants preferred safe agencies for foreigners to trading on their own bottom, thereby lending their credit.

Dutch capital was employed to purchase goods in one country and sell them in another: so that the Dutch became carriers for others, instead of manufacturing and carrying for themselves.

The trade to India, and the banking business, were both taken up by other nations; so that Holland then lost her superiority in these branches.

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Thus circumstanced, Holland was gradually sinking, when political troubles, the end of which it is not easy to foresee, put her at the feet of France: an event that would not have happened in the manner it did, when the true spirit of patriotism reigned, that distinguished her in her more prosperous days. From this, at least, there is one distinct lesson to be learnt, that however it may be natural for nations to lose a superiority, owing to arts, inventions, or foreign trade, yet, if the minds of the people and their manners remain pure, they will not be degraded, by falling a prey to an enemy. When Holland was not rich [end of page #67] it resisted Spain in all her glory, during a very hard, arduous, and continued struggle; but then the people were united as one man: there were no traitors to raise a voice for Spain against their country. When Holland was wealthy, it did not even attempt to resist France when invaded; but then Holland was divided, and there were in every city men, who wished more for the plunder than the prosperity of their country.

In viewing the fall of those nations that sunk before the discovery of America, the eastern empire was the last that attracted attention. It had been reduced by the Turks, with a vigour and energy that promised a renovation, which, however, it did not effect. The Turks brought with them the Mahometan religion, which has debased the manners and degraded the minds of every people. Constantinople, by this change, lost the remains of ancient learning and of commerce, which even the weakness of the emperors, and the repeated wars, had not been able entirely to destroy. The Greeks were reduced to a state of subordination and slavery, but the Turks were not civilized. They adopted what was luxurious and effeminate of Grecian manners, yet still retained their former ignorance and ferocity. Amongst modern nations, the Turkish government is, in form, a monster, and its existence an enigma; yet it extended its sway over all that was most valuable or most splendid in the ancient world. Greece, Egypt, Phoenicia, Syria, the three Arabias, and countries then but little known, are subject to a brutish people, who do not even condescend to mix with the inhabitants of the country, but who rule over them in a manner the most humiliating and disgraceful. {65}

The Turkish government has never been powerful. The city of Venice was always its equal at sea; and, as it disdains to adopt the systems of other nations, it is every day becoming weaker, in comparison with them. It has formerly maintained successful struggles against

— {65} In all other conquests, the conquered and the conquerors have become, at last, one people, when they have settled in the same country, whether Christians or Pagans; but the Turks and Greeks keep as distinct to this day as at the first, and this is probably owing to the nature of the Turkish religion. —

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Germany, Poland, and Russia; but that time is now over, and it owes its present existence to the jealousy of other powers. It is possessed of a greater quantity of good territory than all the leading nations of Europe, Russia excepted; and it is not the interest of men living in less favoured climates, to endeavour to renovate the country of Alexander, and of the other great nations of antiquity.

The Turkish nation is represented as greatly on the decline, but, soon after its establishment, it had every vice that could well exist in a government, and its greatest weakness now arises more from the alteration produced in other nations for the better, than in itself for the worse. The difficulty of keeping people in ignorance is becoming every day greater; and when the Ottoman throne falls the usual order of things will be reversed. For, as other governments may attribute their destruction to corruption of manners, and to ignorance, the Turkish government looks there for its security; and the day that any reasonable degree of light breaks in amongst its subjects will be its last.

To endeavour tracing the causes of decline in a state that owes its existence to its defects, and is in every respect different from other nations, would be useless in the present Inquiry, it has only been noticed to shew, that, in the infinite variety of things, some may owe their existence to what is in general the cause of destruction. [end of page #69]

CHAP. VII. [=sic=—error in printer's copy, should read VIII.]

General View and Analysis of the Causes that operated in producing the Decline of all Nations, with a Chart, representing the Rise, Fall, and Migrations of Wealth, in all different Countries, from the Year 1500, before the Birth of Christ, to the End of the Eighteenth Century, —a Period of 3300 Years.

From the revolutions that have taken place amongst wealthy and powerful nations to the present time, though the origin has been owing to very different causes, and the decline and removal from one place to another has been attended with circumstances not similar; yet the same leading cause for that decline may not only be traced easily and distinctly, but is so evident that it is impossible for it to be overlooked or mistaken.

Local situation, or temporary circumstances, have always afforded the first means of rising to wealth and greatness. The minds of men, in a poor state, seem never to have neglected an opportunity, presented either by the one or the other, and they have generally proved successful, till energy of mind and industry were banished, by the habits of luxury, negligence, and pride, which accompany, or at least soon follow, the acquisition of either.

Where wealth has been acquired first, power has generally been sought for afterwards; and, where power came first, it has always sought the readiest road to wealth, by attacking those who were in possession of it.

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The nations and cities on the borders of the Mediterranean Sea, where arts and commerce first began, where agriculture flourished, and population had risen to a high pitch, carried on perpetual struggles to supplant each other; and, in those struggles, the most wealthy generally sunk under; till Alexander, the first great conqueror, with whose history we are tolerably well acquainted, reduced them all to [end of page #70] his yoke; one small and brave people triumphing over the Egyptian and Assyrian empires, where wealth and luxury had already produced their effects.

Though this triumph of poverty over riches was very complete, except in one single instance, it did not occasion any real change, either in the abodes of wealth, or the channels of commerce. Tyre, the richest commercial city till then, was ruined, to make way for the prosperity of Alexandria, which became the most wealthy; drawing great part of the commerce from Carthage on the west, and taking the whole from Rhinocolura on the east: but, in Egypt and Syria, Babylon and Memphis still remained great cities.

The whole of this ancient world was for a moment under one chief, but was soon again divided amongst the generals who succeeded to that great conqueror; and the Egyptian and Persian empires became rivals, as Egypt and Syria had been before. The Grecian nations still remained the chief seats of civilization and the fine arts; and this continued till the Romans, originally a poorer people than the Macedonians, conquered the whole. This was the second great triumph of poverty and energy over wealth and grandeur, and, in this struggle, Greece itself fell.

The effects of wealth were not less formidable to the Romans themselves, than they had been to those nations they had enabled that brave and warlike people to conquer; so that the mistress of the world, in her turn, fell before nations that were rude and barbarous, but uncorrupted by wealth and luxury.

The conquerors of Rome were too rude, and too many in number, to become themselves enervated by wealth, which disappeared under their rapacious grasp, and which they neither had the art nor inclination to preserve.

This invasion of the fertile and rich provinces by men rude and ignorant, but who came from northern climates, established a new order of things; and only a small remnant of former wealth and greatness was preserved in Egypt and at Constantinople.

For several centuries of war and confusion commerce and the arts appear to have been undervalued and neglected; but still the taste [end of page #71] for oriental luxuries was not entirely banished, and, at the first interval of peace and safety, sprung up again. It was then that Alexandria, Venice, Genoa, and Constantinople, became the channels through which the people of Europe procured the luxuries of Asia. Babylon, Memphis, Palmyra, and all the other great cities of antiquity, were no more; even Greece had lost its arts and splendour;

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Alexandria and Constantinople were repeatedly assailed, taken, and conquered, by the barbarians, who envied their wealth, but who still found an interest in continuing them as channels for procuring to European nations the refinements of the East. Though Venice and Genoa were wealthy, they were but small, and of little importance; and all the nations who might have crushed them at a blow, only considering them as sea-ports of convenience and utility, allowed them to remain independent.

As an intercourse had been established between the northern and southern parts, a taste for the luxuries of Asia had extended to the shores of the Baltic, soon after the victorious arms of Charlemagne had carried there some degree of civilization, and the Christian religion.

Then it was that a new and more widely-extended system of commerce, but something like what had formerly existed in Tyre and Carthage, began in all the maritime towns of Europe, when Italy and Flanders became the most wealthy parts of Europe. A spirit of chivalry, and a desire of conquest, not founded on the same principles with the conquests of ancient nations, or of Rome, to obtain wealth, pervaded all Europe, and the greatest confusion prevailed. In the history of wealth and power, as connected together, this is a chasm. Those who had power despised wealth, and were seeking after what they esteemed more—military glory; and wealth was confined to a number of insulated spots, and possessed by men who were merchants, without any share of power or authority.

This extraordinary and unprecedented state of things gave rise to the Hanseatic League, which rose at last to such importance that those who had been so long seeking after glory, without finding it, began to see the importance which was derived from wealth. They began to see that, even in the pursuit of their favourite object, wealth was an ex-[end of page #72] cellent assistant, and the friendship of merchants begun =sic= to be solicited by princes, as in the days of Tyre and Sidon.

This progress was greatly facilitated and accelerated by the crusades, which, at the same time that they beggared half the nobility of Europe, gave them a taste for the refinements of the East, and taught them to set some value on the means by which such refinements could be procured.

In this manner were things proceeding, when three great discoveries changed the situation of mankind. {66}

The mariners compass, gunpowder, and the art of printing, were all discovered nearly about the same time; and, independent of their great and permanent effects, they were wonderfully calculated to alter the situation of nations at that period.

The navigation of the ocean, which led to the discovery of a passage to the East Indies, and of America, gave a mortal blow to the nations situated on the borders of the Mediterranean Sea, who thus found themselves deprived of the commerce of the East.

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The discovery of gunpowder, a means so powerful of annoying an enemy, without the aid of human force, which places a giant and a dwarf in some sort upon an equality, was wonderfully adapted for doing away the illusions of knight errantry, that had such a powerful effect in making war be preferred to commerce: while printing facilitated the communication of every species of knowledge.

It was then that northern nations began to cultivate arts and sciences, as those of the south under a mild heaven, and on a fertile soil, had done three thousand years before. But ingenuity and invention took a different direction in the north from what they had done in the southern climates; instead of sovereigns and slaves, men were more in mutual want of each other, and therefore a more equal division of the fruits of industry was required.

The manufactures of former times had been confined chiefly to luxuries for the great, and simple necessities for slaves; and commerce, though productive of great wealth to a few, was in its limits equally confined.

— {66} For the dates see the chart, and for their effects, chap. i. book ii. [Transcriber's note: See in the Chart "Mariners Compass *Gunpowder* Printing Invented 1300-1400"].
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[end of page #73]

It was natural that the two nations which had first discovered the passage to the East, and the continent of the West, which abounded with the precious metals, should become rich and powerful, as those cities had formerly done that possessed exclusively the channels of commerce. Those two countries were Spain and Portugal; but here again we find the same fatality attend the acquisition of wealth that had formerly been remarked. It was, indeed, not to be expected, that the steadiness and virtue of the Spaniards and Portuguese could resist the operation of a cause, that neither the wisdom of the Egyptians; the arts and industry of Greece, nor the stubborn and martial patriotism of the Romans could withstand.

Those two nations soon sunk, and the Dutch, the French, and the English, became participators of the commerce.

Manufactures were a new source of wealth, almost unknown to the ancient world. Those begun first to be set in activity in Flanders, then in Holland and France, and, last of all, in England; but, like commerce, and every other means by which wealth is acquired, they have a tendency to leave a country. The cause and the effect are at variance, after a certain time; and though we cannot illustrate this from history, as we may the migrations of wealth arising from other sources, the tendency appears of the same nature, though with this difference; that men may always labour for themselves,

and enjoy the fruits of their labours, though they cannot always find the means of being the carriers to other nations, or becoming merchants.

This alteration in the nature of wealth; the inventions of mankind; the alterations brought on by the facility of communicating knowledge; the systematical manner in which men pursue their interests, and other changes: give reason to hope that, in the present situation of things, those possessions may be rendered permanent, that have hitherto been found to be so evanescent and fugitive.

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Where wealth has not been wrested from a country by absolute force, (in doing which the poorer nations were always successful,) it has emigrated from other causes, and taken up its abode amongst a new people, where circumstances were more favourable for its encouragement. [end of page #74]

Before we leave this recapitulation, it is necessary, however, to take notice of one revolution that did not take place on similar principles with the others, so far as wealth and luxury are in question; but which has in some respects a similarity, and, in others, is precisely the reverse.

About two centuries and a half ago, the Polish nation was one of the most powerful in Europe; Russia could not then, nor for long after, contend with it. The Prussians were its vassals; and the capital of the German empire, when besieged by the Turks, in 1650, owed its safety to the Poles, its brave and faithful allies.

Such was the case; but, at this day, the Polish nation is no longer in existence: it is subdued, parcelled out, and divided, amongst those very powers, to any of which it was at least equal, and to the others superior, at so late a period.

It may be asked, whether Poland was one of those states that has been borne down by its own wealth and opulence? If its ambition, injustice, or any of the other causes so prominent in the decline of nations, operated in the total extinction of it from the rank of independent states? Not one of those causes operated, but still it is not altogether an exception to the general rule.

When the feudal system was established all over Europe, nations under its influence were so far on an equality; and as they all emerged from that situation nearly about the same time, Poland excepted, they still preserved their relative situations. The Poles, during this change in other states, comparatively lost power. Amongst the alterations produced, was that of placing in the hands of the sovereign all the disposable revenue and force of a country, with which standing armies were maintained. Those irregular militias, till then composed of the barons and their retainers; a species of force, at best, far inferior to regular armies, became useless; but particularly so, after the modes of fighting had been changed by the invention of gunpowder, and the adoption of large trains of artillery, which could never have been employed in the feudal armies.

The disposable force of Poland and its revenues did not, by any means, keep pace with those of neighbouring nations; and what was still worse, the strength of that unfortunate country was divided; the [end of page #75] monarchy was elective, and foreign influence had a means of exertion, which, under a hereditary line of kings, is not practicable. Poland was not only weaker than its neighbours, but became a prey to intestine divisions, cabal, and intrigue.

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Though Poland was not wealthy, according to the meaning applied to that word, it was a populous and fertile country, and therefore a desirable possession to the neighbouring states. To Prussia, a most ambitious and aggrandising power, with a military government, and of a very limited extent, it was peculiarly desirable. To Russia, extensive as it is, the fruitful territory was also an object of ambition, from its proximity to the seat of an empire, the most fertile and fine provinces of which lie at a distance. The same desire of possessing what they wanted, operating at the same time on two neighbouring nations, occasioned them to unite their power in a first dismemberment of Poland, for their mutual benefit. The interior convulsions of the country served as a pretext, and its weakness furnished the means of executing the design. In 1772, that independent country first lost some of its finest provinces; but this was only a prelude to its final fall.

The nature of ambition is to augment with success, and as the same divisions continued in the state, a pretence for a farther interference in its affairs was easily found; and, in 1794, Poland ceased to be one of the number of European states. In this last seizure, the house of Austria had no immediate hand. It was, however, necessary to have its consent: and, as the aggrandisement of Prussia was not an object of indifference to Austria, participation in the spoils was proposed, as the price of acquiescence, and it was readily accepted.

In this case, the weakness of Poland, and the ambition of its rivals and neighbours, were the immediate causes of its destruction; but that weakness arose from a want of true patriotism and proper attention in the people themselves. Jealous of liberties, and disobedient to their king, the Poles were slaves to the feudal proprietors of the soil. Though the first cause was different, yet their divisions and quarrels were the same in effect, as if they had proceeded from real causes of discontent, and a deranged state of society, such as we have seen, when the love of the country is lost. In Poland, that love of the country [end of page #76] was not lost, but it was badly directed, which is nearly the same thing; at least, it is equally dangerous.

Why, it may be asked, did not the other powers of Europe interfere? To this, indeed, it would be difficult to give a satisfactory answer. Those who did not interfere, probably, may have cause to repent their indifference. It was an infraction of that sort of federation of nations, which had been found necessary to prevent a repetition of conquests like those of Alexander, or of the Romans; yet, still there is a way of accounting for their conduct, though it cannot be vindicated.

In the first place, Poland lays =sic= remote from those powerful nations that have had the greatest sway in modern times. It was not very easy to interfere with great efficacy; besides, as Poland was previously under foreign influence, the essential evil was done. The example of partitions, indeed, was not given, but it is not impossible that some powers on the continent, though they got no share, might not be sorry to see such an

example. Britain and Spain certainly could not wish for the example, but others might, and others probably did wish for it.

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The first division was, besides, only a beginning; some degree of moderation was preserved, and Poland was only mutilated; it was not destroyed. The case was not entirely new, nor without example.

The second and last division took place at a time when the nations whose interest it was, and whose wish it might have been to interfere, had not the means of doing so. It was when the republican frenzy in France was at its most desperate height, and whom =sic= the whole of civilized Europe appeared to be in danger.

There is one more excuse to be found. The aspect of affairs in Poland resembled, with regard to its revolutions, those of France so much, that those, who at another time would have probably interfered, were rather inclined to co-operate in stifling a rising flame in the north, similar to that which had endangered the whole of the south of Europe.

In all this, the thing the most difficult to be accounted for, is the conduct of the Polish nation; but an inquiry into the causes of that would be quite foreign to the present subject: this is, however, an instance of the danger arising from not keeping pace with other nations [end of page #77] in those arts of government, and internal policy, which constitute the power of nations in the general order of things, whatever that may be.

Although we have seldom found intestine divisions carried to so blameable a length in any other nation that was not corrupt in itself, yet, it is clear, that the influence obtained by the wealth of its neighbours was at the bottom of those highly blameable, and dreadfully fatal divisions.

When aggrandisement is the aim of modern states, there will not now be any difficulty of pleading example; and there is one of those very powers that on this occasion participated in the division which has all the seeds of discord in itself that brought on the ruin of the Polish empire. That power has already felt the effect of example; and, though it may repine, it cannot complain, as it might otherwise have done; or if it does, it cannot expect equal commiseration.

EXPLANATION OF THE PLATE INTENDED TO ILLUSTRATE THE RISE AND FALL OF NATIONS.

In the chart, at the beginning of the work, the lines, from top to bottom, represent the division of time into centuries, each indicating the year, marked under and above it, in the same way that has been adopted in Dr. Priestley's Chart of Universal History, in works of chronology, and in statements of commerce and finance.

The countries that have flourished, whether by commerce, or any other means are supposed to be represented by the parallel spaces from right to left, according to the names written on the right hand.

The rise of the black part, something like a distant range of low mountains, shews at what periods the country was great; when its greatness began and when it ended. This plan would be unexceptionally correct, if the materials for it could be procured; but if they were, it would not lead to any very different conclusion from what it does in its present state. The times, when the elevation began, and its duration are exact. The rises and falls are, as nearly as I am able, estimated from existing documents.

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The part shaded of a darkish colour, and growing gradually lighter at both edges, represent those centuries of ignorance which succeeded the fall of the Roman empire. [end of page #78]

At the bottom, on the part not stained, is a chronological list of events, inventions, and discoveries, connected with the subject. Those which are not, however, important or curious, have no place.

The commerce of France, Britain, Russia, and America, are upon a true scale with respect to their proportional amount, as well as to their rise and progress. The others are not, owing to want of documents; but, as before observed, the amount has very little to do with the subject; the business is to see how wealth and power were divided at any particular time, if they were rising or falling, or if they were at their height, comparing them with the manners of the people at the time.

This is the use of the chart, as to the representation of individual places and nations.

The general conclusion is, from taking the whole together, that wealth and power have never been long permanent in any place. That they never have been renewed when once destroyed, though they have had rises and falls, and that they travel over the face of the earth, something like a caravan of merchants. On their arrival, every thing is found green and fresh; while they remain all is bustle and abundance, and, when gone, all is left trampled down, barren, and bare.

This chart is a sort of a picture, intended to make those migrations and change of place distinct and easily conceived, on which the whole of this book has been occupied. Being once acquainted with the changes that have taken place, we may more accurately compare them with the state of this country at the present time. Those who will take the trouble to read Ferguson's History of the Roman Republic, and Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Empire, may form a judgement of the accuracy or inaccuracy of the chart.

EXAMPLE OF THE MANNER OF INSPECTING THE CHART.

To know when Rome was at the highest pitch of greatness, find, on the right hand, the space marked Roman empire: then look between the lines for the highest part of the dark ground, and look immediately under for the year, it will be seen to be at the birth of Christ, that is, during the reign of Augustus; and by the same means it will be found declining gradually till the year 490. [end of page #79]

In like manner, Carthage will be found at the zenith of its power about 300 years before Christ. The founding of Alexandria and the wars with Rome began then to diminish both its wealth and power.

It is intended by the author of this to execute a chart of the same sort on a very large scale, and assign to the different powers spaces proportioned to their importance, as nearly as he can ascertain.

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With respect to the chronology of this chart, to prevent criticisms which might perhaps be made; but do not apply to it, according to the purpose for which it was constructed, the reader is requested to observe, that I am desirous of illustrating a very important investigation, by representing a very confused and long series of events. The result to be derived from this, is not to be affected by any small inaccuracy. In counting before the birth of Christ, having found many different opinions, and much uncertainty relative to dates, (which I neither have abilities nor inclination to investigate,) I measured backwards, without pretending to settle the year of the world, respecting which there are so many different opinions.

The materials for ancient history are few, and sometimes not much to be relied upon; but, in great leading facts, such as alone are of use in this picture, the authenticity is not to be doubted.

The Assyrian and Egyptian empires had attained wealth and power previous to the time at which this commences. They stood then, and for long after, as if it =sic= were alone in the world; their revolutions, and the rise, prosperity, and decline of other nations, are all represented.

I have not wished to continue the view of France, since the revolution, its present real situation is so imperfectly known; and, from what is known of it, it cannot be compared with any other nation, or with itself previous to that period. [end of page #80]

===== BOOK II. =====

CHAP. I.

Of the Interior Causes of Decline, arising from the Possession of Wealth.—Its general Operation on the Habits of Life, Manners, Education, and Ways of thinking and acting of the Inhabitants of a Country.

As necessity was the first cause of industry and invention, from which wealth and power arise, it is natural that, when the action of that necessity becomes less urgent, those exertions to which it gave rise will gradually fall away. Though habit may sometimes counteract this tendency, in the individual, yet, taken upon a general scale, and from generation to generation, it must inevitably take place.

In this case, an individual who has obtained wealth enjoys an advantage, which no nation ever can expect. With only common prudence, he may cease from exertion or industry, and remain in affluence. If he has property in land, he may let it, and live on the rent; if in money, he may lend it, and live on the interest; but one nation cannot let its lands, or lend its capital to another. It must, by its own industry, render them productive. The great bulk of every nation, then, must be industrious, however wealthy

it may be; otherwise, the wealth will soon be dissipated and disappear. The people of Flanders cannot, for example, cultivate the fields of the French, and live in Flanders; and, if the agriculture of a country is neglected, that country must soon become poor and miserable. {67}

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— {67} We have seen what became of the Romans, when the tribute paid by other nations enabled them to live in idleness. The influx of wealth from America produced nearly the same effect on Spain: though it lasted for a very short time, yet it ruined the country. ==-

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It is not absolutely necessary, then, for an individual to conciliate affluence with industry, or, which is the same thing, to preserve one of the effects of necessity, after the necessity has ceased to exist. But if it were possible for a sum of money, or property of any sort, to be given to each individual in a nation, which would be sufficient, in the midst of an industrious people, to enable him to live in perfect idleness, the whole nation could not become idle. Such a case never can exist, as that of all the individuals in a country becoming sufficiently rich to live without labour. But something approaching towards that state of things actually does take place, when, by the general increase of wealth, the necessity for labour is diminished. The number of idle people is constantly augmenting; and even those who continue to labour do it less intensely than when the operation of necessity was more severe. When a cause is diminished, the effect must in time fall off in proportion.

With individuals, nature has given very powerful auxiliaries to necessity, which strengthen and prolong its operation, but which do not operate equally on nations.

Habit or custom is the one auxiliary, and ambition or avarice is the other.

Habit, in all cases, diminishes the reluctance to labour, which is inherent in the most part of mankind, and sometimes entirely overcomes it. {68} Ambition, which appears under many different forms, renders labour absolutely an enjoyment. Sometimes ambition is merely a desire of amassing property, an avaricious disposition: sometimes it is a desire to create a family; and even, sometimes, the vain and delusive idea of retiring from business, and becoming happy in a state of total idleness, spurs a man on to labour. It is a very curious, but well-known fact, that, after necessity has entirely ceased to promote industry, the love of complete idleness, and the hope of enjoying it at some distant date, leads the wealthy man on, to his last hour, in a train of augmented industry. Thus has nature most wisely counteracted

— {68} There are many instances where habit has rendered a particular sort of labour absolutely a want. It has become a necessary,—a means of enjoyment without which life has become a burthen. ==-

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the disposition of man to idleness; by making the very propensity to it, after a certain time, active in promoting industry.

But this can never be the case with a race of men: {69} and, as a nation consists of a greater number of individuals, so, also, its existence consists of successive generations.

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There is a difference between idleness and inaction. It is the natural propensity of man to be idle, but not to be inactive. Enjoyment is his aim, after he has secured the means of existence. Enjoyment and idleness are supposed, in many cases, to go hand in hand; at any rate, they can be reconciled, whereas inaction and enjoyment are irreconcilable. {70}

But we may still go farther. As taste for any particular enjoyment is acquired when a man is young, and the same taste continues in a more advanced age; a man who has been long in business has had no time to acquire a taste for those enjoyments that are incompatible with, or perhaps that admit of being substituted for it.

Reading the study of the fine arts, and such other means of employing time as men enjoy, who, at an early period of life, are exempted from labour, afford no amusement to the man who has been always accustomed to a life of business, {71} with whom there is an absolute ne-

— {69} It is perhaps amongst chances that seem likely enough; the only one that has never happened, that of a race of misers, in the same lineal descent, for several generations. The reason why I say it never has happened is, that, if it had, the effects would have become so conspicuous, by the riches accumulated, that they could not have passed unobserved.

{70} By inaction is not meant the opposite of loco-motion, such as laying =sic= in bed, or basking in the sun; it is supposed that a man, to enjoy himself, must be reading, talking, in company, or *doing something*.

{71} They sometimes affect this, but it is little else than through vanity. It would be easy to give a hundred striking proofs, but their frequency renders that unnecessary.

Hunting and fishing, the two most anxious and painful occupations in the world, are, in all countries, followed by the affluent and idle as amusements; they want to interest the mind, and occupy themselves. Gaming, which is attended with very painful sensations, is followed much more frequently from propensity than from the love of gain; and, indeed, it would appear, that a life without occupations that interest the mind, is of all others the most insipid: it appears to be worse, it appears to be miserable. ==

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cessity of filling up the time in one way or another. A certain portion of time may be spent in company; but even that, to be enjoyed, must be spent in the society of men of the same class. The inducement, then, to a man who has dedicated the first part of his life advantageously to industry, to become idle, is not great, even when he is at free liberty to follow his inclination.

It is totally different with a young man; his propensity is to idleness, without any of those favourable circumstances that counteract that propensity. Necessity alone can be expected to operate on him; it is in vain to seek for any other substitute. Not that we mean, by idleness, to signify inaction; but that sort of idleness, which resists regular labour. There is a natural propensity to action, but then it is a propensity that operates irregularly, unless under the influence of necessity. It is a continued and regular exertion, directed to a proper object, that is wanted to obtain wealth; to procure this, it is well to imitate nature, and create necessity.

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But, in proportion as a nation grows wealthy, that necessity is done away. It is of the art of prolonging necessity, or rather of reconciling necessity with affluence and ease, for which we are going to search, that we may, by that means, reconcile affluence with industry.

We must, in the first place, find what the natural operation is by which industry leaves a country.

When a country is in a state of poverty, it maintains the same degree of industry, from generation to generation, without any effort. The new race is brought up in the same way that the former was before it, and the same pressure of necessity, acting on the same desire (but no greater desire) to shun labour, produces the same effect at one time that it did at another. The son of a man, who has arrived at a greater degree of affluence than that to which he was born, is generally brought up differently. He is not brought up so hardily in his infancy as his father was, nor so soon called to labour; and probably when he is called to it, he is neither called with so imperious a voice, nor is he so willing to obey the call.

Though we do not live long enough to see an example of this operation on a whole nation, the progression being too slow for the life [end of page #84] of a man, yet we see it in different parts of the same country, that are in different degrees of advancement. How frequent are the instances of men, bred in distant counties, (particularly in the North,) bringing all that industry and those habits of labour to London, that the poverty of their parents, and the state of their part of the country naturally occasioned. Some of those have arrived at affluence, and many of them have to competency; and even those who do not arrive at a comparatively higher rank in London, than their father held in his own county, bring up their children in a very different manner.

Suppose, for example, a blacksmith, from Northumberland, or a baker, from Scotland, settles in London, as his father did at Newcastle or Edinburgh, his son or sons will be bred very differently from what he was; and, after their father's death, the business will most probably go to some new comer, from a distant county.

The father was brought up with the necessity of labouring, or the alternative of wanting food to eat. From his earliest days, he considered himself as fortunate if he could obtain a competent living by honest industry; and this impression, with the habits acquired while it was strong, lead a man, so brought up, to fill his place in life with honour and advantage.

The son, who sees that his father is in affluence, and who partakes of the fruits of a whole life of industry, seldom considers that he must continue that industry, otherwise, that the affluence will cease with the life of his father. It is impossible to make a young

man, brought up in this manner, feel as his father did; and, not having the same impulse given to him at first, he never can set off in his course of life with the same energy.

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But the cause of this evil does not stop here. Frequently the mother is an enemy to the industry of her son; and between the workings of real affection, badly exercised, which leads her to humour the lad; and a sort of silly vanity, equally misplaced, she encourages him, if not in idleness, at least, in the hope that he will never need to stoop to incessant industry. It is not necessary to ascertain the absolute portion of idleness and pride that is infused into the young man; that depends [end of page #85] on particular circumstances: {72} but, in most cases, it is sufficient to prevent his following the footsteps of his father with equal energy.

Perhaps the capital, or the connections a father leaves in trade, may, in some degree, and for some time, compensate for this; but the instances where they do so are not numerous.

This is an example of the manner in which every succeeding generation is brought up differently from that preceding it; but it is an extreme example, and one that, though very real in the individuals, can never suddenly take place on a national scale.

The difference between the general affluence of a nation, and the change of its manners during the life of a man, is by no means equal to the difference between a remote province and the capital of an empire; but, though the example is extreme, the same effect is produced, in the course of several generations upon a nation, that was occasioned by change of place in one individual family from father to son. {73}

When a change like this takes place in one family, (and there are numerous instances of it every day,) poverty comes on again, and the children fall back into the laborious class of society, probably in a degraded state; but as the evil is supplied by new people rising up, it is little felt on the nation; if, however, it occurs very generally, it must have a bad effect; and, indeed, the best thing that can happen for the

— {72} If the mother has been herself born in affluence, she generally has a sort of smothered contempt for the mean origin of her husband. She seldom is fully sensible of the merit by which he has raised himself, and consequently cannot be capable of appreciating the advantage of bringing up her boy in the same way; on the contrary, the habits of industry, which the father acquired at an early age, under the pressure of necessity, are generally secret objects of ridicule to the rest of the family. If, again, the woman has been of low origin in herself, and is become affluent, then matters are ten times worse. Then there is all the pride and vanity that ignorance, and a desire to hide that mean extraction create. Incapable of shewing delicacy and fine breeding in herself, she spoils her harmless children by converting them into specimens of the gentility of the family. For more of this, see the chapter on Education.

{73} In Rome, after the taking of Carthage; and in Portugal, immediately after it got possession of the trade to India; the change must have been as great over the whole of

the people in one generation, as it is generally between a remote province and near the capital. --

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general welfare is, that such men may return to a state of insignificance and labour as fast as possible; for, while they remain above that, and in a declining state, they are filling their place in society badly.

It is different where the change goes on through a whole country, then no one can supply the place, they are all going the same way, and at nearly the same rate; {74} the consequence will be, that this will not be the fall of a family, but the fall of a whole people; the motion will, indeed, be much more slow, but the moving body will be vastly greater, and the effect will be in proportion.

In every nation in Europe there is, between the capital and the distant provinces, a difference of affluence, of wealth, &c. equal to what probably takes place in a nation in one or two centuries. The inhabitants of the capital have some great advantages over those that come from a distance; they have connections, they have money and stock; and, generally speaking, in their early years, they possess a more ready and marketable knowledge. But all these avail nothing against habits of industry, and being taught to expect nothing from others, but to depend all on one's own powers. With this single, but signal, advantage, the sons of the wealthy citizens are always yielding to the son of the peasant; they are one by one giving way, and their places are filled by a new race; while their descendants are sinking into poverty, and filling prisons, poor-houses, and hospitals.

This vicissitude is so observable, that it would be unnecessary to dwell upon it were it, =sic= not of such infinite importance. {75}

The alarming and lamentable increase of the poor, in proportion as

— {74} It is always to be observed, that this reasoning is only applicable in general, and not in every particular case. It has been remarked by the writer of the notes on the Wealth of Nations, that where a fortune is not realized in a family, sufficient to enable it to withdraw entirely from trade, it seldom remains wealthy above two generations. The sons most frequently want intelligence or industry to augment what their father got, and the grandsons have generally dissipation enough to squander entirely away what remains. This is so frequent a case in London, that it may be called the regular routine of the business; and, what arises by regular routine, must be derived from some general and natural cause.

{75} In the chapter on Education, this subject is entered into more fully, and the education of women makes a principal part. A subject not noticed by the author of the Wealth of Nations, though very important. --

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a nation becomes rich, is a proof that it is not in capital cities alone that the effect takes place, but over the whole of a country. {76}

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In England, the number of inhabitants is about six times the number of those in Scotland; and, perhaps, it costs twice as much to maintain a poor person in the former as in the latter. The sum necessary for the maintenance of the poor in England may then be reckoned at about twelve times as much as in Scotland, in order to preserve a just proportion between the two countries. But the poor cost more than sixty times as much in England as in Scotland; that is, at least five times more than the true proportion that ought to be !!!

This, it may be said, is owing to the different manner of managing the business, and, in some degree, it no doubt is; {77} but, as the poor are only maintained in England, and as they are also maintained in Scotland, it would be wrong to allow so great a difference for that alone.

In order, however, to put the matter out of all doubt, let us compare England with itself, and we shall find that the poor's rates, or the expense of maintaining the indigent, has increased more rapidly than the price of provisions, or the price of labour. This ought not to be the case, as they would only have augmented in the same proportion, unless the number of poor was increased as well as the price of the provisions they eat, at the same time that the nation is growing more wealthy.

Of whom do the poor in every nation consist, but of the lame, the sick, the infirm, the aged, or children unprovided for? Of those, the number, in proportion to the total number of inhabitants, will be pretty nearly the same at all times; for it is nature that produces this species of helpless poverty. It would then appear that there is another species of poverty, not of nature's creation, that comes in and destroys the proportion. It would likewise appear, that that new species of poverty

— {76} The Poor's Rate, and regulations respecting that augmenting class of persons, are treated in a chapter by itself.

{77} For this see the chapter on the Poor, in which the subject is investigated at considerable length. At present, it is only mentioned by way of illustrating the effect of wealth on the manners of the people; and to prove, that it is not confined to the capital alone, but is general all over the country of England. -=-

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is occasioned by the general wealth, since it increases in proportion to it.

If we find, then, that the increase of wealth renders the descendants of a particular family helpless, and unable to maintain their place in society; if we find, also, that it gives those portions of a country, which are the least advanced, an advantage over those which are the most advanced; and, if we find that the number of indigent increase most where the wealth is greatest, we surely must allow, that there is a strong tendency

to decay that accompanies the acquisition of wealth. The same revolutions that arise amongst the rich and poor inhabitants of a country, who change places gradually, and without noise, must naturally take place between the inhabitants of rich and poor countries, upon a larger scale and in a more permanent manner. {78} Such changes are generally attended with, or, at least, productive of, violent commotions. Nations are not subservient to laws like individuals, but make forcible use of the means of which they are possessed, to obtain the ends which they have in view.

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As this tendency is uniformly felt by a number of individuals over the whole of a country, when it advances in wealth, and over whole districts that are more advanced than the others, it must operate, in length of time, in producing the decline of a whole nation, as well as it does of a certain portion of its people at all times.

Changes, in the interior of a nation, take place by piece-meal or by degrees; the whole mass sees nothing of it, and, indeed, it is not felt. {79} But it is vain to think, that the same cause that gives the poorer inhabitants of a nation an advantage over the richer, will not likewise

— {78} As we find that wealth seldom goes amongst people of business past the second, and almost never past the third generation, families that rise so high as to be partners in profit, and not in labour or attention, are an exception. Nations resemble the families that acquire enough to be affluent, but not enough to retire from business. A nation can never retire; it must always be industrious. The inference is clear and cannot be mistaken; neither can the fact stated be denied.

{79} The number of bankruptcies have been considered as signs of wealth; and their increase is a sign most undoubtedly of more trade; but this is a barometer, of which it requires some skill to understand the real index. ==

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give poor nations an advantage over rich ones; or, at least, tend to raise the one and draw down the other. Though we find, from the history of the various revolutions that have taken place in different countries, that they arose from a variety of causes, some peculiar to one nation, and some to another; yet we have found a change of manners and ways of thinking and acting, more or less operating in all of them.

Amongst the interior causes of the decline of wealthy nations, arising from the wealth itself, we must set this down as one of a very general and natural operation. We must be particularly careful to remove this, as far as possible, if we mean to avert those evils which hitherto have arisen from a superior degree of wealth and power in every nation.

We are now going to examine other internal causes; but though they are separate from this, yet this is at the root of all, this is perpetually operating, we meet with it in every corner and at every turning. It is what Mr. Pope says, speaking of the master-passion in individuals:

“The great disease that must destroy at length,

Grows with our growth, and strengthens with our strength.”

This radical case of decline is augmented by an ill conceived vanity in the parents, as well as by necessity ceasing to act on the children. Each is following a very natural

inclination; the one to indulge, the other to be indulged. It is the duty and the interest of the state to counteract this tendency, and the manner how that it is to be done will be inquired into in the first chapter of the third book of this work. =sic —there is none.=

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But it is not merely a neglect of industry and the means of rising in society, or keeping one's place in it that is hurtful; the general way of thinking and acting becomes different, and, by degrees, the character of a nation is entirely altered. This change was the most rapid, and the most observable in the Roman republic, and was the cause that brought it to an end, and prepared the people for submitting to be ruled by the emperors. The human character was as much degraded under them, when the citizens were rich, as it ever had been exalted under their consular government, when the people were indigent. [end of page #90]

The various effects of this change in manners will be considered under different heads, but it is too deeply rooted in human nature ever to be entirely counteracted, much less entirely done away. It is firmly connected with the first principles of action in man, and can no more be removed than his entire nature can be altered. What is in the extreme, if dangerous, may be diminished; and that is all that it would be any way useful to attempt: it may be rendered less formidable in its operation, and that is all that can be expected.

The degradation of moral character; the loss of attention to the first principles to which a society owes its prosperity and safety, both of which accompany wealth, are most powerful agents in the decline of nations. We have seen that the Romans, the greatest of all nations, were ruined, chiefly, by degradation of character, by effeminacy, by ignorance; for we generally find that idleness degenerates, at last, into sloth and inaction. To a love of justice, and a power of overcoming danger, or of preventing it, listlessness and a total want of energy succeed: at length, the mind becomes estranged from hope, and the body incapable of exertion. This is the case with those who have for a time enjoyed luxury when they begin to decline; their fall is then inevitable. The Eastern empire, as well as the Western, fell by this means; and it may be said to have been the ordinary course in the decline of nations that have fallen gradually.

The Turks, {80} the Spaniards, and the Portuguese, all owe part of their present feebleness to this cause; and the government of France certainly, in a great measure, owed its downfall =sic= to the same. There the courtiers had sunk in character, and it was become impossible even for the energy, the activity, and intelligence of the nation at large, to counteract the baneful effect of the change that had taken place amongst those who regulated its affairs.

In history we have seen scarcely any thing similar to this, for it was the effect operating on the rulers of the nation only; the strength of the great body of the nation, on which it did not operate, supported that

— {80} Those nations resemble each other in feebleness, and in the cause of it, though, with respect to the Turks, it has existed for a longer period. --

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pride and ignorance; whereas in Spain, Portugal, and Turkey, this evil being general throughout the state, those who have the conducting of affairs are held in some check by the general feebleness of the nation. {81} This not only limits the power of action, but is so visible, that it is impossible for those who govern not to be led to reflection, and to be taught moderation by it.

The power of laying on taxes and the means of defending itself against other nations are regulated by the situation of the people; but the wisdom with which the affairs are conducted is dependent on the rulers, and those who govern. It is therefore fortunate, when the rulers are so far sensible of the feeble state of the country as to be moderate and reasonable. {82}

None of the nations that know their own weakness would ever have risked the experiment that was made on St. Domingo by the French; neither would any nation, in the vigour of acquiring riches, have done so. It required a nation, ruled by men who were ignorant of the true principles, who were corrupted with wealth, and, at the same time, had a vigorous nation to govern, to admit of such a situation of things. {83} Had the nation been less wealthy or weaker, so as to have made the poverty or weakness obvious, this could not have happened; or, had the rulers been less corrupted and ignorant, it could not have taken place. {84}

— {81} The French nation, in reality, was never so powerful and wealthy as at the time of the revolution breaking out. The effects of luxury had only perverted the city of Paris and the court. The power which the energies of the people at large put at the disposition of the government was ill applied.

{82} Perhaps some of the greatest advantages that arise from a form of government like that of England are, that those who have ruled, owe their places to their abilities, and not to favour; that they maintain their situations by exertion, and not by flattery; and that the situation of the nation never can be long disguised. Without the turbulence of a democracy, we have most of the advantages that arise from one, while we have, at the same time, the benefits that proceed from the stability and order of established monarchy.

{83} When the Portuguese were for abandoning the India trade, it was a case pretty similar.

{84} Though the men who overturned the commerce of France were not the same with the members of the ancient government, yet they also were men ignorant of the true interests of the nation. A few amongst them were bent upon an experiment, regardless of the ruin with which it might be attended. --

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In all the interior causes, for the decline of nations, which we are endeavouring to investigate, we shall find a change of manners, and ways of thinking, constantly producing some effect in the direction towards decline. This takes place, from the time that a nation becomes more wealthy than its neighbours; until then, when it is only struggling to equal them, a nation cannot be said to be rich, but to be emerging from poverty.

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The great aim then should be, to counteract this change of mind and manners, that naturally attends an increased state of prosperity.

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CHAP. II.

Of the Education of Youth in Nations increasing in Wealth.—the Errors generally committed by Writers on that Subject.—Importance of Female Education on the Manners of a People.—Not noticed by Writers on Political Economy.—Education of the great Body of the People the chief Object.—In what that consists

The changes of which we have spoken, that take place, gradually, in a nation, from the increasing luxury and ease in which every succeeding generation is raised, cannot be prevented. They are the natural consequences of the situation of the parents being altered. But when that period of life comes, when children enter upon what is called education, then a great deal may be done; for, though the fathers and mothers have still power over their offspring, it is a diminished power; besides which, they are seldom so much disposed to exert even what power remains, as at an earlier period.

It is necessary and fair, after the severe censure that has been passed on parents, for bringing up children wrong, at an early period, to admit, that for the most part, they would not run into that error, and spoil their children, if they were sensible of doing so; and that, as they grow up, they would have them properly instructed, if it were in their power: that is to say, if they had the means.

There are certain things for which individuals can pay, but which it is impossible for them to provide individually; and if they attempt to do it collectively, it is liable to great abuse, and to be badly done.

Individuals never could afford to send their letters, from one end of the kingdom to the other, without combining together, unless government furnished them the means: but, by the aid of the government, they are enabled to do it at a very cheap rate, with expedition and safety, whilst a profit arises to government greater than any regular business in the world produces.

There is a possibility of an individual sending a letter by a particu-[end of page #94] lar messenger, at his own expense, to the greatest distance, provided he can afford it; but, as it happens, there are many more letters require sending than there are messengers to send, or money to defray the expenses.

It is the same with the education of youth. A man may have a tutor to his son, and educate him privately, if he can afford it; but it happens, as with the letters, that there are many more sons to educate than there are tutors to be found, or money to pay them.

As the individual, in the case of the letters, would be obliged to depend on some self-created carrier, if government did not interfere, so they are with regard to the education of their children; and, as in the one case they would be very badly served, so they generally are in the other.

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In the first place, the plans of education are every where bad, and the manner of executing still worse.—Those to whom the education of youth, one of the most important offices in society, is intrusted undergo no sort of examination, to ascertain whether they are fit for the business. They, in general, depend upon their submissive conduct towards the parents and improper indulgence of the children for their success. It was found that the judges of criminal and civil law could not be intrusted with the administration of justice, while they depended on the pleasure of the crown. Can it then be expected that a much more numerous set of men, who are, in every respect, inferior in rank and education, to judges, will maintain that upright and correct conduct that is necessary, when they are infinitely more dependent than the judges ever were at any period?

This is one of the questions that is to be argued on the same principles, that the independence, under a monarchical or democratic government, is decided. Under the dominion of one chief, on particular occasions, which occur but seldom, it may be necessary to yield to his will, if the ruler is shameless enough and infamous enough to insist upon it; but, with a community for one's master, there is a complete system of submission, a perpetual deviation from that which is right.

In the first place, the fathers and mothers are no judges themselves of the merits of the master, or the proficiency of the boy, whom the [end of page #95] master is obliged to treat with indulgence, that he may not complain. Where there is a complete ignorance of the right and wrong of the case, any thing will turn the balance; and it is clear, that where there is no proof of superior merit, there must be good will, flattery, or some other method taken, to obtain a preference.

There are, occasionally, men of real merit, who distinguish themselves as teachers; and who, having a solid claim to a preference, use no mean arts to obtain it. It is but justice to parents in general, to say that such men are always encouraged, while they keep their good qualities uncontaminated by some fault that counterbalances them. {85}

As this is a case where individuals cannot serve themselves, nor provide the means of being properly served, it is one of those in which the government of every country ought to interfere. Not in giving salaries, at the public expense, to men, who, perhaps, would do no duty; but in seeing that the men who undertake the task of education are qualified, and that when they have undertaken it they do their duty, and follow a proper system.

There should be proper examinations, from time to time, and registers should be kept of the number of scholars, and the satisfaction they have given to those who examined them.

Parents would then have a measure, by which they could estimate the merit of a school; the master would have another motive for action, and there would be an emulation

amongst the scholars. The business professed to be done, and undertaken, would then be performed. At present, at about three times the expense necessary, children learn about half what they are intended to be taught.

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Interfering in this manner would be no infringement on private liberty; nothing would be done that could hurt, in any way, the individuals, but what must greatly benefit them. The evil habits that are contracted in early childhood, at home, would be counteracted, and the

— {85} As even those find it is necessary to make a strong impression on the minds of parents, (and as some wish their children to be treated with rigour,) there are teachers, who obtain a credit by overstraining the discipline, after having obtained a fair reputation, by carrying it only to a proper length. --

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youth would be taught to know what it is that renders a man happy in himself, and respected and valued by society.

But the consideration of the system to be followed is not the least important part of the business. The useful should be preferred to the useless, and in this the example of the ancients might be followed with advantage. They had no dead languages to study, and the mind appears to have been in many cases expanded, far beyond its present compass.

Nothing, indeed, can equal the ignorance of the most part of boys, when they leave school; those who are considered as bad scholars, have lost the good opinion of themselves, that ought to be maintained throughout life; they think every thing difficult or impossible. Those, again, who have excelled, are something less ignorant, but become vain and conceited, owing perhaps to their having learnt some useless and superfluous pieces of knowledge.

Education, on the general principle, consists in learning what makes a man useful, respectable, and happy, in the line for which he is destined, whether for manual labour, or for study; for a high or a low occupation.

What is useful becomes a question, in some sort depending upon place, and still more on circumstances, it will therefore be better to discuss it at length in the Third Book, where England is the place, and particular circumstances are taken into consideration.

There are, however, some general rules that apply to all places and to all situations.

Good principles, honour, honesty, and integrity, are equally necessary in every rank of society; with those qualities, even a beggar is respectable, and will be respected; without them, no man ever was or ever will be so. In every mode of education, the importance of those should be inculcated; and that they may be adhered to, every man, either by inheritance, or by talents, or by habits of industry, should have it put in his power to command the means of living in the way that he has been brought up.

Were this attended to, many scenes of misery and vice would be prevented. Admitting that there are propensities in some minds, [end of page #97] that lead to evil, independent of every possible check or control, it must be allowed that the far greater proportion of those who do well or ill in the world owe it to the manner in which they have been brought up in their early days.

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It follows, from this general rule, that parents should carefully avoid bringing up children in a manner in which they have not the means of being afterwards maintained; and that, in the second place, when they cannot leave them in an independent fortune, they should, by making them learn a trade or profession, give them the means of obtaining what they have been accustomed to consider as necessary for them to enjoy.

There are, indeed, great numbers, and the greatest numbers of all; unable even to have their children taught what is called a trade. But there are none whom poverty prevents from bringing their children up to industry; and, if they have been taught to live according to their situation, they will find themselves above their wants, and therefore the same general rule will still apply.

Most writers have considered the subject of education as relative to that portion of it only which applies to learning; but the first object of all, in every nation, is to make a man a good member of society; and this can never be done, unless he is fitted to fill the situation of life for which he is intended.

Governments and writers on education fall, generally speaking, into the same errors. They would provide for the education of persons destined for the learned professions and sometimes for the fine arts; but agriculture, commerce, and manufactures, are totally left out: {86} the most essential, the most generally useful, are not noticed at all.

As so much value is set upon the language of the Greeks and Romans, surely we might pay a little attention to the example of those distinguished nations.

The Greeks studied the Egyptian learning, and improved upon it; but this was only confined to those who followed learning as a profes-

— {86} Lord Somerville has some excellent observations, relative to this, in his publication on Agriculture, published in 1800. ==-

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sion, or whose means allowed them to prosecute it as a study. The common education of citizens was different; it consisted in teaching them to perform what was useful, and to esteem what was excellent. It was a principle with them that all men ought to know how happiness is attained, and in what virtue consists; but they neither trusted to precept nor example. They enforced by habit and practice, and in this the Romans followed the plan the Greeks had laid down, and, by that means, they surpassed all other nations.

When those great nations of antiquity abandoned their attention to the useful parts of education, they soon sunk in national character. It so happens, in this case, that the mode of education and the manners of a people are so closely connected that it is

difficult, from observation, to know which is the cause, and which the effect. Youth, badly educated, make bad men, and bad men neglect the education of their children; they set them a wrong example: such is the case, when a government does not interfere. How this is to be done with advantage is the question.

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Writers on political economy have, in general, considered female education as making no part of the system; but surely, if the wealth and happiness of mankind is the end in view, there can scarcely be a greater object, for none is more nearly connected with it.

Let it be granted that, in the first instance, women are not educated with any view to carry on those labours and manufactures, on which wealth is considered as depending. Let all this be admitted, and that, in an early state of life, they are of no importance in this respect; yet, surely, when they become wives and mothers, when the economy of the family, and the education of the younger children depend chiefly on them, they are then of very great importance to society. Their conduct, in that important situation, must be greatly influenced by their education.

Female education ought then to be considered as one of the things, on the conducting of which well the prosperity of a state does in a great measure depend; it ought, therefore, to be attended to in the same manner as the education of youth of the other sex.

In this case, also, so much depends on place and circumstances, [end of page #99] that we shall follow the same rule as with male education. It shall be treated of as for England, and with the different ranks of society as they are; but there are some general rules not to be forgotten, and which are applicable to all places and all countries.

The great error, in female education, does not consist in neglecting to instil good principles; for that is, in most countries, for obvious reasons, pretty well attended to; but good principles, without the means of adhering to them, are of little avail. If a desire for dress, or other enjoyments, that cannot be gratified fairly, and by the means of which they are possessed, are encouraged, principles will be abandoned in order to gratify passions.—Females are taught frivolous accomplishments in place of what would be useful, and expensive vanity is substituted for that modest dignity that should be taught; the consequence is, that, in every rank of life, according to her station, the woman aims at being above it, and affects the manners and dress of her superiors.

There is too much pains taken with adorning the person, and too little with instructing the mind, in every civilized country; and when women are wise, and good, and virtuous, it is more owing to nature than to education.

As, indeed, the duties of a woman, in ordinary life, are of a nature more difficult to describe than those of a man, who, when he has learnt a trade, has little more to do, the care employed in seeing that proper persons only are intrusted with the important office of teaching them to perform those duties ought to be proportionally great.

The farther remarks on the subject of education are deferred to the Fourth Book =sic— there is none.=, where place and circumstances come into consideration. It is, however, to be observed, that, in all cases, as a nation becomes more wealthy, the

business of education becomes more important, and has a natural tendency to be worse managed; it therefore demands a double share of attention.

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If the women of a nation are badly educated, it must have a great effect on the education of their sons, and the conduct of their husbands. The Spartan and Roman mothers had the glory of making [end of page #100] their sons esteem bravery, and those qualities in a man that were most wanted in their state of society. It should be one part of female education to know and admire the qualities that are estimable in the other sex. To obtain the approbation of the other sex, is, at a certain time of life, the greatest object of ambition, and it is never a matter of indifference.

The great general error consists in considering the woman merely in her identical self, without thinking of her influence on others. It appears to be for this reason, that writers on political economy have paid no attention to female education; but we find no state in which the virtue of men has been preserved where the women had none; though there are examples of women preserving their virtues, notwithstanding the torrent of corruption by which that of the men has been swept away. [end of page #101]

CHAP. III.

Of increased Taxation, as an Interior Cause of Decline.—Its different Effects on Industry, according to the Degree to which it is carried.—Its Effects on the People and on Government.

There has been no instance of a government becoming more economical, or less expensive, as it became older, even when the nation itself was not increasing in wealth; but, in every nation that has increased in wealth, the expenditure, on the part of government, has augmented in a very rapid manner.

Amongst the interior causes of the decline of nations, and the overthrow of governments, the increase of taxes has always been very prominent. It is in the levying of taxes that the sovereign and the subject act as if they were of opposite interests, or rather as if they were enemies to each other.

In every case almost, where the subjects have rebelled against their sovereign, or where they have abandoned their country to its enemies, the discontents have been occasioned by taxes that were either too heavy, imprudently laid on, or rigorously levied.

Sometimes the manner of laying on the tax has given the offence; sometimes its nature, and sometimes its amount. The revolution in England, in Charles the first's time, began about the manner of levying a tax. The revolution of the American colonies began in the same way; and it is generally at the manner that nations enjoying a certain degree of freedom make objection. The excise had very nearly proved fatal to the government of this country, as the stamp duties did to that of France, and as the general amount and enormity of taxes did to the Western Empire. {87}



— {87} The system of taxation was ill understood amongst the Romans, and its execution, under a military government, is always severe. The Romans were so tormented, at last, that they lost all regard for their country. Taxes seem to be the price we pay for the con-[end of page #102] stitution we live under, and as they increase, the value of the purchase lessens. The difference between value paid, and value received, constitutes the advantage or loss of every bargain. ==-

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Perhaps the chief motive for submitting to the difficulties, the oppressions, and the burthens, which people submit to under republican forms of government arises in deception. They seem to be paying taxes to themselves, and for themselves, when, in reality, they are not doing so any more than under a monarchy, where the taxes, in proportion to the service done, are generally less than in a republic.{88}

— {88} America is an exception, but then there is no similarity between the United States and any other country in the world. Their existence, as an independent country, is only of twenty-five years standing; they have had no wars during that time, and the revolutionary war cost little in actual money. The comparison between the states and other nations will not hold, but, if we compare the expense of their government now, and when under the British, it will be found they pay near thirty times as much; and, even allowing their population to have risen one-half, they still pay proportionately twenty times as much. Their revenue now amounts to 16,000,000 of dollars. The public expense, in 1795, when they revolted, was about 350,000 dollars. -=-

This was the case in Holland and Venice. In England, the first great increase of taxes took place under the long Parliament and Commonwealth.

The only administration carried on by delegated authority, that is from necessity obliged to be executed with unabating rigour, is the department of finance. Money is a thing of such a nature, that strict rules are absolutely necessary in its administration. There is here a great distinction between money and other property, or money's worth. A menial servant, of whose honesty there is no proof, and even when it may be dubious, is habitually trusted with the care of property to a considerable amount, and the account rendered is seldom very rigorous; but, in the case of trusting with money, every precaution is first taken, as to being trust-worthy. Security is generally demanded, and neither friendship, confidence, nor the highest respectability, will supply the place of a strict account, which, when not rendered, leaves an indelible stain. There are many causes for this, but they are so generally understood, or, at least, so generally felt, that it is not necessary to examine them; the consequences are in some cases, however, not so evident. One of the most important is, that the accuracy with [end of page #103] which those appointed to collect taxes are obliged to render their accounts, compels them to a strictness in doing their duty that appears frequently rigorous to an extreme degree, and scarcely consistent with justice or humanity.

A king is considered as an unrelenting creditor, and he certainly appears in that character; but it should be considered why he is obliged to be so; for, as a master, he is generally the most indulgent in his dominions.

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No duty or service is exacted with less rigour than that belonging to a civil department under government, when it is not connected with accountability in money; none so rigorous where money is concerned. How is this to be accounted for, unless it is by shewing that the nature of the situation admits of giving way to the feelings of humanity in one case, and not in the other? A few examples will illustrate this point, which is very important, very well known, but not well understood.

A clerk in a public office wants, either for health or private business, or, perhaps, only for amusement, to absent himself from duty; if his conduct merits any indulgence, and if his request is any way reasonable, it is immediately granted, though his salary during his absence may amount to a considerable sum; but he receives the gift under the form of time, not of money. If the same clerk is in arrear for taxes to one-twentieth part of the amount, if he does not pay, his furniture will be seized, and that perhaps by order of the same superior from whom he obtained the leave of absence from his duty. {89}

The consequences would be fatal if the case were reversed. Supposing that leave of absence had been refused, and that a remission of taxes had been granted, the man who remitted the tax would be liable to suspicion, which he could never do away; the receipt of the revenue would never be secure, and the clerk, who had demanded a fair indulgence, would be disgusted and provoked at the refusal.

We cannot, however, alter the nature of things. Taxes cannot be remitted, in any case, without discretionary authority, and that it would

— {89} Accountability in money may be compared to military discipline, when on duty. No allowances are to be made for negligence or deviation from rule. Of this we have lately had a most striking and memorable example. --

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be ruinous to the revenue to give, we must, therefore, never expect that the augmentation of taxes will take place without an increase of discontent, or, at least, an augmented indifference towards government.

Perhaps nothing evinces more the general feeling, (even of the respectable part of society,) with regard to the revenues of the state, than the disposition to profit by evading the payment of duties imposed upon articles of consumption.

The most respectable of the nobility or gentry will conceal a contraband article, or one on which there is a heavy duty, on their return from abroad: and what is more, if detected, they are more ashamed, on account of their want of address, than on account of the crime; for such it is, whatever custom may have taught us to think.

A man who is rigorously treated, by what is commonly called a lawful creditor, whom he would never attempt to defraud must naturally feel doubly incensed, when still more rigorously treated by one whom he would think it very little harm, and no disgrace, to defraud. It is then very clear, that, the common habits of thinking on the subject of debts due to the king, is such as does not favour taxation, or incline people to submit willingly to rigorous modes of recovery.

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All taxes raise the prices of the articles taxed, but those are most felt and most obnoxious which fall on personal property, or on persons themselves.

All taxes, then, when they pass a certain point, have a tendency to send away persons, and property, and trade, from a country, which, if they do, its decline is inevitable. The extent, however, of that effect must depend on a great variety of circumstances, such as the comparative situation of other nations, their distance, the difficulty of removing, &c.

If America were as near to England as France is, the industrious class would emigrate in multitudes; and, if in France, property and persons were as safe and free as in England, part of both would go there; but, as matters are, to the former it is impossible to remove, and, to the latter, the risk surpasses the advantage.

An increase of taxation tends to raise the wages of labour, and, where it does so in due proportion, the labourer pays almost nothing; he still for all that seems to pay, and he has the same disagreeable feeling [end of page #105] as if he did pay. No feeling is more disagreeable than that of being obliged, after earning money that can ill be spared, to pay it away to a surly tax-gatherer, who treats a man and his family with insolence, while he receives the money that should purchase them bread. Besides this, though the prices of many articles keep pace with the wages of labour, yet many others do not. Thus, in a country where wages are rapidly altering, though some are bettered by it, penury is entailed on others, who have not the means of raising their prices.

If heavy taxes are levied on a few articles of consumption, then they become inefficient, and if they are divided amongst a great many, they become troublesome, so that either way they are attended with inconvenience and difficulty.

In every country, where taxation has been carried to a great height, it has, at last, become necessary to bear heavily upon personal property. Such taxes are always attended with disagreeable feelings, and peculiar inconveniency. The tax always comes in the form of a debt, and whether convenient to be paid or not, it admits at best but of little delay. {90}

In England the nature of the government, the disposition of the people, and the same sort of genius that made them succeed in commercial intercourse and regulation, led them to adopt the least objectionable modes of taxation.

The customs were the first great branch of revenue at the time of the revolution. The excise, land-tax, and stamps, rose next, none of which can be objected to; for the person who pays the tax to government only advances the money, and is reimbursed by the consumer, who, again on his part, when he really pays the tax (for good and all) does it under the form of an advance in price. Thus, then, the tax is disguised to him that really pays it, and it is optional, inasmuch as he

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— {90} It will be seen, in a future part of this work, that the farmers have lost nothing, but rather got by the high prices of grain in this country, and it is so probably in all others. Those who sell necessities raise the price; those who make or sell superfluities have no such resource, and therefore pay in the severest manner. ==-

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may avoid the tax, by not consuming the article. He never can be sued for the tax, and he pays it by degrees, as he can spare the money. {91}

Some time before the taxation which the American war rendered necessary, it was thought that the customs and excise could not be carried much farther. Ministers did not chuse =sic= to venture on an additional tax on land, and, consequently, stamps were augmented and extended, as were also duties on windows. A variety of new taxes on particular articles of consumption were resorted to. Those sort of taxes harassed and tormented individuals more than they filled the treasury, yet still, when, after an interval of a few years of peace, new burthens became necessary, in 1793, the same plan was pursued, till it was found ineffectual, being too troublesome and tedious, besides being unequal to the increase of expenditure.

It was necessity that suggested a plan, which is the simplest and easiest of any, so long as it succeeds and is productive. =sic= To increase the excise and customs by an additional five or ten per cent. on the articles that were supposed able to bear it. This has been done again and again with those two branches of revenue, and with the stamps likewise.

But the necessities of the state still outrun the means, and the assessed taxes, the worst and most obnoxious of all, were augmented in the same way; but even those were not productive. The inducement to privation was too great, and the restraints laid on expenditure, suggested the adoption of a tax on income; that is, on the means a man has to pay, which carries in its very name a description of its nature.

We have mentioned the influence that necessity has on industry. One of the effects of taxes, as well as of rent, is to prolong the operation of necessity, or to increase it. A man who has neither rent nor taxes to pay, as is the case in some savage nations, only labours to supply his wants. Whatever proportion rent and taxes bear to the wants of

— {91} The land-tax is not precisely the same, but very nearly. It operates as a tax on the produce of land, that is on commodities for the use of man, the same as those articles subject to duties of customs or excise. The landholder just feels as the brewer, distiller, or importer of foreign goods, he gets the tax reimbursed by the farmer, and the farmer is reimbursed by the consumer. ==-

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a people their industry will be increased in the same proportion, unless their forces are exceeded, and then the operation is indeed very different.

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It follows, from this, that both rent and taxes, to a certain degree, increase the wealth of a people, by augmenting their industry. As rent is not compulsive, it never can in general be carried beyond the point that augmented industry will bear; but taxes are not either regulated by the industry of the individual, or of the community; they may therefore be carried too far, and when they are, the people become degraded, disheartened, their independent spirit is lost and broken, and industry, in place of increasing, as it did in the first stages of taxation, flies away.

The government, in this case, generally becomes more severe, and certainly more obnoxious. The broken spirit of the people makes submission a matter of course, so that there is no effectual resistance made to its power. Incapacity to pay comes at last, and defeats the end; but, between incapacity and resistance, the difference is very wide.

As calculators have been predicting the moment of a total stoppage to the increase of revenue for nearly half a century; as ministers, themselves, have never ventured to lay on a new burthen, except when forced to it by necessity. {92} As taxes have been laid on at random, in a manner similar to that in which the streets and houses of old cities were built, without regularity or design, and as the effects predicted have not taken place, it is fair to conclude, that the subject is not well understood. If it were, the evil would be in the way to be obviated; but still the conclusion would be the same, that increased taxation tends to bring on discontent, and to drive men and capital from a country. The degree of tendency, and the rapidity of its operations, are a question; but respecting the tendency itself there can be no question.

Two things more are to be observed, relative to the effects of taxation, as tending towards decline. The first is, that the taxes are levied by and expended on men, who, having income only for their lives,

— {92} Mr. Pitt seems an exception to this; but the establishment of a sinking fund, at the end of the war, was as necessary for his administration as any of the loans, during the war, were for Lord North; and both measures required new taxes. ==

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generally leave families in distress. Those who lose their parents when young are often left destitute, and those who are farther advanced are frequently ruined by being educated and accustomed to a rank in life that they are not able to support. This is a very great evil, and is renewed as it were every generation. As the revenues of a country increase, this evil increases also: for, except what goes to the proprietors of money in the stocks, all the public revenue, very nearly, goes to people whose income perishes with themselves. To begin with those who collect the taxes, custom-house officers, excise men, collectors, and clerks of every rank and demonination =sic=, there

is not one in ten who does not die in indigence; and if he leaves a family, he leaves it in distress.

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It is no doubt the lot of the great bulk of mankind, that is to say, the labouring part of the community in every country, to leave children unprovided for; but then they are left in a rank of society that does not prevent their going to work or to service, which is not the case with the vast number left by those who enjoy, during life, a genteel and easy existence under government.

The education of such persons is either neglected entirely, or ill fitted for the line of life into which they are to go. If the sum-total of human vice and misery was to be divided into shares, and if it were calculated how much fell to each person, there is not a doubt but at least a double portion would fall to the lot of those unfortunate persons who are left by parents enjoying offices for life; who are generally obliged to expend their income as they earn it. As, according to the natural chance of things, a number of such persons must leave young families, the seeds of misery are continually sowing a-fresh, to the great detriment of society. This evil depends in a great degree upon the habits and nature of the people, which augment or diminish it; and, in commercial nations, the evil is far the greatest. Where commerce does not flourish, persons belonging to the revenue-department are seldom highly paid, and they by no means consider themselves as a class of persons distinguished above the general run, or obliged to live more expensively; but, in a manufacturing country, to live without working, implies a degree of gentility that is extremely ruinous to those who enjoy that fatal and flimsy pre-eminence. [end of page #109]

A manufacturer, who is getting a thousand pounds a year, will, perhaps, not assume so much importance as a man in office who does not get one hundred pounds; and the former, as well as his family, knowing that they are beholden to industry for what they have, do not think themselves above following it. {93}

Unfortunately, it also happens, that, in all sorts of occupation where trust is reposed and punctuality required, more than in ordinary business, it is rather late in life before those employed rise to situations of considerable emolument. When they are old, their families are generally young; thus it is, that the persons who are the most unfit to marry late in life are generally those who do so. This order of things cannot easily be changed. In the rate of payments governments are regulated by the service done, and by the dependence that can be placed on the person employed, who, on the other hand, follows the natural propensities of human nature. When young, and on a small allowance, a revenue-officer remains single; but when it is necessary to become serious, attentive, and confidential, and when he finds he has the means, he betakes himself to a domestic life, which is the most natural to men arrived at a certain time of life, and the best fitted for those who are to be depended upon for the correctness of their conduct. It is impossible to prevent this natural state of things; and if let go uncorrected, if not counteracted, the consequences are very pernicious. It is to this, in a great measure, the augmentation of vice and mendicity =sic= is to be attributed in nations, as they become wealthy and great.

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Perhaps more depends upon the manner of taxation than the amount; at least it certainly is so in all countries where the amount is not very high. In America, for example, the amount is of no importance; the manner might be of very pernicious consequence. In France, before the revolution, the taxes were more oppressive, from the manner of levying them than from their amount. The same thing might be said

— {93} This is a very important part of the consideration; but, as education and it are connected, and that comes into the Fourth Book =sic—there is none.=, the whole consideration is left till then; not only the national prosperity is injured, but the feelings of humanity are hurt, and the sum of human misery increased by this consequence. --

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of almost every country in Europe, England and Holland excepted. At present, the case is greatly altered, in many countries, by the increase: yet, still, one of the principal evils arises from the manner of levying the taxes; the restraints imposed by them, the inconveniency, the vexation, and, finally, the misery and ruin they, in many cases, occasion.

Of all the examples, where taxation contributed most to the fall of a country, Rome is the greatest. The luxury of the imperial court, and the expenses of a licentious and disorderly army, added to the ignorance of the subject, rendered the taxes every way burthensome. From the fall of Rome, to the time of Louis XIV. the splendour of courts, and their expenses, were objects of no great importance. We are but lately arrived at a new aera in taxation; for, though taxation has been the occasion of much discontent at all times, it was carried to no considerable length, in any country in Europe, except in Spain and Holland, till within this last century.

Indeed, when we consider the great noise that has often been made about raising an inconsiderable sum, it is impossible not to be astonished at the reluctance with which people pay taxes, when they feel that they are paying them, and are not accustomed to the feeling.

Taxation is, then, to the feelings of men, disagreeable; to their manners hurtful; they are also, in their operation, to a certain degree, inimical to liberty. The ultimate consequence of this is, that persons and property have both of them a tendency to quit a country where taxes are high, and to go to one, where, with the same means, there may be more enjoyment.

Taxes may be called a rent paid for living in a country, and operate exactly like the rent of houses or land, or rent for any thing else; that is, they make the tenant remove to a cheaper place, unless he finds advantages where he is to counterbalance the expense.



Unfortunately, the persons who have the greatest disposition to quit a country that is heavily taxed are those, who, having a certain income, which they cannot increase, wish to enjoy it with some degree of economy. They are, likewise, the persons who can remove with the greatest [end of page #111] facility. Thus, people whose income is in money are always the first to quit a country that is become too dear to live in with comfort.

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Many circumstances may favour or counteract this tendency, such as the difficulty of finding an agreeable place to retire to, where the money will be secure, or the interest regularly paid; but, an inquiry into that will come more properly when we examine the external causes of decline.

Though the increase of taxes, by augmenting the expense of living, and of the necessities of life, is little felt by the labouring class, their wages rising in proportion; yet a most disastrous effect is produced on the fine arts, and on all productions of which the price does not bear a proportional rise.

Where taxes are high, and luxury great, there must be some persons who have a great deal of ostentation, even if they have little taste. A picture or a jewel of great value will, very certainly, find a purchaser, but that will only serve as a motive for bringing the fine painting from another country, where the necessities of life are cheaper, and where men enjoy that careless ease which is incompatible with a high state of taxation.

When Rome became luxurious, to the highest pitch, there were neither poets, painters, nor historians, bred within its walls; buffoons and fiddlers could get more money than philosophers, and they had more saleable talents. Had Virgil not found an Augustus, had he lived three centuries later, he must either have written ballads and lampoons, or have starved; otherwise he must have quitted Italy.

When Rome was full of luxury, and commanded the world and its wealth, there was not an artist in it capable of executing the statues of its victorious generals. {94}

Some Greek island, barren and bare, would breed artists capable of making ornaments for imperial Rome.

— {94} They were obliged to cut the heads off from ancient statues, as their artists were only sufficiently expert to carve the drapery of the body. ==

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It is an easy matter, in a rich country, to pay for a fine piece of art, But a difficult matter to find a price for the bringing up a fine artist. {95}

The fine arts have not, indeed, any intimate or immediate connection with the wealth or strength of a nation. The balance of trade has never been greatly increased by the exportation of great masterpieces of art, nor have nations been subdued by the powers of oratory; but the knowledge and the arts, by which wealth and greatness are obtained, follow in the train of the finer performances of human genius.

Where money becomes the universal agent, where it is impossible to enjoy ease or comfort for a single day without it, it becomes an object of adoration, as it were. To despise gold, which purchases all things, is reckoned a greater crime than to despise

him to whose bounty we are indebted for all things; consequently, ambition, without which there never is excellence, is, at an early period of life, bent towards the gaining a fortune. A man, indeed,

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must either be of a singularly odd and obstinate disposition, or very indifferent about the opinion of others, and even about the good things of this world, (as they are termed,) to persevere in obtaining perfection in science or art, while without bread, when he might, with a tenth part of the care and study, live in affluence, and get money from day to day. There are few such obstinate fools; and without them, in a wealthy country, there can be found few men profound in science, or excelling in any of the arts.

The augmentation of taxes, by rendering the produce of industry dearer than in other countries, tends to cut off a nation of that de-

— {95} This is liable to some exceptions. Natural genius may make a man excel; but, even then, it is ten to one if he is not compelled to labour in order to get bread, in place of trying to obtain fame. It was thus the great Dr. Johnson, with a genius that might have procured him immortal fame, drudged, during life, on weekly or daily labours, which will soon be forgotten. Even his dictionary, wonderful as it is for a single man, is not worthy of the English nation, and Johnson's name is little known beyond the limits of his own country. His genius was great, but his labours were little. His mind was in fetters; it was Sampson grinding at the mill to amuse the Philistines; not Sampson slaying lions, and putting to flight armies. --

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scription, from the markets in poorer countries. If all other countries are poorer; and the taxes lower; it has a tendency to shut it out from all the markets in the world.

An operation, that, at the same time that it renders people less happy, less contented, and more indifferent to the fate of their country, and at the same time tends to shut them out from foreign markets, is certainly very hurtful to any country, but particularly so to one, the greatness of which is founded on manufactures and commerce.

It would be useless to enlarge on so self-evident a consequence; yet, even in this case, we shall find something of that mixture of good, along with the bad, which is to be found in all human things.

As exertion originates in necessity or want, which it removes, taxation has the effect of prolonging the operation of necessity, after it would otherwise have ceased, and of rendering its pressure greater than it otherwise would be; the consequence of this is a greater and larger continued exertion on the part of those who have to pay the taxes. Human exertion, either in the way of invention or of industry, is like a spring that is pressed upon, and gains strength according to the pressure, until a certain point, when it gives way entirely.

Those investigators, who have calculated the effect of such and such a degree of taxation, of national debt, &c. have all erred, in not making any, or a sufficient, allowance for the action of this elastic power. Mr. Hume and Mr. Smith, certainly, both of them, men of profound research, have erred completely in this. The former, in calculating the ultimatum of exertion, at a point which we have long since passed; and, the latter, in reasoning on the taxation at the time he wrote, as if nearly the utmost degree, though it has since trebled, and the difficulty in paying seems to be diminished; at least it appears not to have augmented.

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To fix the point at which this can stop is not, indeed, very easy; particularly, as the value of gold and silver, which are the measures of other values, do themselves vary. Thus, for example, a working man can, with his day's wages, purchase as much bread and beer as he could have done with it forty years ago. Though the national debt [end of page #114] is five times as great as it was then, at the present price of bread, it would not take twice the number of loaves to pay it that it would have required at that time.

The depreciation of money, then, as well as the continuation and augmented pressure of necessity, counteract, to a certain degree, and for a certain time, the natural tendency of taxes; but that counteraction, though operating in all cases, in its degree and duration, must depend upon particular circumstances; and though, perhaps, it cannot be, with much accuracy, ascertained in any case, it is impossible to attempt resolving the question in a general way; we shall, therefore, return to the subject, when we apply the general principles to the particular situation of England.

One conclusion, however, is, that as taxes, carried to a great extent, are very dangerous, though not so if only carried to a certain point; as that point cannot be ascertained, it ought to be a general rule to lay on as few taxes as possible; and the giving as little trouble and derangement to the contributor as may be, is also another point, with respect to which there cannot be two different opinions. [end of page #115]

CHAP. IV.

Of the interior Causes of Decline, arising from the Encroachments of public and privileged Bodies, and of those who have a common Interest; on those who have no common Interest. {96}

From the moment that any particular form of government or order is established in a nation, there must be separate and adverse interests; or, which is the same thing, bodies acting in opposition to each other, and seeking their own power and advantage at the expense of the rest.

In a country where the executive government is under no sufficient control, its strides to arbitrary power are well known; but, in a government poised like that of England, where there are deliberative bodies, with different interests, acting separately, and interested in keeping each other and the executive in check, it is not from the government that much danger is to be apprehended.

It is not meant to dwell on this particular part of the subject. As those governed hold a check on the executive power, which alone can be supposed to profit by oppression, there is a means of defence, in the first instance, and of redress, in the second, which diminishes greatly, if it does not entirely do away all danger from encroachment.

Another thing to be said about this government is, that government and the subject never come into opposition with each other, except where there is law or precedent to determine between them.

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The danger, then, of encroachment on that side, is not very great, and it is the less so in this country, that, when there have been contests, they have always ended in favour of the people; whereas, in most

— {96} The public certainly has a common interest, but it feels it not, and even those who have separate interests make part of that very public.—This will be exemplified, in a variety of instances, in the course of the present chapter. --

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other countries, they have terminated in favour of the executive power.

It is not so, however, with many other of the component parts of society. Those deliberating bodies, who have separate interests, and all those who live, as it were, on the public, and have what they call, in France, *l'esprit du corps*, for which we have no proper expression, though it may be defined to be those who have a common interest, a fellow feeling, and the means of acting in concert, are much more dangerous.

In nations where the executive power has no control, the progress of public bodies is less dangerous than where the power of the king is limited. It is always the interest of the sovereign, who monopolises all power, and those around him, to prevent any man, or body of men, from infringing on the liberty of the subject, or becoming rivals, by laying industry under contribution, so we find that, in every such nation, the clergy excepted, all public bodies are kept under proper subjection. {97}

— {97} In all countries, those who have the care of religious matters must necessarily have some control over the minds of the people, which they can to a certain degree turn either to a good or a bad purpose. It is, therefore, impossible that the government and clergy can, for any length of time, act in opposition to each other: one or other of the two must soon fall, and there have been instances of the triumph of each. We have sometimes seen kings triumph over the clergy, but not very often; and we have frequently seen governments overturned by their means: except, therefore, in a state of revolution, they must mutually support each other. This is the natural state of things; but, in Roman Catholic countries, priests have a superior sway to what they have in any other, for several reasons that are very obvious. In the first place, the sovereign of the nation is not the head of the church; and, in the second, by means of a very superior degree of art and attention, during the dark ages, when the laity were sunk in ignorance, the catholic clergy contrived to entail the church property, from generation to generation, upon the whole body: at the same time, enjoining celibacy, by which all chance of alienation, even of personal property, was done away. As to the means of acquiring property, and of augmenting it; they were many, and, in every contest with the secular authority, they had a great advantage, by speaking, as it were, through ten thousand mouths at once, and

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giving the alarm to the consciences of the weak. In countries where the protestant religion has been established, the case is widely different. Gothic darkness was nearly fled before the reformation: besides this, the clergy are like other men, with regard to the manner of living; they are fathers and husbands, and, as such, liable to have all the property that is their own alienated, as much as any other set of men [end of page #117] whatever. The reformers, who were neither destitute of penetration nor zeal, and who knew all the abuses of the church of Rome, in matters of regulation as well as of opinion, were very careful to settle the new order of things on such a plan, as to be free from the evils which they had experienced, and against which they had risen with such energy and zeal. --

The simple state of the case is, that the interest of the people is that of the sovereign; and, except in cases where there is a profound ignorance of what is good for the nation, every wise sovereign takes the part of the people. But, under a limited monarchy, or in a democracy, the case is different. There, those bodies, which an arbitrary monarch would reduce to obedience at once, stand upon prerogative themselves; they form a band in the legislature, and act true to their own interests; so that the sovereign himself is compelled to admit of abuses, which he is willing but not able to remedy.

It is a great mistake, and one of the greatest into which people have of late been apt to run, that the government and people of a country are of opposite interests; and that governments wish to oppress the people, and rob them of the means of being affluent and happy: the very contrary is the case; all enlightened monarchs have acted quite differently.

Alfred the Great, Edward III. Queen Elizabeth, and nearly all her successors have endeavoured to increase the wealth and happiness of the people in England. Henry IV. of France, even Louis XIV. Peter the Great of Russia, Catherine, and indeed all his successors, as also the Kings of Prussia, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and other sovereigns, who know how to shew their disposition, have tried to enrich their people, and render them happy. The great study of the English government has always been directed to that end, and the Romans extended their care even to the nations they subdued. Though there are many sovereigns who have not known how to do this, and therefore have either not attempted it, or erred in the mode they have taken; yet, with very few exceptions indeed, sovereigns have been found to wish for the prosperity of the nations over which they ruled.

In all human institutions there is much that is bad, and something [end of page #118] that is good; and the best, as well as the worst, are only combinations of good and evil, differing in the proportions. In mixt governments, or in limited governments, the people can defend their rights better against the sovereign than against those bodies that spring up amongst themselves: whereas, in pure monarchies, they have only to guard

against the encroachments of the sovereign; and he will take care to prevent them from being oppressed by any other power.

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This tendency to destruction, from encroachments of public bodies in established governments, is more to be dreaded in limited monarchies, and in democracies, than in pure monarchies; but we have had little occasion to observe the progress in governments of the former sort, excepting the clergy, though the military and the nobles generally play their part.

In Rome, the military never were dangerous, while the armies were only raised, like militias, for the purpose of a particular war; but, when they became a standing body, they were the proximate efficient cause of destroying liberty, though this was only the prelude to that decline which afterwards took place.

In limited monarchies, the lawyers are the greatest body, from which this sort of danger arises, and the reasons are numerous and evident.

United in interest, and constantly occupied in studying the law of the country, while the public at large are occupied on a variety of different objects, and without any bond of union, there can be nothing more natural than that they should contrive to render the business which they alone can understand, of as much importance and profit as possible.

In the criminal law of the country, where the king is the prosecutor, and where the lawyers are not interested in multiplying expense or embarrassment, our laws are administered with admirable attention; though, perhaps, in some cases, they are blamed for severity, they are justly admired over the world for their mode of administration.

It is very different in cases of property, or civil actions, where it is man against man, and where both solicitor and council =sic= are interested in the intricacy of the case. Here, indeed, the public is so glaringly imposed upon, that it would be almost useless to dwell on the sub-[end of page #119] ject, and, as a part of the plan of this work is to offer, or point out, a remedy, it may be sufficient, in this case, to go over the business once, and leave the examples till the relief is proposed.

At present, it is, however, necessary to shew why, as things are constituted in mixed governments like this, no remedy is to be had. The public only acts by representatives; and, in the House of Lords, the law-lords, who have *l'esprit du corps*, may easily contrive to manage every thing. One or two noblemen excepted, no one either has, or pretends to have sufficient knowledge to argue or adjust a point of law. Indeed, it is no easy matter to do so with effect, for, besides that, the law-lords have ministers on their side, or, which is the same thing, are on the side of ministers, the speaker is himself at the head of the law. The other members who look up to the law-lords, and who are generally very few in number on a law-question, generally give their assent. In the House of Commons, in which there are a number of lawyers, they are still less opposed. The country gentlemen profess ignorance. They think that to watch money-



bills, the privileges of the house, the general interests of the nation, roads, canals, and inclosures, is their province. The mercantile, and other interests, composed of men getting money with great rapidity, consider the abuses of law as not to them of much importance; they do not feel the inconvenience, and have neither time nor inclination to study the subject. {98}

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The prerogative of the king to refuse his assent, might, perhaps, be expected to come in as a protection, but here there is least of all any thing to be expected. In the first place, it is thought to be wise never to use that prerogative, and, in the second place, the lord-high-chancellor is the king's guide in every thing of the sort, insomuch, that he is styled the keeper of the king's conscience.

With power, influence, and interest on one side, and nothing to oppose it on the other, (for the common proverb is true, as all common

— {98} The law is the widest, and the shortest, and the nearest road to a peerage. A Howe, Nelson, and St. Vincent, play a game, partly of skill, and partly of chance, for title; they must have luck and opportunity. The others are sure with fewer competitors to have more prizes. ==-

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proverbs are, that what is every body's business is nobody's,) the lawyers must encroach on the public, and they have done so to a most alarming degree.

In this case, it is not, as in others, where the great cut out work for and employ the small. No. The great generally (indeed almost always) begin with the advice and by the means of an attorney, who is only supposed to understand law-practice. The proceeding does not originate with the council, who could form some judgment of the justice of the case, so that a mean petty-fogging attorney may, for a trifle, which he puts into his own pocket, ruin two ignorant and honest men; he may set the ablest council to work, and occupy, for a time, the courts of justice, to the general interruption of law, and injury of the public.

This is, perhaps, one of the greatest and most crying evils in the land, and calls out the most loudly for redress, as the effects are very universal. In a commercial country, so many interests clash, and there are such a variety of circumstances, that the vast swarms of attorneys, who crowd the kingdom, find no difficulty in misleading one of the parties, and that is the cause of most law-suits.

As commercial wealth increases the evil augments, not in simple proportion, but in a far more rapid progression; first, in proportion to the wealth and gain to be obtained, and, secondly, according to the opportunities which augment with the business done.

In addition to the real dead expense, the loss of time, the attention, and the misfortune and misery occasioned by the law, are terrible evils; and, if ever the moment comes, that a general dissatisfaction prevails, it will be the law that will precipitate the evil.

The mildness of the civil laws in France, and the restraints under which lawyers are held, served greatly to soften the rigours of the revolution for the first two years. Had

they possessed the power and the means they do in England, the revolution must have become much more terrible than it was at the first outset.

The lawyers owe all their power to the nature of the government. An arbitrary monarch will have no oppressor but himself, but here the [end of page #121] different interests are supposed to be poised; and when they are, all goes right, but, when they happen not to be so, the most active interest carries the day.

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Though the law is the greatest of those bodies that is of a different interest from the public at large, yet there are some others deserving notice, and requiring reformation. It is the interest of all those who are connected with government to do away abuses that tend to endanger its security, or diminish its resources.

As the public revenue is all derived from those who labour, and as it can come from no other persons, if the prosperity and happiness of the subject were a mere matter of indifference, which it cannot be supposed to be; still it would be an object for government to preserve his resources undiminished. It was our lot, in another chapter, to mention the enormous increase of the poor's rate, which was in part attributed to the general increase of wealth; mal-administration is, however, another cause, and, the public is the more to be pitied, that the parish-officers defend their conduct against their constituents at the expense of their constituents.

In an inquiry after truth, it should be spoken without fear of offending; and, in this case, though the feelings of Englishmen may, perhaps, be hurt, and their pride wounded, it must be allowed, that if it were not for the mock-democratical form of administering =sic= the funds for the maintenance of the poor, they would never suffer the extortion, and the bare-faced iniquities that are committed. {99} The ship-money, the poll-tax, the taxes on the Americans, and others, that have caused so much bloodshed and strife, never amounted to one-tenth, if all added together, of what the English public pays to be applied to maintain the poor, and administered by rude illiterate men, who render scarcely any account, and certainly, in general, evade all regular control. Those administrators, though chosen by the people, always, while in office, imbibe *l'esprit du corps*, and make a common cause.

— {99} In Brabant and Flanders the people were very jealous of their liberties. They were, however, most terribly oppressed by the churchmen and lawyers. --

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The repairs of highways, bridges, streets, and expenses of police in general; whatever falls on parishes, towns, or counties, in the form of a tax or rate, is generally ill-administered, and the wastefulness increases with wealth. The difficulty of controlling or redressing those evils proceeds from the same spirit pervading all the separate administrations. Government alone can remedy this; and it is both the interest and duty of the government to keep a strict watch over every body of men that has an interest separate from that of the public at large. Similar to the human body, which becomes stiff and rigid with age, so, as states get older, regulation upon regulation, and encroachment on encroachment, add friction and difficulty to the machine, till its force is overcome, and the motion stops. In the human body, if no violent disease intervenes, age occasions death. In the body politic, if no accidental event comes to accelerate the effect, it brings on a revolution; hence, as a nation never dies, it throws off the old grievances, and begins a new career.

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The tendency that all laws and regulations have to become more complicated, and that all bodies, united by one common interest, have to encroach on the general weal, are known from the earliest periods; but we have no occasion to go back to early periods for a proof of that in this country. As wealth increases, the temptation augments, and the resistance decreases. The wealthy part of society are scarcely pressed upon by the evils, and they love ease too well to trouble themselves with fighting the battles of the public. Those who are engaged in trade are too much occupied to spare time; and, if they were not, they neither in general know how to proceed, nor have they any fund at their disposal, from which to draw the necessary money for expenditure.

It sometimes happens, that an individual, from a real public spirit, or from a particular humour or disposition, or, perhaps, because he has been severely oppressed, musters sufficient courage to undertake the redress of some particular grievance; but, unless he is very fortunate, and possesses both money and abilities, it is generally the ruin of his peace, if not of his fortune. He finds himself at once beset with a host of enemies, who throw every embarrassment in his way: his friends [end of page #123] may admire and pity, but they very seldom lend him any assistance. If some progress is made in redressing the grievance, it is generally attended with such consequences to the individual, as to deter others from undertaking a similar cause. Thus the incorporated body becomes safe, and goes on with its encroachments with impunity.

Much more may be said upon this subject; but, as it is rather one of which the operation is regulated by particular circumstances, than by general rules, the object being to apply the result of the inquiry to England, we shall leave it till we come to the application of it to that country, only observing, that the church, the army, and the law, are the three bodies universally and principally to be looked to as dangerous; and each of them according to the situation and the form of government of the respective countries, though, in England, the church has less means than in any country in Europe of extending its revenues or power, the law and corporate bodies the most; and, under arbitrary governments, the church and the military have the most, and the law and corporate bodies little or none. [end of page #124]

CHAP. V.

Of the internal Causes of Decline, arising from the unequal Division of Property, and its Accumulation in the Hands of particular Persons.— Its Effects on the Employment of Capital.

In every country, the wealth that is in it has a natural tendency to accumulate in the hands of certain individuals, whether the laws of the society do or do not favour that accumulation. Although it has been observed in a former chapter that wealth follows industry, and flies from the son of the affluent citizen to the poor country boy, yet that is only the case with wealth, the possessor of which requires industry to keep it; for, where

wealth has been obtained, so as to be in the form of land or money at interest, this is no longer the case. {100}

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In America, and in countries that are new, or in those of which the inhabitants have been sufficiently hardy, and rash to overturn every ancient institution, precautions have been taken against the accumulation of too much wealth in the hands of one person, or at least to discourage and counteract it; but, in old nations, where we do not chuse =sic= to run such risks, the case is different. The natural vanity of raising a family, the means that a rich man has to accumulate, the natural chance of wealth accumulating by marriages, and many other circumstances, operate in favour of all those rich men, who are freed from risk, and independent of industry. In some cases, extravagance dissipates wealth, but the laws favour accumulation of landed property, and counteract extravagance; the advantages are in favour of all the wealthy in general, and the consequence is, that from the first origin of any particular order of things, till some convulsion takes place, the division of property becomes more and more unequal.

Far from counteracting this by the laws of the land, in all those

— {100} Amongst the Romans, in early times, property in land was by law to be equally divided; but that absurd law was never strictly attended to, and when the country became wealthy was totally set aside. --

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countries, the governments of which took strength during this feudal system, there are regulations leading greatly to accelerate the progress. The law of primogeniture has this effect; and the law of entails, both immoral and impolitic in its operation, has a still greater tendency.

These laws only extend to agricultural property; but commerce, which at first tends to disseminate wealth, in the end, has the same effect of accumulating it in private hands.

Industry, art, and intelligence, are, in the early ages, the spring of commerce; but, as machinery and capital become necessary, a set of persons rise up who engross all the great profits, and amass immense fortunes. {101}

The consequence of great fortunes, and the unequal division of property, are, that the lower ranks, though expensively maintained, become degraded, disorderly, and uncomfortable, while the middling classes disappear by degrees. Discontent pervades the great mass of the people, and the supporters of the government, though powerful, are too few in number, and too inefficient in character to preserve it from ruin.

The proprietors of land or money should never be so far raised above the ordinary class of the people as to be totally ignorant of their manner of feeling and existing, or to lose sight of the connection between industry and prosperity; for, whenever they do, the industrious are oppressed, and wealth vanishes. {102}

It requires not much knowledge, and little love of justice, to see that there must be gradations in society, which, instead of diminishing, increase the general happiness of mankind; but when we

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— {101} Invention has nearly the same effect in commerce that the introduction of gunpowder and artillery have on the art of war. Wealth is rendered more necessary to carry them on. Every new improvement that is made, in either the personal strength and energy of man becomes of less importance.

{102} Some of the greatest proprietors in this kingdom, much to their honour, are the most exemplary men in it, with respect to their conduct to their tenantry; but though the instances are honourable and splendid, they are not general; nor is it in the nature of things that they can be general. In France, matters were in general different; and the inattention of the nobility to their duty was one cause of the revolution; they had forgot, that, if they neglected or oppressed the industrious, they must ruin themselves. -=

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find that the chance of being born half an hour sooner or later makes one man the proprietor of 50,000 acres and another little better than a beggar; when we consider that, by means of industry, he never may be able to purchase a garden to grow cabbages for his family, it loosens our attachment to the order of things we see before us, it hurts our ideas of moral equity. A man of reflection wishes the evil to be silently counteracted, and if he is violent, and has any disposition to try a change, it furnishes him with arguments and abettors.

When the Romans (with whose history we are tolerably well acquainted) {103} grew rich, the division of property became very unequal, and the attachment of the people for their government declined, the middle classes lost their importance, and the lower orders of free citizens became a mere rabble. When Rome was poor, the people did not cry for bread, but when the brick buildings were turned into marble palaces, when a lamprey was sold for fifty-six pounds, {104} the people became a degraded populace, not much better, or less disorderly than the Lazzeroni of Naples. A donation of corn was a bribe to a Roman citizen; {105} though there is not, perhaps, an order of peasantry in the most remote corner of Europe, who would consider such a donation in ordinary times as an object either worthy of clamour or deserving of thanks. {106}

The Romans, at the time when Cincinnatus held the plough, and the conquerors of nations roasted their own turnips, would have thought themselves degraded by eating bread obtained by such means; but it was different with the Romans after they had conquered the world.

In a more recent example, we may trace a similar effect, arising from a cause not very different.

— {103} We know better about the laws and manners of the Romans 2000 years ago, in the time of the first Punic War, than about those of England, in the time of Henry the

Fourth. They had fixed laws, their state was young, and the division of property tolerably equal.

{104} See Arbuthnot on Coins.

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{105} Do not the soup-shops of late invention, and certainly well intended, bear some resemblance to these days of Roman wretchedness and magnificence.

{106} It is to be observed, these donations were not on account of scarcity, but to save the people from the trouble of working to earn the corn; they were become idle in body and degraded in mind. ==

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The unequal division of property in France was one of the chief causes of the revolution; the intention of which was, to overturn the then existing order of things. The ignorance of the great proprietors concerning of their true interests, and the smallness of their numbers, disabled them from protecting themselves. The middle orders were discontented, and wished for a change; and the lower orders were so degraded, that, at the first signal, they became as mutinous and as mean as the Plebians at Rome, in the days of its splendor. {107}

That this was not alone owing to the unequal division of property is certain, there were other causes, but that was a principal one. As a proof that this was so in England, where property is more equally divided than it was in France, the common people are more attached to government, and of a different spirit, though they are changing since the late great influx of wealth into this country, and since difficulties which have accumulated on the heads of the middle orders, while those who have large fortunes feel a greater facility of augmenting them than at any former period.

In those parts of this country, where wealth has made the least progress, the character of the people supports itself the best amongst the lower classes; and the inverse progress of that character, and of the acquisition of wealth, is sufficiently striking to be noticed by one who is neither a very near, nor a very nice observer.

Discontent and envy rise arise from comparison; and, where they become prevalent, society can never stand long. They are enemies to fair industry.

Whatever may have been the delusive theories into which ill-intentioned, designing, and subtle men have sometimes deluded the great mass of the people, they have never been successful, except when they could fight under the appearance of justice, and thereby create discontent. The unequal division of property has frequently served them in this case.

— {107} The Parisian populace were the instruments in the hand of those who destroyed the former government, as the regular army is in the hands of him who has erected that which now exists. ==

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[Transcriber's note: possible omissis—page 128 ends as above, page 129 starts as next follows...]

while it increased the ignorance, and diminished the number of the enemies they had to encounter.

As this evil has arisen to a greater height in countries which have had less wealth in the aggregate than England, it is not the most dangerous thing we have to encounter; but, as the tendency to it increases very rapidly of late years, we must, by no means, overlook it. A future Chapter will be dedicated to the purpose of inquiring how this may be counteracted in some cases, in others modified and disguised, so as to prevent, in some degree, the evil effects that naturally arise from it.

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Of all the ways in which property accumulates, in particular hands, the most dangerous is landed property; not only on account of entails, and the law of primogeniture, (which attach to land alone,) but because it is the property the most easily retained, the least liable to be alienated, and the only one that augments in value in a state that is growing rich.

An estate in land augments in value, without augmenting in extent, when a country becomes richer. A fortune, lent at interest, diminishes, as the value of money sinks. A fortune engaged in trade is liable to risks, and requires industry to preserve it: but industry, it has been observed, never is to be found for any great length of time in any single line of men; consequently, there are few great monied men, except such as have acquired their own fortunes, and those can never be very numerous nor overgrown.

Besides our having facts to furnish proofs that there are no very great fortunes, except landed fortunes; it can scarcely have escaped the notice of any one, that no other gives such umbrage, or shews the inferiority men =sic= who have none so much. {108}

That there is a perpetual tendency to the accumulation of property, in the hands of individuals, is certain; for, amongst the nations

— {108} If a man has wealth, in any other form, it is only known by the expenditure he makes, and it is quickly diminished by mismanagement; but the great landed estate, which is seldom well attended to, is mismanaged to the public detriment without ruin to the proprietor. --

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of Europe, those who are the most ancient, exhibit the most striking contrasts of poverty and riches.

Nations obtaining wealth by commerce are less liable to this danger than any others; at least we are led to believe so, from the present situation of things: we are, perhaps, however, not altogether right in the conclusion.

In France there were, and in Germany, Russia, and Poland, there are some immense fortunes, though general wealth is not nearly equal to that of England: so much for a comparison between nations of the present day. Again, it is certain, there were some fortunes in England, in the times of the Plantagenets and Tudors, much greater than any of the present times. {109} England was not then near so wealthy as it is now, and had very little commerce: it would then appear, that whether we compare England with what it was before it became a wealthy and commercial nation, or with other nations, at the present time, which are not wealthy, commerce and riches appear to have operated in dividing riches, and making that division more equal, rather than in rendering their accumulation great in particular hands, and their distribution unequal.

Before we are too positive about the cause, though we admit this effect, let us inquire whether there are not some other circumstances that are peculiar to the present situation of England, that may, if not wholly, at least in part, account for it.

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The form of government in England is different from that of any of those countries. It is also different in its nature, though not in its form, from what it was under the Plantagenets and Tudors. Court favour cannot enrich a family in this country, and the operation of the law is tolerably equal. As neither protection, nor rank, in this country, raise a man above the rest of society, so the richest subject is obliged to obtain, by his expenditure, that consideration which he would ob-

— {109} Two centuries ago, land was sold for twelve years purchase, and the rents are five times as great as they were then; 10,000 L. employed in buying land then would now produce 5000 L. a year. Had the same money been lent, at interest, it would but produce 500 L. The land, too, would sell for 140,000 L. The monied capital would remain what it was. -=-

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tain by other means, under another form of government, {110} and he is as much compelled to pay his debts as any other man.

It is not, however, the great wealth of one individual, or even of a few individuals, that is an object of consideration. It will be found that the great number of persons, who live upon revenues, sufficiently abundant to exempt them from care and attention, and to enable them to injure the manners of the people, (being above the necessity of economy, feeling none of its wants, and contributing nothing by their own exertion to its wealth or strength,) is a very great evil, and one that tends constantly to increase.

But if this progress goes on, while a nation is acquiring wealth, how much faster does it not proceed when it approaches towards its decline? It is, then, indeed, that the extremes of poverty and riches are to be seen in the most striking degree.

The higher classes can never be made to contribute their share towards the prosperity of a state; where there are no middling classes to connect the higher and lower orders, and to protect the lower orders from the power of the higher, a state must gradually decline.

It is in the middling classes that the freedom, the intelligence, and the industry of a country reside. The higher class may be very intelligent, but can never be very numerous; and being above the feeling of want, except in a few instances, (where nature has endowed the wealthy with innate good qualities,) there is nothing to be expected or obtained of them, {111} towards the general good.

From the working and laborious classes, again, little is to be expected. They fill the part assigned to them when they perform their duty to themselves and families; and they have neither leisure, nor other means of contributing to general prosperity as public men;



— {110} In France, the richest subject under the crown was a prince of the blood, &c.

{111} In this case, the English form of government is good, because, it not only hinders any man from forgetting that he is a man, but whenever there is any ambition, no one in this country can rise above the necessity of acting with, and feeling for, their inferiors, of whom they sometimes have to ask favours, which they never do under a pure monarchy. -=-

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they, indeed, pay more than their share of taxes in almost every country; {112} but they cannot directly, even by election, participate in the government of the country.

If any number of persons engross the whole of the lands of a nation, then the labourers that live on those lands must be in a degraded situation; they then become less sound and less important members of the state than they would otherwise be.

Necessity does not act with that favourable impulse on people, where property is very unequally divided, that it does where the gradation from the state of poverty to that of riches is more regular.

As the action of the body is brought on by the effect produced on the mind; and as there is no hope of obtaining wealth where it appears very unequally divided, so also there is no exertion where there is no hope. {113}

Where there is no regular gradation of rank and division of property, emulation, which is the spur to action, when absolute necessity ceases to operate, is entirely destroyed; thus the lower classes become degraded and discouraged, as is universally found to be the case in nations that have passed their meridian; the contrary being as regularly and constantly the case with rising nations.

Besides the degradation and listlessness occasioned in the lower ranks, by an unequal distribution of property, the most agreeable, and the strongest bond of society is thereby broken. The bond that

— {112} This is less the case in England than in any other country.

{113} It is strange how possibility, which is the mother of hope, acts upon, and controuls, the passions. Envy is generally directed to those who are but a little raised above us. They are reckoned to be madmen who envy kings, or fall in love with princesses, and, in fact, they are such, unless when they belong to the same rank themselves.

Love, for example, which is not a voluntary passion, or under the controul of reason, ought, according to the chances of things, sometimes to make a sensible and wise man become enamoured of a princess, but that never happens. It would appear, that, in order to become the object of desire, there must be a hope founded on a reasonable expectation of obtaining the object. This can be but very small in the lower classes, when they look at the overgrown rich, and have no intermediate rank to envy or emulate. --

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consists, in the attachment of the inferior classes, to those immediately above them. Where the distance is great, there is but little connection, and that connection is merely founded upon expediency, not on a similarity of feeling, or an occasional interchange of good actions, or mutual services. By this means, the whole society becomes, as it were, disjointed, and if the chain is not entirely broken, it has at least lost that strength and pliability that is necessary, either for the raising a nation to greatness, or supporting it after it has risen to a superior degree of rank or power.

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Amongst the causes of the decline of wealthy nations, this then is one. The great lose sight of the origin of their wealth, and cease to consider, that all wealth originates in labour, and that, therefore, the industrious and productive classes are the sinews of riches and power. The French nation, to which we have had occasion to allude already, was in this situation before the revolution. Rome was so likewise before its fall. We are not, however, to expect to find this as a principal cause in the fall of all nations; many of them fell from exterior and not interior causes. Venice, Genoa, and all the places that flourished in the middle ages, fell from other causes. Whatever their internal energy might have been, their fate could not have been altered, nor their fall prevented. The case is different with nations of which the extent is sufficiently great to protect them against the attacks of their enemies; and where the local situation is such as to secure them from a change taking place in the channels of commerce, a cause of decline which is not to be resisted by any power inherent in a nation itself.

In Spain and Portugal the internal causes are the preponderating ones, and, in some measure, though not altogether so, in Holland. If England should ever fall, internal causes must have a great share in the catastrophe. In this inquiry, then, we must consider the interior state of the country as of great importance.

When property is very unequally divided, the monied capital of a nation, upon the employment of which, next to its industry, its wealth, or revenue, depend, begins to be applied less advantageously. A preference is given to employments, by which money is got with most ease and [end of page #133] certainty, though in less quantity. A preference also is given to lines of business that are reckoned the most noble and independent.

Manufacturers aspire to become merchants, and merchants to become mere lenders of money, or agents. The detail is done by brokers, by men who take the trouble, and understand the nature of the particular branches they undertake, but who furnish no capital.

The Dutch were the greatest example of this. Independent of those great political events, which have, as it were, completed the ruin of their country, they had long ceased to give that great encouragement to manufactures, which had, at first, raised them to wealth and power in so surprising a manner. They had, in the latter times, become agents for others, rather than merchants on their own account; so that the capital, which, at one time, brought in, probably, twenty or twenty-five per cent. annually, and which had, even at a late period, produced ten or fifteen, was employed in a way that scarcely produced three.

If it were possible to employ large capitals with as much advantage, and to make them set in motion and maintain as much industry as small ones are made to do, there would scarcely be any limit to the accumulation of money in a country; but a vast variety of causes operate on preventing this.

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Whatever, therefore, tends to accumulate the capital of a nation in a few hands (thereby depriving the many) not only increases luxury, and corrupts manners and morals, but diminishes the activity of the capital and the industry of the country. {114}

In all the great places that are now in a state of decay, we find families living on the interest of money, that formerly were engaged in manufactures or commerce. Antwerp, Genoa, and Venice, were full

— {114} It is a strange fact, that when this country was not nearly so far advanced as it is now, almost all the merchants traded on their own capitals; they purchased goods, paid for them, sold them, and waited for the returns; but now it is quite different. They purchase on credit, and draw bills on those to whom they sell, and are continually obliged to obtain discounts; or, in other words, to borrow money, till the regular time of payment comes round; they may, therefore, be said to be trading with the capital of money-lenders, who afford them discount. --

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of such, but those persons would not have ventured a single shilling in a new enterprise. The connection between industry and revenue was lost in their ideas. They knew nothing of it, and the remnants of the industrious, who still cultivated the ancient modes of procuring wealth, were considered as an inferior class of persons, depending upon less certain means of existence, and generally greatly straitened for capital, which, as soon as they possessed in sufficient quantity, enabled them to follow the same example, and to retire to the less affluent, but more esteemed and idle practice of living upon interest.

In countries where there are nobility, the capital of the commercial world is constantly going to them, either by marriage of daughters, or by the other means, which rich people take to become noble. Even where there are no nobility, the class of citizens living without any immediate connection with trade consider themselves as forming the highest order of society, and they become the envy of the others. There appears to be no means of preventing capital, when unequally divided, from being invested in the least profitable way that produces revenue. When more equally divided, it is employed in the way that produces the greatest possible income, by setting to work and maintaining the greatest possible quantity of labour.

If there is not sufficient means of employing capital within a nation or country that has a very unequal division of wealth, there are plenty of opportunities furnished by poorer nations. Accordingly, every one of the nations, states, or towns, that has ever been wealthy, has furnished those who wanted it with capital, at a low interest. Amsterdam has lent great sums to England, to Russia, and France. The French owed a very large sum to Genoa at the beginning of the revolution. Antwerp, Cologne, and every one of the ancient, rich, and decayed towns had vested money in the hands of foreign nations,

or lent to German princes, or to the great proprietors of land, on the security of their estates. The American funds found purchasers amongst the wealthy all over Europe, when they could not find any in their own states; and, it is probable, that the far greater portion of their debt is at this time in the hands of foreigners.

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Thus it is that wealthy nations let the means by which the wealth [end of page #135] was acquired go out of their hands; each individual in a new state, or in an old, follows his own interest and disposition in the disposal of his property. In the new state, the individual interest and that of the country are generally the same; in the old one, they are in opposition to each other, and that opposition is greatly increased by the unequal division of property. The middling class of proprietors never seek the most profitable employment for their money; the very wealthy are always inclined to seek for good security and certain payment, without any consideration of the interest of their country.

To counteract the tendency of property to accumulate, without infringing on the rights of individuals, will be found desirable. In the Fourth Book =sic—there is none.=, a mode of doing this shall be attentively taken into consideration.

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CHAP. VI.

Of the Interior Causes of Decline, which arise from the Produce of the Soil becoming unequal to the Sustenance of a luxurious People.— Of Monopoly.

It has already been mentioned, and we have seen, in the case of Rome and Italy, that the country which was sufficient to maintain a certain population, when the manners of the people were simple, becomes incapable of doing so, when wealth has introduced luxury.

The case of the Romans, though the most clearly ascertained of any, and the circumstances the best known, is only in part applicable to an inquiry into the effects of luxury at the present day. The nature of luxury, the nature of the wants of man, and the diffusion of that luxury, its distribution amongst the different classes, are so unlike to what they were, that the comparison scarcely holds in any single instance.

A most enormous increase of population (a forced population as it were) in a small country, together with large tracts of land converted from agriculture to the purposes of pleasure were the principal causes why Italy, in latter times, was incapable of supplying itself with corn. Wherever wealth comes in more easily and in abundance, by other means than by agriculture, that is to a certain degree neglected. To cultivate ceases to be an object where it is more easy to purchase. This certainly is, at all times, and in all places, one of the consequences of an influx of wealth, from wheresoever it comes, or by whatever means it is acquired; though, in Italy, it was felt more than perhaps in any other part of the world. The manner in which wealth comes into a nation has a great effect on the consumption of produce, owing to the description of persons into whose hands it first comes. In Rome, the wealth came into the hands of the great. The slaves and servants, though more numerous, were, perhaps, fed in the same manner with the



slaves in earlier periods, though probably not with so much economy. In a manufacturing country, [end of page #137] the greatest part of the wealth comes first into the hands of the labouring people, who then live better and consume more of the produce of the earth; not by eating a greater quantity, but by eating of a different quality.

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In every manufacturing or commercial country, wealth displays itself in general opulence amongst the lower orders, and the means of supplying that greater consumption is the same as it was in Rome. The money that arrives from other countries enables the community to purchase from other countries the deficiency of provisions, and prevents the evil effects from being felt at the moment.

When, in course of time, there comes to be a difficulty of obtaining the supply, from the want of produce in the country itself, then the decline begins; and as no wealth, arising either from conquest, colonies, or commerce, bears any great proportion to the daily food of a people, its effect is soon felt in a very ruinous and terrible manner.

England is the greatest country for extensive commerce that ever existed, yet the amount of the whole of its foreign trade would not do much more than furnish the people with bread, and certainly not with all the simple necessities of life. If, therefore, a country, such as this is, were unable to furnish itself with the necessities of life, the whole balance of trade, now in its favour, would not be sufficient to supply any considerable deficiency.

The desire of eating animal food, in place of vegetables, is very general and, amongst a people living by manufactures, will always be indulged. If the country was fully peopled, before animal food was so much used; that is, if the population was as great as the vegetable produce of the country was able to supply; as the same quantity of ground cannot feed the same number of people with animal food, there will be a necessity of importing the deficiency.

The change that this produces, when once it begins to operate, is a most powerful and effectual cause of decline; and, without the intervention of conquest, or any violent revolution, would of itself be sufficient to impoverish, in the first instance, and, in the second, to depopulate a country.

We find every country that was once wealthy, but that has fallen [end of page #138] into decline, is thinly peopled; and if it were not for the want of information, from which the cause may be traced, a deficiency of food might most probably be found to be one of the most efficient.

Flanders, which is one of the most fertile countries in Europe, and has experienced a partial decline, is probably not near so fully peopled as it once was. Its present population would not support those armies, or give it that rank amongst nations which it at one time maintained. It is true there have been persecutions and emigrations, which must have reduced the population of the country for a time, but not to an extent that would account for such a diminution in its numbers, as there is reason to think has taken place.



Ghent, a town of an amazing size, could, at one time, send out fifty thousand fighting men. It certainly could not now (that is to say, at the time the French subdued the country) have furnished one-fourth part of the number. Ghent is not the only town in this situation, the others have all fallen off in the same manner. When manufactures declined, the people did not go to live in the country, for that also is thinly inhabited, the richness of the soil being taken into consideration.

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The peasants of that country lived much better than their French neighbours; they apparently brought up their children with more ease, and fed them more fully; but the country was not so populous, in proportion to its fertility.

In southern climates, where the heat of the sun is great, and vegetation difficult, unless the crop is of a nature to protect the ground from its effects, natural grass is never luxuriant; and the cattle are neither so large nor so fat as in more northerly latitudes. Corn, on the other hand, which rises to a sufficient height, before the hot season, to protect the ground from the rays of the sun, is a more profitable crop; and, indeed, the only one that could (potatoes excepted) support a great population.

In such countries, scarcely any degree of general affluence would enable the labouring classes to eat animal food. No degree of wealth, that can well be supposed, would enable the inhabitants of the southern parts of France, or of Spain, to live on butcher-meat, which, [end of page #139] if it became to be in general demand, would be dearer than poultry, or even than game. The absolute necessity of living on vegetables, or rather the absolute impossibility of contracting a habit of living on animal food, must, then, in those countries, counteract the taste, and prevent depopulation being produced by that cause.—But it is very different with more northerly countries, where it is almost a matter of indifference, in point of expense, to an individual who enjoys any degree of affluence, whether he lives on vegetable or animal food, and where he gives a decided preference to the former. {115}

It is probable that nature (so admirable in adapting the manners of the inhabitants to the nature of the country) has made heavy animal food less congenial to the taste of southern nations than to those of the north. There is, indeed, reason to believe it is so, but, whether it is or not, as natural philosophy is not here the study, but political economy, the fact is, that if southern nations had the same propensity, it would be impossible to indulge it to an equal extent.

As wealth and power are intimately connected with population, and depend in a great measure upon it, wherever they are the cause of introducing a taste that will, in the end, depopulate a country, they must, in so far, undermine their own support, and bring on decay. This is a case that applies to all northern nations, and particularly to Britain; in order, therefore, to treat the subject at full length, it will be better to enter into the minute examination when we come to apply the case directly to this country, and seek for a remedy.

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— {115} The proportion between the prices of bread and butcher meat will help to a conclusion on this subject. The warmer and dryer the climate, the cheaper bread is in proportion. At Paris, which is a dry, but not a very warm climate, the proportion, in ordinary times, was as four to one. A loaf of bread of four pounds, and a pound of meat, were supposed to be nearly the same price, but the meat was generally the higher of the two. In England, the proportion (before the late revolution in prices) was about two to one, and, in Ireland, where the soil and climate are more moist, and better for cattle, flesh meat was still cheaper, in proportion. The poverty of the people, indeed, prevented them from living on animal food, but buttermilk, (an animal production) and potatoes, a cheaper vegetable, are their chief sustenance. —

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Though this cause of depopulation, arising from wealth, increasing the consumption of food, is peculiar to northern nations, yet there are others that have a similar effect, that fall more heavily on the inhabitants of the south.

Rest from labour is, in warm climates, a great propensity, and easily indulged. In no northern nation could there be found so idle a set of beings as the Lazzeroni of Naples. If the nations of the north have a desire to indulge themselves in consuming more, those of the south have a propensity to be idle, and produce less, the effect of which is in nearly the same; for, whether they produce any thing or not, they must consume something. The same listlessness and desire of rest, that produces idleness and beggary amongst the poor, makes the rich inclined to have a great retinue of servants, and, as those servants are idly inclined, they serve for low wages, on condition of having but light work to perform. Thus it is that the fertility of the soil, and the other natural advantages are destroyed by the disposition of the inhabitants.

It does not appear, however, that this disposition was indulged or encouraged to any hurtful extent, until wealth had vitiated the original manners of the inhabitants. The Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, all of them performed works requiring great exertion. They encouraged industry and arts, and became great, wealthy, and populous; but, when once they fell to decline, the same fate attended the descendants of them all. {116}

Of all the countries that were once great, and have fallen to decay, Italy has retained its population the best; but, for this, there is an evident cause to be found in the natural fertility of the country, and the resource still drawn from foreigners, who have never ceased to visit that once famous seat of arts and military glory.

The number of horses and of domestic animals maintained by the

— {116} After the Augustan age, the populace of Rome seem to have degenerated with great rapidity, as the donations of corn clearly prove. Had the tributary countries

not furnished the means of providing food, the Goths would have been saved the trouble of sacking the city, as the people must have perished for want. --

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fruits of the earth, but producing nothing, as they increase, in every country where wealth prevails, may be considered as a cause of depopulation, confined to no part of the world. Thus we find either the same cause acting throughout, or different causes producing the same effect in different countries; thereby reducing them all much more nearly to an equality than we could at first imagine.

It has been observed, that when wealth comes to the working orders, and makes them indulge in animal food, it produces a greater effect, with respect to the consumption of produce, than if the same wealth came into the hands of the rich; this is, however, in some degree, compensated by their not keeping pleasure horses, the greatest of all consumers of the produce of the earth. One horse will consume as much as a family of four persons living on corn, and the ordinary vegetables used in England; and as much as two families, living as they do in Ireland or Scotland, on oat-meal, milk, and potatoes.

As we find depopulation one of the effects that is universally occasioned by decline, it must originate in some cause equally general, and that cause must be one attending the state of wealth and greatness, for it does not appear to be a necessary effect of decline. We can very easily conceive a people, degraded and numerous, reduced to live poorly, as they do in Naples, Cairo, and some other particular spots: but taking the whole of those countries together, we find evident marks of a falling off in population; and we find it not progressive, but of long standing. Those countries seem to have found a new maximum of population, far inferior to the former standard, immediately after they ceased to be wealthy and flourishing.

Perhaps it was from this cause that the idea of sumptuary laws originated; for though, in some cases, the pride of being distinguished might occasion the sovereign to enact, or the higher orders of society to solicit them, yet they were always considered as tending to prevent ruinous extravagance. When states become very wealthy, they may consider such regulations as ridiculous, and perhaps they may neither be necessary nor effectual; yet, nevertheless, there must be some cause for the general opinion of their utility. Though it is not the fashion of the present times to hold an opinion as good because it is general, and its prevalence in ignorant times is considered as a mark of its being erroneous; yet, observation and common sense have never been wanting at any period, and it is from those sources that such maxims and opinions arise. Any man who had travelled, first through Italy and Spain, and then through England and America, would be very likely to invent sumptuary laws, if he had never heard of such a thing before. In the application of sumptuary laws, as a device, for preventing decline, the traveller might, perhaps, be very whimsical; sometimes forbidding what would never be attempted; but there would be nothing at all ridiculous in his general intention. {117}

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It will certainly be found that, in all the causes of the decay of nations, the increase of consumption, and decrease of production, takes the greatest variety of forms, and disguises itself the most; it is, therefore, one that is much to be guarded against, particularly as its effects seem to be difficult to remedy.

As the manner in which a country acquires riches has a considerable influence on the habits of the people, a country acquiring riches by conquest, or colonies, must naturally expend it in splendour and magnificence.

Merchants are less splendid than conquerors and planters. Their ostentation is of a different sort; and, as the fortunes made in that way are rather more equally divided, they cannot launch out quite so far. Besides, merchants are seldom entirely independent of credit and industry; at least, when acquiring their fortunes they were not so; and, therefore, whether the necessity continues or not, the habit, once contracted, is never quite effaced.

Manufacturers, again, are still less splendid than merchants. With them, the gifts of fortune are more equally divided than with either of the other three, and they seldom arrive at more than an ordinary degree of affluence; which affords the means of gratifying personal wants, of living with hospitality, ease, and comfort.

— {117} If, for example, it were a law at Manchester or Birmingham, that no man should keep above fifty servants in livery, or burn more than three-dozen wax-lights at a time, it would be like mockery, and would be perfectly useless; at Rome it would be very useful. --

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The greatest part of manufacturing wealth, and that, indeed, is divided with a pretty equal hand, is that which goes to the working people, who spend nearly the whole on personal enjoyment.

The quantity of food that an individual may consume is nearly limited by nature; but the extent of ground on which that food grows depends chiefly on the quality. Thus, for example, it will require nearly ten times the number of acres to maintain one hundred people, who live on animal food, that =sic= it would require to supply the same persons living on vegetables; and, as wealth increases, animal food always obtains the preference. This is evident, from so many proofs, that it scarcely needs illustration. In London, which is the most wealthy part of England, there is more animal food consumed than in any other part, in proportion to the numbers; and, in the country there is always less than in the towns. In the country, and in the towns of England, there is more than in any proportional part of Scotland, or in France, or, indeed, any part of Europe. Expensive as animal food is here, still it bears less proportion to the wages of

labour, or the general wealth, than in any other country. In every country, as riches have increased, the consumption of the produce of the earth has augmented.

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The Dutch seem to have been well aware of the danger of wealth making the people consume too much. A man in moderate circumstances loses his credit there, who roasts his meat instead of boiling it. It is reckoned wastefulness, and, as such, is the occasion of confidence being withdrawn from him: it has nearly as bad an effect on a man's credit, as if he were seen coming from a gaming-house.

It will, perhaps, be said, that the parsimony of the Dutch is ridiculous, but we ought not to attribute this merely to parsimony, but to a feeling similar to what we have very properly in England when we see bread wasted. It arises from a feeling of the general want, not of the particular loss, which is totally a different thing. If a man give away imprudently, that loss is to himself, not to the community. As there cannot be givers without receivers it is a change of hands, but there ends the matter. A habit of wasting is another [end of page #144] thing, it is a general loss, and, therefore, hurts the community at large as well as the individual.

When this augmented consumption takes place, to any great extent, it is the infallible cause of depopulation. How nearly depopulation and decline are connected with each other is very easily and well understood; indeed, it is impossible not to see their intimate connection. {118}

While the exports of a country amount to a great sum, a few millions can be spared for the importation of provisions, without any great difficulty; but the evil may increase imperceptibly, till it becomes impossible to remedy it. The distress that must be occasioned, in such a case, is beyond the power of calculation; for though, in times of plenty, animal food is preferred, whenever there comes any thing like want, that can only be supplied by corn, and there is no wealth sufficient, in any country, to procure that for a number of years, to any great extent. {119}

It is calculated, by the author of the notes on Dr. Smith's Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations, that, if the supply of corn were to fall short, one-fourth part, in England, for a number of years running, there would be no means of finding either corn to buy, ships to transport it, or money to pay for it, without totally deranging the commerce of the country.

In every country there are a number of persons who can afford to

— {118} Till within these twelve or fourteen years, England always was able to export some grain; but now the demand for importation is great and regular. It has had a vast influence on the balance of trade, which, though it has been great some years, has not, upon the whole, been equal to what it was previous to the American war, when the whole amount of foreign commerce was not one-half of what it has been for these last ten years.



{119} If it could be done, it would bring on poverty; but, as the excess of crops over the consumption is not, in any nation, equal to one-tenth of its whole revenue; and, as the expense of eatables amount to nearly one-half, the wealth of a nation would soon be destroyed, if it were possible to produce from other nations a supply. The calculation would be nearly as under for England, putting the population at nine millions.

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In ordinary times, nine millions of people living on bread, potatoes, &c. would require about four millions of acres; but nine millions, living on animal food, will require thirty-six millions of acres. --

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live in a more expensive way than the rest; perhaps, this may be reckoned at one-fourth, but, in countries that are poor, even that fourth cannot afford to eat animal food. If, however, a country becomes sufficiently rich for one-sixth to live chiefly on animal food, and the other five-sixths to live one day in the week on that food, the effect will be as if one-third lived on it constantly, which would require two-thirds more territory than when the whole lived on bread.

Those who think that such matters find their own level, and regulate themselves, may be right in the long run, for so they indeed do. But how? When poverty and want came, no doubt the consumption of flesh-meat would be diminished; when the country had no means of supplying itself as it did when it was rich, famine would play its part in becoming one of the regulators; but, before this regulation could be effected, the evil we wish to prevent would have taken place. The country would be depopulated and ruined. We must, therefore, in trying to avert the decline of a nation, not set any thing down for the counteracting and adjusting power, which is known sometimes to interfere so very advantageously in the affairs of men. Though it is true that it does interfere, it is in all cases of this sort too late, it is an effect of the cause which we wish to avoid; we can only look to it here for stopping the career in process of time, but, never for preventing it. We know that the extravagance of an individual impairs his fortune, and, that the diminution of means will, at length, counteract the extravagance; but, then it will do so when it is too late, and after he is ruined. Wastefulness may be stopped, but it cannot possibly stop itself, as the diminution of means is the cause of the extravagance ceasing, and itself is an effect of the prior existence of the extravagance.

Regarding men merely then as producing and consuming, (the proportion between which regulates the wealth of a nation,) we find that, in their own persons, there is a rooted tendency to bring on the decline. But we shall farther find that not only do people in wealthy and luxurious nations produce less and consume more than in nations less advanced, but they increase the number of unproductive labourers, all of whom consume without producing. They also main-[end of page #146]tain animals who consume, but do nothing towards production. {120} No country, in which the people live much upon animal food, can be well peopled. Two hundred persons to a square mile of country is nearly the highest population of any nation in Europe, that is, as near as may be, three acres and a quarter to each person; but, on an average, even in France, there are more than four acres to each.

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Supposing that one-half of the land is cultivated, then that gives about two acres to each person.

Supposing, again, that one-third of this is consumed by horses or other animals who labour; or, supposing that they do not serve for the food of man, then there will be nearly about one acre and a quarter for the maintenance of each person.

It will, however, only require half an acre to one person, if they all lived on field vegetables; {121} and, if they all lived on fresh meat, it would require four acres; the natural conclusion is, that one-fourth live on animal food, and the other three-fourths on vegetables, or what is the same thing, that the proportions of the two sorts of food are as one to three.

According to the proportion of the prices in France, of four to one, it would certainly cost double the price to live on animal food that =sic= it does on vegetables; that is to say, if the only vegetable was bread, supposing which is the case, that one pound of meat supplies the place of two pounds of bread, as it certainly does. In England, where beef is only twice the price of bread, {122} it is almost a matter of indifference as to price, whether a working man lives on vegetables or animal food. To the taste and the stomach, however, it is no matter of indifference, the animal food, therefore, is preferred; but if it were a matter of some importance, in point of economy, that would not prevent the people of a country, flourishing by manufactures, from

— {120} One good horse well kept, whether for pleasure or labour (it has already been said) will consume nearly as much as a moderate family.

{121} Vegetables raised in the kitchen-garden would go vastly further, but this is a rough average, the subject neither admitting of, nor requiring accurate investigation.

{122} That is about the usual proportion, though about a year ago it was four times as much in France. --

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eating it, and thereby at length sinking to a lower degree of population than a poor country living on vegetable food.

In all nations getting wealthy this is a consideration, but most so when the wealth is acquired by manufactures, when the lower and numerous class have an opportunity of gratifying themselves by indulging in the species of food which they find the most agreeable.

This, like the other changes of manners, of which it is only a part, is a natural consequence of a propensity inherent in human nature; it cannot, therefore, be prevented or done away, though it may, to a certain degree, be counteracted. The

manner of counteracting it not being a general manner, but depending on circumstances, shall be treated of when investigating the increasing danger, arising from this cause, in the English nation.

It remains at present for us to examine another evil attendant on the inadequacy of the soil to supply the consumption of a country.

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One of the most alarming circumstances attendant on this situation of things is, that provisions become an object of monopoly, and the most dangerous and destructive of all objects. The law has interfered in regulating the interest of money, but not in the rent of houses or of other use of property. Circumstances may occur, in which the necessity of procuring a loan of money is so great, as to induce the borrower to engage to pay an interest that would be ruinous to himself, and that would grant the lender the means of extortion, or of obtaining exorbitant profit. The same interference would be just as reasonable, wherever the same sort of necessity, by existing, puts one man in the power of another. This is the case with every necessary article of provision, which, indeed, may be considered as all one article, for the price of one is connected with the prices of all the others.

Provisions, indeed, are, in general, articles that cannot be preserved for any very great length of time; but then, again, they are articles of a nature that the consumers must have within a limited time also, and for which they are inclined to give an exorbitant price rather than not to have. The interference of the law between a man and the use of his property, ought to be as seldom as possible; but it has never been maintained as a general principle, that it ought never to interfere. [end of page #148] If it is at any time, or in any case, right to interfere legally, the question of when it is to be done becomes merely one of expediency, one of circumstance, but not one that admits of a general decision.

A writer of great (and deservedly great) reputation has said so much on this subject, and treated it in a way that both reason and experience prove to be wrong, that it is become indispensably necessary to argue the point. {123} Monopoly, regrating, and forestalling, which two last are only particular modes of monopolizing, have been considered as chimeras, as imaginary practices that have never existed, and that cannot possibly exist. They have been likewise assimilated to witchcraft, an ideal belief, arising in the times of ignorance. It is now become the creed of legislators and ministers, that trade should be left to regulate itself, that monopoly cannot exist.

With all the respect justly due to the learned writer who advanced so bold an opinion, it may be asked, since many instances occur, both in sacred and profane history, in ancient times, and in our own days, of provisions, on particular occasions, selling at one hundred times their natural price, (and, every price above the natural one, is called a monopoly price,) how can it be asserted that they may not become an object of monopoly in a more general way, though not at so exorbitant a price?

How, it may be asked, can this thing, that has so often occurred in an extreme degree, a thing that is allowed to be possible, be compared with the miraculous effect of witchcraft, of the existence of which there does not appear to be one authentic record? The one, at all events, a natural, and the other, a supernatural effect. How are those to be admitted in fair comparison?

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If we know that, at the siege of Mantua, the provisions rose to one hundred times their usual price, we may believe the same thing possible, at the siege of Jerusalem, two thousand years ago, and at the siege of Leyden, or at that of Paris. If we know that a guinea is given for a

— {123} Dr. Smith, in his Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations. The author of the notes, and continuation, has, indeed, answered his arguments; but that does not render it less necessary to do so here. ==-

[end of page #149]

bad dinner at an inn, which is not worth a shilling, merely because some particular circumstance has drawn more people together than can be provided for; and, because hunger admits not patiently of delay, can we dispute the inclination to extortion on the one hand, and the disposition to submit to it on the other?

If that is admitted, the interference of the law is allowable on the same principle on which it regulates the interest of money, though not to the same extent; that is, it is allowable, in particular instances, where the effects are similar, but not in all instances, because, in all instances, they are not similar. {124}

The rate of provisions is then liable, on particular occasions, to rise to a monopoly price, such as that of those rare productions of nature, the quantity of which cannot be increased, whatever the demand may be. {125} It follows, as an evident consequence, that the price increases as the scarcity augments; but, if it only did so, the evil would not be so great as it really is. In the first place, the anxiety attendant on the risk of wanting so necessary an article creates a greater competition amongst buyers than the degree of scarcity would occasion in an article of less necessity and importance. In a wealthy nation, the evil is still farther increased, by two other causes.

The high price which one part of the society is able to afford, and the wealth of those who sell, enables them to keep back the provisions from the market; the first cause operates in all countries nearly alike, for, the anxiety to have food is nearly equal all the world over. But the last two operate more or less, according to the wealth of the buyers and of the sellers, as the eagerness and ability of the former to purchase, and the interest and ability of the latter to keep back from selling, are regulated by the degree of wealth in a country. {126}

— {124} The law concerning money is a general law, because, at all times, there are some individuals in want of it, and would be liable to grant exorbitant interest. It is not so with provisions, for, it is only occasionally that they cannot be had at reasonable prices.

{125} Dr. Smith divides produce into three different sorts; the two first are such as can be only produced in a certain quantity, whatever the demand may be; and such as can be produced always in sufficient quantity.

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{126} This was proved by what happened in Paris in 1789, and in England in 1790. The [end of page #150] want in Paris was so real that there often was not, in that great city, bread, and materials to make it, more than sufficient for twenty-four hours: yet it never rose to above double the usual price, or twopence English the pound, (that is, sixteen sols for the four-pound loaf,) although the people were obliged to wait from six in the morning till two or three in the afternoon, before they could get a loaf a piece, and more they were not permitted to purchase or carry away. In London, where bread could always be had in plenty, for money, it rose to more than three times the usual price, (one and tenpence the quartern loaf,) yet bread is a much more necessary article to the poor in Paris than in London. But the case was, in London, the people are richer, and, in each place, it rose as high as the people were found able to pay. --

When the necessaries of life become dear, and arrive at a monopoly-price, then all taxes and other burthens laid on the people become a matter comparatively of little importance. In England, where the taxes are higher than in any nation in the world, they do not come on the poor to above three pounds a head; {127} and, of those, at least one-half can be avoided by a little self-denial. But, when the provisions increase one-half in price, it amounts to at least four pounds a head to each person; so that the effect falls on the population of the country, with a most extraordinary degree of severity.

But, great as this evil is, it has, by the circumstances and nature of things, a tendency to increase the very cause in which it originates. Though the highness of price diminishes the consumption of victuals in general, it diminishes the consumption of vegetable food, or bread, more than it does that of animal food. Though all sorts of eatables rise in price, in times of scarcity, yet bread, being the article that excites the greatest anxiety, rises higher in proportion than the others. This affords an encouragement to gratify the propensity for eating animal food; and this propensity is encouraged by an absurd and mistaken policy, by which (or perhaps rather an affectation of policy) economy in bread is prescribed, and not in other food; so that when people devour animal food, and increase the evil, they think they are most patriotically and humanely diminishing it. {128}

— {127} The whole taxes in this country do not amount to above four pounds a head, of which one-third is paid entirely by those wealthy, or at least affluent; it is, then, putting the share paid by the labouring body very high to put it at three pounds each person.

{128} Both in France and England, during the last scarcity, the use of every other sort of [end of page #151] food was recommended, to save the consumption of bread-corn. Potatoes are the only substitute that tended really to relieve the distress; all others, and, in particular, animal food, had an effect in augmenting it. --

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The danger of wanting food, though very formidable, does not act so instantaneously as to serve as an excuse for want of reflection, like an alarm of fire, where the anxiety to escape sometimes prevents the possibility of doing so; yet the fact is, that all the measures that have generally been taken, in times of scarcity, have tended rather to increase than to diminish the evil.

In monopoly, a sort of combination is supposed to exist between the sellers of an article, when the article does not happen to be all in the hands of one person, or one body of persons. But combinations are of various sorts; there are express combinations entered into by people having the same interest for a particular purpose. Those are done by a sort of an agreement, when the interest of the individual and of the body are the same. Such combinations are generally effectual, {129} but unlawful. There are combinations not less effectual, that arise merely from circulating intelligence of prices, and certain circumstances on which prices are known to depend, amongst all those concerned, who immediately know how to act in unison.—This is not unlawful.

An elegant historian has said that there was a time when the sovereign pontiff, like the leader of a band of musicians, could regulate all the clergy in Europe, so that the same tones should proceed from all the pulpits on the same day. The list of prices, at a great corn-market, has the same effect on the minds of all the sellers within a certain distance. Intelligence now flies so swift that there is no interval of uncertainty; the whole of the dealers know how to act, according to circumstances, and they are all led to act nearly as if they were in one single body. Like gamblers, who have won a great deal, rather than hasten to sell, even when they fear that prices may fall, they keep back their stock, and risk to lose something of what they have gained, by continuing to speculate on the agreeable and winning chance by which they have already profited.

— {129} There are sometimes combinations which it is the interest of a whole body to preserve, but of each individual to break, if he can with impunity; such generally soon fall to the ground. —

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The dealers in an article of ready sale, or for which there is a certain demand, have never any difficulty, in a wealthy country, of procuring money to make purchases, or to enable them to keep their stock; and the gains are so immense that there is no speculation equally attractive.

As the rent of land, in England, is reckoned at twenty-five millions a year; and it is reckoned that, in a common year, the rent is worth one-third of the produce; it follows that, of all sorts of produce of land, the value is seventy-five millions. But, in the year 1799, when the prices were more than doubled, the value was one hundred and fifty millions, of which the landlord received (as usual) twenty-five to his

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share, leaving for the farmer, &c. one hundred and twenty-five, instead of fifty, the usual sum. As the wages of servants remained the same, and, in an ordinary year, would amount to one-third of the rent, eight millions went for that, leaving one-hundred and seventeen millions, in place of forty-two, the usual residue. Two-thirds of the value of rent, or sixteen millions, is, in an ordinary year, supposed to go for seed, the maintenance of cattle, and labourers; so that, in that year, the portion so consumed must be estimated at double value, or thirty-four millions, which, deducted from one hundred and seventeen, leaves eighty-three for the farmers, in place of twenty-five, in an ordinary year: so that, when the price doubles, the farmers =sic= profit does more than triple. In the year 1799, the farmers were known to have the profit of four ordinary years, supposing that they had been the actual sellers in the market. The fact was otherwise no doubt, with regard to those who pocketed the profit, which went in part only to farmers, and the rest went to the monopolists, dealers, regraters, forestallers, &c. who advanced money to keep up the price. To the public who paid, the matter is the same, and, to the business itself, there is little difference as to who profited, or who found capital; for, as they shared the profit amongst them, and as they received three times as much as in an ordinary year, they could, out of the sales of the first four or five months, make all the payments [end of page #153] for the whole year to the landlord; and, therefore, could have the means of keeping the remainder, just as long as they thought proper.

Thus, then, while there is any degree of scarcity, the provisions of a country are at a monopoly-price; and the dealers act, though individually, as if they enjoyed one general monopoly. {130}

Before leaving his important subject, it is necessary to observe, that, though dealers in provisions, in times of any degree of scarcity, that is, when there is not quite enough fully to supply the consumption of the country, act, in keeping up prices, as if they had an exclusive privilege for monopoly, yet that is the only cases =sic= in which they do so. A single monopolizer can diminish the quantity, and perhaps destroy a part of it with advantage to himself. Thus the Dutch East India company were said to have done with the spices. {131} But the individual dealer, though he is interested in a general high price and monopoly, is still more interested in selling as much as he can; and the higher the price, the more careful he is not to waste or consume more than he can help. In this respect, the monopoly of the many is not half so hurtful as the individual monopoly. This proves that all the vulgar errors, which occasion reports of farmers and dealers destroying their corn, are not only without foundation, but would produce an effect quite contrary to the avaricious principle, by which such men are considered as being governed. {132}

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— {130} There is one moment only when they do not, that is, when they find out, for certain, that prices are going to fall. There, for a moment, individual interest, and general interest are opposite, and they hasten to sell, and to reduce the price too much. But even this does not relieve the public; for, though it makes the reduction very rapid for a time, and may sometimes bring it below the level, it quickly rises again and finishes when the panic amongst the dealers is over, by remaining higher than it ought to be.

{131} If diminishing the quantity one-quarter rises =sic= the price one-half, then the monopolist gains, if he possesses the whole market; but the individual dealer, if he were to burn his whole stock, would not diminish the quantity in the country one-thousandth part, and therefore make no sensible difference.

{132} Both in London and Paris, the reports of this sort, and, (making a little allowance for the language and nature of the people,) exceedingly similar in nature and tendency, prevailed during the scarcity of 1789 and 1799. —

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Monopoly of this sort, by raising the prices of the necessaries of life, in the end, augments the prices of labour, the rent of land, and the taxes of a country. We have already examined the tendency of all this; it is only necessary to observe that the rise in prices, or depreciation of money, which other causes bring on by degrees, this brings on violently and suddenly. {133} This cause will always exist in a country that cannot provide enough for its own subsistence.

How far this may go it is not easy to say; for if it is clear that the farmer, by double prices, gets eighty-three pounds in place of twenty-five, he can certainly afford to give his landlord something more. If he gave him double the usual rent, it would still leave more than double for himself. {134}

Of all the causes, then, that hasten the crisis of a country, none is equal to that of the produce becoming unequal to the maintenance of the inhabitants; for it is only in that case that the effects of monopoly are to be dreaded.

In the case of animal food becoming too much in request, there is a remedy which may be easily applied; of which it will be our purpose to speak, in treating of the application of the present inquiry to the advantage of the British dominions.

— {133} The few years of dearth altered wages and rent more than had been known for half a century before. Wages rose more, from 1790 to 1802, than they had done from 1740 to 1790.

{134} As the usual rent was twenty-five, and the usual profit twenty-five, the landlord and tenant had fifty to divide, at ordinary prices; but, at double prices, they had eighty-

three added to twenty-five, or one hundred and seven to divide: so that, if the farmer gave fifty, that is, double, he would still have fifty-seven to himself, which is more than double, by nearly one-third over and above.

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No allowance has been made in this calculation for the diminution in quantity. The reason is, that was comparatively very small; increased consumption, rather than deficiency of produce, being the cause. Besides, we only stated the rise as being double the usual price, whereas, it was three times greater. [end of page #155] --

CHAP. VII.

Of the Increase of the Poor, as general Affluence becomes greater.— Of Children left unprovided for.—Of their Division into two Classes— Those that can labour more or less, and those that can do no Labour.

In the career of wealth, in its early state, when individual industry is almost without any aid from capital, men are as nearly on an equality as the nature of things can admit. But, in proportion as capital comes in to the aid of industry, that equality dies away, and men, who have nothing but industry, lose their means of exerting it with advantage, some become then incapable of maintaining their rank in society altogether.

At the same time that this is taking place, articles of every sort, that are necessary for the existence of men, are becoming dearer. As some ranks of society have been described as bringing up their children not to know the existence of necessity, others, who are depressed below the natural situation of men, are bringing them up to feel the extreme pressure of want.

There is no situation of things in which a man, with natural strength, and a very slender capacity, may not gain sufficient to maintain himself, if he will be industrious; but, in a wealthy country, numbers are so pressed upon by penury, in their younger years, that neither the powers of their body, nor of their mind, arrive at maturity.

Accustomed, from an early age, to depend rather upon chance, or charity, for existence, than upon industry, or energy of their own, they neither know the value of labour, nor are they accustomed to look to it for a supply to their wants.

Whilst the foundation of idleness and poverty is laid in, for one part of a nation, from the affluence of their parents, another portion seems as if it were chained down to misery, from the indigence in which they were born and brought up. [end of page #156]

The depressed and degraded populace of great and wealthy cities are not the accidental victims of misfortune; they are born to its hard inheritance, and their numbers contaminate more, who, were it not for their own misconduct and imprudence, might have shared a better lot.

When nations increase in wealth, the fate of individuals ceases to become an object of attention; and, of all the animals that exist, and are capable of labour, the least value is set upon the human species. {135} Like individuals who rise to wealth, and forget their

origin, societies forget the first foundation of all wealth, happiness, and power. That individuals should do so is not to be wondered at. They never saw society in an infant state; nor is it the business of individual citizens to occupy themselves with public affairs; but those who are intrusted with their management, and whose business is to know the original sources of prosperity, ought to attend to and counteract this growing evil.

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When the Romans were poor, the people depended on exertion, and they enjoyed plenty; but when Lucullus and other citizens were squandering millions, at a single banquet, the people were clamouring for bread. While the person of a Roman lady was ornamented with the wealth of a province, the multitude were covered with rags, and depressed with misery. It would have been no hard matter, then, to have foretold the fate of Rome. The natural order of things was deranged to too violent an extreme to be of long duration. The state was become like a wall that had declined from the perpendicular, while age was every day weakening the cement, by which it was held together, and though of the time and hour of destruction no man knew, the event was certain.

It would, at first sight, appear that great cities are the only places in which misery of this description arises; but that is not the case.

— {135} It was never heard of, that a young horse, or any useful animal of the brute creation, was left to die with hunger in a land of plenty; but it happens to many of the human race, because there is no provision made, by which those who furnish them food may be repaid by their labour, which would be a very easy matter to adjust, if a little attention were paid to the subject. --

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Great cities are the refuge of the miserable, who, perhaps, find it in some shapes augmented, by a residence in so friendless an asylum; but there they avoid shame, they see not the faces that have smiled upon them in better days; they are more at ease amongst strangers, and they are kept in countenance by companions in penury and want. {136}

In every wealthy nation, the rich shun the view of wretchedness, which is attended with a silent reproach. Those who have property, mistrust the honesty, and blame the conduct of those who have none. In this state of things, the country affords no retreat nor residence, and want and wretchedness find the evils of a crowded society, where they pass unnoticed, much more tolerable.

In most countries, the law has taken precautions to punish, or to stop the evil in the individual; but in no great and wealthy country has it been thought of sufficient importance to take effectual means to prevent it.

In small states, when society is new, and under some absolute sovereigns, (remarkable for their penetration, genius, and love of their people,) a momentary stop has been put to this career of misery; but, in the first place, there has been no such monarch in any wealthy country; and, in the second, as soon as power fell into other hands, the progress has begun again where it left off.



One great cause of the increase of mendicity is the increase of unproductive labourers, as a state becomes more wealthy, who, dying before their children are able to provide for themselves, increase the number of the indigent. Men living by active industry naturally marry at an early age; menial servants, revenue officers, and all those who administer to the gratifications of a wealthy and luxurious people, marry later in life; and besides their not having an industrious example to set before their children, are torn from them sooner, by the course of things.

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— {136} If one of the brute creation is in want, it will supply that where it is most easily to be had, physical difficulty is the only one it knows; bodily pain the only one it feels. But men are different, they often undergo great want amongst strangers, to avoid more insufferable feelings amongst friends. -=-

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It has been noticed, that, in every society, as wealth increases hospitality dies away. And those good offices interchanged between man and man, to which life owes many of its comforts in a less advanced state of society, and which protect individuals from the frowns of fortune, gradually disappear. The social feelings become less active, and men turn selfish and interested, thinking for themselves, and careless for the community; while, on the other hand, the causes for poverty increase; on the other, the means of relief are misapplied, neglected, or squandered away. The funds that ought to be administered with disinterestedness and integrity are committed to the hands of men who live on the general misfortune, and thus the wretched, who are relieved, are not fairly treated, while the public, that is burthened with their misfortunes, is loaded far beyond its proper degree.

The population of a country is diminished in a double ratio as the poor increases: they create nothing, but they consume; and if a country sees one-tenth of its population living on charity, it is equivalent at least to seeing one-seventh diminished in numbers altogether.

Most sorts of labour require those employed in it to have some capital, such as decent clothes, or tools, or money to live upon till wages are due. Little as that capital is, yet thousands are reduced to absolute beggary for want of it; their industry finding no means of exertion. A man becomes dependant =sic= on charity for existence; and, though able to work, eats the bread of idleness, and that without being in fault.

The number of persons absolutely unable to labour is nearly the same in every country, and is not much augmented by its wealth; so that if there were, as there easily might be, always employment for those who would otherwise be entitled to relief, and if they were allowed a fair price for their labour, they would then cease either to be a burthen to themselves or to the public.

Little coercion would, in this case, be necessary. A few proper regulations, to prevent theft and losses, would be all that could be wanted with those who could labour; and those who could not, being few in number, would be provided for in a better manner than when [end of page #159] they can be, where their portion is shared with those who are able to procure for themselves an existence.

We must by no means look for relief, in cases of this sort, from difficult or intricate management and regulation. If we look at the nature of things, it points out the way.

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Those that cannot labour are the only persons who ought to be a burthen on the public; and they are the only ones that would be so, if the matters were properly regulated and attended to. As it is in most countries, there are many who cannot get work to do, and those are provided for in different ways, but always at the expense of the public. Sometimes it is by a regular assessment, sometimes by theft and depredation, sometimes by individual charity, or those other means to which a man has recourse before he will absolutely starve for want.

Those who, from philanthropy, are for relieving all, soon find themselves deceived, and unable to proceed. Those who, disgusted with the vices of a few, consider them all as equally culpable are much to blame. Surely, the individual case of a fellow-creature in misfortune is worth attending to; and he must be ignorant indeed who cannot, in most instances, avoid deception. [end of page #160]

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Tendency of Capital and Industry to leave a wealthy Country, and of the Depreciation of Money in agricultural and commercial Countries.

As the increase of capital in every country is the consequence of former productive industry, so also is it the support of future exertion.

When the capital of a country has become sufficient for all the employment that can be procured for it, the first effect is the lowering of interest, which sinks down under the rate appointed by law, and under the rate at which it is lent out at in other countries.

When capital is not in sufficient quantity, those who want to borrow are more numerous than those who have money to lend; then the competition is amongst the borrowers to obtain the preference, and they all give as high an interest as the law allows, and would give more if they could avoid the penalty, which, in all countries, has been attached to accepting more than the regulated sum; a sum regulated merely to prevent the effect of competition, which might induce people to give more than in the end they would find they could afford to pay.

When capital becomes over abundant, the very reverse takes place; the lenders become rivals, and offer to lend at an under rate of interest.

The first effect of this is, that people who were but scantily supplied with capital before borrow, and carry on business more at ease, so that more capital is employed in business, and new employments are found out for capital.

The usual employments for a superabundant capital are improving lands, building houses, erecting machines, digging canals, &c. for the use of trade; and finally, giving longer credit to merchants in other countries, {137} as well as to those who are running

in debt in their own. The stock on hand in manufactured goods increases something also. But when all these have taken place, to as great an extent as wanted, then the money begins to flow into other countries. By degrees, more money is sent away than should go, and the persons who are the proprietors of it frequently follow.

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If the capital that leaves a country were only that which cannot find employment in it, the harm would not be great, though it would tend to enrich other countries, and bring them nearer a level. But that is not the case, the advantage of lending money abroad, if regularly paid at a higher interest than can be obtained at home, induces people to draw their money from trade, and vest it in the hands of foreigners. The Venetians, the Genoese, the Dutch, the Hanseatic Towns, and the cities of Flanders, did this; and the capital, which, when employed at home, formerly maintained perhaps one hundred people in affluence and industry, only supported one single family living in indolence and splendid penury. {138}

After being in possession of money for a considerable time, men prefer a certain employment at a low interest to one attended with risk, even where the interest is higher; and when great sums have been got by trade, those who have got them retire and live on the interest, which men, who have only gained a small capital cannot do.

There are many other circumstances, besides the abundance of capital, that tend to carry it away from a wealthy country. The depreciation of money that takes place, in every country that grows

— {137} As the subject is here treated in the general way, applicable to all nations, the employment found by national debt, and the funds rising is not taken into account, as it will be noticed in the case of England. When money is plenty, all individuals in trade give longer credit; but this employs little more capital, when they give it to each other it employs no more, but when to consumers it does.

{138} The manner in which those families live is peculiar to themselves; great shew with great economy, and without the smallest spark of love, either for their fellow-citizens or their country. -=-

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rich, falls nearly all on the lender at interest, {139} who, as he cannot bring back things to their former value, seeks enjoyment in another country, and obtains, by change of place, what he lost by lapse of time.

The weight of taxes is another cause that drives capital from wealthy to poorer countries; and last of all, in case of anxiety, or of mistrust, the capitalists are generally the first to emigrate. [{140}] Anxiety and mistrust are periodical amongst a wealthy people.

As the burthens sustained by a people in prosperity are generally great, in proportion to their capital and industry, it is clear, that when capital and industry diminish, the burthens, (which do not admit of being diminished in the same proportion,) fall more heavily on those who remain; this increased cause produces, naturally, an increased

effect. Thus, like a falling column, the weight increases, and the momentum becomes irresistible.

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It is then that necessity, the spur to industry in new and rising nations, (that spur which taxes and rent continue to excite, for the good of mankind, for a certain period,) begins to crush what it had raised, and to stab where it formerly stimulated. Then it is that the money-lenders, who, at first, sent off their capital, having ceased to be engaged in trade, withdraw, by degrees, and rather content themselves with a diminished income in another country, than struggle with the difficulties they find they have to encounter in their own.

— {139} Money lent out at interest loses, money laid out in purchases gains, in a country that is advancing in riches.

If a man, who had 2000 L. thirty years ago, had laid out 1000 L. at interest, and, with the other bought land, he would, indeed, have got less rent for his land at first, but now it would be doubled, he would get 60 L. a year, and if he wished to sell he would get 2000 L. whereas, the other 1000 L. would only produce 50 L. and, if called in, the single thousand would be all he would receive.

{140} [Transcriber's note: footnote not assigned a place in the original text, intended location assumed to be as shown] This was seen at the beginning of the French revolution, though the assignats, by lowering the rate of exchange, frightened many from transferring their money, at an apparent loss of twelve or fifteen per cent. But those that overlooked this loss have rejoiced in it ever since, as the others have repented bitterly the avarice that made them risk all to save a little, and to become beggars. ==-

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It is difficult to say at what point this would stop, if the effect produced did not affix the boundary.

The prices of land, of rent, of houses, and of provisions, sink low, and induce some people to remain; for, as those articles cannot be transported, or carried off, and are always worth possessing and enjoying, it is clear there must be a term set to the decay and emigration, by the nature of things. Unfortunately for countries that have been great, that term does not seem to arrive till it is reduced far below the level of other nations. {141}

There are, however, some peculiar causes that operate in some modern nations, in counteracting this effect, so far as it is occasioned by a superabundance of capital; but, as this is not general to all nations, the proper place for speaking of it will be when we come to treat of the tendency of capital to quit this country.

The effects, arising from that depreciation of money, which takes place in every wealthy country, are great and numerous, and have been always found where wealth

abounded. The people in such countries can easily command the labour of others that are not so rich, but the others cannot afford to pay for theirs; this tends to remove industry. On the other hand, if a supply of the necessities of life are wanted in a rich country, they may be obtained from countries where the value of money is less, without throwing prices out of their level; whereas, in the country where money is of great value, that is not the case.

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The price of bread, for instance, is, at Paris, one penny the pound, and in London at eight-pence the quatern loaf, which weighs just four French pounds, the price is exactly double. If every thing was conducted in a fair way, corn, from all countries, where it is equally as cheap as in France, might be brought and sold in London, at the

— {141} At Bruges, (in Flanders) at Antwerp, Cologne, Ghent, or any of those decayed towns, house-rent was fallen, before the French revolution, to little more than an acknowledgement for occupation, where the houses were large and retired. This induced people to live at those places, who would not otherwise have done so. Small houses, lately built, were more expensive than the large old ones, built in the time that commerce flourished. -=-

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usual market price; but, before Paris could get a supply from London, the bread would cost three times its usual price. This circumstance, if properly managed, might be turned to advantage; why it is not, is difficult to say, and is a proof that there are either regulations, or practices without regulation, that counteract the true nature of things; for it would not cost a farthing a pound to bring the corn from Paris to the London market.

Paris is only mentioned here for the sake of comparison, and because the average prices have nearly the proportion of one to two. The reasons why corn is not brought from thence are no secret, but the same reasoning will apply to American corn, corn from Barbary, or the Baltic, and from other places, where the value of money is greater than in England. {142}

The principal of the other effects of the depreciation of money are to be found in the chapter on the exterior Causes of the Decline of Nations, as it is in its foreign transactions that the depreciation of money is the most felt.

In the interior, that depreciation only acts when there is a considerable lapse of time, during which the value has altered; it has, in general, no effect on transactions that are begun and finished within a short period, and in the interior of the country itself.

The depreciation of money, wherever it takes place, would cause an increase of taxes, even if there were no other reason for it; but, in so far it counteracts itself, by making them to be more easily born. =sic= Whatever its particular effects may be, and however complicated they are, the general tendency of the depreciation of money is to depress industry in that country, and to encourage it in others, where the value is greater than in it.

— {142} In America the value of money is less than in England, compared with wages; but the usual proportion, between the wages of labour and the price of corn, is different in that country from every other with which we have any connection. -=-

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CHAP. IX.

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Conclusion of the interior Causes.—Their Co-operation.—Their general Effect on the Government and on the People.—The Danger arising from them does not appear till the Progress in Decline is far advanced.

Though these causes enumerated have all one general tendency, yet their distinguishing characteristics deserve attention.

Some begin their operation from the moment the wealth of a country commences, others are only felt late in the progress of its decline. The effects of some may be diminished greatly, others may be prevented entirely; but, in all cases, the attention of government is necessary, and that before the operation of decline is actually commenced; for, prevention, and not remedy, is what ought to be aimed at, besides which, when decline has once begun, governments are too feeble to be capable of any effectual regulations.

To assist nature, in every case where her operations are favourable to the enjoyment and happiness of men, and to counteract those that are unfavourable, is the business of individuals and of states. What the individual is unable to do, should be done by those to whom the care of public affairs is given; by those who act for the benefit of all, and in the name of all.

From the first approaches of a state to wealth and greatness, we find that there are a combination of causes that begin to operate in promoting its decline. The first moving principle, necessity, is gradually done away, and with it flies industry; so that, from one generation to another, both the moral and physical man becomes changed, till he is unable to sustain the weight that he has raised; and, at last, he is crushed by the decent =sic= of the ponderous mass.

While a gradual progress destroys that industry, from which all wealth springs, other causes act to remove or misapply the labour [end of page #166] that is left, while others again are putting capital to flight, or leading to a misapplication of it.

Last of all come discord and war, the most universal cause of all those that tend to depopulate a country, and to diminish as well as degrade the inhabitants, thus giving durability to misfortune, and rendering hopeless the fate of a fallen nation.

Amongst all the causes of decline, one alone is found that has a double effect, and counteracts in one direction what it promotes in another.

This is taxation, a very certain cause of ruin if carried too far, and always dangerous; but, for a length of time, having a very powerful effect in repressing the progress of luxury, in continuing the action of necessity, the mother of industry, and in preventing that species of consumption that lays the foundation for the depopulation of a country.

From this it would seem to be almost as dangerous to take off the burthens that have been laid upon a people, as to lay them on with too heavy a hand. There is not any example worth noticing of such a case, therefore, it must stand on its own ground: history informs us nothing on the subject.

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The supposed case would be thus. That a nation should rise to a high pitch of wealth by industry, and support a heavy load of taxes, still increasing in wealth, and superior to most other nations. We are to suppose the load of taxes greatly diminished, and then to investigate the consequences.

Perhaps this is an useless hypothesis =sic=, the case never has been, and perhaps never will be; but, still it is, at least, a possible case; it is a matter of curiosity, at least, if it is not one of utility, and I have a great example to plead as my apology. Dr. Adam Smith amused himself in his inquiry into the causes of the wealth of nations =sic= in a similar manner, by a hypothesis concerning the taxation of the British colonies.

Supposing the pressure of necessity were to be suddenly taken away, those whose income is regulated by their efforts would relax in exertion; that is to say, the productive labourers of the country would relax, while those whose incomes are fixed, that is principally [end of page #167] the unproductive labourers, would become comparatively more opulent, and their luxury would increase.

This is an effect very different from what the public expects. The most useful class would gain little or nothing, while the drones of society would find their wealth greatly augmented, which would be one of the most unfortunate effects that could well be conceived, and might very soon bring about a very serious and disagreeable event.

In the course of investigating the national debt of England, in the Fourth Book =sic--- there is none.=, it will be necessary to examine this at length, but, there it will be attended with another circumstance, not one of general consideration; (as national debt is not any general or necessary appendage to a government) namely, the letting loose a great monied capital, which must either be employed here, or it will seek employment in another country, which may rise on the ruin of this.

In considering the reduction of taxes that have been long standing, and have risen to a great amount, there is certainly reason to fear evil consequences, though this is no argument in favour of taxation; on the contrary, it is a reason for avoiding it, for, it is in all cases dangerous to do what it will be attended with danger to undo.

Though the precise case of taxes being done away may never come before us, there is, at this time, an operation going on that is nearly similar, and the result of which will soon be known.

The French people were loaded with nearly twenty-five millions sterling annually to the church, and they do not now pay three. This, indeed, was partly in taxes, and part in church-lands; they have also got rid of a great deal of rent, by the sale of emigrant estates, the lands have got into the hands of men, who mostly cultivate them themselves, and have no rent to pay.

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On the supposition that the new government is not more expensive than the old, (and it ought not to be so, the debts having been nearly all wiped off,) the burthens on industry will be much less than formerly, it will then be curious to observe if agriculture flourishes more, if prices are reduced, and if the taxes that still remain are better paid. There are, indeed, many concomitant circumstances that will tend to derange the experiment, or render the conclusion uncertain; but, still it is an in-[end of page #168] teresting and a great event, and will be worth attentive observation. {143}

We must, so far as this investigation goes, conclude, that, unless the natural tendency of things to decline is powerfully counteracted, every country that rises to wealth must have a fall; and that, therefore, it merits investigation, whether it is or is not possible to counteract the tendency to decline, without interrupting the progress towards greater prosperity, and, to manage matters so, that whether it is not possible, after having attained the summit of wealth, we may remain there instead of immediately descending, as most nations have hitherto done.

From individuals, the exertion necessary is not to be expected; but, it may be looked for from the government of a country, which, though composed of individuals, the succession of persons is differently carried on; it is not from age to age, and from an old father to a young son, but from men in the vigour of life, to men in the vigour of life, who, while they are occupied in public affairs, may be considered, with respect to whatever is to be done for the good of the nation, (for its prosperity, defence, or protection,) as animated with the same spirit, without any interruption.

With respect to the interior causes of decline, they may be counteracted always with more or less effect, by a proper system of govern-

— {143} The burthens on the industry of old France, were,

Livres.

Rent of land 700,000,000

Revenues of clergy 600,000,000

Taxes, including the expense of levying 800,000,000

2,100,000,000

In sterling money L. 87,500,000

Half land now occupied by the cultivators, }

and the remainder let at lower rents } 350,000,000

Revenues of clergy, and the expenses 50,000,000

Taxes as before 800,000,000

1,200,000,000

Or in sterling money L. 50,400,000



This makes a diminution of L. 37,100,000; or something more than a third of the whole expense, and more than all the taxes to the state estimated at the highest rate. ==-

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ment. In the latter portion of this work we shall endeavour to shew how that may be attempted with safety, if not accomplished with full success.

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Before, however, we conclude this subject, and rely on government, it is necessary to mention that, in treating with other nations, a kind of overbearing haughty pride is natural to those who govern a powerful and wealthy people. In that case, they act as individuals, and are not to be trusted; and the less so, that a nation of proud pampered citizens is but too apt to applaud insolence in those who govern them.

This pride has been a very constant forerunner of the fall of wealthy and great nations, and, in Rome excepted, it has never failed. The emperors of Rome were much less haughty than the ambassadors of the republic; a love of false splendour had supplanted a ferocious affectation of dignity, yet, the former was the less humiliating of the two to other nations. {144}

While the rulers of wealthy nations are apt to act haughtily to others, they are liable to fall into another error, in mistaking the strength of their own people, and loading them too heavily, trusting too much both to their internal energy, and external force.

As the near observers of the inability of the people are generally afraid to carry unwelcome tidings to their superior; and, if they did, as he is seldom inclined to give credit to unwelcome news, the ruin of a nation has probably made a very considerable progress before he, whose business it is to put a stop to it, is aware of the danger.

The continual clamour that is made about every new burthen that is laid on, and the cry of ruin, which perpetually is sounded in the ears of a minister, and of those who execute his orders, are some ex-

— {144} The appearance of virtue and self-command, which the republican Romans preserved, added to the bravery with which they maintained whatever claims they put in, overawed a great part of their enemies; and those, who were not absolutely overawed thought that defeat and submission were, at least, robbed of their shame, when such was the character of the conqueror; and the claim once allowed was no longer questioned. Very different was the case, when the emperor was a fidler, or a buffoon, the senators puppets, and the pro-consuls themselves robbers. ==

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cuses for their not attending to them; but the consequence is not the less fatal to the nation on that account.

A nation that is feeble has, at least, the advantage of knowing it, and is not insensible if she receives a wound; but the government of a powerful nation is like the pilot of a ship, who navigates in a sea, the depth of which he cannot sound, and who spreads all his sails: if he strikes upon a rock, his ship is dashed to pieces in a moment. The other, sailing amongst shallows and sands, proceeds with caution, avoids them if possible, and, if she touches, it is so gently, that even her feeble frame is scarcely injured.

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The rulers of nations appear, in general, not to be aware of the evil that arises from the government they have to manage becoming too unwieldy =sic=, or too complicated; in either case, a check, though but of short duration, is irretrievable. This is a great oversight, and, at least, greatly augments the chances against the durability of a government. In proportion as the machine is unmanageable and complex, the embarrassment of those who have the conduct of it will be great, and the enemies will be proportionately bold and audacious. In all such conflicts, much depends on the spirit of the combatants, and more still on that of those who, at first, are lookers on, who act in consequence of the opinion they have of the force or feebleness of either party. {145}

The tendency that a nation has to decline is not, then, in general, counteracted, by the government; but, on the contrary, is pushed on by it, and precipitated into the gulf. No wonder, then, that the career is rapid, and the fall irretrievable.

It is, nevertheless, to the government, and to it alone, that we must look for that counteracting force that is to stay the general current. Individuals can only look to their own conduct, and they neither can

— {145} Not only when the French revolution began, but a hundred times afterwards, did the party triumph that appeared the strongest, merely because it appeared so. All those who stand neutral at first, take a side the moment they have fixed their opinion as to the strength of the contending parties, and this decision is always in favour of the party they think the strongest. --

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be expected to have time nor inclination to study the public welfare, and, even if they had, they would want the means.

Government can never be better employed than in counteracting this tendency to decay. It has the means, and is but performing its duty in doing so. The previous step to all this, however, is a knowledge of what is to be done, a full sense of the necessity of doing it, and a disposition to submit to the regimen necessary.

For this purpose, both the government and the people must give up something. The people must allow government to interfere in the education of children, and, in that, give up a little of their liberty; {146} and those who govern must attend to many things which are generally neglected. To do the routine business of the day is the occupation of most of the governments of Europe, whether in war or at peace; they therefore habitually become agents of necessity, and what can be procrastinated is never done; that is to say, what is good is very seldom done, and what is necessary to prevent immediate evil, is always the chief, and sometimes the only, occupation.

There are some men in the world who prosper merely because they look beforehand, and conduct their affairs. There are others who, with equal industry, and much more trouble and care, are always a little behind, and allow their affairs to conduct them; such men never succeed, and, if they can keep off the extreme of misfortune, it is all that is to be expected.

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Most governments, in wealthy nations, are like those latter species of individuals,—they do not conduct their affairs, but are conducted by them, and think they succeed, when the necessary business of the day is done. This listlessness must be done away, and, though the

— {146} From the impossibility of a nation, once immersed in sloth and luxury, returning to the tone and energy of a new people, we may judge of the impossibility of a nation going on progressively towards wealth, not suffering from the manner of educating children. The leading distinction between a rising and a fallen people is the disposition to industry and exertion, in the one, and to sloth and negligence, in the other. It is while a nation is increasing in wealth that this alteration gradually takes place; and, as this is the main point on which all depends, the nation is safe when it is well attended to, even if other things are, in some degree, neglected. —

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governments of countries that are wealthy have no occasion, like Peter the Great, or the founders of new states, to create new institutions, and eternally try to ameliorate, they ought to be very carefully and constantly employed in preventing those good things that they enjoy from escaping their grasp, so far as it depends upon interior arrangement. Exterior causes are not within their power to regulate, therefore they should be the more attentive to those that are; and, though exterior causes are out of their dominion, yet, sometimes, by wise interior regulations, the evil effects of exterior ones may be prevented. Nothing of all this can be done, however, until the government rises above the routine business of the day, and until all the necessary and pressing business is got over. The first thing, then, for a government is to extricate itself from the situation of one who struggles with necessity, after which, but not before, it may study what is beneficial, and of permanent utility.

So far it would appear all nations are situated alike, with regard to the general tendency to decay; {147} and so far all of them may be guided by general rules, but as to the particular manner of applying those rules, it must depend on the peculiar circumstances of the nation to which they are meant to be applied.

In general, revenue has become the great object with modern nations: and, as their rulers have not ventured to tax the necessities of the people to any high degree, but have laid their vices, rather than their wants, under contribution, the revenue-system, (as it may be called,) tends to make a government encourage expensive vice, by which it profits, and check innocent enjoyment, by which it has nothing to gain. This is a terrible, but it is a very prevalent system; it is immoral, inhuman, and impolitic.

So far as this goes, a government, instead of checking, accelerates the decline of a people; but, as this is not a natural cause of decline, as it is not universal or necessary, it is to be considered with due

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— {147} The Chinese, and, in general, the nations of Asia have not been considered as included in this inquiry. The Chinese, in particular, are a people in a permanent situation: they do not increase in riches, and they seem to have no tendency to decline. Their laws and mode of education and living remain the same. ==-

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regard to particular circumstances. In general, we may say, that, in place of inviting the lower classes to pass their time in drinking, by the innumerable receptacles that there are for those who are addicted to that vice, every impediment should be put in the way. Drinking is a vice, the disposition to which grows with its gratification; most other avocations (for drinking in moderation is only such) have no tendency of the sort. Those enjoyments which have a tendency to degenerate into vice should be kept under some check; those which have no such tendency ought to be encouraged; for, where the main and general mass of the population of a country is corrupted, it is impossible to prevent its decline. If it remains uncorrupted, the matter is very easy, or, more properly, it may be said that prosperity is the natural consequence.

Manners will always be found of more consequence than laws, and they depend, in a great measure, on the wise regulations of government in every country.

Not only do most governments profit by laying the vices of the people under contribution; but, as revenue is, by a very false rule, taken as a criterion from which the prosperity of a nation may be estimated, the very evil that brings on decay serves to disguise its approach. A nation may be irretrievably undone, before it is perceived that it has any tendency to decline; it is, therefore, unwise for governments to wait till they see the effects of decay, and then to hope to counteract them; they must look before-hand, and prevent, otherwise all their exertions will prove ineffectual. [end of page #174]

CHAP. X.

Of the external Causes of Decline.—the Envy and Enmity of other Nations.—their Efforts, both in Peace and War, to bring Wealthy Nations down to their level.

The external causes of the decline of nations are much more simple in themselves than the internal ones, besides which, their action is more visible; the way of operation is such as to excite attention, and has made them thought more worthy of being recorded.

The origin of envy and enmity are the same. The possession of what is desirable, in a superior degree, is the cause of envy. That occasions injurious and unjust proceedings, and enmity is the consequence, though both originated in the same feeling at first, they assume distinct characteristics in the course of time.

The desire of possession, in order to enjoy, is the cause of enmity and envy; and all the crimes of nations, and of individuals, have the same common origin.

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It follows, as a natural consequence, arising from this state of things, that those nations which enjoyed a superior degree of wealth, became the objects of the envy of others. If that wealth was accompanied by sufficient power for its protection, then the only way to endeavour to share it was by imitation; but if the wealth was found unprotected, then conquest or violence was always considered as the most ready way of obtaining possession.

The wandering Arabs, who are the only nations that profess robbery at the present day, (by land,) follow still the same maxim with regard to those whose wealth they mean to enjoy. If too powerful to be compelled by force to give up what they have got, they traffic and barter with the merchants of a caravan; but if they find themselves able to take, they never give themselves the trouble to adopt the legitimate but less expeditious method of plunder and robbery =sic=. [end of page #175]

As it has been found that wealth operates, by degrees, in destroying the bravery of a people, after a certain time, so it happens that, in the common course of things, a moment arrives when it is considered safe, by some one power or other, to attack the wealthy nation, and partake of its riches; thus it was that the cities of Tyre and of Babylon were attacked by Alexander; and thus it was that his successors, in their turn, were attacked and conquered by the Romans; and, again, the Romans themselves, by the barbarous nations of the north.

Besides those great revolutions, of which the consequences were permanent, there have been endless and innumerable struggles for the possession of wealth, amongst different nations; but the real and leading causes are so uniform, and so evident, that there is not a shadow of a doubt left on that subject.

Mr. Burke had good reason to say that the external causes were much easier traced, and more simple, than the internal ones; for, the Romans excepted, the instances of rich nations attacking and conquering poor ones are very rare indeed.

The Romans had erected their republic on a different plan from that of any other; they had neither arts, industry, nor territory of their own, and they conquered nations upon speculation, and for the sake of civilizing the people, and making them contribute revenue; how they were successful has been explained. But even the Romans would not have attacked poor nations, if they had been, at an earlier period, possessed of the means of attacking those that were wealthy.

Necessity obliged them to begin with Italy: their safety made them defend themselves against the Gauls, and, till they had a navy, it was impracticable to carry their conquests into Asia or Africa; but, after they had conquered Carthage, they lost very little time in attacking Egypt, and those countries occupied by the successors of Alexander.

The taking of Constantinople was the last decided victory of this sort, and in nothing but time and circumstance did it differ from the others; in all the great outlines it was exactly the same. [end of page #176]

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The effeminacy and luxury of the rich, those interior causes, of which we have already spoken, always give facility to those efforts which envy and avarice excite.

The rivalship, in time of peace, is a contest confined to modern nations; or, at least, but little known to the ancients. Indeed, it is only amongst commercial nations that it can exist. There can be no competition in agriculture; and, indeed, it is only in war, or in commerce, that nations can interfere with each other.

The Phoenicians were the only commercial people of antiquity. Carthage was the colony, and received the Indian produce at second hand. It was in no way a rival.

When Solomon mounted on the throne of his father David, he applied himself to commerce; but the wisdom and power he possessed were such as bore down all opposition during his reign. Having married the daughter of the King of Egypt, who assisted him in several conquests, he founded the city of Palmyra, or Tadmor in the Wilderness, for the greater conveniency of the Eastern trade. The King of Tyre was his ally, but he was so, most probably, from necessity, for the alliance was very unnatural; and, soon after the death of Solomon, the Tyrians excited the King of Babylon to destroy Jerusalem: so, that if there had been, in ancient times, more people concerned in commerce, there is no doubt there would likewise have been more envy and rivalry.

=sic=

The cities of Italy, the Dutch, the Flemish, the English, and the French, have been incessantly struggling to supplant each other in manufactures and commerce; and the war of custom-house duties and drawbacks has become very active and formidable.

This modern species of warfare is not only less bloody, but the object is more legitimate, and the consequences neither so sudden nor so fatal as open force; to which is to be added, that if a nation will but determine to be industrious, it never can be greatly injured. If it enjoyed any peculiarly great advantages, those may, indeed, be wrested from it, but that is only taking away what it has no right to possess, and what it may always do without. [end of page #177]

The intention of this inquiry is not to discover a method by which a nation may engross the trade that ought to belong to others, it is only to enable it, by industry and other means, to guard against the approaches of adversity, which tend to sink it far below its level, thereby making way for the elevation of some other nation, on the ruins of its greatness.

As, in the interior causes of decline, we have traced the most part to the manners and habits of the people, so, in the exterior causes, it will be found that much depends upon the conduct of the government. [end of page #178]

CHAP. XI.

Why the Intercourse between Nations is ultimately in Favour of the poorer one, though not so at first.

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In all commercial intercourse with each other, (or competition in selling to a third nation,) the poorer nation has the advantage in its gain; but this advantage is generally prevented by the length of credit which the wealthy nation is enabled to give, by which manufacturers are sometimes ruined in their own country by strangers, who can neither rival them in lowness of price nor goodness in quality.

In countries that are poor, those who have the selling, but not the manufacturing of goods, are so much greater gainers by selling goods purchased on credit, of which they can keep a good stock and assortment, than in selling from a shop or store scantily supplied with ready money, that there is not almost any question about either price or quality; there is not scarcely an alternative. In one line, a man can begin who has scarcely any capital, and do a great deal of business; he can even afford to sell the articles he purchases on credit with very little profit, because they procure him ready money; whereas, if he sells an article upon which he has no credit, he must replace it with another, by paying money immediately. The consequence is, that while those who sell to the public are poor, the nation or manufacturer that gives the longest credit will have the preference; but this is daily diminishing, for even with the capital of the rich nation itself, the manufactures of the poor one are encouraged; the manner is as follows:

A, at New York, purchases goods for one thousand pounds from B, at London, which he sells without any profit, and, perhaps, at a considerable loss; because B gives him twelve months credit. But A, who has, by this means, got hold of money, as if by a loan, will not lay that out with B, nor let him touch it till the year's end; and, having made no profit by the sale of B's goods, he must turn to advantage the money he obtained for them. According to the situation of mat-[end of page #179] ters in the country, and the nature of A's concerns, he will make more or less, but what he makes it is not the business to investigate; it is sufficient to know, that he will lay his ready money out with those who will sell cheap, in order to get by it; that is to say, he will lay it out with some person in his own country. {148} Thus, though the rich nation sells goods on credit at a price which cannot be obtained for them by the purchaser, yet its capital serves to give activity to the manufacturers in the poor country. It is true, that this operation is slow, but it produces an effect in time, and finishes by robbing the wealthy nation of its superiority, obtained by giving credit. It is thus that in all their intercourse, the first advantage is to the rich nation, but terminates in favour of the poor; for whenever equality of prices are the question, and both can give sufficient credit, the poorer nation has the advantage in point of price.

With regard to rivalling each other, in a third place, the poor nation has the advantage, if the merchants there have the means of paying with ready money, because the price is lower than that of the richer country. {149} If they have not that means, they cannot deal with them, but must wait till they have, by perseverance; and, in course of time, come to have the means when the poor nation is certain to enter into competition with advantage.

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But this is not the only way in which the capital of a rich nation is employed in fostering a rivalry in a poorer nation. Were the manufacturers the only persons who sold goods, it would be confined to this; but that is not the case, for merchants, who are the sellers, study only where they can purchase the cheapest; thus English merchants purchase cloths in Silesia, watches in Switzerland, fire-arms at Liege,

— {148} The Dutch used to give long credit, and buy with ready money, by which means they had great advantage for a long time; but, at last, the ready money they paid to some, and the credit they gave to others, set their industry at work, and they became rivals. Dutch capital was, at one period, of great service to the English, as that of England now is to the Americans.

{149} This is not meant to apply to any particular sort of manufacture. In some, a nation may have a permanent advantage over another; in others, only a temporary one, and in the greater portion no other advantage than what arises from superior capital. --

[end of page #180]

in preference to laying out the money in England or Ireland; and they will give credit, as before explained, to the nation that wants it.

In this manner it is, that the capital of a rich country supplies the want of it in poorer ones, and that, by degrees, a nation saps the foundation of its own wealth and greatness, and gives encouragement to them in others.

It is then that the weight of taxes, the high price of commodities, and the various causes which encumber those who live in wealthy nations, begin to produce a pernicious effect. The tendency of industry is to remove its abode, and the capital of the merchants, who know no country, but understand arithmetic, and the profits of trade, gives the industry the means of doing it with more ease and promptitude.

The Dutch, for the last century, employed their capital in this manner, and, at one time, were the chief carriers, for they secured custom by paying readily and giving credit largely. They ruined many of their own manufactures in this manner, but it is impossible to separate the calculation of gain from the mercantile system and mercantile practice in individuals; therefore it is no reproach to their patriotism, for patriotism cannot be the rule in purchasing goods from an individual. A merchant can have no other rule, but his own advantage, or, if he has, he will soon be ruined.

There are many manufactures in England that originally rose by means of Dutch capital, not lent capital, but by ready money paid for goods, which were carried to other nations, and sold here upon credit.

The English have, for a long time, been able to do this piece of business for themselves; and, of course, the Dutch did not find the same means of supporting their carrying trade; and as they had ruined many of their own manufactures, they sunk both as a commercial and manufacturing people.

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If the time should ever come that capital should be so abundant in all nations, as that obtaining credit will not be an object, then it will be seen that no nation will have so very great a share of manufactures and commerce more than others, as has hitherto been the case.

In countries where the common practice is to sell, chiefly, for [end of page #181] ready money, great fortunes are seldom gained. Even in wealthy countries, in branches of business where no credit is given, great fortunes are very seldom got, and for a very simple reason. The business is pretty equally divided. But in a country that gives long credits, or in a branch of trade on which long credits are given, we always see some individuals gaining immense fortunes, by means of doing a great deal more business than others, who, having less capital, are enabled to do less.

There is not any one thing in which a nation resembles an individual so much, as in mercantile transactions; the rule of one is the rule of all, and the rich individual acts like a rich nation, and the poor one like a poor nation. The consequences are the same in both cases. The rich carry on an extensive trade, by means of great capital; the poor, a limited one, dependant =sic= chiefly on industry; but wherever the poor persevere in good conduct, they finish by getting the command of the capital of the rich, and then becoming their rivals.

There is one thing peculiar to the intercourse of rich and poor nations, in which it differs from the intercourse between rich and poor individuals in the same country. Money, which is the common measure of value, has a different price in different countries, and, indeed, in different parts of the same country. If a man, from a poor country, carries a bushel of corn with him into a rich, he can live as long upon it as if he had remained where he was; but if he carry the money, that would have bought a bushel of corn at home, he perhaps may not be able to live upon it half so long. {150}

The effect that this produces, in the intercourse between two countries, is, that in proportion as the difference becomes greater, the rich country feels it can command more of the industry of the poor, and the poor feels it can command less of the industry of the rich; so that

— {150} In common life, this difference, between carrying money and necessaries, is perfectly well understood, but it is experience that is the teacher; and the rough countryman, or woman, when they have the opportunity of judging from fact, understand the motives as well as the most profound and ingenious =sic= writer on political economy. ==

[end of page #182]

when their industry can be both applied, with any degree of equality, to the same object, the poor supplies the rich, and therefore increases its own wealth.



It is thus that great numbers of the people in London are fed with butcher-meat from Scotland, and wear shoes from Yorkshire; but there would be a very limited sale in either of those places for meat from Smithfield, or shoes manufactured in London. {151}

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This diminution of the value of money, that takes place in all rich countries, serves farther to increase the advantage of poorer ones in manufacturing, and accelerates the natural effect of competition, which is facilitated, as has been said, by the capital of the rich country giving activity to the industry of the poorer one.

This last neither can be called an exterior nor an interior cause, as it is derived entirely from the relative situations of the two countries, and belongs to both, or originates in both; but, as it raises the poor nation nearer the level of the rich one, its effect gradually becomes less powerful. Though there is no means of preventing the operation of two nations coming nearly to a level by this means, yet it does not appear to be a necessary consequence that the nation that was the richer should become the poorer. As this, however, has been a general case, we must conclude it to be a natural one, but there we stop, and make a distinction between what is natural only, and what is a necessary effect. Their coming to a level was a necessary effect; but, though the other may be natural, it cannot be necessary, and therefore may be counteracted; to find the means of doing this, is all that is proposed by the present inquiry.

— {151} If it was not for taxes and rent, that are chiefly spent in large towns, as well as law-expenses, and the prices of luxuries, of dress, and furniture, the cities, like London, would soon be reduced. --

[end of page #183]

CHAP. XII.

Conclusion of exterior Causes.—Are seldom of much Importance, unless favoured by interior ones.—Rich Nations, with care, capable, in most Cases, of prolonging their Prosperity.—Digression on the Importance of Public Revenue, illustrated by a statistical Chart.

The exterior causes of the decline of any nation, that has risen above its level, though formidable, are nothing, in comparison to the interior causes, and are of no great effect without their co-operation.

As the government of a country has an influence over the interior causes, so its alliances, and the laws of nations, though not very well attended to, (yet seldom altogether forgot,) have a tendency to stop the progress of the exterior causes, before they advance too far; that is to say, before they absolutely depress a nation.

For several centuries, the stronger nations of Europe protected the weaker, and the matter was carried so far, that the weak powers generally gained the most. Prussia and Sardinia are two examples of nations rising by political connections; and though the system is lately changed, and Poland has been despoiled and divided amongst nations,

to each of which it was superior in power only two centuries ago, and though Holland and Switzerland groan under the yoke of France, yet, it is to be hoped, the old system is not abandoned, otherwise there will be no end to the encroachments of the great powers on the smaller.

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The means of communicating, between nations, are now easy; they have felt the advantage of preserving a sort of balance, {152} and the ad-

— {152} The expression, balance of power, gives a false idea. It seems to imply, that alliances in Europe were so nicely arranged, as to make the force of nations, in opposite interests, equal; but this never was the case for half an hour, nor was it ever intended. The whole [end of page #184] that is meant, is to prevent the present order from being overturned, by one nation annihilating or subduing another; and then, by their united strength, swallowing up a third, as was the case with the Romans. -=-

vantages are so great, that they probably never will be entirely abandoned, though we have strong proofs, of late years, that they are not always held very sacred.

The chart subjoined to this, giving a statistical representation of the powers of Europe, shews nearly in what manner power is distributed at this time; the population and extent are there represented with accuracy: these are the foundation of power; and the amount of the revenue may be said to shew the means, which a nation has of exerting that power. (For the description and explanation see the page opposite the chart). [Transcriber's note: seemingly a reference to Chart No. 2; the explanation in fact appears on page 190.]

The balance of power, however well attended to, could not prevent the decline of a nation from interior causes. It may prevent the operation of exterior causes from pushing a nation to the extreme of humiliation, by taking advantage of its internal situation. But the decline of almost every nation has commenced within its own bosom, and has been completed by causes acting from without.

The common termination of the interior causes of decline is revolt, or a division into parties, when the party that has the disadvantage generally calls in some neighbour to its aid. This is the most miserable fate that can befall =sic= a country, and no punishment is sufficiently severe for the men, who have so far lost every sentiment of patriotism as to have recourse to such a step.

The exterior causes of decline, namely, rivalry in peace and the combined efforts of enemies in war may be considered as irresistible, if the government, which has the direction of a nation, does not act wisely; but, if it does, they may be put at defiance. If a nation preserves its interior sources of prosperity, and acts with moderation and firmness towards others, their envy and efforts will be without effect, and need never be a cause of much uneasiness.

In its relation to other nations, the government of a country acts like an individual. The first thing is to regulate its interior affairs, and, the next is, in treating with others, to consider circumstances, and take justice and moderation for a rule of conduct. [end of page #185]

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The circuitous politics attributed to ambassadors, who represent states, is a common theme of invective: as custom has established it as a sort of rule, in all such transactions as they conduct, to conceal a part of what is meant, to demand more than is expected to be obtained, and offer less than is intended to be given, there is no immediate remedy; but this is only in the mode and manner of treating, and does not necessarily imply unfair intention. If it has become a custom to ask three by way of obtaining two, and of offering only two to prevent the necessity of giving four, (which would be expected if three, the number intended to be given, were offered at first) it is an abuse of language, in so far that what is expressed is neither meant by one, nor understood by the other to be meant; but, it is nothing more: neither is it a custom void of meaning; it is founded on the nature of man.

If men were perfect, and capable of seeing at one view what was fair, each might come prepared to ask exactly what he wanted, and determined not to yield any thing; and it would result from their being perfect, that each would just demand what was right, and the other was disposed to give; but, as men are not perfect, and as it is the inclination and even the duty of each to obtain the most favourable terms he can, (and as he does not see exactly what is right,) he naturally demands more than he has a right to expect, or than the other is disposed to give. If ambassadors met together with a determination to speak explicitly at first, and with a determination not to recede, the consequence would probably be, that they would not treat at all, so that the mode of receding a little does not absolutely imply that more is asked than is wished for, but that each party over-rates its own pretensions, in order to obtain what is right.

One thing is certain, that the treaties that have been the best observed have been those founded on equity, where the contracting parties were neither of them under the influence of fear or necessity.

The exterior dangers of a country are not only more simple in their nature than the interior ones, but, being less silent and gradual in their progress have been more noticed by historians.

Even the ambitious rapacity of the Romans was first directed [end of page #186] against Carthage, on account of its pride and injustice in attacking other states; and, in the history of the nations of the world, there is scarcely a single example of national prosperity being unattended with some degree of pride, arrogance, and injustice; nor can it easily be otherwise, for, notwithstanding all the boasted law of nations, power seems amongst them to be one of the principal claims on which right is founded, though, in the moral nature of things, power and right have not the most distant connection.

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It is then an object for those who govern nations, in the first place, to counteract as much as possible the internal tendency to decline, arising from the causes that have been enumerated; and, after having done that, to regulate their conduct with regard to other nations, so as to protect themselves from those external causes of decline, on the existence of which they have no direct influence, but which are not capable of producing any great effect, unless favoured by the internal state of the country, and by the unwise conduct of those by whom it is governed.

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Digression concerning the Importance of Public Revenue.

No state, what ever its wealth may be, can possess power, unless a certain portion of that wealth is applicable to public purposes. As the want of revenue has not been a very common cause of weakness, we shall give, as an example, the almost solitary, but very strong, case of Poland. Its feebleness, in repelling the attacks of its enemies, was occasioned, in a great measure, by want of revenue. It was with far superior population, with more fertile soil, and a people no way inferior in bravery, greatly inferior in actual exertion to Prussia. When, at last, the Poles, seeing their danger, united together, and were willing to make every personal exertion and sacrifice, to preserve their country, they had no means of executing their good intentions. They had not kept up an army when it was not wanted, and they could not, on the emergency, create one when it was become necessary. [end of page #187]

The definition given of power makes it a relative thing, and, therefore, the revenue necessary to maintain that power or force must be relative also; it, therefore, depends on circumstances, what is to be considered as a sufficient or insufficient revenue.

If the United States of America were accessible with ease to European nations, or if they had powerful neighbours on their own soil, they would find their present revenues quite unequal to preserving their independence; but, as it is, perhaps they are the most wealthy civilized nation in the world, if an excess of revenue constitutes wealth.

In Europe, whatever nations are unable to keep up forces sufficient to make those exertions which, according to their alliances and dangers, may be necessary, they are weak from want of revenue, and ought to augment it.

In the course of making greater exertions than the revenues would bear, some nations have contracted debts. It is not the purpose here to enter into the complication such debts occasion, and the alterations they make on the revenue, and the disposal of the revenue of a country; but, so far as that subject is yet understood, it appears that the clear revenue, after paying the interest of the debt, ought to be as great as it would be altogether, if there were no debt; that is to say, after paying interest, there ought to

remain a sufficient surplus to pay all the expenses necessary for government and defence.

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The money that goes for the payment of interest has some tendency to increase the influence of government at home, but is of no manner of use with regard to enemies.

From the statistical chart here annexed, which shews the relative proportion of the revenues of all the nations in Europe, as well as their actual amount, it is perfectly clear, that, great and extensive as the Russian empire is, it will not be very powerful until its revenues are considerably increased.

The great value of money, and the prices of provisions, and many sorts of warlike stores, enable great armies to be maintained in that country, even with small revenues; but the Russians can make no great effort, at a distance from home, till their revenues are augmented.

The revenues of Spain are considerable; but the free revenue is not, [end of page #188] and it has no credit to supply the place. The same thing may be said of Portugal; and if England had no credit, it would be in the same situation; but as it has better credit than any nation ever had, so, likewise, it is the only one whose efforts have never been in any way, or at any time, either restricted or suspended, for want of money to carry them into effect.

The Dutch were, at one time, situated nearly as England is now; they had not sufficient free revenue, but they had good credit; of which, however, they were not willing to make the necessary use, and the French marched into Amsterdam with greater ease than the Russians did into Warsaw.

The greatest victories of the French, during the revolution, were gained at a time when her regular revenues were inconsiderable, and when she was in a state of absolute bankruptcy. This is considered by some as a proof that force is independent of revenue, and that Frederick the Great was mistaken in saying, that money was the sinews of war; but this case has been misunderstood as well as misrepresented.

Though, in general, regular resources for money are necessary to support war, and regular resources imply revenue, it never was asserted, that, if irregular resources could be obtained, they would not answer the same purpose, so long as they lasted. During the first five years of the French revolution, a sum equal to at least four hundred millions sterling was consumed, besides what was pillaged from the enemy. So that at the time that France was without regular revenue, she was actually expending seventy-five millions sterling per annum: a sum greater than any other nation ever had at its disposal.

The impossibility of such a resource continuing is of no importance in the present argument, although it is luckily of very great importance to the peace of mankind. France supported war, for a certain time, by consuming capital, and without revenue, but not without money; so that what his Prussian Majesty said, stands uncontroverted,

and the necessity of revenue, regular and durable, for the maintenance of regular and durable force, is established beyond the power of contradiction. [end of page #189]

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EXPLANATION OF STATISTICAL CHART, NO. 2.

In this chart, the different nations of Europe are represented by circles, bearing the proportion of their relative extent. This is done in order to give a better idea of the proportions than a geographical map, where the dissimilar and irregular forms prevent the eye from making a comparison.

The graduated scale of lines represents millions of pounds sterling; and the red lines, that rise on the left of each circle, express the number of inhabitants in millions, which may be known by observing at what cross-line the red one stops.

The yellow lines, on the right of the circles, shew the amount of revenue in pounds sterling.

The nations stained green, are maritime powers; those stained pale red, are only powerful by land.

The dotted lines, to connect the extremities of the lines of population and revenue, serve, by their descent from right to left, or from left to right, to shew how revenue and population are proportioned to each other.

The impression made by this chart is such, that it is impossible not to see by what means Sweden and Denmark are of little importance, as to wealth or power; for, though population and territory are the original foundation of power, finances are the means of exerting it.

What must the consequences be if the Russian empire should one day become like other nations? If ever that should happen, it either will be divided, or it will crush all Europe.

The prodigious territory of Russia, and the immense revenues of England, are the most astonishing things represented in that chart; they are out of all proportion to the rest.
[end of page #190]

===== BOOK III. =====

CHAP. I.

Result of the foregoing Inquiry applied to Britain.—Its present State, in what its Wealth consists, illustrated by a Chart, shewing the Increase of Revenue and Commerce.

Having now taken a view, and inquired into the causes that have ruined nations that have been great and wealthy, from the earliest to the present time; having also inquired into the causes that naturally will operate where those did not, and that would, at a later

period, have produced the same effect; it is now the business to examine how far and in what way the result of the inquiry applies to the British empire.

The power and wealth of Britain, according to the definition given at the beginning of this work, are founded not on conquests, extent of territory, superior population, or a more favourable soil or climate, or even in bravery; for in those it is but on a par with other nations.

The only natural advantages of Britain are, its insular situation and the disposition of the people, and the excellent form of its government.

From the two first have arisen that good government, commerce, and industry; and on those have arisen again a great naval power, and an uncommon degree of wealth.

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In arms, it does not appear that England is so powerful by land, in proportion as in former times: her power must then be considered as a naval power, and that founded principally on commerce. {153}

— {153} Our last brilliant achievements by land were under the Duke of Marlborough; but even then, with allies to assist, we were but a balance to France. Before the conquest, England seems to have been far below the level of most other nations, as a power by land. Soon after [end of page #191] she appears to have risen above France, and other nations, or they probably rather sunk; but, ever since England became formidable at sea, she has lost her superiority in the army; although she has never sunk under the level, and never, in any instance, were her armies beat when the numbers were equal to those of the enemy. ==-

{Here appears at page 192 the second chart, entitled

“Chart
Representing the
Extent, Population & Revenue
-of the-
PRINCIPAL NATIONS in EUROPE
—in 1804—by
W. Playfair”}

As such then we have only to examine the foundation on which she stands, and find in what she is vulnerable.

We must first begin with the interior situation, to follow the same order that has been attended to in the rest of the work.

Changes of manners, habits of education, and the natural effects of luxury, are as likely to operate on the British empire, as on some others which they have destroyed.

From the unequal division of property, there is perhaps less danger, but from the employment of capital there is more than almost in any other nation.

From the abuses of law and public institutions and *l'esprit du corps*, we run a very great risk; more indeed than under an arbitrary government or even a republic. These last are the dangers that most seriously threaten a nation living under a mixed government.

As to the produce of the soil becoming unequal to the maintenance of a people addicted to luxurious habits, we have much also to fear from that: the operation is begun, and its effects will soon be most serious: they are already felt, and very visible.

From taxation, unproductive and idle people, we have more to fear than most nations; and from an alteration in the manner of thinking, and persons and property leaving the

nation, we have as much as any other nation, according to the degree of wealth that we possess; so that, upon the whole, the interior causes of decline are such as it is extremely necessary to guard against in the most attentive manner.

In respect to the exterior causes, we are exempt entirely from some, from others we are not; and, in one case, we have exterior causes for hope that no nation ever yet had.

The advancement of other nations, their enmity and envy, are full as likely to operate against this nation as against any other that ever existed; but as we owe none of our superiority to geographical situa-[end of page #192] tion like the Greek islands, the Delta of Egypt, and borders of the Mediterranean Sea, we run no risk of any discovery in geography, or in navigation, operating much to our disadvantage.

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We are not so far advanced before other nations in arts as to have any great reason to dread that their advancement will be our ruin; but still we must allow, that a number of external causes may combine to bring us to their level, when the effects of our present wealth may soon operate in reducing us under it.

Since, then, commerce is the foundation of our wealth, and since our power, which is naval, is built upon commerce, let us begin with taking a view of its present situation.

The increase of the trade of Britain to foreign parts, within these last fifteen years, though a very natural effect of the causes that have operated during that period, is not itself a natural increase, because the causes that produced it are uncommon, temporary, and unnatural.

The East and West India trades have been both lost to France and Holland. The French, before the revolution, had a greater share of the West India trade than ever we had, and they could undersell us in foreign markets.

The Dutch and French together had a very great share of the commerce of the East; this partly accounts for the rapid increase of English commerce since they lost theirs. Besides, the French nation itself, which formerly consumed scarcely any English manufactures, and supplied Germany, and many parts of Europe, with its own, has been employed for several years in consuming its manufactured stock, eating up its capital, and ruining its own manufactories; so that France itself, Germany, and a great portion of the continent, have been obliged to apply to Britain, both for manufactures and colonial produce, as well as for the goods that come from India.

Add to this, that capital on the continent of Europe has suffered an unexampled diminution, from a variety of causes. A great part has been consumed in France, and in all the countries into which her armies have penetrated, particularly in Holland; and that confidence, [end of page #193] which serves in place of capital, has been impaired in all countries, and ruined in many.

It has already been shewn that the want of capital prevents a poor nation from supplying itself, and furnishes a rich one with the means of supplying it, and, as it were, extorting usury from it by giving credit. The misfortunes of the continent had, by this means, all of them a direct tendency to advance the commercial prosperity of England; but still the matter does not rest even here, for the real capital that fled from the continent of Europe has, in part, taken refuge in England. We have risen, (for the moment,) by their depression; and though the advantage will be of some duration, yet we ought not to consider it as permanent. {154}

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Those causes have operated, as indeed might be expected, in a most powerful manner, but that operation has already begun to cease. In such uncommon and unexampled circumstances as the present, it is impossible to foresee =sic= what may happen, yet it is scarcely possible to suppose things will remain as they are. Terror and alarm are too painful to continue their action long on the human mind; and even if the cause were not diminished, the effect would become less violent with time and custom. Again, we are not to suppose, that such times as those of 1793 and 1794 are ever to return, therefore the alarm will be diminished, new capital will rise up, and, as security of private property is now understood to be the basis of all wealth and prosperity, confidence will be restored by degrees.

The increase of trade is not then to be expected from the same causes that have of late operated with so rapid and powerful an effect: on the contrary, they may be expected so far to cease, as to occasion a diminution of our exports.

This will, however, be counteracted by some circumstances, while others will tend to augment the violence of its effects.

The trade with the American States and with Russia increase, from

— {154} As one proof of capital taking refuge in England, the sudden rise of stock, during the first three years of the French revolution, may be adduced, without fear of being contradicted as to the fact, or the assigned cause controverted. [end of page #194] --

no temporary or fallacious cause. In the former country, population very rapidly increases, and, in the latter, wealth and civilization, which have a similar effect {155} upon the wants of a nation. These are in favour of a manufacturing country, like England.

These two are not only, then, permanent, but augmenting causes for our commerce; {156} they are causes that augment rapidly, and may, with proper care, be carried to a great extent.

The superiority in the West India trade is so far of a permanent nature, that France will never again be a formidable rival there. St. Domingo is not only lost, but probably lost for ever, while it is expected that Britain may retain her islands. This trade, then, may be set down as permanent; that is to say, that there does not seem to be any immediate cause for its decline; {157} and the government of this country is sufficiently aware of consequences not to neglect taking every precaution possible.

The East India trade does not, indeed, appear equally secure. There we are powerfully rivalled by the Americans, and the merchants of other countries; but, on the other hand, the demand for the produce of Asia is augmenting rapidly all over the continent of

Europe; so that perhaps we may be able to maintain our ground, even though other nations regain part of the trade they have lost.

To remain, then, in the situation in which we are, with respect to

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— {155} The great augmentation of fine fertile territory, in America, will retard the progress of manufactures and commerce in that country, by employing the capital and attention of the inhabitants on agriculture. This may be the case for half a century, and, if England improves, the circumstances may continue to operate in favour of British manufactures for many centuries to come.

{156} The ports in the Black Sea add a new district to the commercial world, which, in course of time, must greatly increase the demand for such articles, as a civilized people consume. The fineness of the climate and of the country will enable the inhabitants to gratify the taste which civilization will bring along with it.

{157} It would be quite foreign to the end of this inquiry to examine into the interior state of the West India islands, or as to their continuing subject to Great Britain. This is entirely a political affair, unconnected with commerce, though its effects on it would be prodigious. [end of page #195] --

foreign trade, we must exert ourselves; those external causes that have forced trade upon us, for these last fifteen years, being but of a temporary nature.

In order to be more sensible of this necessity, let us consider a few other circumstances.

The wealth of England, which was the envy of Europe, even previous to the American war, in which we stood single-handed and alone (having the three most powerful maritime nations against us, and none to take our part) has now become more conspicuous, and much more likely to excite envy.

Not only the situation of Britain is much more exalted, but the other nations feel a comparison that is infinitely more humiliating; add to this, that old attachments, and a regard to the laws of nations, and to a balance of power in Europe, are much enfeebled, or rather nearly done away.

Britain has alone, for some time, stood forward to resist the innovations and power of France; and, after having at first subsidized every nation that would fight in the common cause, it has alone maintained the common right itself, thereby adding a double humiliation to those who wanted means of assisting, or whose courage had failed.

France, with all its acquisition of territory and alliance, with all that influence over neutral nations, which terror of its arms inspires, will never cease to combat the prosperity of England. Some other nations, through envy or shame, stimulated by a hope of partaking in the wealth that England loses, will either sit passive or assist. {158}

The East India trade is that which excites the greatest portion of envy, and it will be difficult to resist its effects. This superior degree of envy is occasioned by three principal causes:

The splendid establishments of the East India company, its fleets,

— {158} Gratitude, some will say, may prevent this; but nations have no gratitude, they only know their interest, and nothing retrospective is any motive for action. We need not search into remote periods for proofs of this, see Holland, Spain, Russia, &c. during the latter part of the last war. [end of page #196] ==

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and the fact that it is the greatest commercial company that does now, or ever did, exist, constitute the first cause, not only for envy, but for a wish to participate in the trade.

The second cause arises from the extent of our possessions, the immensity of the territorial revenues, and the evident injustice of a company of merchants becoming sovereigns, and holding the ancient princes of the East, and the successors of the Great Mogul, as tributary vassals. {159}

It is in vain that we say the people are happier than they were before we did them the honour to become their masters. Whether this is true or not, there is no means of proving it, besides there can be no right established by London merchants to force the inhabitants of Hindostan to become happy, whether they will or not.

The same pretence has been used by the French, in subduing Flanders and Brabant, in governing Holland and Switzerland; but they have not been able to obtain credit. The regular governments, who partitioned Poland, have pretended the same thing; and our slave-merchants and planters give very positive assurances that the negroes toiling on the West India plantations are much happier than they were in their own country; yet, in defiance of all this cloud of witnesses, there is something in the human breast that resists and rejects such evidence; evidence doubtful, on account of the quarter from whence it comes, and the interests of the witnesses, as well as con-

— {159} However we may look upon this, other nations certainly see the matter as iniquitous and unjust; and it is well known with what feelings such a belief is entertained.

Though the revolutions in Farther Asia have not made any part of the basis of our inquiry, yet it is impossible, having mentioned the Mogul empire, not to notice its rapid and terrible fall. In 1707, only ninety-eight years ago, the Great Mogul ruled over a country equal in extent, and little inferior in population, to France, Spain, Germany, and England. His revenues amounted to thirty-two millions sterling, which, at that time, was nearly equal to the whole revenues of all the monarchs of Europe. He is now circumscribed to a territory less than the smallest county in England, and is the vassal at will of a company of English merchants, who, with all their greatness, do not divide profits equal to one week of his former revenues! [end of page #197] -=-

trary to the natural feelings of beings endowed with the power of reason; at variance, also, with an opinion of a very ancient origin, “that coercion and force are enemies to enjoyment.”

In defiance, then, of our assertions, the other nations of Europe will and do view this acquired territory with anger, as well as envy; and, though it is true, that, out of the immense revenues that arise to the company, they divide little profit, though their debts are annually augmenting, yet individual Englishmen, it must be admitted, bring home great fortunes.

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This fact is not to be denied, and is so much the worse, that though a government even of merchants may be supposed to obtain revenues fairly, individuals, who rapidly acquire great wealth are always supposed to do it by extortion or unfair means. {160}

The third cause for envy is of great antiquity. The commerce of the East, from the earliest ages, has been that which has enriched all the nations that ever possessed it; and, consequently, has been a perpetual cause of envy and contention, as we have already seen, in its proper place. For all those reasons, not one of which we can remove entirely, the East India trade is a particular object of envy; and, unless great care is taken, will entail the same danger on this country, as it has on all those that ever possessed it. Tyre and Sidon, in Syria, Alexandria, in Egypt, Venice, Genoa, the Hans Towns, and Portugal, have all been raised and ruined by this trade, which seems to

— {160} So far back as 1793, Mr. Dundas estimated the sums remitted by individuals at an annual million; add to this, plunder arising from war, (which is become as natural a state in India as peace,) and we shall see that now the revenues and establishments are nearly doubled. The following will not be an unfair estimate:

Private fortunes remitted in 1793 L. 1,000,000
Average ditto arising from years
of war, the plunder of
Seringapatam, &c 300,000
Increase remitted home since,
in proportion to revenue 700,000

Remitted now by the same description
of men L. 2,000,000

Besides what is remitted home, those servants of the company expend immense sums in the country, living there in the greatest luxury. [end of page #198] ==

have been the cradle and the grave of most of those nations that have become rich and powerful by the means of commerce.

Our West India wealth, though derived from a source still more, or at least equally, impure, and though not inferior in amount, is, for several reasons, not the cause of so much envy. It is not confined to a company, and therefore the splendour and ostentation that, in the case of the Asiatic trade, occasion envy, do not exist in that to the American islands.

Our monopoly is by no means so complete, which has a double effect in our favour; for, besides preventing others from envying us so much, it prevents them from condemning us so severely.

The same nations that see, in its full force, the injustice of subjecting the inhabitants of the East, in their own country, in a way that, at the worst, is not very rigorous, join cordially in robbing Africa of its inhabitants, to make them slaves in America, in a way, that, at the best, is very rigorous.

Such are the baneful effects of sordid interest acting on the mind of man! But our business is not here to investigate opinions, but their result; and, in the present instance, we find that to admit participation in criminality is the only way to avoid envy and offence.

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The third cause for envy is likewise wanting. The commerce with the West Indies is but of a recent date, and no nation has ever owed its greatness or decline to that single source. {161} It is not like the Asiatic trade, a sort of hereditary cause of quarrel; a species of heirloom, entailing upon the possessor the envy and enmity of all other nations.

The envy occasioned by the West India trade is farther diminished by the circumstance that the plantations have been raised with the money of the persons by whom they are possessed; and that if they had no original right to the soil in its barren state, the cultivation at least is owing to their capital and industry.

The most solid and secure portion of our trade is that which con-

— {161} France was the nation that, before the revolution, gained the most by this trade; indeed, no nation has, to this date, gained so much as it did. --

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sists of our manufactures at home. In those, though we excite envy, we excite no other of the hateful passions. Emulation is natural, and admiration is unavoidable, on seeing the vast progress that arts and industry have made in this country; so that England is absolutely considered as the first country in the world for manufactures.

This cause of greatness and wealth operates in a more uniform and durable manner; though, like others, it has its bounds, yet the nature of them is not easily ascertained.

In this there are two things essential,—the procuring a market, and the means of supplying it. We have always yet found the means of supplying every market we have got; but we have not always been able to extend our market so much as it might have been wished.

America and Russia offer new markets, as has already been observed, but, to extend our old markets, we must either reduce the price, improve the quality, or extend the credit, and invention is the only means by which these things can be done; and there is no possibility of knowing where to set bounds to invention, aided by capital and the division of labour. We are, however, not to forget that priority in point of time being one of the causes of a nation's rise, and being of a nature to be destroyed in the course of years, the superiority we enjoy may leave us, as it did other nations in former times.

When a country produces the raw material, and labour is cheap, and the art established, we might suppose the superiority secure; but it is not. The cotton trade was first established in the East Indies, where the material grows, where the labour is not a tenth of the price that it is in England, and the quality of the manufactured article is good; yet machinery and capital have transplanted it to England. But the same



machinery may give a superiority, or at least an equality, to some other country; it is, therefore, our business to persevere in encouraging invention, by the means that have hitherto been found so successful. {162}

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— {162} The law of patents, and the premiums offered by the Society of Arts, suggest improvements, and reward them when made. To those, to the security of property, and nature of the government, we chiefly owe the great improvements made in England. ==-

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The most necessary thing for our commerce is the support of mercantile credit, without which it is in vain to expect that trade will be carried on to any great amount. In 1772, when a great failure occasioned want of confidence, the exports of the country fell off above three millions, but its imports fell off very little. {163} In 1793, when the internal credit of the mercantile people was staggered, precisely the same effect was produced. These are the only two instances of individual credit being staggered to such a degree, as to prevent mercantile men from putting confidence in each other; and they are the only two instances of any very great falling off in the exports in one year, except during the American war, when the chief branches of trade in the country were cut off or diminished.

The falling off, in exports, in 1803, which was very great indeed, (being no less than one-third of the whole,) was not occasioned by the same cause, but appears to have been owing to three others of a different nature.

First, the French had actually shut us out from a great extent of coast, and this occasioned a diminution of exports, which will, in part, be done away, when new channels of conveyance are found out. It will nevertheless operate in causing some diminution, as circuitous channels render goods more difficult to be introduced, and consequently dearer to the consumers.

The second cause appears to have been, the uncertainty of our merchants where to send the goods, and who to trust, as the fear of the extension of French power took away confidence, and produced a sort of irresolution, which is always hurtful to business.

The third cause of the diminution of trade, no doubt, arose from the cessation of that alarm about property, that has been described as having occasioned so much to be sent from the continent to England. In other words, it is the return of the pendulum which had vibrated,

— {163} This is a sort of paradox: when money became scarce, the nation bought nearly as much as ever, but sold less. This is not the case with individuals, and, at first sight, does not appear natural. ==-

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through a temporary impulse, beyond the natural perpendicular. Had there been no revolution in France, and had it not been conducted on the principles it was, our trade could not have augmented so fast as it did; but a falling off of fifteen millions in one year is too much to be ascribed to that cause alone. An examination of the branches that did fall off will elucidate this.

The commerce with the United States of America is one of those that has fallen off, and is the only one that does not appear to be directly connected with these causes. There are some reasons, however, for thinking that it had an indirect connection with them.

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Whatever interrupts our connection with the continent of Europe, or renders it unsafe, has, in some degree, the same effect with a stagnation of credit at home. This has taken place; and as it of course affected every branch of trade, that with America felt the blow amongst the rest, and, indeed, more than in proportion; for, as there is no course of exchange with any town in America, and as the credits there are long, the exportation to that country suffers in a particular manner when there is any heaviness in the money market here. Thus it was that, in 1772, the American exports suffered a diminution of two millions from the stagnation; and, in 1793, of rather more than half a million. In the former case, the American trade seems alone almost to have suffered, and, even in the latter case, it fell off more than in its just proportion.

It has been observed, that the improving our manufactures at home is the most secure support of our foreign trade, which chiefly depends on superior skill, industry, and invention, the wages of labour being greatly against us. We shall consider by what stability of tenure we hold that advantage.

The nation or individual that proceeds first in improvement is always uncertain how much farther it can be carried; those who follow, on the contrary, know what can be done, and therefore act with certainty and confidence. As to individuals, those who are the foremost in improvement have great difficulties to encounter; they seldom can procure the pecuniary aid necessary, and always do so with great difficulty; whereas, those who copy, without half their merit, or, [end of page #202] perhaps, without any merit at all, meet with support from every quarter. {164}

From this it is very evident, that the nation the farthest advanced in invention has only to remain stationary a few years, and it will soon be overtaken, and perhaps surpassed. Holland, Flanders, and France, were all originally superior, in the arts of manufacturing most goods, to England; and, indeed, it is no great length of time since we obtained the superiority over Holland in several articles of importance, and in particular where machinery was wanting. If it were necessary, it would not be difficult to give examples, to shew with what eagerness those who imported inventions were taken by the hand, on the bare probability of success, while the inventors of machines, and of methods of manufacturing entirely new, and of still more importance, were left to grope their way, and, until crowned with success, rather considered as objects of pity than of praise or admiration. {165}

It is not then altogether by a sure or lasting tenure that we hold this superiority of manufactures. We have examined several other sources of wealth, and the general conclusion is, that, without care and atten-

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— {164} Mr. Arkwright, who produced the cotton-spinning machine, underwent great difficulties for many years; as also did Mr. Watt, the ingenious and scientific improver of the steam-engine; and, had not good fortune thrown him in the way of Mr. Boulton, a man of fortune and resource, and himself a man of genius, he probably must have languished in obscurity, and the nation remained without his admirable invention. The profits derived from the spinning-machine may, at first sight, appear the greater national advantage of the two; but it is not so in reality, for the spinning-machine only manufactures a raw material, brought from another country, cheaper than before; whereas, the steam-engine enables us to obtain raw materials from our own soil cheaper; a thing more important, more permanent, and of which we were more in want: besides this, the steam-engine is extending the scope of its utility every day; whereas, the spinning machines can go little farther. But to leave this digression, which is not altogether foreign to the purpose, and return to the facility with which inventors are followed, it is a fact, that in almost every country in Europe, money can be got by any adventurer who will propose to establish either a cotton spinning machine, or a manufactory of steam-engines; and it is a fact, that immense sums have been, and are still given, for those purposes.

{165} Slitting-mills, saw-mills, the art of imitating porcelain, and of making good earthenware, and paper, together with a vast number of other inventions, were imported from Holland; in every one of which we have gone beyond the Dutch, just as they got the better of the Flemings in the art of curing herrings. Priority of invention is not then a permanent tenure. --

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tion, this nation cannot be expected long to maintain its superiority over others, in the degree it at present enjoys.

The American market, {166} and the Russian (in a smaller degree,) however, hold out a prospect of increased commerce to us, from external causes, that we cannot flatter ourselves with in the internal ones. It is to those we must look, and to those only, for the extension of the sale of our manufactures; but, even in this case, we must use efforts, for it is very seldom that a good end is effected by accident, or without a view towards its accomplishment.

Having now taken a view of the situation of this country, and seen that, though it is not likely to be deprived of its commerce by conquest, like Babylon, Tyre, or Alexandria, or by a new discovery in geography and the art of navigation, like Venice and Genoa; though, indeed, it has no great appearance of sharing the fate of Spain, Portugal, or Holland, yet there are other causes that may stop its career. If it is exempt from the dangers they laboured under, it is subject to others from which they were free.

We have already examined the effect of taxes and national debt on the industry of a country, even whilst augmenting in wealth; but we have not examined what that effect will be when a country comes to be on a level with other nations that do not labour under the same burthens.

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There is no possibility of standing long still with a burthen on the shoulders, it must either be thrown off or it will become a cause of decline. Let us endeavour to point out methods by which that may be averted, or at least procrastinated. In doing this, we are either exposing our ignorance and presumption, or doing a signal service to our country.

— {166} The American exports from this country consist almost entirely in manufactures; we neither supply that country with East or West India produce. The Russians are aspiring at possessions in the West Indies, and, no doubt, will succeed; they are advancing still more rapidly in power than the Americans are in population. It was only in 1769, (not forty years ago,) that the first Russian flag was seen in the Mediterranean Sea, and now Russia stands fair to be sovereign of a number of the Greek islands; and, at any rate, by the Dardanelles, to carry on a great commerce. What may thirty years more not effect with such a country, and such a race of sovereigns? --

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The load must be taken off, or it will crush the bearer; but how this is to be done is the difficulty. If our debt is paid off, the capital will go to other nations, for it will not find employment amongst ourselves; and this will reduce the nation, and raise others. If it continues, we sink under it; and, if we break faith with the creditors, it destroys confidence for ever; we can no longer give law, by means of our capital, to the markets in other nations, and we probably overturn the government of our own.

Amongst the *exterior* causes of decline that are general, none applies so completely to Great Britain as that of the envy and enmity, occasioned by the possession of colonies we have settled, or countries we have conquered.

The wealth of Britain and its power arise from agriculture, manufactures, commerce, colonies, and conquests. The envy they excite is not, however, in proportion to the wealth that arises from them, but rather to the right we have to possess them, and the consequent right that others have to contest the possession.

Improved agriculture has never been a source of enmity amongst civilized nations, though it has been an object of conquest when an opportunity presented itself.

Manufactures, the great source of our wealth, are, in a certain degree, beyond the reach of our enemies. Our greatest consumption for them is amongst ourselves, and if we did not export to any part of the world, except enough to procure materials, we should enjoy nearly all that we now do. Our wealth would not be very materially diminished, though our naval strength would. The means of destroying our manufactures is not then very easily to be found.

The commerce with other nations, our enemies, or rivals, have a more effectual means of diminishing, by the laying on duties on our manufactures, and augmenting those duties when the goods happen to be carried in English vessels; but still the advantage we enjoy in this competition is great.

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Not so with our colonies and conquests. The whole imports from the East Indies, from 1700 to the present day, have only amounted [end of page #205] to 165,000,000 L. and our exports, during the same period, to 83,000,000 L. while our total exports have amounted to 1,486,000 L. during the same period. {167}

There would be much affectation, and little accuracy, in attempting to make any thing like a strict comparison between the relative proportions of the wealth procured by general trade, and that procured by trade with India. The exports amount to about one-nineteenth part of the whole; and, perhaps, as they are manufactured goods, to about one-tenth part of the whole manufactures of the country exported: but the manufactures exported are not equal to one-third part of those consumed at home, so that not above one-thirtieth part of our manufacturers are maintained by the trade to India.

In 1793, when the charter of the company was renewed, the India-budget stated the private fortunes acquired and brought home, at one million annually: that has probably increased since then; but it was at that time greater than it had been before: if, then, we take the annual arrival, since the year 1765, at one million, it will make forty millions, which, compared with the balance of trade during that period, amounts to about one-sixth part of the balance supposed to come into the country.

How much of our national debt might be set down to the account of India, is another question. By debt contracted, and interest of debt paid, during the same period, we have disbursed the sum of 1,100,000,000 L. which is equal to more than twelve times the whole of the property acquired by our India affairs, supposing the 45,000,000 L.

— {167} Comparison between the total foreign trade of the country, to that with the East Indies only, for 104 years.

Total Exports. Total Balance Exports to India.
in our favour.

From

1700 to 1760, L540,000,000 L249,000,000 L18,000,000

1760 to 1785, L370,000,000 L101,000,000 L25,000,000

1785 to
1805,

L576,000,000 L142,000,000 L40,000,000

L1,486,000,000 L492,000,000 L80,000,000



[Transcriber's note: L=GBP/Pounds Sterling.]

This is about a nineteenth part of our foreign trade, and the balance is greatly against us. --

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remitted, to be all gain, together with one-half of the 83,000,000 L. which surely is allowing the gain at the highest rate for both. {168}

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Supposing, then, that the wars that India has occasioned have cost (or the proportion of the debt they have occasioned) one-sixth part of the whole of our debt, and that the profits on goods to India, and private fortunes, came into the public treasury, there would still have been a great loss to the state; but this has not been the case, the interest of the debt has been levied on the people, and will continue to be so, till all is paid off; which, according to the plan of the sinking fund, will be in thirty-five years, so that we shall have about 750,000,000 L. more to pay, {169} supposing we have peace all that time, and continue to possess India.

There is something very gloomy in this view of national affairs, and yet there is no apparent method of making it more pleasing.

It is, on the contrary, very possible, that as Malta, on account of its being supposed the key to India, has cost us 20,000,000 L. within a few years, that, in less than thirty-five years, it may cost us *something* more; and, it is not by any means impossible, that, before that period, we may either lose India, or give it away; on either of which suppositions, the arithmetical balance of profit and loss will be greatly altered, to our farther disadvantage.

On the possessions in India, and the complicated manner in which our imports (again exported) affect the nation, a volume might be written, but it would be to very little purpose, in a general inquiry of this sort. It is sufficient to shew here that the wealth obtained by that channel is not of great magnitude, in comparison either of the

— {168} The nearness of the balance of trade, to the amount of debt contracted, will naturally excite attention, but it appears merely accidental, and to have not any real connection.

Debt borrowed L500,000,000
Interest paid L590,000,000

L1,090,000,000

[Transcriber's note: L=GBP/Pounds Sterling.]

{169} Let the future profits and expenses be set against each other, like the last. ==

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wealth acquired by foreign trade, or by our industry at home; and that, at the same time, we see that it excites more envy and jealousy than all the rest of the advantages we enjoy put together.

Badly as men act in matters of interest, and much as envy blinds them in cases of rivalry, yet still there is a certain degree of justice predominant in the mind, that admits the claim of merit and true desert. Every person, who has heard the conversation, or read the opinions of people in other nations, on the wealth and greatness of England, will allow, that, as commercial men, and as manufacturers, we are the wonder of the world, and excite admiration; but, concerning our dominion over India, and our plantations in the American islands, foreigners speak very differently.

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In order to bring down a nation, that has risen above its level, there is followed a system of enmity in war, and rivalry in peace.

The Portuguese seized on a lucky opportunity to undermine and supplant the Venecians and the Genoese, who had long been the envy of all nations, for the wealth they obtained, by the monopoly of the trade to India. The Dutch soon rivalled the Portuguese in trade, and the Flemings in manufactures; and, indeed, there is no saying in how great a variety of ways the superiority of a nation may not be pulled down.

England, commencing later than any, has now obtained her full share of the commerce of the East, and of manufactures; but the nations that envy the wealth of others have always several great advantages. The nation that is highest treads in discovery, invention, &c. a new path, and is never certain how far she can go, nor how to proceed. Those who follow have, in general, but to copy, and, in doing that, it is generally pretty easy to improve. At all events, a day must arrive when the nation that is highest, ceasing to proceed, the others must overtake it.

As the nation that is farthest advanced is ignorant of the improvements that may be made, it does not feel what it wants; and, like a man in full health, will give no encouragement to the physician. The countries that follow behind act differently; and they generally, in order [end of page #208] to protect their rising manufactures, impose duties on similar ones imported; thus preventing a competition between old established manufactures, and those recently begun.

So far as priority of settlement, or of invention, give a superiority to a nation over others, the equalizing principle acts with a very natural and evident force; but, when the manners and modes of thinking of a people have once taken a settled turn, in addition to their proficiency in manufactures, it does not appear easily to be altered.

The Germans excelled at working in metals, and possessed most of the arts, in a superior degree to any other people in Europe, a few centuries ago. In some arts they have been surpassed by the French, in more by the Dutch, and in nearly all by the English. {170}

Conquests and colonies are wrested from nations suddenly and by force; arts and manufactures leave them in time of peace, silently and by degrees, without noise or convulsion; but the consequences are not the less fatal on that account; nor, indeed, is the effect slower, though more silent. Though colonies or conquests pass away at once, such changes only take place after a long chain of causes have prepared the way for them; whereas, manufactures are perpetually emigrating from one country to another: the operation, though slow and silent, is incessant, and the ultimate effect great beyond calculation.

A good government, and wise laws, that protect industry and property, and preserve, in purity, the manners of the people, are the most difficult obstacles for a rival nation to overcome. Prosperity, which is founded upon that basis, is of all others the most secure. There are sometimes customs and habits that favour industry, the operation of which is not perceptible to those who wish to imitate and rival successful and wealthy nations.

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In general, it is not to be expected that the southern nations can come in competition with those living in more northerly climates in

— {170} The individual German workmen have not been excelled by the workmen of any other nation, but the German nation itself has been outdone. --

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those manufactures, where continued or hard labour is necessary. Nature has compensated the inhabitants of such countries for this incapacity, by giving them a fine climate, and, in general, a fertile soil; and, when they do justice to it, they may live affluent and happy. But, since industry and civilization have got into northern countries, it is impossible for the southern ones to rival them in manufactures.

It would be impossible for any people living on the banks of the Nile, where the finest linen was once manufactured, to rival the cloths of Silesia, or of Ireland: as well might we think to bring back the commerce with India to Alexandria by the Red Sea.

The fine manufactures of India, notwithstanding the materials are all found in the country, the lowness of labour, and the antiquity of their establishment, are, in many cases, unable to keep their ground against the invention and industry of Europeans. The art of making porcelain-ware, from a want of some of the materials, has not, in every respect, equalled that manufactured in China; but in everything else, except material, it excels so much, that the trade to that country in that article is entirely over.

Many of the finest stuffs are nearly sharing the same fate, and they all probably will do so in time. Those whom we hope to surpass are determined to remain as they are, while Europeans aim at going as far in improvement as the nature of things will allow.

But the nations that follow others in arts are not always confined to imitation, though we have seen that even there they have a great advantage. It frequently happens that they get hold of some invention which renders them superior, in a particular line, to those whom they only intended to imitate.

When the superiority of a nation arises from the natural produce of the earth, such as valuable minerals, then it is very difficult for others to rival it with advantage; and it is very unwise of any nation to employ its efforts in rivalling another in an article where nature has given to the other a decided advantage; and it is equally ill-judged of a nation to neglect cultivating the advantages which she enjoys from nature, as they are the most permanent and their possession the most certain of any she can enjoy.

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If nations were to consider in what branches of manufacture they are best fitted to excel, it would save much rivalry, misunderstanding, and jealousy; at the same time that it

would tend greatly to increase the general aggregate wealth of mankind. It is not to industry and effort alone that mankind owe wealth, but to industry and effort well directed.

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This is well explained in the excellent Inquiry into the Causes of the Wealth of Nations, and it is to be regretted that this truth is not more generally understood; for it would contribute still more to the peace and happiness of mankind, than to their commercial wealth.

There is not, however, any subject on which nations are so apt to err, and, indeed, the error is natural enough, if the ambition of a rival is not checked by judgement and attention to circumstances.

When a nation is particularly successful in one branch of manufacture more than in any other, it is generally because some peculiar circumstances give it an advantage. This ought to operate as a reason for doubting whether it might be prudent to attempt to rival a nation in an object in which it had particular advantages; but quite the contrary is the case; a rival nation aims directly at the thing in which another excels the most, and frequently fails when, in any other object, she might have proved successful. {171}

The changes of the taste and manners of mankind, as well as discoveries in arts and science, lay a foundation for political changes; but it is an irregular foundation for change; its operation is sometimes in favour of, and sometimes against the same nation, and it never can be calculated beforehand.

As the nations that have improved in manufactures the latest have always carried them to the greatest perfection, it is natural to inquire how this happens.

The exertion of the mind and body are both of them greatly aug-

— {171} How many ridiculous attempts have been made, in the north, to rival the Italians in raising silk, and by enlightened men too; but it is not sufficient to be enlightened, it is necessary to follow a proper train of reasoning.—Good natural sense sometimes supplies the place of regular reasoning, and, as if it were intuitively, arrives at a true conclusion. ==-

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mented by success, and diminished by any thing of a contrary description. The rising nation has always an increased energy, and that which is about being rivalled a sort of discouragement and dismay. This is one cause, but there are others.

So far as methods of working and machinery are connected, the imitating nation has the advantage; it copies the best sort of machine, and the best manner of working at once. The workmen have neither an attachment to the old inferior methods, nor do they use old inferior machines, to avoid the expense of new ones. {172} In short, they adopt all improvements without much additional expense; and, as men's minds are always more

occupied in thinking about a new object than an old one, they are even more likely to make improvements.

As to difficulties in rivalling a nation in skill, in any mechanical art, there are none. The only difficulties in manufactures are in the inventions and improvements, and those have been overcome by the leading nation, and are no difficulties to that which follows. There are, indeed, some arts which require particular talents, and a real exertion of genius; but those are so few in number, and have so little connection with the common affairs of mankind, or the wealth of nations, that they do not deserve to be noticed.

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There is nothing in the art of weaving, or working in metals, or in any other material for common use, that is of such difficulty but that any man, with a common capacity, may do it nearly as well as any other man. The habits and manners of mankind, their disposition to labour, and the nature of the government under which they live, may encourage or discourage manufacturing; but both the strength and capacity of any of the natives of Europe, taking them on an average, are fully sufficient to enable them to excel in any work.

— {172} Where machines are very expensive, new improvements, that require other machinery, are sometimes crushed and rejected on that account. To adopt them, a man must sometimes begin by sacrificing half his fortune, by destroying his old machinery.

There have been several instances of this seen, particularly in the making of iron, when it was proposed to convert the rough gueuze into good malleable iron bar, by rolling it at a welding heat, instead of hammering it by a forge-mill. --

[end of page #212]

{Here appears at page 212 the third chart, entitled
"Chart
Shewing the Amount of the
Exports and Imports
-of-
ENGLAND
to and from all parts
from 1800 to 1805"} }

The British nation has begun to seek for wealth from agriculture. It had long been the mode to pay attention and give the preference to manufactures; but the current is, for the present, set in, in another direction. Calculation has, till of late, been confined to mercantile men; but, after all, they have not carried it to a very great length: and, as to their speculative wisdom, it consists chiefly in taking a ready advantage of some immediate object.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE NO. III.

The space from right to left is divided into years, each line representing the year marked under and above. From the beginning of the last century, till the year 1770, every tenth year only is expressed, and the average amount of exports and imports only is shewn; but, from 1770 to the present time, every year is separately represented by a line going from the top to the bottom.

The divisions from top to bottom are millions of pounds sterling, each representing a million, measuring from the bottom, the number of millions indicated is marked on the right margin.

As the exports, which are expressed by a red line, increased or diminished, the red line rises or falls, crossing the division representing the year at the line which indicates the number of millions to which the exports amounted that year.

The yellow line is drawn on the same principle, and represents the imports for the same years; the difference between the two, which is stained green, being the balance for or against England.

Thus, for example, we see that, till the year 1775, the exports rose very fast, and were far above the imports, but that then their proportion begun =sic= to vary; insomuch that, in 1781, the yellow line rose above the red, when the balance in favour of England turned against it, to the amount of a million for one year. In 1782, the balance again became favourable; but, though the trade was increasing, the balance was once more, in 1785, against England; ever since which it has been more or less in our favour.

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The difference between the two lines is stained pale green, when the balance was favourable, but of a pale red when against England.

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The advantages proposed by this mode of representing matters are the same that maps and plans have over descriptions, and dimensions written in figures; and the same accuracy is in one case as the other; for, whatever quantities can be expressed in numbers may be represented by lines; and, where proportional progression is the business, what the eye does in an instant, would otherwise require much time.

The impression is not only simple, but it is as lasting in retaining as it is easy in receiving. Such are the advantages claimed for the invention twenty years ago, when it first appeared; the claim has been allowed by many, and not objected to, so far as the inventor knows, either in this or in any other country.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE NO. IV.

Chart of revenue, from the time of Queen Elizabeth to the present day.

Till the accession of William III. in 1688, the materials for this are not altogether accurate; but they are not far wrong, and indeed, the low state of the revenue, previous to that period, is such that it is a matter of little importance whether or not they are very exact. It is represented here rather as a contrast to the present high revenue, and a matter of curiosity, than as being of much importance.

The pale red part expresses the free revenue, or what is over, after paying the interest of our debt.

This free revenue has not increased so fast as the value of money has decreased, previous to the year 1793; and certainly, at that time, the annual sum of 7,000,000 L. was no equal to 4,000,000 L. in the reign of Queen Anne.

The green part shews the annual interest of the national debt, and proves, beyond contradiction, that, under such a system, expenses of war (for the whole debt has been contracted for wars) augment in much more than a simple proportion.

The yellow part, bounded by a curved line, shews the manner in which the sinking fund will increase in its operation of paying off the debt, on the supposition that the nation continues to borrow as it has [end of page #214] done for the last twelve years; setting apart one per cent. on every new loan, for its liquidation.

As comparative views are the great object of these charts, a yellow dotted line is made, representing the amount of the revenue of France during the same period, till 1789,

when the revolution stopped its progress; since which its amount has not been regularly known. {173}

— {173} The author published an Atlas, containing twenty-seven charts of the different branches of commerce, revenue, and finance, of England, which was translated into French. The fifth edition, much improved, and brought to the present time, is now printing, and will be published in November. -=-

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CHAP. III. [=sic=—error in printer's copy, should read II.]

Of Education, as conducted in England.—Amelioration proposed.— Necessity of Government interfering, without touching the Liberty of the Subject.

The importance of education has been already mentioned, as it in general regards all nations, and certainly when we have examples to shew what are the lasting and terrible consequences of degradation of national character and manners, it is impossible to pay too strict an attention to that subject.

The natural tendency in a nation, while growing richer, to alter its character, owing to the different manner in which the children are educated and brought up, applies particularly to England, and to every nation getting rich by trade or manufactures. In another part, it has been observed, that where the wealth of a country circulates amongst the labouring classes first, it alters the manner of living more than when it originates with the higher; it produces, also, a greater change on the education of children.

No part of the general inquiry is so particularly applicable to England, in an excessive degree, as that relative to education. In proportion as ignorant people arrive at that sort of affluence, which manufactures and trade produce, in that same proportion do they ruin their children. The manners, the nature of the government, and the way of thinking of the people, all lead to this in England; and so far as it is possible to observe the effect, it may be said to appear as if it operated with rapidity at the present period.

Many volumes have been written on education, by the ablest men; but it has already been observed, that they have all treated the subject in a manner much too intricate and complex. Fully aware of the importance, they seem to have thought that it could not be treated too much at length, or investigated too minutely; and, by this means, what they have said is little applicable to general purposes; for, if to educate a man for common life were a difficult complicated operation, it would very seldom be performed. [end of page #216]

{Here appears at page 216 the fourth and final chart, entitled
“Chart
Representing the
Increase of the Annual Revenues
-of-
ENGLAND AND FRANCE,
from the beginning of the 17th Century to
the present time”}

The word education itself appears to be misapplied or misunderstood, owing, probably, to its original construction and use, and no other word having been substituted in its place.

By education was meant, in former times, the teaching to read and write; and these accomplishments, which, at that time, distinguished a gentleman from the lower classes, and, by that means, education is still considered as only applying to the learning of what is taught at schools or universities. It is principally in this light that those who have written on it have viewed it, though in fact *well brought up* (*bien eleve*) comes nearer to the meaning than being *well learnt*, which is equivalent to well educated.

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In this, as in every other thing, the end in view should never be forgotten; but, as it happens with respect to the middling and lower orders, it is forgotten so soon as affluence has made a little progress in a country.

The education of the higher classes is generally pretty well conducted; and, indeed, human beings, when beyond the reach of want, who do not inherit the necessity derived from Adam, of gaining their bread by the sweat of their brows, require much more teaching than others, whose conduct is regulated by necessity, and who have not the means of giving way to the passions that beset human nature.

With respect, however, to the higher classes, it is scarcely possible for a government to interfere to much purpose. Those who are possessed of fortune will act according to inclination; and, in respect to this class of society, in England, it is already in less need of reform or interference than any others, while the lower and middling classes require it more.

There is no possibility for an ignorant man to become of any importance in this country, even with the aid of wealth and fortune. An immoral character, or a mean selfish one, has not a much better chance, while, by talents and good conduct, every thing desirable may be obtained: perhaps, nothing further can be done to excite men of rank and fortune to emulation and virtue.

With respect to the learned professions, the modes by which students are brought up to them are by no means unexceptionable; but that is not a point of very great national importance; at any rate, [end of page #217] it is not the part in which England stands the most in need of attention {174} and interference from the government of the country.

The two classes to whom bringing up, as it is generally understood, would apply better than the word education, are the middle rank of society, and the lower order of people in trade.

The middle rank of society is, in all countries, the most important in point of principles and manners. To keep it pure is always of the highest importance, and it is the most difficult, for there a baneful change is the most apt to take place.

Gentlemen of rank, in all countries, resemble each other very nearly; not, perhaps, in exterior, because that depends on fashion, which is arbitrary, but in mind and manners there is less difference than between men in a second rank of society.

The lower orders, so far as they are forced, by necessity, to labour, resemble each other also; they are pressed by necessities and passions on one side, and the desire of rest on the other; and a fair allowance being made for variety of climate, of circumstances, and of natural dispositions, there is nothing very different amongst them. {175}

What applies with respect to the higher and lower orders does not

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— {174} Our lawyers (barristers) are probably superior to those of any other nation, and the clergy are, at least, equal. This is not, indeed, saying a great deal; but it is so difficult, in matters of religion, to temper zeal, and draw a line between emulation and fanaticism, that, perhaps, it is better that they should be a little remiss than righteous overmuch. It is not in the education of churchmen, but in the manner of paying and providing for them, that the error lies; and that subject is treated elsewhere.

{175} Cervantes, in his admirable romance of Don Quixote, paints the mind of a gentleman, which all countries will acknowledge to be like the truth. The madness apart, the manner of thinking and acting was that of the gentleman of Spain, France, Germany, or England. Neither was he the gentleman of the fifteenth or eighteenth century, but of any other century. His dress was Spanish; his madness and manners belonged to the ages of chivalry and romance, but the mind and principles of the gentleman suited all ages and all countries.

Sancho, again, barring likewise his oddities, is the peasant of all countries; studying to live as well as he can, and labour as little as he may. In short, a mind continually occupied about personal wants, and alive to personal interest. In the middle ranks of society there is no such similarity. ==

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apply at all to the middling classes, nor even to the most wealthy class of labourers in a manufacturing country: in those we can find no fixed character; it is as variable as the circumstances in which the individuals are placed, and it is there that a government should interfere. It should interfere in guiding the richer classes of working people, and the middling ranks, in the education of their children, and in assisting those of the lower orders, who are too much pressed upon by indigence.

The end in view in all education is to make the persons, whether men or women, fill their place well and properly in life; and this is only to be done by setting a good example, instilling good principles, accustoming them, when young, to good habits; and, above all, by teaching them how to gain more than they are habituated to spend.

It follows from this, that industry, and a trade, are the chief parts of education, that reading and writing are not, being but of a very doubtful utility to the labouring class of society.

On this subject, it is absolutely necessary to advert to what Dr. Smith says relative to apprenticeships; the opinion of so great a writer is of too much importance not to be examined, and refuted, if found wrong.

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Apprenticeships, or teaching a trade, is the basis of the future happiness and prosperity of the individual in the lower and middle classes. On this subject, however, Mr. Smith says quite the contrary. That the idleness of apprentices is well known, that their inducement to industry is small, and that, as to what they have to learn, a few weeks, or sometimes a few days, would, in most cases, be sufficient. In short, he maintains, that they would learn better, be more industrious and useful, if employed on wages, than if bound for a term of years; and, finally, that there were no apprentices amongst the ancients. As to there being no apprentices in the ancient world, if that was the case, is no argument with respect to the present state of things; for, while most part of working men were slaves, there could not possibly be much occasion for apprentices; but are we quite certain, that the freed men, so often mentioned, were not people who had served apprenticeships? Freed men are so often mentioned, that there must have been probably something else to which they owed their freedom, besides the goodwill or [end of page #219] caprice of their masters, particularly as that goodwill must have been exercised to deserving objects, and consequently the sacrifice made in giving liberty was the greater. {176}

As men cultivated difficult arts; that is, as luxury increased, it must have become difficult to get labour done by slaves, merely by compulsive means; there must have been bargain and mutual interest settled between the master and the slave, so as to accomplish the end intended. {177} Amongst rewards to a slave, liberty, at a certain period, is not only the greatest, but is the only one that effectually serves the slave; for, while he remains the property of a master, his rewards can consist of little else than good treatment, as all property given is liable to be taken back again.

Supposing, however, the point yielded, and that there were no apprentices in the early ages; but that the practice originated in the days of ignorance; in the dark ages, under the feudal system, together with the invention of corporations and privileged bodies, against whose existence the whole set of economists have leagued together, as the Greeks did against Troy; still the obscurity of the origin is no objection. A constitution like that of Britain, for example, is not an invention of antiquity; it took its rise in the dark ages and in times of ignorance, but it is not for that the less an object of admiration. Many other examples may be furnished of the admirable things that took rise in the dark ages; and amongst them, not the least, is the abolition of slavery itself. {178}

Let us, however, examine the effect of apprenticeships in those places where they can be compared with persons brought up entirely free.

— {176} We may form some idea of the difficulty of getting work done by people in no way interested in the success, by the workhouses in this country. The smallest quantity, and of the most simple nature, is all we get done, because the overseers are ignorant, and the nation inattentive, and the labour compulsive.

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{177} In Egypt, and most other ancient countries, the son followed, by law, the trade of his father: this was equivalent to an apprenticeship.

{178} Whether it arose from the mixture of a northern with the southern people, or from what other cause, it is certain, that, during the ages of ignorance, the foundation was laid for almost all that is great, at the present time. ==

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If there are trades, where it is true, (as Mr. Smith affirms,) that the art of working may be learnt in a few weeks, what are the consequences? At the age of sixteen or seventeen, a boy can get as much money as he will be able to earn at any future time in his life; he will be able to get as much as a man, who has a wife and five or six children to maintain. There will be required a very great share of moderation and wisdom, indeed, under such circumstances, to prevent such a boy from wasting his money in ways that will incapacitate him from living easy when he shall become a father of a family himself, or from idling away the spare time that his gains afford him. He will, naturally, do part of both: but the way that is generally done is this. Without controul from a master, and totally independent of parents, who are quite left behind in poverty, (not having more to maintain their whole family than the youth himself earns,) he despises them, saves a little money at first, and purchases finery. The novelty of dress soon wears off, and the more immediate pleasures of eating, drinking, and keeping company, as it is termed, take the lead. The consequence of the same is idleness and rags. Ashamed to shew himself amongst persons of better conduct, the youth changes his place of residence and work; habit has got hold of him, and labour becomes hateful; a soldier's life appears the best for a youth of such a description; and, it is an undoubted fact, that, at those places where trades are carried on, that can be learnt in a short time, {179} there are more recruits obtained for the army than in any other districts of equal population. It is also an undoubted fact, that, in these same districts, the most respectable people bind their sons apprentices; and, in doing so, they are guided by experience, and affection for their children, not by interested motives.

— {179} This is not the case with many trades, and Mr. Smith is under a mistake as to the fact; but, granting it to be true, the places in question, Birmingham, Sheffield, Manchester, and other towns where the division of labour reduces every operation to great simplicity, are the best for recruiting the army. In those places, all respectable people, who can afford it, bind their sons apprentices, to prevent the danger. ==

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In the other case, again, where a trade is not easily learnt, how is skill to be obtained but by an apprenticeship. The bringing the son up to his father's trade, a practice that prevails in the eastern parts of Asia, is one way; parental authority needs not the aid of a written indenture; but, where this is not the case, who is to teach a youth, if he is not to be bound for a certain number of years, but to go away as soon as he has learnt a trade? The father, in some cases, may be able to pay for his son learning the trade, and this experiment has sometimes been tried, but generally with very imperfect success. The youth, for the most part, in those cases, considers himself as independent of the master, and gives himself very little trouble to learn his business.

Where the reward of the master, or rather the remuneration for his pains and trouble, is to arise from the labour of the boy, the master is interested in his learning; and the other feels an obligation, as well as an interest in learning. Though the apprentice is not absolutely paid for what he does, he finds his ease, his importance, and comfort, all depend on his proficiency; and, with young minds, such motives are much more powerful, and act through a better channel than avarice.

The power that the legislature gives to a master over his apprentice appears not only to be wise but necessary; and, if rewards for earning a trade could be given, in addition to that without infringing on liberty, or burthening the state, it would be a great advantage.

But learning a trade is not the only advantage of an apprenticeship; a good moral conduct, fidelity, and attention to his duties, are all acquired at the same time, or ought to be so; whereas, the youth who, at an early age, is left without control, is apt to learn just the contrary.

Where people have fortune, circumstances give them a control over their children by expectancies; but, where there is no fortune, and children must provide for themselves, an apprenticeship is a substitute for expectancies, which appears highly necessary; and it is wonderful how so discriminating and profound a man as Dr. Smith could overlook so material a circumstance. It shews how far prejudice, and an [end of page #222] opinion once adopted, will lead men of the first judgement and genius astray; {180} for it is not to be supposed that any person will stand forward of himself to maintain an opinion against which experience speaks so decidedly.

To learn a trade, and be taught a good moral conduct, and attention to one's duty, is certainly the essential part of education, both in the lower and middling classes; and that portion of education, which appears to have got an exclusive title to the name, reading and writing, are, with the working classes, a very inferior object.

One of the duties of government, then, is to watch over the education of the children of the middling and lower orders, which has a tendency to grow worse, as the nation advances in wealth.

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In England, the pride of the middling classes is to have their children educated at boarding-schools, where the business of eating, sleeping, dressing, and exercise, is pretty well understood; where the branches of education, pretended to be taught, are little attended to, (writing, and some exterior accomplishments, of which the father and mother can judge, excepted,) where moral conduct, the duties in life, and the conduct necessary to be followed, are scarcely once thought of.

It is true, that, till a certain age, it is generally not known for what particular line of life a young man is intended; but, there are certain things necessary to every line of life, and those should never be neglected. The habits contracted at schools are very often of a sort never to be got the better of; and how can good habits be contracted when no attention is bestowed on the subject?

The consequence of this is, that, when the good sense of the father or mother, or of the boy himself, does not correct the evil, he is bred up to consider himself as born to be waited on, and provided for, without any effort of his own; he is led to suppose that he is to indulge

— {180} In the notes upon the Wealth of Nations, this case is argued, but the matter is too important not to be examined on every occasion and opportunity. The opinion here alluded to is that general way of thinking, respecting corporations, privileges, and regulations, or restraints of every sort imposed on trade, which the writers on political economy, in general, think ought all to be entirely done away. --

[end of page #223]

in a life similar to that his father leads at home, where a few indulgencies =sic= are the natural consequences of age, and the fair returns for a life employed in care and industry.

In England, it would be absolutely necessary to make school-masters undergo an examination; not only at first, and before the school should be licensed, but the boys should be examined twice a year, and the result enregistered, so that the business would really be to learn something, and not merely to spend the time.

The small proficiency made in the schools, in England, and around London in particular, is incredible. It is even difficult to conceive how the boys avoid learning a little more than they generally do, during eight or ten years. {181} The masters pretend, for the most part, to teach boys Latin, by way of teaching them English, but without almost ever accomplishing it. In arithmetic, the common rules are taught, but scarcely ever decimal fractions, and almost never book-keeping, so useful and so easy an art.

Writing and spelling are better taught, perhaps, than in any other country, and, certainly, those are great advantages; but, according to the time and money spent, it is the least

that can be expected. Here we may remark, that those are the only acquirements with the proficiency in which the father and mother are necessarily acquainted; it therefore gives reason for thinking, that, if the same check were held in other branches of their education, they would be excited to make equal progress.

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When the time comes that it is fixed on what line of life a young man is to adopt, then there should be schools for different branches, where

— {181} Without contesting the point, whether dead languages are of any use, it will be allowed that the study costs pretty dear. Three-quarters of the time, for seven years employed on that is equal to five years employed constantly, and twenty pounds a year, at least, is the expense. Not above one in one hundred learns to read even Latin decently well, that is one good reader for every 10,000 L. expended. As to speaking Latin, perhaps, one out of one thousand may learn that, so that there is a speaker for each sum of 100,000 L. spent on the language. It will, perhaps, be said, that Latin is necessary to the understanding English, but the Greeks, (particularly at Athens,) who learnt no language but their own, understood and spoke it better than the people of any other country. --

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there should be knowledge taught, analogous to the profession. For the mercantile line, for agriculture, for every line of life, boys should be prepared; and, above all, it should never be neglected to instil into them the advantages of attention to industry, to doing their duty, and in every case making themselves worthy of trust.

Public examinations, such honours and rewards as would be gratifying, but not expensive, for those that excelled, would produce emulation. Though, perhaps, it is not of very great importance to excel in some of the studies to which a young man applies at school, yet it is of great importance to be taught that habit of application that produces excellence.

With regard to the education of the lower classes, it would be no great additional burthen to the nation if there were proper schools established in every parish in the kingdom, at the expense of the public, in order that there might be a proper control over those who teach, and over what is taught. {182} Without going so far as to compel people of the lower classes to send their children to school, they might be induced to do it for a short time, and, at all events, care should be taken that the teachers were fit for the office they undertake.

In no country do the lower classes neglect the care of their children more, or set them a worse example, than in England; they are mostly brought up as if the business of eating and drinking were the chief purpose of human existence; they are taught to be difficult to please, and to consider as necessary what, in every other nation in Europe, is considered, by the same rank of people, as superfluous.

Although the lower orders have as good a right as the most affluent to indulge in every enjoyment they can afford, yet to teach this to children, without knowing what may be

their lot, is doing both them and society an injury. A great number of crimes arise from early indul-

— {182} As there are between nine and ten thousand parishes, twenty pounds given in each, to which the schoolmaster would be allowed to add what those who were able could pay, might perhaps answer the purpose, and would not amount to a great sum.

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gence of children, and from neglecting to instil into them those principles which are necessary to make them go through life with credit and contentment. {183}

The Spartans used to shew their youth slaves or Helots in a state of intoxication, in order to make them detest the vice of drunkenness; but this was the exhibition of a contemptible and mean person in a disgraceful situation. The effect is very different when children see those they love and respect in this state; it must have the effect of either rendering the parent contemptible, or the vice less odious, it perhaps has some effect both ways; but, at all events, it must operate as a bad example, and, amongst the lower classes, it is a very common one.

When a nation becomes the slave of its revenue, and sacrifices very =sic= thing to that object, abuses that favour revenue are difficult to reform; but surely it would be well to take some mode to prevent the facility with which people get drunk, and the temptation that is laid to do so. The immense number of public houses, and the way in which they give credit, are undoubtedly, in part, causes of this evil. It would be easy to lessen the number, without hurting liberty, and it would be no injustice if publicans were prevented from legal recovery for beer or spirits consumed in their houses, in the same manner that payment cannot be enforced of any person under twenty-one years of age, unless for necessities. There could be no hardship in this, and it would produce a great reform in the manners of the lower orders.

There are only three modes of teaching youth the way to well-doing,— by precept, by example, and by habit at an early age. Precept, without example and habit, has but little weight, yet how can a child have either of these, if the parents are encouraged and assisted in living a vicious life? Nations and individuals should guard

— {183} The French, before the revolution, were not be =sic= considered as a more virtuous people than the English, yet there were fewer crimes, and less dissipation amongst the lower orders than in England, and more amongst the higher. The French, particularly the mothers, have less affection for their children, yet they brought them up better, both in habits and in principles. ==

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against those vices to which they find they have a natural disposition; and drinking and gluttony are the vices to which the common people in this country are the most addicted.

Whatever other things may be taught, let this truth be instilled into all children brought up to earn their bread, that in proportion to their diligence will be their ease and enjoyment, and that this world is a world of sorrow and grief to the idle and the ignorant;

that knowledge does not consist in being able to read books, but in understanding one's business and duty in life, and that industry consists in doing it.

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Female education, in England, requires as much reform as that of the other sex; but, though the subject is not much less important, it is perhaps still more difficult. It has been remarked, by those who have travelled abroad, that, in other countries, women are in general not better, but rather worse dressed than men of the same rank: in England it is different; for, at an early age, the women are dressed, both as to style and quality of clothes, far above their rank. This might, perhaps, not be difficult to account for, but it undoubtedly is a misfortune, and one that is greatly increased by the mode of education and manner of thinking; for the main and indispensable virtue of that amiable sex excepted, (for which Englishwomen are highly distinguished,) perhaps no women in the world are brought up in a more frivolous unmeaning manner. The French women, with all their vivacity and giddy airs, have more accomplishment; {184} and, as they speak their mind pretty plainly, they have, on many occasions, testified surprise to find English ladies, who had studied music for years, who could scarcely play a tune, and who, after devoting years to the needle, were incapable of embroidering a pin-cushion.

Novels, a species of light, insipid, and dangerous reading, are the bane of English female education. They teach a sort of false romantic sentiment, and withdraw the mind from attention to the duties of

— {184} The emigrants have taught to ladies of rank, fashions; and to those of an inferior class, arts and industry. The English women did not know half what they could do, till the French came amongst them, about twelve years ago. --

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life, at a time when it should be taught to learn their high importance. In female education the government should interfere; for the education of the mother will always have an influence on the education of the son, as her conduct in life must have on that of her husband.

As one general observation, relative to the education given at most public schools, it may be observed, that, whilst much time is taken up in teaching things that can never probably be of great utility, that species of knowledge that does not belong to any particular class, but which is of the utmost importance, is left to chance and to accident. While a boy is tormented with learning a dead language he is left to glean, as in a barren field, for all those rules of conduct on which the prosperity and happiness of his future life depends. {185}

A public education is, in many respects, better than a private one for boys, but, in some things, it is inferior: consequently those who can afford it, and wish to give their sons the most complete education, try to unite the advantages of both, by sending them to a public school, under the care of a private tutor. It is not in the power of the middling classes to do this; but modes should be adopted to give the boys, either by books or

public lectures, those instructions, relative to moral conduct, to prudence, behaviour, &c. which a private tutor gives to those under his particular charge.

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As to female education, it is a difficult subject: one great improvement would, nevertheless, be not to allow above a certain number in any one seminary; to have people of irreproachable conduct over them, and, wherever the parents can, to bring them home at the age of thirteen or fourteen. The public education ought certainly to finish at an early age, and, in all cases, with respect to females, a private is much preferable to a public education. {186}

— {185} The most virtuous of the Roman emperors attributed to his preceptors every one of those excellent qualities he possessed. The ancient education of Greece and Rome was very different from that of the moderns.

{186} Since this was written, we understand a book for this very purpose is about to be printed, with the professed design of uniting the advantages of a public and private education. --

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CHAP. III.

Of the Effects of Taxation in England.

What has been said of the increase of taxes, their tendency to ruin a nation, and bring on its decline, together with the counteraction occasioned by the continuance of necessity, as being applicable to all nations in general, applies, in every sense, to England, and even more to England than to any other nation. Taxes are carried to greater excess than in any other country; and, as England flourishes by trade and manufactures, (the price of which taxes enhance,) they gradually tend to shut foreign markets against us. This has already been explained; we, however, still have to inquire into the particular manner in which it operates upon this country.

That the system of taxation, though irregular in England, is less so than in any other country, in proportion to the extent to which it has been carried, is true; but still, however, if a number of the most troublesome and ill-contrived taxes were done away, and others established in their place, it would be a great advantage.

Greater danger arises from the augmentation of taxes in a wealthy country than in a poor one, when they stretch beyond the proper line, because the general prosperity hinders the effect from being visible, till it has advanced beyond the power of remedy; whereas, in a poor country, the injury is soon felt.

The invention and industry of this country have been most wonderfully increased by the necessity of exertion, under the protection of good laws, which rendered property secure. But we trust too much to our resources, and, like men in health and vigour, are the most likely to injure our constitution.

The most part of the arts, in point of manufacturing, seem to have come to nearly the last degree of perfection, so far as abbreviation of labour can carry them. [end of page #229]

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The division of labour, and the modes of working in the iron and metal branches, have not of late been in any material degree improved in our towns, the most famous for them; and as to any particular gift of bringing things to perfection, or reducing prices, it does not appear to be confined to England. Watches and fire-arms are two of the most ingenious and nice branches of metal manufactures; yet, at Liege, the latter is carried to greater perfection than at Birmingham, and London and Lancashire are outdone by Switzerland, in the former. Those, indeed, are not manufactures of which the taste or form is constantly altering; but they are a proof of the ability to work with equal advantage, both as to quality and price, with the manufacturers of this country.

The next great branches are the weaving. For silks, France has always had the advantage of us; and our fine woollen cloths have never equalled those of Louvier and Sedan for quality, although, in point of price, they have the advantage.

In linens, we enjoy no particular pre-eminence; and, in the American market, we are beginning to be undersold by those of Silesia. For a second quality of woollen cloth, and for the manufacture of cotton, in all its branches, we still have the superiority; but our great advantage, the cause of the general preference to our manufactures is the long credit we give, which, if it should ever cease to be practicable, would ruin not one, but all our manufactures, nearly at a stroke.

It is very natural and very well for Englishmen, who have never been out of their own country, to ascribe to superiority of quality, (and inferiority of price is the same thing,) the great success they have in selling their goods in foreign countries; but such as have had an opportunity to see how it really is, know the contrary; and those who have not, may know it by observing who are the individuals in any branch of business at home that do the most, and they will find it always to be those who have the power of giving the longest credit. It is true that, in the course of time, and by struggling hard, those who have little means of extending their business at first, do it by degrees; but, until they do, they never can, in point of quantity, rival those who give long credit.

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In the inability of other nations to give equal length of credit, consists our principal advantage; but we have seen, by the vicissitudes of ancient nations, that the wants of others, or their being behindhand, are but a very insecure tenure for the prosperity of any nation.

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The exportation of Britain was but inconsiderable at the beginning of last =sic= century, or about one-ninth of what it was two years ago.{187} Previous to the American war, it gradually increased to about three times what it was in the year 1700; that is, in seventy-five years. The progression was pretty regular till the year 1750, when it had risen to nearly double; but, in twenty-five years after, it increased as much as it had in fifty years before. The American war threw it back forty years, but it soon got up again to where it probably would have been, had the American war not intervened; it, however, rose beyond any thing that had ever been seen. It doubled in less than ten years; and, from this, we are led to conclude, that the taxes had not then begun to hurt national industry. But we shall see the reason, for the great increase was not owing so much to any cause inherent in this nation, as to the absolute impossibility of other nations continuing their commerce. We had got all the East and West India trade of the French and Dutch, and America had again become our greatest customer for British manufactures.

Capital that could be removed was, in a manner, banished from the continent of Europe, and had taken refuge in England, and a great extent of the continent had been desolated with war. We are not, however, to expect this amazing export trade to continue; indeed, it has already fallen, in one year, as much as it ever rose in any three years; it fell fifteen millions in one year. The taxes may have operated much against our prosperity, without our knowing it, in a crisis of this sort, though they did not absolutely counteract the favourable effect produced by other causes.

The commerce of the American states, which were, (like England,) out of the vortex of danger, and secure, increased in fully as rapid

— {187} In 1802, the exports amounted to 45,500,000 L. In 1702 to 5,500,000 L. ==-

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a manner as ours, and fell off in the same way. We must not then, consider as durable, or owing to ourselves, circumstances that arose out of the general and temporary situation of other nations.

It has been said in the general chapter on taxation, and again repeated in that on national debt, that both the one and the other operate, for a certain time, in augmenting the industry and wealth of a country, but that there is some point at which they begin to have a contrary effect; that point, however, being dependent on a variety of circumstances, is not a fixed one, it cannot be discovered by investigation before the time, but it may by symptoms and signs that become visible soon after.

It is a sign that a nation has passed the point at which taxes cease to be a spur to industry, when the duties on consumption, or optional duties, which one may avoid paying, by not using the article taxed, become less productive than formerly, and when

it is found necessary to lay taxes on land, houses, and such sort of property as can be made to pay, independent of the will of the proprietor.

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When taxes are laid upon property, not on consumption, it is to be supposed the latter can bear no more. Taxes on property are forced taxes; on consumption =sic=, they are generally, to a certain degree, voluntary, though not always so.

The augmentation of wealth has, in this country, been great, but it has never been regular or uninterrupted; that of taxation has, on the contrary, been uninterrupted, and this is better seen from the chart than from any thing that can be said. There can be no doubt that, though hitherto our increasing prosperity has been so great as to counteract the effect of heavy taxation, yet that the same thing cannot be expected to continue long. How long it may continue, or whether it has not already ceased, or is on the point of ceasing, is uncertain; but there is nothing more positive, than that, if taxes increase, they must, in process of time, crush industry, and, therefore, at all events, they should be kept as low as possible.

The whole income of the country is estimated only at 150,000,000 L. The taxes to the state amount to 40,000,000 L. and those for the maintenance of the poor to 5,500,000 L. But this is the mere money ac-[end of page #232] count, without estimating loss of time, trouble, and inconvenience; so that it may fairly and reasonably be put down at one-third of the whole revenue or income of the individuals, yet the complaints are not so loud, and the clamour is not so great, as when they did not amount to one-twentieth of that revenue. This may, however, be accounted for.

One-third part of revenue is derived from the state itself, so that there are but two-thirds remain independent of it. The habit of bearing burthens, and experience of the inutility of complaint, are likewise reasons for acquiescence; besides these, we cannot but all be sensible, that complaints were very violent when there was little occasion for them. We cannot deny, that the nation has been prospering for a hundred years, while the cry of ruin has been resounding perpetually in every corner; it is therefore natural to mistrust our fears, and sit in silence, waiting the event.

The portion of our expense that consists in interest of money, on which no economy can operate, is so great, that it prevents any hope of much diminution from economy; and, indeed, in the time of peace, no economy that could be practised, more than what has commonly been done, would diminish our burthens one-fiftieth part. Even that would be very difficult, perhaps impracticable; for our free revenue, in time of peace, has not augmented in proportion to the diminution of the value of money; so that, in 1792, the expenses of the state were comparatively less than in the reign of Queen Anne.

Economy, then, is not the mode in which we must seek relief in time of peace. To carry on war in a less expensive manner in future, and take a solid and effectual method of reducing our debts, are the means, both of which are treated of in their proper place.

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The modes of relief then, are three:

1. Economy in war.
2. A solid and fair method of reducing the present interest.
3. Attention, to render the system of taxation as little troublesome, and as fair and equal as possible.

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CHAP. IV.

Of the National Debt and Sinking Fund.—Advantages and Disadvantages of both.—Errors committed in calculating their Effects.—Causes of Error.—Mode proposed for preventing future Increase.

In no circumstance does the British empire differ so widely from all nations recorded in history, or from any now in existence, as with regard to the national debt.

Not only the invention of contracting debt to carry on war is but of recent origin, but no nation has ever carried it to near the extent that it has arrived at in England. The Italian states, in which this mode was first practised, never had the means of carrying it very far. In Spain, France, and Holland, national debt met with obstacles that arrested its progress long before it arrived at the pitch to which it has now come in this country.

The interest of the debt is above thrice the free revenue of the country, in time of peace, as that revenue was, previous to hostilities in 1793.

Whenever any operation is begun, the result of which is not known, owing to its being new, but which is in itself of great importance; the anxiety it occasions must be great, and, generally, the alarm is more than proportioned to the danger. If ever this truth was exemplified in any thing, it has been with regard to the national debt of England, which has been a continual object of terror since its first creation; not a public terror, merely amongst the ignorant, but the most profound and enlightened statesmen. Calculators, and writers on political economy, have served to augment the uneasiness by their predictions of a fatal termination.

While the debt has been augmenting with great rapidity, the wealth and resources of the nation have, at least, augmented equally fast, and the matter of fact has given the lie to all the forebodings of those who [end of page #234] occasioned the alarm. This very extraordinary circumstance merits an investigation.



It unfortunately happens, that, where people are deeply interested in a subject, they form their opinion before they begin to examine and investigate, and consequently the mind commences with a bias, and acts under its influence, the consequence of which is, that the conclusion is not so accurate as it otherwise would be. Not that, in calculating with figures, the disposition of the mind can make an unit of difference, the question being once fairly stated; but the previous impression on the mind tends to prevent the fair statement of the question.

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That an uninterrupted practice of borrowing must end in an inability to pay is a self-evident axiom. It is not a matter that admits of dispute; but to fix the point where the inability will commence is a problem to resolve of a very difficult nature; it is indeed a problem, the re-solution =sic= of which depends upon some circumstances that cannot be ascertained. There are, it is true, certain fixed principles; but there are some points also that depend on events entirely unconnected with the debt, and, in themselves, uncertain. Two great considerations, that operate powerfully, have been omitted by most writers on this subject. The first, is the increased energy of human exertion, under an increased operation of necessity; the second, is the effect that the depreciation of money has, on lessening the apparent burthen occasioned by the interest of the debt. That these two causes, which have not been taken into account, have rendered the calculations erroneous, there is not a doubt; and how far they may still continue to operate is, at this time, as uncertain as ever; but they ought not to be considered as of operation beyond a certain unknown point, else the practice of contracting debt would be capable of infinite extension, which is impossible.

But the augmentation of the debt itself is not the only circumstance that excites attention, as intimately connected with the fate of this nation.

The increasing wealth and prosperity of the nation, under the heavy load of taxes, of which the debt is the principal occasion, is as much a matter of surprize as the ultimate result is an object of anxiety.

So long, however, as the nation is not actually born =sic= down by the [end of page #235] weight of taxes, its wealth must increase; and, what is considered as a very strange phenomenon, is only the natural and necessary consequence of increased taxation.

When men inhabit and cultivate land of their own, they are under no necessity of creating any greater value than they consume; but, when they pay RENT and TAXES, they are laid under a necessity of producing enough to supply their own wants, and to pay the rent and taxes to which they are subject. The same is the case with regard to manufacturers in every line of business, for though they do not, perhaps, consume any part of what they produce, (what comes to the same thing is that,) they are obliged to produce as much as will exchange, or sell, for all they want to consume, over and above paying their rent and taxes.

Without rent and taxes there are only three things that excite the exertion of man:—Necessity, arising from natural wants; a love of pleasure; or, a love of accumulation.

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When a man labours no more than for his mere natural necessities, he is a poor man, in the usual acceptation =sic= of the word, that is, he has no wealth; {188} and a nation, peopled with such men, would justly be called a poor nation. When a man labours for nothing more than what he expends on pleasure, or to gratify his taste and passions, it is still the same, he consumes what he creates, and there is an end of the matter; and, whether he creates much or little, as his consumption is regulated by it, no difference is made to society; but, when rent and taxes constitute a part of the price of every commodity, the consumption of every man, whether he pays any taxes directly or not, himself, is attended with an increase to the revenues of those who receive the rent and taxes, and obliges him to create more than he consumes.

— {188} Some philosophers call a man rich, who wants little, and has that little; they are quite right, in their way, but that does not apply here. Perhaps, according to their definition, the Lazzaroni of Naples are richer than the merchants of London; and, a man who is contented in a parish work-house, is, beyond dispute, rich; to say that such a man is wealthy would be absurd, because wealth, with writers on political economy, implies being possessed of real tangible property. --

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It arises from this, that the aggregate wealth of a people increases with rent and taxes; for, where there are neither, the desire of accumulation is the only thing that increases wealth. {189}

It is for this reason, that, by obliging a man to create more than he himself consumes, taxation increases the wealth of a nation; so that the flourishing state of England is a very natural effect of heavy taxation. The misery and poverty of those people who have little or nothing to pay, is equally natural, though it does not astonish one quite so much.

As there is nothing in the world without a bound, and a limit, it is clear, that, in laying it down as a principle, that rent and taxes occasion wealth instead of poverty, it is only to be understood, to a certain extent; that is to say, to the length to which the nature of things will admit of the exertion of man augmenting his industry, but not a step farther.

To ascertain this point would be to solve a most curious problem; observing, that the solution would, in every case, depend on a great variety of particular circumstances.

Something like a general investigation, however, is possible. It will not be accurate, nor is that wanted, but it may lay the foundation for understanding the matter better at a future period.

In London, rent and taxes are heavier than in any other part of the kingdom, and in Scotland they are less than in any other; yet, the working people, from all parts of the

kingdom, come to London, and from the poorest places, in the greatest numbers. Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, are the poor countries, *lightly taxed*, and from them

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— {189} Accumulation is sometimes not a passion, but arises from necessity; by accumulation, is meant the increasing the value of the stock you possess, whether it consists of land, cattle, money, or merchandize.

Thus, for example, the Americans are increasing in wealth, from necessity, because their country is becoming better, by being cultivated, in order to produce what is necessary. They cannot have what they want, in the way they wish, without increasing or bettering the property of which they have taken possession.

If they had no more rent and taxes than they have, and if this were not the case, they would remain a poor people. Thus, the inhabitants of Syria, of Egypt, of Arabia Felix, formerly the finest countries in the world, having a property that does not better in their possession, and having scarcely either rent or taxes to pay, remain, from generation to generation, creating little, and consuming what they create. --

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people come, perpetually, to pay *heavy taxes* in London. Yes, but it will be said, in answer, these are poor countries. They are, however, richer than England was in the days of Queen Elizabeth; and, if the nature of things could have admitted of people *changing centuries*, as they *change countries*, the people of the seventeenth century, with light taxes, would have emigrated to the nineteenth century, with all its heavy taxes, just as those Irish and Scotch come to London.

This proves that, even in London, the excess of taxes is not yet such as to create a retrograde effect, and it proves it in a very striking manner. Though there may, at first sight, appear something ludicrous in the idea of emigrating from the seventeenth to the nineteenth, from the reign of Queen Elizabeth to that of his present majesty, it is a perfectly fair comparison, and will hold good, examine it as much as one will. The common expression, (and a very significant one it is,) that one part of the country is a century behind another, or twenty years, or fifty years, is exactly the same idea, expressed in other words, for it is a comparison between the changes which a lapse of time makes in one case, and a removal of place in the other. The present times are then better to live in than those of Elizabeth, as London is better than any distant part of the country.

That the ability of the nation to sustain a given burthen, for a certain number of years, is no proof of a permanent ability to support it, must be admitted, even if the same annual resources were to continue; but, that permanent ability becomes much less certain, when we consider that the annual resources are perpetually varying, that, therefore, they have so many uncertain quantities, that it is impossible to resolve the problem.

As to the effect, with respect to the increasing the burthens of the people, that has been treated under the general head of taxation. Whether the money goes to pay for a ship



of war, a regiment of soldiers, or the interest of loans, makes no difference to him who pays the tax; and, indeed, makes little to the general system of national economy, as, in every case, what is paid to the state is employed on unproductive labourers or idle people. That is to say, it is consumed, and never appears again.

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National debt, then, so far as it increases the taxes of a country, is like any other national expenditure; and, in maintaining unproductive and idle people, it is also the same; but it has, in another point of view, a different effect, and that effect is an advantageous one.

In every nation, the greatest part of the capital is employed, or, as it is called, sunk. Land, houses, machines, merchandize, &c. are the principal employments of capital. As those are transferred from one to another, or as the use or produce of them is paid for, by one to another, money is wanted occasionally; and, if there were no other employments, money must either be lying idle in some persons =sic= hands, till an employment could be found for it, or the possessor of it must begin some enterprise, and sink it himself.

But, when money is thus employed, it is no longer in the power of the proprietor; and, though money may be borrowed on such sort of security, it is slowly, and with difficulty. The expense, the inconveniency =sic=, and time necessary, prevent the lenders of money from lending any for occasional purposes on such sort of security; but when a nation borrows, and the stock is divisible and transferable at will, money can always be realized when it is wanted for any purpose that affords a greater advantage than the stock affords. {190}

Without this had been one of the effects of national debt, how could the facility of borrowing have increased, {191} as it has done? or how could merchants and individuals raise the sums they now do? {192}

— {190} In 1793, 5,000,000 L. was lent to merchants on exchequer-bills. The property, on which the money was secured, was really merchandize, but the lenders would have nothing to do with the goods; government stepped in, and took the goods as a security, creating a stock transferrable, that represented the same goods, and, as if by magic, the money was found in a moment. I know of no operation so fit for elucidating the advantage of national debt as this.

{191} Borrowing on life rents is bad, for this reason; where there is no employment of this sort, all money is constantly employed in some sort of trade or enterprise that will produce profit, but cannot be realised. Example, Paris, &c.

{192} When money was wanted, in Queen Anne's time, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, (Mr. Montague,) attended by the Lord Mayor and Sheriffs, went about, from shop to shop, to borrow it, much in the way that is occasionally practised by the beadles for a public charity!! Yet England's credit was good, it owed little, the war was popular, and the country rich. ==-

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It must be allowed that one hundred millions, or at least a much smaller sum than our debts amount to now, would have produced this effect, and might answer every purpose of this sort, but there is still a consideration arising from the fluctuations in a stock, when it is small, and also from the number of persons possessed of it. People buy in and sell out with total indifference when the quantity is great, and the fluctuations small; but, the moment the funds are agitated, whether in rising or falling, money becomes scarce for those who want it for other purposes.

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That the number of persons ready to buy and sell must be proportioned, in some degree, to the quantity of stock, is of itself so evident, that it would be useless to enlarge upon it; but it must be granted that the national debt has long ago passed the sum that was necessary to produce this advantage.

We find, then, that the evils attending the increase of debt are greatly counteracted by the debt itself, and that, to a certain amount, it is productive of a very considerable advantage to a trading nation. As those who calculated its ill effects, and foretold the ruin it would bring upon the state, did not take into account those circumstances, the result of their enquiries was necessarily wrong, in point of time, though the effect of which they spoke is perfectly certain to take place, if the debt continues to increase. Their reasoning may be compared to that of an astronomer, who observed the position of a planet, but, in his calculations, made no allowance for the refraction of the atmosphere, who would therefore err as to the place of the star, but not as to its existence.

Let us now consider the natural consequence, supposing that future increase is prevented by means of the sinking fund established for that purpose. As to the probability of this, it depends on so many circumstances that are concealed in the womb of time, that it would be madness to give any other than a hypothetical solution of the question.

If the war continues, and expenses increase nearly as they have hitherto done, great as is the operation of a sinking fund, it will not have time to counteract the evil. If the war stops soon, it will diminish the debt with a most prodigious rapidity, {193} if it continues; the question, whether taxes can be found to pay the interest or not? can only be answered as a matter of opinion, which is, in a case of this sort, equivalent to no answer at all.

With respect to the supposed case of the debt augmenting, the observations that apply to that have been made already; they now only remain to be made with respect to the debt being paid off.

It has been observed already, in the chapter on Taxation, that the case of taxes being taken off to a great amount would be a new one of sudden and hurtful operation. Wages of labour would be diminished, as well as the burthens on those who live on settled income; it would therefore render people of fixed income more affluent, without giving ease to those who want it; in short, as the augmentation of taxes falls most on people with fixed incomes, so the advantages of this would principally be felt by them; and, as the baneful operation carries a sort of counteracting antidote with it, so, likewise, this beneficial operation would be attended with some drawback and inconveniency =sic=.



The diminution of taxes, though the ultimate is not, however, the immediate consequence of the operation of the sinking fund, the efficacy of which depends on the taxes being kept up to their full extent for a considerable time. =sic= The first effect of the fund is, that a large sum, annually expended, as revenue drawn from the subject, is reimbursed to the stockholders, and becomes capital.

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This would immediately raise the funds, and thereby would counteract the sinking fund itself in a very material degree. Money would become abundant for all the purposes of trade, and it would be difficult

— {193} A sort of ridicule has been thrown on the operation of compound interest, because its effects are so amazing as not to be capable of being realized; but, on this subject, two things are to be said,—first of all, it has never been to the operation during the first hundred years that either incredulity or ridicule have applied, and the sinking fund was never meant to continue to operate so long. Secondly, though there are many drawbacks on the employment of large sums laid out at interest, that diminish, and would at last destroy, the result of the calculation in accumulating; it is not so in paying off debt, where the effect calculated is produced with the greatest certainty. --

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to find employment for it; and, if the progress continued, part of it would most undoubtedly be sent to other countries, and so be the means of impoverishing this.

If, then, we could suppose fifty years of peace, and that the national debt could be paid off, (as it might be in that time,) the situation of productive labourers would be worse; of unproductive, better; and, finally, capital would leave the country, which would be deprived of that transferable stock, the beneficial effects of which have been mentioned.

The necessity that creates industry would be diminished, so that nothing could tend more effectually to bring on the decline of the nation than if all the debt were to be paid off; an operation which, though possible in calculation, never certainly would take place; the evils attending it would be so manifest, so clear, and so palpably felt before that was accomplished.

To let the national debt continue to increase is, then, certain ruin, at some period unknown, but perhaps not very distant; to pay it off would be equally dangerous: what then are we to do?

We must try to raise the resources necessary for war within the year, by which means we may avoid augmenting the debt. That is not, however, to be done while the present heavy interest remains, and that cannot be got rid of, according to any method yet publicly known, without bankruptcy, breaking faith with creditors, or paying off the debt; a resource in itself dangerous, and one that, after all, would bring relief at a very distant day.

Since the debt has been contracted, let it be kept up; but let a mode be taken of reducing the interest, without breaking faith with the creditors of the state, so that we may never be obliged to borrow any more.

At present, the sum that goes annually for interest, and for the sinking fund, (that is for paying off capital,) amounts to twenty-four millions, and the expenses of a year of war do not exceed that sum. Twelve millions of this may be found by war-taxes, and twelve millions diminution of the interest would just leave a residue sufficient to pay for a constant state of war; and, if peace came, the war-taxes would be taken off. The enemies of England would then not be able to make notches [end of page #242] in a stick, and say, "When we come to such a notch England will be ruined."

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If this could be done it would be a solid and permanent system of revenue, arising out of an unsolid and transitory one.

Any thing like want of faith with the creditors would, however, not only be disgraceful and dishonourable, but would reduce such numbers to beggary, and ruin credit so completely, that the nation would be lost for ever; and, certainly, if we are to be ruined, there is no balancing between ruin with honour and ruin with disgrace.

There is a mode that would be fair and practicable, and the present is the most favourable moment for executing it; indeed, it is perhaps the only one when it has been practicable or would be just. By practicability and justice, two words very well understood, we mean, in this instance, that it is a moment when those who would have to pay the difference would be willing to do it, would see their interest in doing it, and would feel that they ought to do it.

We mean not to propose any of those imaginary means, by which debts will be paid off without burthens laid on. We have no talent for schemes, where all is produced from nothing, and no faith in their practicability.

The late and present wars, which have occasioned one-half of the debt, and for which our exertions are to be continued, were undertaken for the preservation of property; for, though the French system is so completely bad that even the beggars in England would be losers by adopting it, yet, it will be allowed, that the evil to people of property would be much greater than to those who have no property. Let us look to Flanders, Holland, and other countries, and say no if we can.

It was on this idea that an income-tax, afterwards termed a property-tax, was laid on, by which the rich are made to pay, and the poor are exempted. The justice and expediency of this was universally admitted: there might be some difference of opinion as to modes and rates, but there was none as to the general principle.

We would, then, propose to RAISE LOANS, at a low rate of interest to reimburse the present creditors, ON THE SAME PRINCIPLE ON WHICH THE PROPERTY-TAX EXISTS, in the following manner:

There are, by Mr. Pitt's calculation, (and his may be taken [end of page #243] in order to prevent caviling) 2,400,000,000 L. of capital in the kingdom. Let us then create a two and a half per cent. stock, into which every person possessed of property should be *compelled* to purchase at par, in proportion to their capital, so as to redeem fifty millions every year, thereby creating fifty millions of new debt at two and a half per cent. and reimbursing an equal sum bearing an interest of five per cent.

A loan of two per cent. per annum, on each man's capital would do this, and would never be an object for the safety of the whole, particularly as it would only last for ten

years. As he would have interest at two and a half per cent. he would, in reality, only lose half, that is, one per cent. a year during twelve years; so that a man, with 10,000 L. would only have given 100 L. a year for twelve years.

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At the end of ten years, the interest of the national debt would be reduced to one-half its present amount, which, together with the war-taxes, would be sufficient to prevent the necessity of creating more debt. This, however, is not all, a more prompt effect and advantage may be expected. It is more than probable, that the moment our enemy found that the nation, could, without any great exertion, put its finances on a permanent footing, the present contest would finish. It is now only continued, in hopes of ruining our finances, and it is on the accumulation of the debt that the expectation of that is alone founded.

We observed, in the beginning of this Chapter, that most people are biased by hope or fear, in examining a question of great importance; and that, therefore, they do not state it quite fairly, without being sensible of their error. In the case of the gloomy calculators of this country, fear and anxiety operated in causing a misstatement; but, with regard to our enemies, hope is the cause of their magnifying the effect of our national debt, and, it must be allowed, that hope had seldom ever a more easy business to perform. The general conclusion is certain, and all the question that remains, is with respect to time.

The only mode of putting an end to this hope of our enemy, and to the war, at once, will be by shewing that enemy *that it is quite out of his power to augment our debt*, but until =sic= a method shall be adopted by [end of page #244] us, that is PRACTICABLE AND EASILY UNDERSTOOD, that will not be believed by our enemy.

The rapidity of the operation of a sinking fund is easily calculated, but not so easily credited, particularly by people not inclined to do so, and who would not themselves have the constancy and self-denial to leave it time to operate. Besides, by this operation, we shall not get free of debt till the taxes are raised far above their present amount. Our enemies may be pardoned for believing it impracticable, particularly as many of our friends are of the same opinion.

France, which has always been the rival of this country, and hates it now more than ever, (envy being now an ingredient of its hatred,) knows well that it is fallen and degraded, that it has less wealth and happiness than England; but then it considers, that, however bad its finances may be, they are getting no worse; that to continue the war for twenty years will bring no more ruin on the nation, while half the term would probably ruin us. Till we show the fallacy of this calculation, we cannot expect a durable peace. Our ruin is become an object, not only of ambition, but of necessity, as it were, to France; and nothing but despair of being able to accomplish their object will make them abandon the attempt.

We must be permitted here to ask a few questions:

Is not the time favourable for the plan here proposed?

Would it not be fair in its operation?

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Would it not bring relief effectually and speedily?

Would it not reduce our burthens, without breaking faith with the creditors of the state?

Would it not reduce the interest, without setting too much capital afloat, that might leave the country?

Could our enemies then calculate on the national debt destroying England?

The affairs of nations, it has been observed, become so complicated, and the details so multiplied, that those who have the management of them are scarcely equal to the business of the day; and they have no leisure to inquire into the best modes of keeping off evil when it is yet distant; of this we have had ample experience.

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Allowing all the credit possible to the sinking fund, (and a great deal is due,) still during war its operation is a sort of paradox; it does not obtain relief: it is liable to be questioned; but we are come to a point, where the stability of our finances ought to be put out of doubt, and beyond all question. The mode of settling our affairs ought not only to be such as in the end may succeed, but its efficacy and practicability ought to be such as our enemies can understand and give credit to. Without this, we shall have no end to the contest.

With respect to what our enemies will give credit to, a good deal depends on their own natural disposition. A fickle and arbitrary people, who are continually breaking their faith, can have little belief in the constancy of a sinking fund, but they will be perfectly well inclined to believe, that men of property may be compelled, and will even be glad to pay one per cent. a year, for ten years, to ensure the safety of that property. Supposing then that the sinking fund were the better plan of the two in reality, it would not be so in the present circumstances, because it would not obtain credit, and the other will.

As to the rest, deprive the French of their hopes of ruining our finances, and they will make peace on reasonable terms, whenever we please; their object for continuing the war will then be at an end; and, if they do continue it, we can go on as long as they can, without any addition to our burthens.

Whatever the cause of a war may be, the hope of success is the only possible motive for persisting in it. The French have been led into two errors; first, by the comparison of this country to Carthage, and of their own to Rome, (an absurd comparison that does not hold,) and, in the second place, by looking on our ruin, from the increase of our debt, as certain. We ought to undeceive them, and then they will have less inclination to persist in war. No pains has hitherto been taken to set them right; nor, indeed, with

respect to the national debt, can it ever be done by the present method, till they see the effect; for though the progress of a sinking fund in peace is easily understood, in time of war there is much appearance of deception; it looks like slight =sic= of hand more than a real and solid transaction.

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CHAP. V.

Of Taxes for the Maintenance of the Poor.—Their enormous Increase.—The Cause.—Comparison between those of England and Scotland.—Simple, easy, and humane Mode of reducing them.

Amongst the interior causes that threaten England with decline, none is more alarming than the increasing expenses of the poor; expenses evidently rising in a proportion beyond our prosperity, and totally without example, either in the history of past times, or in that of any modern nation.

The poor of England cost more to maintain than the free revenue of the country amounted to thirty years ago, and to nearly three times the amount of the whole revenues of the nation, at the time of the revolution.

The proportion between the healthy and the sick cannot have changed so much as to account for this augmentation; we must, therefore, seek for the cause elsewhere.

It probably arises from several causes; the increasing luxury, which leaves more persons in indigence when they come to an advanced age, owing to their being unwilling or unable to undergo the hardships to which nature subjects those who have been born to labour, and outlive their vigour; being thereby deprived of those indulgences which, in better days, they have experienced. In England, menial servants are accustomed to consume more than people of moderate fortune do in other countries, and they are the race of people most likely to be left to penury in their old age. In countries where there are, indeed, greater trains of menial attendants than in England, they, in general, belong to the great, who make some provision for them, or who, keeping them from ostentation, can retain them to a more advanced age; and, at all events, as they live a less luxurious life, they can make a better stand against that penury which it is their hard destiny to encounter. [end of page #247]

In a commercial country there is less attachment between master and servant, than in any other; and the instances of provision for them are very rare.

In proportion as a nation gets wealthy, the human race shares the same fate with other animals employed in labour; they are worked hard, and well fed while they are able to work, but their services are not regarded when they can do but little. {194}

Want of economy in the management of the funds destined for the purpose of their maintenance is another cause of increase in the expense of the poor. In a nation where every individual is fully occupied with his affairs, and has little time to attend to any thing else, those who manage the affairs of the poor find that few are inclined to look close



into matters, and fewer still have the means of doing it if they would; so that abuses increase, as is always the case when there is no counteracting check to keep them within bounds.

Another cause, no doubt, is that, as the number of unproductive labourers increase, greater numbers of children are left in want.

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To all those causes we must add the increase of towns, and the decrease of hamlets and villages. Towns are the places where indigence has the greatest consolation, and where the relief which is held out is attended with the least degree of humiliation and reproach.

When we compare the cases of England and Scotland, the causes cannot be doubted; for, there, servants live harder, the working class do not labour so hard, and are not so soon worn out, neither have the towns increased so much, at the expense of the hamlets and villages.

The greatest of all the causes of the increase of poor, however, arises from taxation and rent. It has been observed, in the chapter on Taxation, that, for a certain length, taxes and rent are productive of industry, and that, at last, they finish by crushing it entirely.

— {194} If it were the custom to keep horses that were worn out till they died a natural death, the maintenance of them would cost more in England than in any other country; for their vigour is exhausted before the term of old age arrives. The calculation is in this country, to pay well, and be well served. -=-

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The manner that this happens, is, that long before a country is as highly taxed as the majority of its inhabitants will bear, those who are the least able to pay are crushed, and reduced to absolute poverty.

There are two causes which may render a person unable to support the burthen of taxation: the one is, having a great family; the other is, being able to gain but little from weakness, or some other cause; and, where there are two causes that tend to produce the same effect, though they operate separately, they must, of course, sometimes act in conjunction.

The weakest part of society gives way first, in every country; and, on account of the arbitrary and ignorant, though lavish method of relieving that portion of society, in England, the evil is increased to more than double.

There is no relief at home in their own houses, no help, no aid, for the indigent, which might produce so admirable an effect, by counteracting the ruin brought on by heavy taxes and high prices; no, the family must support itself, or go wholesale to the workhouse. This is one of those clumsy rude modes of proceeding that a wealthy people, not overburthened with knowledge, naturally takes to overcome a difficulty, but without care or tenderness for the feelings of those relieved, or that regard for public interest, which ought to go hand in hand. For this it would be well to search a remedy.

A father and mother, and six children, will cost, at least, fifty pounds a year in a workhouse; but, perhaps, the aid of twelve or fifteen pounds would keep them from going there, and by that means save the greatest part of the money, while the country, which loses their industry, would be doubly a gainer.

There is a sort of rough, vulgar, and unfeeling character, prevalent amongst the parish-officers, that is a disgrace to the country and to the character of Englishmen. It is highly prejudicial to the nation; and, if there were no moral evil attending it, if the feelings of the poor were no object, =sic= the rich ought to attend to it for self-interest. If they will not, the government of the country is interested, both in honour and in interest, to do so.

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Exemption from taxes will do little or nothing, the lower orders [end of page #249] are nearly all exempt, but that general dearness, that is the consequence of a general weight of taxes, is severely felt by them, and from that they cannot be exempted. They must get relief by assistance, and that assistance ought to be given in a manner that will not throw them altogether a burthen on the public. {195}

It is impossible to tax the people of a nation so highly, as they can all bear, because, before some will feel, others will be crushed; before the bachelor feels the tax, the father of a large family is obliged to starve his innocent offspring. Before he who has only two children feels the hard pressure, the family of twelve will be reduced to want; and so in proportion. The mode, then, to raise the most money possible, would be to tax the whole nearly as high as the bachelor can bear, and then to give a drawback in favour of the man with the children, they would then be on a perfect equality as to taxation, and the highest sum possible might be raised without hurting any one portion of the people more than another.

If the links of a chain are not all equally strong, before any strain is felt by the strong links the weak ones give way, and the chain is broken. The case is the same with the members of a community. Now, when you lay on taxes, the general tendency is to raise the price of food and labour; most labourers receive the advantage of the price of labour, but many pay unequally for the rise of food.

A tax on the wealthy, it will be said, is the thing proposed, but no, that would do nothing, it must be a premium or drawback to men with families who are poor, not merely to counteract the effect of any one tax, but the total effect of taxation with respect to maintaining their children. Wide, indeed, is the difference between a tax on those who are well able to pay, and a premium or drawback in favour of those who are not.

The manner of providing for the poor in England leads to a degree

— {195} Probably, the reason that so small a sum serves the purpose in Scotland is, that relief is administered to the families, at their own houses, by the minister and elders of the parish. It is a rare instance of an administration, without emoluments and without controul. The funds are distributed with clean hands, in all cases, and impartially in most. --

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of wastefulness and improvidence unknown in any other country. Improvidence ought as much as possible to be discouraged; for, with those who labour hard and are indigent, the desire to gratify some pressing want, or present appetite, is continually uppermost. This may be termed the war between the belly and the back, in which the former is generally the conqueror. It would be a small evil if this victory were decided seldom, as in other countries, but in the great towns of England there is as it were a

continual state of hostility. In London, the battle is fought, on an average, at least, once a week; and idleness, and the profits of those sort of petty usurers, called pawnbrokers, are greatly promoted by it.

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Some part of this evil cannot, perhaps, be remedied, but there are certain articles that ought not to be taken in pledge, such as the clothes of young children and working tools. {196}

There is no doubt but, that, in a populous inhospitable trading town, where there is no means of obtaining aid, from friendship, where the want is sometimes extreme, the resource of pledging is a necessary one. This is to be admitted in the degree, but by no means without limitation; for the facility creates the want, (even when it is a real want) for it brings on improvidence and carelessness. The lower classes come to consider their apparel as money, only that it requires changing before it is quite current. {197}

If this matter were well looked into, together with the other causes from which mendicity proceeds, which increases so rapidly, we should

— {196} In Scripture it is forbidden to pledge the upper or the nether mill-stone. This is a proof, of very great antiquity, and indisputable authority, of the care taken to prevent that sort of improvidence that hurts the general interest of a people. It should be imitated in this country with regard, to all portable implements of labour, such as mill-stones were in those early times.

{197} In Scotland, twenty years ago, there were not so many pawnbrokers as there are in Brentford, or any little village round London. In Paris, as debauched a town as London, and where charity was as little to be expected, there was only one lending company, the profits of which, after dividing six per cent., went to the Foundling Hospital. It was, as in London, a resource in cases of necessity, but there was too much trouble to run it on every trifling occasion, as is done in London, and, indeed, in most towns in England. --

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soon perceive a diminution of the poors' rates, and the wealthiest country of Europe would not exhibit the greatest and most multiplied scenes of misery and distress.

The numbers of children left in indigence, by their parents, would be comparatively lower, and there would not be that waste in the administration of the funds on which they are supported.

There is, probably, no means of greatly diminishing the number of helpless poor, but by an encouragement to lay up in the hour of health an abundance to supply the wants of feebleness and age, but this might go a great way to diminishing the evil. All persons who have places under government, of whatever nature, ought to be compelled to subscribe to such institutions; this would be doing the individuals, as well as the community, a real service, and would go a great way to the counteracting of the evil.

{198} Preventatives are first to be applied, and after those have operated as far as may be, remedies.

The poor, &c. to whose maintenance 5,500,000 L. a year goes, (a sum greater than the revenues of any second rate monarchy in Europe,) may be divided into three classes:

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First, Those who by proper means might be prevented from wanting aid.

Second, Those who, for various reasons, cannot get a living in the regular way, but might, with a little aid, either maintain themselves, or nearly so; and,

Third, Those who, from inability, extreme age, tender youth, or bodily disease, are unable to do any thing, and must be supported at the public expense. Nobody will dispute that there are of all those descriptions maintained at present =sic=; and, therefore, all that can create a difference of opinion is about the proportions between the three.

It is probable that one-half, at least, could maintain, or nearly

— {198} The widows scheme, as it is called in Scotland, for the aid of the widows and children of clergymen, is a most excellent institution; it has been attended with the best effects, both on individual happiness and national prosperity so far as it goes. The plan is such as might, with very little variation, be applied to all the officers of the revenue, clerks in office, &c. &c. --

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maintain, themselves; one-quarter might be prevented from ever requiring any aid at all; and the other quarter would be assisted as at present.

This would reduce the expenses to less than one-third, and, probably, to one-quarter of what they are now; that is, of 5,500,000 L. there would be a saving of 3,500,000 L. but that is not all, for the national industry would be augmented by 2,000,000 L. and more; that is to say, by the industry of the half that maintained themselves, so that the nation would gain partly in money saved, and partly in money got, 5,500,000 L.

According to the true spirit of the English nation, in which there is a great fund of generosity and goodness at the bottom, it may perhaps be said, that the poor are not able to labour at all, and, that the plan would not answer. This is but a rough manner of answering a proposal, which neither is in reality, nor is meant to be, void of humanity. There were, by last years =sic= accounts, nearly 900,000 persons of one sort and another maintained or relieved, which does not make above six pounds a year for each person, now, where is there a person that can work at all, that cannot earn above four-pence a day in England? {199}

The plan for remedying this abuse ought to be very simple, for it will be administered by such ignorant and rough directors, that, if it is not simple, it must fail entirely.

— {199} It would be foreign to the plan of this Inquiry to enter into the details of the poor persons, and shew the absurdity of the management; but, it is very evident, from

those that are printed, that they get no work to do, the quantity of materials delivered to them to work upon will not admit of earning money to maintain themselves.

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The following is a specimen of the attention given to this subject, and the means taken to enable the poor to pay for their maintenance, by their labour. In Middlesex, where the expense amounted, in 1803, to 123,700 L. or about 340 L. a day, the sum expended to buy materials amounted to no more than 4L.1s.11d. !!! It is impossible to comprehend how this capital stock could be distributed amongst above ten thousand labourers. It is not very easy to conceive the impertinence of those who presented this item, as a statement to the House of Commons, which would have done well to have committed to the custody of the sergeant-at-mace, the persons who so grossly insulted it. One thing, however, is very easily understood and collected from all this. The business altogether is conducted with ignorance, and executed carelessly and negligently, and that to an extreme and shameful degree. ==-

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To have a good surgeon or physician is essential; and those who would not work, and who were able, should have the same allowance that a prisoner has in a jail; but those who would work should be paid a fair price, and allowed to lay out the money, to hoard it, or do as they please, except drinking to excess. [{200}]

Though many for want of vigour are refused employment in a workshop, some for want of character, and others for various reasons, become burthensome, yet there are not a few, who, from mere laziness, throw themselves upon the parish, where they live a careless life, free from hunger, cold, and labour. When the mind is once reconciled to this situation, the temptation is considerable, and there are many of those poor people, who will boast that they have themselves been overseers, and paid their share to the expenses.

Whatever evil is found to have a tendency to increase with the wealth of a nation ought, most carefully, to be kept under; and this is one not of the least formidable, and, of all others, most evidently arising from bad management and want of attention.

It would be necessary to have all sorts of employment, that the persons in such places can, with advantage, be occupied in doing, and a small allowance should be made to defray general expenses; amongst which, ought to be that of surveyors of districts, who should, like those employed by the excise-office, inspect into the state of the different poor-houses, and the whole should be reported, in a proper and regular manner, to the government of the country, from time to time.

Those little paltry parish democracies that tax one part of the people, and maltreat the other, ought to be under some proper con-

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— {200} [Transcriber's note: assumed location—footnote not assigned a place in the text.] The system, in England, of only employing people in the vigour of life is a source of much mischief, and is an increasing evil, which government, the East India company, and all the public bodies, are encouraging. Men are treated in this instance exactly like horses. They are worked hard and well rewarded in their vigour; but, in so wealthy a county =sic= as this, those occupied in commerce, and men in power, will not be troubled with any but such as can do their business with little trouble to the master. They do not consider what mischief they are preparing for their country. Shenstone, the poet, seems to have thought of this when he says, in a case of woe:

“But power and wealth's unvarying cheek was dry.” --

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troul; and the happiness and prosperity of England should not be left at their mercy.

In a country where every thing is done with such admirable accuracy in the revenue-department, as England, it would be useless to attempt pointing out the manner of executing the plan; it is sufficient to shew its practicability and the necessity of attending to it.

If, in the first instance, the advantage would be such as is here mentioned, it would, in a few years, be much greater, particularly in so far as fewer families would be left in a state of indigence; for, it is clear, that such families are a continual encumbrance on the rising generation, and tend to the diminution of the general mass of useful citizens.

If it should so happen, that taxes augment, or that trade falls off, (both of which may very likely happen,) then the interference of government may become a matter of absolute necessity; but then, perhaps, it may be too late. It would be much better if government would interfere, before the evil is actually come to the highest pitch. The parishes might, perhaps, look with jealousy on an interference of this sort, as being an infringement on their rights; for Englishmen are sometimes very tenacious of privileges that are highly pernicious to themselves. This difficulty, (for it probably would be one,) might be got over, by previously establishing inspectors in the different bishop's sees, who should be obliged to render an account to the bishop, to be communicated to government, by which means, the evil would either be removed, or its existence ascertained, so as to answer the complaints that might be made, and thereby prevent all discontent on the subject.

Without being able to say what might absolutely be the best remedy, it is, at least, fair to ask the question, whether it is fit that the administration of 5,500,000 L. a year should be intrusted to the hands of ignorant men? It may likewise be asked, if the feelings of the necessitous ranks of society (as keen in many instances as those of their betters,) should be wounded by men, who have not sufficient knowledge of any sort to act with

the humanity necessary. The candidates for popular favour, amongst the lower housekeepers, are generally flattering, fauning =sic=, cringing men, and such are almost without exception, cunning, ignorant, and overbearing, wherever they have the least [end of page #255] authority over others. Such, in general, are the parish-officers, to whose care this important affair is committed.

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Though this is an institution almost on the purely democratic principle of equal representation, it is a very bad specimen of that mode of government. The shameful lawsuits between parishes, about paupers, the disgraceful and barbarous treatment of women, who have been betrayed and abandoned, admit of no excuse. They are not productive even of gain or economy. Amongst some tribes of savage Indians, the aged and helpless are put to death, that they may not remain a burthen on those who are able and in health; and it is equally true, that, in England, the young innocents, who have not parents to protect them, are considered as a burthen; and, if they are not absolutely sent out of the world, the means necessary to preserve them in it are very inadequate to the purpose. If criminality could be engraved on a graduated scale, their deaths ought in general to be written down at some intermediate point between accidental homicide and wilful murder. The persecution of this unfortunate race may be said to commence before they are born; and, though the strength of a nation depends much on its population, less care is taken to encourage it, than to produce mushrooms, or to preserve hares and partridges.

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CHAP. VI.

Causes of Decline, peculiar to England.

In addition to the causes of decline which Britain, as a wealthy country, has, in common with most other nations, it has some peculiar to itself, (or of which the degree at least is peculiar to it).

The national debt, the high rate of taxation, the prodigious expense of the poor, and the nature of the government, are peculiar to this country. There are other circumstances in its favour, of which we shall speak in the next chapter; but, in this, we shall review those that are against it, and of an unfavourable nature and operation.

The high rate of taxation, for the very reason that it is the highest ever known, inspires our enemies with hopes of our downfall, and makes them persevere in continuing to put us to expense.

The unprecedented commerce we enjoy, of which every other nation would wish to have a share, (and of which each, most mistakenly, thinks it would have a share, if Britain was undone,) is a cause of attracting envy and enmity, and repelling friendship. Our colonies in the West, and our possessions in the East, act like the conductors that draw the electric fluid to a building, but they do not, like those conductors, serve to protect it from violence. We have seen, that the advantage arising from them is more than doubtful, that they enrich individuals and impoverish the state; but all this would be nothing new, were it not for the vast scale on which those evils exist.

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The poor's rate, which is in itself completely unexampled, though a common thing to all nations, is so exorbitant in England, that it may very properly be ranked amongst the dangers peculiar to this country. Who would believe, that Frederick the Great of Prussia carried on his brilliant and successful wars against the most formidable enemies, expended more than one-eighth of his revenues annually on the encouragement of industry, and left his treasury well stored, yet all this with an income, less by one-fourth than the sums that go to support [end of page #257] the poor in England, notwithstanding all the miserable manoeuvres that are practiced =sic= to avoid giving them assistance?

The form of government in England, though best for the liberty of the subject, and for the security of persons and property, is deficient in the means of repressing those infringements which particular bodies of people make upon the community at large. The representative system, when well understood, divides itself into parties, having different interests. There are the commercial, the landed, the East India, the West India, and the law, all of which have great parliamentary influence, and can be formidable to any minister; they therefore have a means of defending their interests, and they are concerned so deeply as to take a very active part whenever any questions are agitated relative to them.

The landed interest and the law are, indeed, the only ones that have any great party in the House of Peers; but then the House of Peers seldom interferes in matters that concern the interests of the others. The Lords seem not to think it their province; and, in general, more through diffidence than negligence, they avoid meddling, though, to do that honourable house justice, to it we owe much. Many bills, of a dangerous tendency, have been thrown out by it, after they had passed the other house; and it has been generally done with a wisdom, magnanimity, and moderation, which is only to be accounted for by a true love of the country and an upright intention. {201}

— {201} It is wonderful to what a length good intention, (zeal apart,) will go in leading men right, even when they have not paid very particular attention to a subject. There is a feeling of what is wise, as well as of what is right, that partakes a little of instinct, perhaps, but is more unerring than far fetched theory on many occasions. This was seen in a most exemplary manner, at the time that the principles of the French revolution were most approved of here. Those principles were plausible, though flimsy, and founded on sophisms, and a species of reasoning, that plain unlettered men could not answer, and men who did give themselves the pains to reason might have answered; yet, three times in four, it was the man who could not answer it, who, guided by upright intentions, rejected it as bad, without being able to tell why. The most acute were, in this case, the most deceived; for it must now be allowed, that all approbation of the theories, relative to the rights of man, and the manner of asserting them were wrong. Many of those who fell into the error had, no doubt, unblameable intentions, but they did not consult common sense. ==-

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In every assembly, a small number, who completely understand their own interest, can do a great deal, if they will act together; but, this is not all, they can use arguments with a minister that pave the way for obtaining the ends they have in view, while the general interests of the country alarm no one but upon great occasions.

Under arbitrary monarchs, all bodies with separate interests, are kept in due order, they have no means of defending themselves but by remonstrance, which, against power, is but a very inadequate protection.

There is nothing forced or chimerical in this statement of the case, and the consequence is, that no country ever saw any bodies rise to such a height, except the clergy in Roman Catholic countries, and the barons during the feudal system, when they had arms in their hands; who, if they could not absolutely resist their sovereign, were at least able to refuse him aid, and could annoy him greatly. But those examples will bear no comparison with the separate interests in England at this time. The barons have long lost their power, and the Roman Catholic clergy have lost the greatest part of their power and revenue also. If they had not, wealthy and powerful kingdoms would not have existed.

Under a free government, where people think that an opposition to a minister in parliament is a most excellent thing, the energies of the nation, as to war, are greatly lessened. This must, in its connections with other nations, produce very hurtful effects; but, where the evil is without a remedy, there is no advantage in dwelling upon it; and it does not appear that there is any possibility of separating from a free government, some sort of an opposing power, that must hamper the executive, and lessen the energies of the nation.

Under pure monarchies, kings can reward merit; they can encourage talents, and act according to circumstances. In England, the king, or his ministers, have no fund from which they can do this. An application to parliament is expensive and troublesome; and, in many cases, where the object would be fair, it would be unattainable. But this is not all, for when, by act of parliament, any thing of the sort is [end of page #259] once done, it is left without proper controul, and the expense is generally double what it ought to be.

On the whole, there is too little of discretionary =sic= power in a representative government; good cannot be done but by rules, which, in many cases, it is impossible to comply with. This is a disadvantage which we labour under, and is a sort of drawback on our excellent form of government; but this is not like the opposition in the senate, it may be got over, and merits attention.

Such appear to be the disadvantages to which Britain is peculiarly liable, either in toto, or in the degree; but, on the other hand, she has many circumstances in her favour, if



they are properly taken hold of; and, indeed, some, of which the effect will be favourable, whether any particular attention is paid to them or not. To those we shall advert with peculiar pleasure, and hope that they will not be neglected, but that they may afford a means of continuing our career of prosperity on the increasing scale, or that, at least, they may prevent us from sharing the fate of those nations that have gone before.

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CHAP. VII.

Circumstances peculiar to England, and favourable to it.

It has been observed, that, in northern nations, where luxury is not attended with such a degree of sloth and effeminacy as in warm climates, the habits of industry can never so completely leave a country. The feelings of cold and a keen appetite are enemies to sloth and laziness; indeed they are totally incompatible with those habits and that degradation of character, that are to be found in southern climates. This advantage Britain shares with other nations of the north; but she has some peculiar to herself.

Situated in an island, the people have a character peculiar to themselves, that prevents foreigners and foreign influence from producing those baneful effects that are so evident in many nations, where they come and depart with more facility, and where a greater similarity in manners and in character enable them to act a conspicuous and a very dangerous part, in the cases of misunderstanding and party dispute.

In all the wars, bloody and long-contested as they were, between the houses of York and Lancaster, foreign influence never produced any effect such as that of Spain did in France, previous to the accession of Henry IV. or as the influence of France and Spain have produced in Italy, or that of France on Spain itself, or those of Russia and Prussia in Poland, with numerous other examples on the continent.

We know of no ideal boundaries in this country. In this country we are all one people, and can distinguish ourselves from any other; indeed, the national character is rather too averse to mixing with people from the continent; but this, that seems now a fault, may some day be considered as a very useful virtue.

Even in the times when an unfortunate jealousy and mistaken interest kept England and Scotland at variance, and when the latter kingdom was in the habit of adopting the politics of France, and [end of page #261] embracing its interests, there seems to have been some repelling principle that kept the little nation out of the gripe of the great one.

The French never had any preponderating power there, and, indeed, in latter times so little, as not to be able to defend Queen Mary or the Romish religion against the reformers; to do both of which there was no want of inclination. It appears, then, very clearly, that though, on the best terms of friendship, the Scotch had at the bottom that British mistrust of foreigners, that, ever since it was civilized, has freed the island from foreign influence.

The form of government, the security of property, and the free scope that is given to exertion in every line of business, will continue to enable this country to hold itself high,

even if some of its present sources of wealth should be dried up; and, whatever may be the feelings of the representatives of the people upon ordinary occasions, the moment that any real danger occurs, they will, we are certain, act like men, determined to stand by their country.

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How feeble was the former French government when assailed with difficulty? It was at once as if struck motionless, or, the little animation that was left was just sufficient to enable it to go from one blunder to another. How different has England been on every emergency? In place of the arm of government seeming to slacken in the day of danger, it has risen superior to it. We have never seen the same scenes happen here, that have taken place in Poland, Sweden, and so many other places. In the three attempts to invasion, {202} (Monmouth's and the two other rebellions,) where foreign influence was used, the event was the most fatal possible to those who made them; they were contemptible in the extreme; and, if it is considered in whose favour they were, it is probable the support from a foreign power rather did injury to the cause.

— {202} Here we must not confound the case of the Stuarts with that of the King of France. In England, it was the government that was divided, the legislative being against the executive; *one* part of the government was feeble, but the other was not, and therefore we cannot say that the government was feeble. In France, the king and ministers governed alone, they were the whole government, and therefore as they were feeble, the government may be taxed with weakness. --

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The form of government has this great advantage in it, that, as abilities are the way to preferment, the higher classes (at least) have a better education than the same rank of persons in any other nation, so far as regards the interest of the public, and the nature of the connection between the different orders of society; ignorance of which, is the surest way to be destroyed.

In all new and rising states the higher orders, even under despotic governments, and where all the distinctions of ranks are completely established, have a proper regard for the importance and welfare of the lower orders of people. As they increase in wealth and have lost sight of its origin, which is industry, they change their mode of thinking; and, by degrees, the lower classes are considered as only made for the convenience of the rich. The degradation into which the lower orders themselves fall, by vice and indolence, widens the difference and increases the contempt in which they are held. This is one of the invariable marks of the decline of nations; but the nature of the English government prevents that, by keeping up a connection and mutual dependence amongst the poor and the rich, which is not found either under absolute monarchies or in republics. In republics, the people become factious and idle, when they become any way wealthy. In this country, besides the insular situation, circumstances in general are such as to prevent the lower classes from falling into that sort of idleness, apathy, and contempt, that they do in other countries, even supposing these burthens were done away, that at present necessitate exertion.

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To those causes let another still be added, the religious worship of the country, which, without any dispute or question, is greatly in its favour.

To speak nothing of the religious opinions or modes of worship in ancient times, there are three at present that merit attention and admit of comparison.

The Christian religion is distinguished for raising men in character, and the Mahomedan for sinking them low. Whenever the Mahomedan faith has extended, the people are degraded in their manners, and the governments despotic. The disposition of a Mahomedan king [end of page #263] or emperor is more different in its nature, from that of a Christian sovereign, than the form of a hat is from that of a turban.

Under the most despotic Christian sovereigns, matters are governed by law, there are no regular murders committed by the hand of power, without the intervention of justice; and if plenitude of power admits of the greatest excesses in the sovereign, in some Christian countries, the opinion of his fellow men, the fear of his God, or some sentiment or principle in his own breast, restrains him in the exercise of it.

It is not so with Mahomedan princes: with them, nothing is sacred that they hate, nothing shameful that they do. Whatever their conscience may be, whatever may be the nature of their moral rules, rapine and murder are certainly not forbidden by them, or the law is not obeyed. In proportion to the despotism and ferocity of the sovereign, is the slavishness of the people, their brutality, and vice, in all Mahomedan countries; their character and its great inferiority is so well known, that it is impossible for any person to be ignorant of it.

When the Mahomedan governments possess power, they are proud and overbearing; the people luxurious, and given to every refinement in vice. When they sink, that pride becomes ferocity, and the luxury degenerates into brutality and sloth; but neither in the one nor in the other case have they the proper value for science, for literature, for liberty, or for any of the acquirements that either make a man estimable or useful. They neither excel in arts, nor in science; physically =sic=, they are inferior in utility, and their minds are less instructed. They are not equal to Christians either in war or in peace, nor to be compared to them for any one good quality.

The greatest and the best portion of the old world is, however, in their hands; but, in point of wealth or power, they are of little importance, and every day they are sinking lower still.

Amongst those who profess Christianity it has been remarked, by all who have travelled, and who have had an opportunity of observing it, that agriculture, commerce, and manufactures, flourish most in Protestant countries. Even where there are different sects of the Christian religion in the same country, arts, manufactures, and commerce, appear to have flourished most amongst the Protestants. The [end of page #264]

cruelties of the Duke of Alva, and the absurd bigotry of Louis XIV. drove the most industrious inhabitants from the Netherlands, and from France, merely because they happened to be Protestants, which is a proof that there is a connection between that branch of the Christian religion and industry. The Protestants were the most industrious.

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The Protestants appear also to be the most attentive to preserving a good form of government, and to set a greater value upon liberty than people of any other religion. In this, England has an advantage that is inappreciable. {203}

The reformation in religion, and the establishment of manufactures in England, date from nearly the same period; it was about the same time, also, that the spirit of liberty began to break out first in Scotland, and then in England, which terminated in the revolution. There are, therefore, many reasons, from experience, for believing that the Protestant religion is particularly favourable to industry and freedom. There are other reasons, likewise, that arise from a consideration of the subject, that would lead one to the same conclusion, even if there were no experience of the fact.

Whatever frees the human mind from useless prejudice, and leads it to pure morality, gives dignity to man, and increases his power of becoming a good and useful member of society.

The Christian religion not only contains the most pure moral code, but the best, most useful, and simple rules for conduct in life are

— {203} The great influence, founded on attachment to her person, and the feeling of the long happiness they had enjoyed, under Queen Elizabeth: her great authority, supported by esteem, and confirmed by long habit, restrained the spirit of freedom which so soon after tormented her successors. James had had full experience of that spirit before he left Scotland; and, when he mounted the English throne, was known, frequently, to exclaim against presbytry, as the enemy of monarchy. He, as was very natural, thought that the difference of religion caused the superior love of freedom in Scotland, for he was not sensible of the different effects produced by the calm, steady, and dignified deportment of Elizabeth, and the unsteady conduct of his unhappy mother, Mary. He also confounded hatred for arbitrary prerogative in kings, with hatred for kings themselves; and considered monarchy, and his own sort of monarchy, as essentially the same. Had he lived in our days, he would have experienced the difference, and not have considered the church of Scotland as being a greater enemy to kingly power than that of England, or as being more favourable to liberty. ==

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there promulgated. The Roman Catholic faith was clogged, in the early days of the church, with a great number, both of dogmatical and practical errors, that tend not only to fetter the mind, but actually embarrass the business of human life.

In a former chapter, we had occasion to speak of the encroachments made by public bodies on the general mass of the people, but none ever was so pernicious in its effects, so grasping, and so well calculated to retain, as the Roman Catholic church.

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Their celibacy took away from the clergy every disposition to alienate even personal property, while the practice of auricular confession, and the doctrine of the remission of sins, gave them an opportunity of besieging the human mind in its weakest moment, and the weakest place, in order to rob posterity, and enrich the church. In the moment of weakness, when a man's mind is occupied in reflecting on the errors, and perhaps the crimes, of a long and variegated life; when his ties to this world are loosened, and his interest in eternity becomes more lively, and near; a religion that enables a zealous or interested priest (aided by the casuistry and argument of centuries) to barter a promise of everlasting bliss, for lands and tenements bequeathed to the church, provides amply for the acquisition of earthly treasure, for its ministers, and those devoted to a life of religious pursuits. It is, indeed, wonderful, that, with such means, the church, in Roman Catholic countries, did not become more wealthy than it was. {204} With a continual means of acquiring, and none of alienating, it appears well qualified for absorbing the whole landed property of a nation. Such an encroachment on the public wealth, and industry of a people, is a sufficient reason for the Protestant countries (where the clergy have not the same means) becoming more wealthy and industrious.

It would not be difficult to prove that there is an effect produced on the minds of individuals in Protestant countries, that is favourable to industry; but a discussion of this nature might seem displaced in a book of this sort. It is sufficient that we see, from experience and

— {204} In France, before the revolution, the revenues of the clergy, in lands, tythes, &c. were reckoned to amount to 25,000,000 L. sterling per annum. The number of feasts and fasts was also a great drawback on industry. --

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reason, that, of all religions, the Christian is the most favourable to the prosperity of a people, and that of its different branches, the Protestant, or what is termed the Reformed Religion, is again the best. It is the religion established in Britain.

Another source of hope arises from a circumstance of very great importance, and very peculiarly favourable to Great Britain.

It has been observed, that the colonies in the West, and conquests in the East, cost a great deal and produce little; that, in short, their possession is of very doubtful advantage.

The possession of the North American provinces, now the United States, were a great burthen to England, from their first settlement till about the year 1755, when their trade began to be of advantage to this nation; but, in twenty years after, the revolt took place, and cost England a prodigious sum.

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To enter into a long detail on this subject it is not necessary; but no sooner were the hostilities at an end, than the American states bought more of our manufactures than ever. Their laws and manners are similar to our own, the same language, and a government evidently approaching as near to ours as a republican well can to a monarchical form. There is not, at this time, any branch of trade, either so great in its amount, or beneficial in its nature, as that with the United States; with this farther advantage, that it is every day augmenting, {205} and as no country ever increased so fast in population and wealth, so none ever promised to afford so extensive a market for our manufactures =sic= as the United States. This market is the more secure, that it will not be the interest of the people who have got possession of that immense tract of country to neglect agriculture and become manufacturers, for a long period of time.

The greatest project, by which any nation ever endeavoured to enrich itself, was certainly that of peopling America with a civilized race of inhabitants. It was a fair and legitimate mode of extending her means of acquiring riches; but Britain failed in the manner of obtaining her object, though not in the object itself, and

— {205} By this is not literally meant, that the trade every year is greater than the preceding, but that it continues to increase. -=-

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the United States promise to support the industry of England, now that it has humbled its ambition, far more than both the Indies, which gratify it so much.

It is highly probable, that America will increase more rapidly in wealth and population than in manufactures, such as she at present takes from great Britain; but if the ratio merely continues the same that it is now, the purpose will be completely answered, and a market for British manufactures insured for ages to come. In 1802, by the last census, the inhabitants of the United States amounted to about eight millions; and, for several years together, the exports of British goods have amounted to seven millions, so that it is fair to reckon a consumption equal to sixteen shillings a year to each person. It was about the same in 1774, previous to the revolt; and, as the population doubles in about fifteen years, in the course of thirty years more, the exports to that country alone would amount to 24,000,000 L. provided we continue to be able to sell at such rates as not to be undersold by others =sic= nations in the American market.

There is nothing great, nothing brilliant, in this commerce, all is solid and good; it is a connection founded on mutual wants and mutual convenience, not on monopoly, restriction, or coercion; for that reason it will be the more durable, and ought to be the more valued; but it is not. Governments, like individuals, are most attached to what is dear to purchase and difficult to keep. It is to be hoped, however, that this matter will be seen in its true light.

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One circumstance, that makes the matter still more favourable for Britain is, that the western country of America, by far the most fertile, as well as the most extensive, is now peopling very rapidly. The labour and capital of the inhabitants are entirely turned to agriculture and not to manufactures, and will be so for a great number of years; for, when there are fifty millions of inhabitants in the United States, their population will not amount to one-half of what may naturally be expected, or sufficient to occupy the lands. The fertility of the soil will enable the Americans, with great ease to themselves, to make returns in produce wanted in Europe, so that we may expect a durable, a great, and an advantageous trade with them. In British [end of page #268] manufactures our trade was not near so great before the revolt, for we then supplied America with every article.

This, however, will depend partly on our circumstances; for, if wages and the prices of our manufactures rise, as they lately have done, our merchants will buy upon the continent of Europe, what they otherwise would purchase in England, to supply the American market.

America is the only country in the world where, with respect to the wages of labour, and the produce of industry, money is of less value than in England. The Americans will then be able to afford to purchase English goods, when other nations will not; but then, they will only purchase such articles as cannot be had elsewhere; for though they may and will continue able to purchase, they will not do it if they can get goods that suit them elsewhere. {206}

No country, that we read of in history, ever enjoyed equal advantages with the American states; they have good laws, a free government, and are possessed of all the inventions and knowledge of the old world. Arts are now conveyed across the Atlantic with more ease than they formerly were from one village to another. It is possible, that a new market of so great an extent being opened may do away those jealousies of commerce, which have, for these two or three last centuries, occasioned many quarrels, and which are peculiarly dangerous to a nation that has risen high above its level.

All those things, with care and attention, will prove advantageous to Britain in a superior degree. They afford us much reason for hope and comfort, and do away one of the causes for fearing a decline that has been stated, namely, the being supplanted by poorer nations, or by not having a market for our increasing manufactures.

There remains yet another consideration in favour of Britain, as a manufacturing and a commercial country; for, as such, we must view it, reckoning more on industry than on the ideal wealth of our colonies in the West, and our conquests in the East. It is this, we are the

— {206} England begins already to lose the market for linen-cloth, window-glass, fire-arms, and a number of other articles. It would have entirely lost that of books, if any nation on the continent of Europe could print English correctly. As, it is, they are printing

in America, in place of our keeping the trade, which we might have done with great profit and advantage. --

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latest of European nations that has risen to wealth by commerce and manufactures. In looking over the map, there does not seem to be any one to supplant us; all those, who have great advantages, have already gone before, and, till we see the example of a country renewing itself, we have a right to disbelieve that it is possible.

Russia is the only country in Europe that is newer than England, and many circumstances will prevent it from becoming a rival in commerce. It does not, nor it ever can increase in population, and carry civilization and manufactures to the same point. Though, very new, as a powerful European nation, the people are as ancient as most others in Europe; the territory is so extensive, the climate so cold, and the Baltic Sea so much to the north, and frozen so many months in the year, that it never will either be a carrying or a manufacturing country. To cultivate its soil, and export the produce of its mines, the skins, tallow, hides, timber, &c. &c. will be more profitable, and suit better the inhabitants than any competition in manufactures.

It is not in great extensive empires that manufactures thrive the most, they are great objects for small countries, like England or Holland; but, for such as Russia, Turkey, or France, they are a less object than attention to soil and natural productions; and, thus we see, that China, the greatest of all countries in extent, encourages interior trade and manufactures, but despises foreign commerce. {207}

One peculiar advantage England enjoys favourable to manufactures, deserves notice. The law of patents, if it does not make people invent or seek after new inventions, it at least encourages and enables them to improve their inventions. Invention is the least part of the business in respect to public wealth and utility. There has long been a collection of models, at Paris, made by one of the most in-

— {207} The smaller a district, or an island is, the exports and imports will be the greater, when compared with the number of inhabitants. Take the exports and imports of all Europe, with the other quarters of the world;—considering Europe as one country, and it will not be found to amount to one shilling a person per annum. Take the amount in Britain, it will be found about forty shillings a person. Consider what is bought and sold by a single village, and it will be still greater than that; and, last of all, a single labouring family buys all that it uses, and sells all that it produces. And the meanest family, taken in this way, does proportionably =sic= more buying and selling than the richest state, taken in a body. Consider the whole earth as one state, and it neither exports nor imports. ==

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genious mechanics of the last century, (Mr. Vaucusson,) at the expense of that government, in which were nearly all the curious inventions brought forth in England,

together with many not known in it. Some Englishmen, in going through it, brought over new inventions here, for which they obtained patents, and, by which, they, as well as the public, were gainers, while the inventions lay useless and dormant in France.

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Invention is not a thing in a man's power, and great inventions are generally more the effect of accident than of superior abilities; at any rate, no encouragement is certain to produce invention, but it always will produce improvement on invention. When a man has a patent for fourteen years, he does every thing in his power to make the object of that patent become as generally useful as possible, and this is only to be done by carrying the improvements as far as he is able. {208} Others, again, who have no patent, but are of the same trade, endeavour to preserve their business by improvement, and to this contest in excellence may be attributed the great progress, made in England, in bringing manufactures to a higher degree of perfection than in any other country.

The great inventions, from which others branch out and spring, are not due, it has often been asserted, to natives of this country. Probably this may be owing to the circumstance, that they were known before the advancement of this country in any of the arts; but let that be as it may, there are a vast number of inventions carried to greater

— {208} This is sufficiently important to deserve to be illustrated by some examples. The improvement of the steam-engine, by Mr. Watt, was a matter of accident; an accident, indeed, that could not have happened, had he been an ignorant man; but the improvement of it was not accidental. It was, in consequence of great encouragement given, and to the prolongation of the patent, by an express act of parliament. This patent has been the occasion of almost totally changing the machine, and of extending its use to a vast variety of objects, to which it probably might never have been extended, had it not been the sole business of a very able man, aided by a number of other ingenious persons, whom he was enabled to employ. It was the cause of improving the mechanism of mills for grinding corn, and others of different descriptions, far beyond what they had been, although the most able engineer in that line (Mr. Smeaton) died before the last and greatest improvements were made.

The same thing may be observed of the cotton-spinning-machines, and with a little difference of all the inventions that have been brought to perfection, under the influence of exclusive privileges. ==

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perfection, and turned to more advantage in this country than in any other.

This advantage, which England enjoys over other countries, is a more solid one than it appears to be, for it is intimately connected with the government and laws of the country, and with that spirit which sees the law well administered, which, in the case of patents, is a matter of no small difficulty, and prevents others from becoming our rivals, or attaining the same degree of perfection; {209} for, unless the law is well administered, there can never be the great exertion that is necessary to create excellence.

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The fine arts and the mechanic arts are quite different in regard to the manner in which they are brought to perfection. Individual capacity and genius will make a man, even without much teaching, excel in one of the fine arts; whereas, in the mechanic arts, to know how an operation is performed is every thing, and all men can do it nearly equally well. The consequence of this is, that, as experience improves the manner of working, the mechanic arts improve, from age to age, as long as they are encouraged and practised. It is not so with the fine arts, or only so in a very small degree, and from this it arises, that, in sculpture, poetry, painting, and music, the ancients, perhaps, excelled the moderns. In the mechanic arts they were quite inferior. The best examples of this, (and better need not be,) are an antique medal, boldly and finely executed, but ragged on the edges, not on a flat ground, or of equal thickness, compared with a new guinea, or a Birmingham button tamely engraved but trimly executed. In the former, there is every mark of the artist, none of the machine. In the latter, there are some faint and flat traces of an artist, but great proof of mechanical excellence. The skill of the artist, necessary to produce the first, cannot be commanded, though it may, by encouragement, be called forth; but the reunion of talents, such as are necessary for the latter, is so certainly obtainable, that it, at all times, may be procured at will, after it has once been possessed.

— {209} In 1790 the French laid down the law of patents, on the English plan, and rather, in some respects, improved; but the people never understood it. The lawyers never understood it; and, even before the anarchy came on, it was evident it would never produce any very great effect, for want of proper administration. --

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Security, to reap the fruits of improvements, is all that is wanted, and this the law of patents, as applied and enforced in England, affords in a very superior degree. Although, by the communication everywhere, the ground-work of every art whatever is now no longer confinable to any one nation, though the contrary is the case, and that the knowledge necessary circulates freely, and is extended by a regular sort of system, in periodical publications of various descriptions, yet the manner of turning that knowledge to advantage does not, by any means, seem equally easy to communicate.

The legislature of the United States of America has, indeed, in this case, done full justice to the encouragement of arts and to inventions; but circumstances, as has been already said, make other objects more advantageous for the employment of labour and skill in that country. For these reasons, therefore, we may look forward with some confidence, to the flourishing of arts and manufactures, for a long term of years, if the same attention that has been paid to their encouragement still continues; but neither this advantage alone, nor all the advantages united, that have been enumerated, will be sufficient to preserve our superiority, if those, who regulate the affairs of the country, do not favour them.

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It is in consequence of great pains and care, that manufactures have flourished in this country, and they cannot be preserved without a continuation of the same care, although it is individual effort that appears to be the principal cause. Thus, the travellers, on a well-made highway, proceed with rapidity and ease, at their individual expense, and by their individual energy; but, if the road is not kept in repair, their progress must be impeded, and their efforts will cease to produce the same effect, for they cannot individually repair the road.

Such appear to be the peculiar circumstances that favour Great Britain; and that under disadvantages that are also peculiarly great, give hopes of prolonging the prosperity of the country.

There is still, however, something wanting to increase our advantage. Any person acquainted with the manufactures of England will naturally have observed, that they are all such as meet with a market in this country. We have no mannfactories =sic= for goods, for the sole [end of page #273] purpose of our foreign markets; so that, though we consider ourselves as so much interested in foreign trade, yet we have adapted all our manufacturies, expressly, as if it were to supply the home market.

This observation will be found to apply very generally, though there are a few exceptions, and though the quality of the goods manufactured, and intended for exportation, is adapted to the market for which they are destined. This last, indeed, is very natural, nor could it well be otherwise, but that is not going half the length necessary.

Instead of carrying our goods into a strange country, and trying whether the inhabitants will purchase, we should bring home patterns of such articles as they use themselves, and try if we can supply them with advantage. Nations vary, exceedingly, in taste, and so they always will. The colour of the stuffs, the figures on printed cottons, and even the forms of cutlery, and articles of utility, are, in some sort, matters of taste. If we are to manufacture for other nations, let us try to suit their taste as we do to suit that of our own people at home. The reasons why we do not do this are pretty evident. In the first place, it would not answer the purpose of an individual to procure the information necessary, and make a collection where the advantage, in case of success, would be divided with all that chose to imitate them; besides this, in many cases, the means are wanting to procure what is necessary.

The study of botany has been greatly advanced, and kitchen gardens greatly enriched, by the importation of exotic plants; and, probably, our manufactures might be greatly extended, if the same care were taken to collect foreign articles, the produce of industry. {210} We do not find every foreign plant succeed in this country, but if it seems pro-

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— {210} A collection of all sorts of stuffs, with the prices in the country, where worn, and the same of all sorts of hardware, toys, trinkets, &c., should be made, at the public expense, and be open, on application, to the inspection of every person who might apply in a proper manner; and even specimens, or patterns, should be delivered out, on the value being deposited. In Persia, and many places, if we would copy their colours and patterns, we might sell great quantities of cotton stuffs. Our hatchets, and some other of our tools, are not made of a form liked by the Americans. —

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bable, and worth trying, we never fail to do that; we trust it would be so with foreign manufactures, if we had proper patterns. A fair trial would be made, where success seemed probable, and the event would determine the future exertion.

Accidental circumstances, a few centuries ago, brought new plants into this country, they now come into it in consequence of regular exertions for that purpose. What was then true, with regard to plants imported, is still true with respect to manufactures exported. We manufacture for ourselves, and if any thing of the same sort suits other nations, we send it, if not, there is no trade to that part; now, this must be allowed to be an accidental cause, for the promotion of foreign trade.

Wherever it is possible to prevent the debasing the quality of an article, so as to hinder it answering the purpose, or gratifying the expectations of the purchaser, that ought to be done, for it has long been such a practice for English manufacturers to undersell each other, that they stick at no means of being able to do so.

A variety of qualities, according to price, is necessary. All persons cannot afford to buy the best sort of goods; but, when a reduction of price is carried so far as to be obtained by making an article that is useless, this is a means of losing the trade; and it would be very easy to prove that such examples are very numerous, and that various branches of trade have been lost by that means.

With regard to the extent of sea coast, the advantage that may be derived from the fisheries, and the benefit arising from that circumstance to commerce, they are natural advantages, and already perfectly understood. [end of page #275]

CHAP. VIII.

Conclusion.

After having gone through the subject of the Inquiry, according to the mode that appeared to be the best, in which there has been one invariable rule, never to oppose theory and reasoning to facts, but to take experience as the surest guide, a

recapitulation can scarcely be very necessary; but a conclusion, applicable to the situation of this country, certainly may.

This, however, ought to be short, as the reader has all the materials for it in his own power, but it may save him trouble.

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The great end of all human effort is, to improve upon the means which nature has furnished men with, for obtaining the objects of their wants and wishes, and to obviate, to counteract, or do away those inconveniencies =sic= and disadvantages which nature has thrown in the way of their enjoyment. {211}

With the mind, the same course should be used as with material bodies. It is impossible, in either case, to create; but we may turn the good to as profitable an advantage as we are able, and counteract the bad.

To attempt to hinder men from following their propensities, when in power, is always arduous, generally ineffectual, and frequently impracticable; besides, when it can be done coercively, it infringes too much on the liberty and the enjoyment of mankind. A controuling power should be employed as seldom as possible.

— {211} Thus, in building a house, you form the stones, the clay, and other materials, which nature has furnished, in order to counteract the effect of heat or cold, moist or dry, as is most agreeable. Thus, men have learned to melt and vitrify the sand on the sea-shore, to make glass, grind it into a form, and make a microscope to view the most minute objects of nature, or to bring the most distant nearer, by the telescope: thus, rectifying the imperfection of human sight. Perhaps the burning of *coals* to convert *water* into *steam*, and, with that *steam*, raising *coals* and *water* from the mine is the most complete triumph of human skill over physical difficulties. How invention and discovery have improved the state of man since the time that the uses of corn and fire were unknown in Greece!!! ==-

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To attempt to smother the passions is vain, to controul them difficult; besides, it is from energy, arising from passions or propensities, that all good, as well as all evil, arise. The business, then, will neither be to curb nor to crush, but to give a proper direction. This is to be done by good habits, when young, and a proper education, which cannot be obtained by individual exertion, without the assistance of government; an assistance that it is therefore bound to give.

The general tendency of wealth and power are to enervate people, to make them proud and indolent, and, after a certain time, they leave a country. Individuals have no means to counteract this tendency, unless the governing power of the country gives a general impulse to them, in cases where they can act, and acts itself, with care and attention, where individuals can do nothing.

In the case of education and manners, in the case of providing for children, individuals may do much, but government must not only give the means, but the impulse. In the case of the soil becoming insufficient for the inhabitants, and of taxes and national debt increasing, government may stop the progress; and in the cases of individual bodies

trenching on the general weal, as well as in the tendency of inventions, capital, &c. to emigrate to other countries, the government may counteract, and, perhaps, totally prevent them all.

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In all cases, individuals will and must follow their lawful propensities, both in the means of employing capital and expending revenue; that is, they must be left free, in a general way, and only interrupted and regulated in particular cases; but, sometimes, the means must be furnished them of going right, and in other cases the inducements to do so augmented. We shall take the subjects in the same order that they followed in the Second Book.

Though the manners of people, arrived at maturity, can only be regulated by their education, when young, if that is properly attended to, it will be sufficient; for though it will not prevent the generation that has attained wealth, from enjoying it according to the prevailing taste, it will prevent contamination being communicated with increased force, as it now is, to the children. The evils then will go on in a simple proportion; they now go on with a compound one, and the evils arising from the [end of page #277] luxury of each generation are doubled on that which follows after. If that is prevented, it will be all that probably is necessary; at all events it is probably all that is possible.

In taxation, the government should study to do away what is obnoxious in its mode of collection, for that does more injury to the subject, in many cases, than an equal sum would do levied in another manner; and when payments are to be made, the mode should be rendered as easy as possible. Every unnecessary trouble should be avoided in collecting a tax. In the tax on receipts and bills, why should the sums to which they extend not be printed on them, so as to prevent error, which is sometimes attended with great loss, and always with inconvenience? If this had been done, how many law-suits, how many nefarious tricks, would have been prevented? But not to speak of those inconveniences only, how much useless trouble, uneasiness, and uncertainty, would have been saved in the common way of transacting business? In most cases, the subject is treated as if neither his time, nor his conveniency, nor his feelings, were worth attending to. This is equally impolitic and unjust: there is, perhaps, no country where people are more careful to keep within the pale of the law, than in England; but when they are within it, and have power, no people use it with a more insulting rigour; and for this there is no redress.

In many cases, this would be entirely prevented by proper attention in first laying on the tax. There should be a board of taxation, to receive, digest, and examine, the suggestions of others. In short, pains should be taken to bring to perfection the system. At present, it is left to chance; that is to say, it is left for those to do who have not time to do it, and, of consequence, the blunders committed are seen by all the world. {212}

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— {212} An act of parliament for a new tax is seldom ever right till it has been evaded a number of times, and even then in perfectioning =sic= it, an increase of revenue is the only object attended to; the conveniency of the subject is scarcely ever thought of. Taxes are laid on, that experience proves to be unproductive and oppressive, and sometimes are, and oftener ought, to be repealed; thousands of persons are sometimes ruined for a mere experiment. As the public pays for it, they, at least, might be indulged with a little attention; nothing costs less than civility. If half the attention were paid to preventing unnecessary trouble to the subject, [end of page #278] in cases of taxation, that is paid to the preservation of partridges, we should have the thing very differently managed. There should also be a public office, to hear just complaints against those who give unnecessary trouble, as there is for hackney coachmen. Men in all situations require to be under some controul, where they have power. Most of those who *drive* others, go wrong sometimes, unless held in check by some authority. --

The encroachments of separate bodies on the public, it is entirely in the power of the state to prevent. It is owing to weakness or carelessness, or ignorance, that governments admit of such encroachments, and they are easily to be prevented, partly, as has been shewn, by positive regulation, and partly by counteracting them, whenever they appear to be proceeding in a direction any way doubtful. When they do so, the conclusion may be, that they are working for themselves; and, in that case, they ought to be very minutely examined into; and, as all public bodies, and men belonging to a class that has a particular interest generally derive their means of trenching on the public from government, it may very easily controul their action, or counteract the effect.

As lawyers have the administration of justice amongst themselves; as the executive part is in their hand, the law-makers should be particularly careful to make them amenable by law for bad conduct; it ought not to be left in the bosom of a court, to strike off, or keep on, an improper man. It is not right, on the one hand, that attorneys, or any set of men, should be subject to an arbitrary exertion of power; and it is equally unfair for them to be protected, by having those who are to judge between them and the public, always belonging to their own body. In defence of this, it is said, that attornies are servants of the court, and that the business of the court being to do justice, their correction cannot be in better hands. This is a tolerably ingenious assertion, if it were strictly true; but the court consists both of judge and jury; whereas, in this case, the judge assumes all the power; that is to say, when a case is to be determined relative to the conduct of a lawyer, a lawyer is to be the sole judge, and the jury, who represent the public, are to have

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their power set aside; thus, when their opinion is most wanted, it is not allowed to be given. Under such regulation, what real redress can be expected? As for the taxing costs by a master, it is [end of page #279] rarely that a client, from prudential motives, dares appeal; and, when he does, the remedy is frequently worse than the disease; and, even in this case a lawyer judges a lawyer. Without saying any thing against the judgments, it will be allowed, that in neither case is the principle of Magna Carta adhered to, of a man being judged by his peers; besides, in every other fraud there is punishment proportioned to the crime. In this case there is no punishment, unless the extortion is exorbitant, and then the punishment is too great. It ought to be proportioned to the offence, as in cases of usury, and then it would be effectual; but to let small misdemeanors go free and to punish great ones beyond measure is the way to elude punishment in all cases. A man ought to pay his bill; let the attorney take the money at his peril, and let there be a court to judge fairly, at little expense, and with promptitude, and punish the extortion by a treble fine. This would answer; but all regulations, relative to law, are left to the lawyers themselves; and the fable of the Man, the Lion, and the Picture, was never so well exemplified, Never, in any case, was redress more wanted; perhaps, never was it less likely to be had.

The unequal division of property, as has been shewn, arises partly from bad laws, and partly from neglect of regulation; it is, indeed, one of the most delicate points to interfere in; nevertheless, as it has been proved, that laws do already interfere between a man and the use of his property, (and that it is, in some cases, necessary that they should do so) the question is reduced to one of circumstances and expediency, it is not one to be determined, in the abstract, on principle. It is also of too nice a nature to be touched roughly by general regulation; but, if large estates in land, and large farms, were taxed higher in proportion than small ones, it would counteract, to a certain degree, the tendency of landed property to accumulate in any one person's hand; and, except in land, property seldom remains long enough in one family to accumulate to a dangerous degree. {213}

— {213} Besides the above truth, of other property being liable to be dissipated from its nature the law of primogeniture does not attach on it, and the evil, if it did, would not be any way considerable. --

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The increased consumption of a nation, which we have found one of the causes of decline that increases with its wealth, may be more effectually prevented than any other; not by interfering with the mode in which individuals expend their wealth, but by managing it so that vegetable food shall always be in abundance; and if so, the high prices of animal food, and the low price of vegetables will answer the purpose of

counteracting the taste for the former, which is the cause of the dearth, and brings on depopulation; and therefore its hurtful effect will be prevented. {214}

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To this, gentlemen of landed property may object, and no doubt will object, but let them consider how rapidly ruin is coming on. At the rate matters now go, it would not be a surprising, but a natural effect, if most of the fields in Britain were converted into pasture, and our chief supply of corn obtained from abroad. The rent of land would, indeed, be doubled, the wages of labour would rise more than in an equal proportion, and a very few years would complete the ruin of this country. The landed proprietors surely would not, for any momentary gain, risk the ruin of themselves and of their country, for both may be the consequence of persisting in this system. {215} Or, if they will persist in it, will the government, which has other interests to consult and to protect, allow that single one to swallow up all the rest?

It is true, the freedom of trade will be invoked; but the freedom of

— {214} Suppose that, of the waste lands, eleven millions of acres were cultivated, and that as much as possible (suppose five millions) were always in grain, those five millions would be able to supply the nation nearly in an ordinary year. A law might also be made, compelling all landlords and farmers to have only three-fourths in grass; this could be no hardship. There would then be always corn in plenty; monopoly would be prevented, because anxiety would be avoided; for a real deficiency to a small amount gives cause to great anxiety and grievous monopoly. The waste lands, when disposed of, might have whatever condition attached to them was thought fit.

{215} We say persisting in this system, for when bread fell to be at a moderate price, last summer, (1804,) the outcry amongst the farmers was great and violent, and the legislature altered the law about exports; the consequence of this was, that the price of wheat rose regularly every week till it was doubled. All this was the effect of opinion, for the price of corn rose too quickly to allow any to be sent out of the kingdom, by the new law. --

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trade is a principle not to be adopted without limitation, but with due regard to times and circumstances; let it then never be invoked upon a general question, without examination. Though this is the true way of arguing the question, let freedom of trade be taken in another way; let it be considered as a general principle, it will then be immutable, and cannot be changed. {216} The present corn-laws must on that principle be done away, and no bounty allowed for exportation or for importation, which indeed would be the best way; but, at all events, let us have one weight and one measure for both parties, and not invoke freedom of trade to protect the corn-dealers when prices are high, and enact laws to counteract the effects of plenty, which produces low prices.

On this subject, government must set itself above every consideration, but that of the welfare of the country: it is too important to be trifled with, or to be bartered for any inferior consideration.

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The prices of our manufactures will soon become too high for other nations. Our inventions, to abbreviate labour, cannot be perpetual, and, in some cases, they can go no farther than they have already gone; besides, the same inventions, copied by nations where labour is cheaper, give them still a superiority over us.

If increased consumption was the leading cause of the destruction of Rome, to which money was sent from tributary nations, and employed to purchase corn, (so that its supply was independent of its industry,) how much more forcible and rapid must be its effects in this country, living by manufactures, and having no other means to procure a supply from strangers, when that is necessary? {217}

The burthens of our national taxes continuing the same, those for

— {216} When corn was dear, and the public cry was for regulation, it was announced, in the highest quarters, that trade was free. Ministers acted as if they had been the colleagues of of =sic= the economist Turgot; but, when prices fell, the language was changed, and new regulations were made. Compare the Duke of Portland's letter, in 1799, with the act for the exportation of grain, in 1804.

{217} The money sent out of the country for corn is a direct diminution of the balance due to us from other nations, and it now amounts to near three millions a year on an average. The balance in our favour is not much more than twice that sum at the most, and was not equal to that till lately: the imports of grain may soon turn the balance against us. ==

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the poor increasing, our means diminishing; what could possibly produce a more rapid decline?

The danger is too great and too evident to require any thing farther to be said; particularly as the last ten years have taught us so much, by experience.

It is unnecessary to repeat what was said about the mode of reducing the interest of the national debt without setting too much capital afloat; without breaking faith with the creditors of the state, or burthening the industry of the country.

On the increase of the poor and the means of diminishing their numbers enough has been said. That must originate with government in every case and in some cases exclusively belongs to it. They must act of themselves entirely, with respect to the very poor and to their children. With those who are not quite reduced to poverty, they should grant aid, to enable them to struggle against adversity, and prevent their offspring from becoming burthensome to the public.

The other affairs well attended to, capital and industry will lose their tendency to leave the country; and, if they should continue to leave it, the case will be desperate; for, after the lands are improved, and the best encouragement given to the employment of capital, and to the greatest extent nothing more can be done. It will find employment elsewhere.

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The efficacy of a remedy, like every thing else in this world, has a boundary, but the extent and compass of that depends, in a great degree, on exertion and skill, and particularly so in the present instance. It remains with the government to make that exertion, either directly itself, or by putting individuals in the way to make it.

The government of a country must then interfere, in an active manner, in the prevention of the interior causes of decline. As to the exterior ones, they do not depend on a country itself; but, so far as they do, it is exclusively on the government, and in no degree on the individual inhabitants.

The envy and enmity which superior wealth create, can only be diminished by the moderation and justice with which a nation conducts itself towards others; and if they are sufficiently envious and [end of page #283] unfair to persist, a nation like Britain has nothing to fear. But we must separate from envy and enmity occasioned by the possession of wealth, that envy and enmity that are excited by the unjust manner in which wealth is acquired.

In respect to Britain, it has been shewn, that the envy and enmity excited, are chiefly by her possessions in the East Indies; we have seen, also, that the wealth obtained by those possessions is but very inconsiderable, and that they have, at least, brought on one-third of our national debt; it would then be well, magnanimously to state the question, and examine whether we ought not to abandon the possession of such unprofitable, such expensive, and such a dangerous acquisition; till we do so, it is to be feared that we shall never have a true friend, nor be without a bitter enemy.

We have had experience from America, which is become precious to us now, that we have lost it, and which was a mill-stone about our neck, while we were in possession of it. Let us take a lesson from experience, and apply its result to what is at this moment going on, and we cannot mistake the conclusion to be formed. Let the nation be above the little vanity of retaining a thing, merely because it has possessed it. {218} Let the great general outline of happiness, and of permanent happiness, be considered, and not that ephemeral splendour and opulence, that gilded pomp that remains but for a day, and leaves a nation in eternal poverty and want. Britain can only be firm and just in its conduct towards other nations, give up useless possessions, defend its true rights to the last point, encourage industry at home, and take every step to prevent the operation of those causes of decline that we have been examining; let merit be encouraged, and

— {218} In this country, public opinion would be against a minister, who proposed to give up any possession abroad, however useless. This is owing to the pride occasioned by wealth. The people are not rapacious for conquests, but once in possession they are very unwilling to let them go.

It is not necessary to quit the trade to India, or abandon all our possessions, but to diminish our establishments, circumscribe our conquests, and not aim at possessing

more than we had thirty years ago. That moderation would conciliate all nations, and envy would find its occupation gone. -=-

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let it never be forgotten or lost sight of, that wealth and greatness can only be supported, for a length of time, by industry and abilities well directed, guided by justice and fair intention. This is the truth of which we are never to lose sight. We may keep sounding for the bottom, and reconnoitring the shore, the better to direct our steps, but we must never lose sight of the beacon, with the help of which alone we can safely enter the wished-for harbour.

There is a great disposition in the human mind to give the law, when there is the power of doing it. The abuse of power appears to be natural and dangerous; yet, we have seen, that most nations, both ancient and modern, have fallen into that error. The hour of British insolence has also been mentioned, and, certainly, with regard to America, we did not more materially mistake our power than we did the rights of those with whom we had to treat.

It is much to be questioned, whether the undaunted and brave spirit of our naval commanders does not, in some cases, lead them too far in their rencontres with vessels of other nations on the high seas, and we ought not to forget that, in this case, the match played is that of England against all the world. As no other nation is under the same circumstances with this, no one will be inclined to take our part, or to wink at, or pardon, any error we may commit.

The Hans Towns, at one time, were paramount at sea; they could bid defiance to all the world; and, at first, they did great actions, and employed their power to a good purpose. They destroyed the pirates, and humbled the Danes, after they had robbed both the English and French, and burnt both London and Paris; but they also had their hour of insolence. They began to be unjust, and to be insolent, and the cities that had begged to be united to them, in the times when their conduct was honourable and wise, withdrew from the participation of their injustice, pride, and arrogance. While they attended to protecting themselves, and to following their own affairs, they did numberless good offices to the ships of foreign nations; they had universal good will and commanded admiration. But, when they became supercilious, and a terror to others, their pride was soon humbled, never again to rise. [end of page #285]

In considering the whole, there is a considerable degree of consolation arises to British subjects, to see the very mistaken comparisons that have, in the first place, been made between Rome and Carthage; and, in the second place, the still more unfair comparison made between those two rival powers, and France and England.

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As opinion and belief have a great power over the minds of men, whether they act in conformity to their views and wishes, or in opposition to them, it is of great importance to remove an error, which was of very long standing, very general, and had the direct tendency to make the people of both countries think the parallel well drawn, and therefore conclude that this mercantile country must, sooner or later, sink under the power of France. But, when it appears that most authors have been inadvertently led into the same mistake, with respect to those two ancient republics, and that, even if there had not been the mistake, the parallel drawn would not have been true, then France will probably cease to found her hopes on that comparison, and we may, at least, cease to feel any apprehension from so ill-grounded a cause.

That a nation once gone on in the career of opulence can never go back with impunity is as certain as its tendency to going back is. The possession of riches is of a transitory nature, and their loss attended with innumerable evils. Though nations in affluence, like men in health, refuse to follow any regimen, and use great freedom with themselves, yet they should consider there is a vast difference. A man, well and in health, is in his natural state; yet even that will not resist too much liberty taken with his constitution; but a nation that has risen to more wealth than others is always in an artificial state, insomuch as it owes its superiority, not to nature, but either to peculiar circumstances, our =sic—sc.: or = superior exertion and care; it is therefore not to be supposed capable of being preserved, without some of that attention and care, which are necessary to all nations under similar circumstances, and which, in the history of the world, we have not yet seen one nation able to resist.

There are sufficient circumstances, new and favourable in the [end of page #286] case of Britain, to inspire us with the courage necessary for making the effort.

There is one part of the application of this Inquiry, to the British dominions, left intentionally incomplete. It has been left so with a design to keep clear of those discussions that awaken a spirit of party, which prevents candid attention. It is of little use to enquire, unless those who read can do it without prevention or prejudice. It is therefore, very necessary not to awaken those feelings, by adding any thing that may rouse a spirit of party; and it is difficult to touch matters that concern men, deeply interested in an object, without that danger. What seems impartial to an unconcerned man, seems partial to those who are concerned; and sometimes the observer is blamed by both the parties, between whom he thinks he is keeping in the middle way.

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The advantages of the form of government adopted in Britain have been fairly stated in account; but constitutions and forms of government, however good, are only so in the degree; they are never perfect, and have all a tendency to wear out, to get worse, and to get encumbered. The French were the first, perhaps, that ever tried the mad scheme of remedying this by making a constitution that could be renewed at pleasure. But it was a violent remedy, to implant, in the constitution itself, the power of its own destruction, under the idea of renovation. The English constitution has taken, perhaps, the best way that is possible for this purpose; it has given to king, lords, and commons, the power of counteracting each other, and so preserving its first principles. Without going into that inquiry, it is sufficient to say, that the advantages which may be derived from the British constitution can only be expected by the three different powers having that will, and exercising it; for, if they should act together on a system of confidence, without an attention to preserving the balance, they must overset, instead of navigating the vessel.

The individuals of whom a nation is composed, we have seen, never can, by their efforts, prevent its decline, as their natural propensities tend to bring it on. It is to the rulers of nations we must look for the [end of page #287] prolongation of prosperity, which they cannot accomplish, unless they look before them, and, in place of seeking for remedies, seek for preventatives.

It is very natural and very common for those who wield the power of a great nation, to trust to the exertion of that power, when the moment of necessity arrives; but that will seldom, if ever, be found to answer. The time for the efficacy of remedy will be past before the evil presents itself in the form of pressing necessity; and that very power, which can so effectually be applied in other cases, in this will be diminished, and found unequal to what it has to perform.

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Application of the present Inquiry to Nations in general

IF there is a lesson taught by political economy that is of greater importance than any other, it is, that industry, well directed, is the way to obtain wealth; and that the modes by which nations sought after it in the early and middle ages, by war and conquest, are, in comparison, very ineffectual.

Notwithstanding that princes themselves are now convinced of the truth of this, by a strange fatality, the possession of commercial wealth has itself become the cause of wars, not less ruinous than those that formerly were the chief occupation of mankind.

It was discovered a few centuries ago, that small principalities, and even single cities, acquired more wealth by industry, than all the mighty monarchs of the middle ages did

by war; but we are not yet advanced to the ultimate end of the lessons that experience and reason give in regard to the interests of nations, with regard to wealth and power.

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To suppose that mankind will ever live entirely at peace is absurd, and is to suppose them to change their nature. Such a reverie would only suit one of the revolutionists of France; but let us hope that there is still a possibility to lessen the causes of quarrels amongst nations. The true principles of political economy lead to that, and the object is sufficiently important.

By *agriculture* and *manufactures*; that is, by producing such things as are conducive to the happiness of man, the *aggregate wealth of mankind* can alone be increased.

By *commerce*, which consists in conveying or selling the produce of industry, the aggregate wealth of mankind is not increased, but its *distribution is altered*. {219}

— {219} Though the produce of soil is not obtained without industry, yet, to make a distinction that is simple and easily understood and retained, we suppose manufactured produce to go by the name of the produce of industry. --

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As individuals, and sometimes nations, have obtained great wealth, not by producing, but by altering the distribution of wealth produced; that is, by commerce, that seems, to those who aim at wealth, to be the greatest object of ambition.

If every nation in the world were industrious, and contented with consuming the articles it produced, they would all be wealthy and happy without commerce; or, if each nation enjoyed a share of commerce, in proportion to what it produced, there would be no superiority to create envy.

Variety of soil and climate, difference of taste, of manners, and an infinity of other causes, have rendered commerce necessary, though it does not increase the aggregate wealth of mankind: but nations are in an error when they set a greater value on commerce than on productive industry.

Some nations are situated by nature so as to be commercial, just as others are to raise grapes and fine fruits; therefore, though one nation has more than what appears to be an equal share of commerce, it ought not to be a reason for envy, much less for enmity.

Some nations also find it their interest to attend chiefly to agriculture, others may find it necessary to attend more to manufactures; but that ought to be no cause of enmity or rivalry.

With a view, if possible, to diminish a little the envy and rivalry that still subsists, let us take a view of this business in its present state.

Britain, the wealthiest of nations, at this time, sells little of the produce of her soil, and a great deal of the produce of her industry; but she purchases a great deal of the produce

of the soil of other countries, though not much of their industry: in this there is great mutual conveniency and no rivalship. In fact, her wealth arises nearly altogether from internal industry, and, by no means from that commerce that is the envy of other nations; for it is clear, that whoever produces a great deal may consume a great deal, without any exchange of commodities, and without commerce.

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The English, number for number, produce more, by one-half, than [end of page #290] any other people; they can, therefore, consume more; they are, therefore, richer.

If France would cultivate her soil with the same care that we attend to manufactures, (at the same time manufacturing for herself as much as she did before the revolution,) she would be a much richer country than England, without having a single manufacture for exportation. Her wines, brandies, fruits, &c. &c. would procure her amply whatever she might want from other nations. Let France make good laws to favour industry; and, above all, render property secure, and she will have no occasion to envy England.

Russia, part of Germany, Spain, Italy, and Portugal, are all in a similar situation with France in this respect; they will each be as rich as England the moment they are as industrious, and have as many inventions for the abbreviation of labour.

Holland, Sweden, Denmark, Prussia, and some parts of Germany, are, more or less, in the same situation with England; they require to pay attention to manufactures, for they have not the means of raising produce enough to exchange for all they want.

If there is any occasion for rivalry, or ground for envy, it is then but very small, and it happens that the rivalry which exists is between those nations that, in reality, ought to be the least envious of each other, the nations who have the fewest quarrels are those who really might be rivals.

Rivalship is natural between those who are in similar situations. France, Spain, and Portugal, might be rivals. England, Holland, Prussia, and Denmark, might also be rivals; but there can be no reason for France envying England her manufactures and commerce, any more than for England envying France for her climate, soil, extent, =sic= of territory and population.

The way to produce the most, being to give industry its best direction. Nations, differently situated, ought never to be rivals or enemies, on account of trade.

If those, who regulate the affairs of nations, were to consider this in its true light, there would be less jealousy and more industry. [end of page #291]

There appears to be only one real cause for war, so far as it is occasioned by a wish to obtain wealth; and that arises from possessions in the East and West Indies, and in America.

If there were no such possessions, or if they were more equally divided, there would be very little cause for war amongst nations.

It may, very possibly, at some distant time, be an object for a general congress of nations, to settle this point; so that it shall be no longer an object of jealousy. This can

be done only by abandoning entirely, or dividing more equally; but, at present, the animosity and enmity occasioned is considerable, though not well founded.

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The Spaniards are not envied for the possession of Peru, nor the Portuguese for the Brazils, though they draw more wealth from them than ever England or Holland did from their foreign possessions; yet, England is, and Holland was, an object of envy, on account of possessions abroad. This is the more unreasonable, that the Spaniards and Portuguese keep the trade strictly to themselves, while England allows nations, at peace with her, the most liberal conditions for trading with her Indian possessions: conditions, indeed, that give them a superiority over ourselves. {220} This conduct ought not to bring down upon England, envy or enmity, (though it does); for the fact is, that if all nations were at peace with England, they might, if they had capital and skill, (and that they have not is no fault of England,) trade with India to great advantage, while we should have the trouble of defending our establishments, and of keeping the country.

Before the revolution, France obtained more produce from Saint Domingo alone, in one year, than Britain did from all her West India Islands together, in three years, and much more than England did from all her foreign possessions together; yet, France was never obnoxious to other nations on that account.

— {220} This may seem strange, but it is literally true; the quarrels between the India Company, and the free trade, as it is called, are an ample proof of the truth of it. The free-trade-merchants chiefly act under the name of agents for Swedish and Danish houses, so liberally has England acted with regard to neutral nations. --

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It appears, then, very evident, that the envy and jealousy do not arise from the *magnitude or value of foreign possessions*, but from some other cause, though it is laid to that account. This cause is worth inquiring into.

It appears that Holland and England have, alone, been causes of jealousy to other nations, on account of foreign possessions; but, that Spain, Portugal, and France, never have, though there was more real reason for envy and jealousy.

The reason of this appears to be, that those nations, who excited no envy, escaped it, because their indolence, or internal economy, prevented them from becoming rich; but, that Holland and England, which, in reality, owed their wealth chiefly to internal industry, and very little of it to foreign possessions, have excited great envy, and that England does so to the present hour. {221}

It is, then, wealth arising from industry, that is the object to be aimed at, and that cannot be obtained by war or conquest. The purpose is not advanced, but retarded, by such contests; and if those, who rule nations, would condescend to enter into the merits of the case, they would find, not only that the happiness of the people, and every purpose at which they aim, would be better answered than by contesting about the means of wealth, which, consisting in internal industry, does not admit of a transfer. One nation

may be ruined, and another may rise, (as, indeed, they are continually doing,) but one nation does not rise merely by ruining another; the wealth of a nation, like the happiness of an individual, draws the source from its own

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— {221} From both the East and West Indies, England never has, till within these last ten years, drawn three millions a year, that could be termed profit or gain, and, even in the last and most prosperous times, not eight millions, which is not equal to more than one-twentieth part of the produce of national industry at home. Even the foreign commerce of England, except so far as it procures us things we want, in exchange for things we have to spare, is not productive of much wealth. Supposing the balance in our favour to be six millions a year, which it has never uniformly been, it would only amount to one-twenty-fourth of our internal productive industry. In short, we gain five times as much by a wise division of labour, the use of machinery, ready and expeditious methods of working, as by the possession of both the Indies!!! --

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bosom. The possession of all the Indies would never make an indolent people rich; and while a people are industrious, and the industry is well directed, they never can be poor.

It is to be hoped, that the time is fast approaching, when nations will cease to fight about an object that is not to be obtained by fighting, and that they will seek for what they want, by such means as are safe and practicable. [end of page #294]

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—> *The reader will observe, on one =sic= of the pages, reference to an Appendix, but the design was altered, from the consideration that readers of history do not require solitary facts, by way of illustration, though such are very easy to be produced.*

THE END.

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***** [Transcriber's note: In the original work: —the footnotes are designated by [*] but are here serially numbered for ease of reference; —in some cases the same word is spelt differently in various parts of the text, *e.g.* controul/control; Hans/Hanse Towns, shew/show (one instance only of the latter) *etc.* These and other vagaries are reproduced largely without special note. Likewise treated are the numerous examples of the number of the subject not agreeing with that of the verb.]

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