

II

THE FUTURE OF THE WORKING CLASSES (1873)¹

MR MILL has given in his *Autobiography* a more detailed account than we had hitherto possessed of that aid that he derived from his wife in most of the best work he has done. This information has great value at a time at which, partly by the voice of Mr Mill himself, we are being awakened to the importance of the question whether the quick insight of woman may not be trained so as to give material assistance to man in ordering public as well as private affairs. He says—"In all that concerns the application of philosophy to the exigencies of human society I was her pupil, alike in boldness of speculation and cautiousness of practical judgment." All the instances that he gives of this tend to show how our progress would be accelerated if we would unwrap the swaddling clothes in which artificial customs have enfolded woman's mind and would give her free scope womanfully to discharge her duties to the world. But one instance strikingly illustrates that intimate connection, to which all history testifies, between the free play of the full and strong pulse of woman's thoughts and the amelioration of the working classes.

The chapter of the *Political Economy* (he says) which has had a greater influence on opinion than all the rest, that on the "Probable Future of the Labouring Classes," is entirely due to her: in the first draft of the book that chapter did not exist. She pointed out the need of such a chapter and the extreme imperfection of the book without it: she was the cause of my writing it; and the more general part of the chapter—the statement and discussion of the two opposite theories respecting the proper condition of the labouring classes—was wholly an exposition of her thoughts, often in words taken from her own lips.

Other women may have spoken much as she spoke; but, for one reason or another, their words have been almost as though they had not been. Let us be grateful that on this topic one woman has spoken not in vain.

The course of inquiry which I propose for to-night will never

¹ A Paper read at a *Conversazione* of the Cambridge "Reform Club," Nov. 25, 1873, and printed shortly afterwards for private circulation. It is here reproduced without amendment or alteration of any kind; though it bears marks of the over-sanguine temperament of youth. A few passages in it have been included in more recent writings, which are still in print. (Manuscript footnote about 1923.)

lie far apart from that pursued by Mr and Mrs Mill, but will seldom exactly coincide with it. I propose to sketch in rough outline a portion of the ground that must be worked over if we would rightly examine whether the amelioration of the working classes has limits beyond which it cannot pass; whether it be true that the resources of the world will not suffice for giving to more than a small portion of its inhabitants an education in youth and an occupation in after-life, similar to those which we are now wont to consider proper to gentlemen.

There are large numbers of unselfish men and women who are eager to hope, but who find themselves impelled to doubt. From time to time there reaches them some startling but well-authenticated account of working men, who have misspent their increased wages, who have shown little concern for anything higher than the pleasures of eating and drinking, or possibly those amusements which constitute the miserable creature who is called the sporting man. From time to time they meet with some instance in which servants have made use of such improvements as have already taken place in their position only to adopt a tone of captious frivolity and of almost ostentatious indifference to the interests of those whom they have undertaken to serve. Thus minds unwilling to doubt are harassed by doubts such as these: whether a large amount of hard, nay, of coarse manual work will not always have to be done much as it is done now; whether a very high degree of cultivation would not render those who have to perform this work unfit for it, and, since they cannot escape from it, unhappy in performing it; whether an attempt to extend beyond certain boundaries the mental cultivation of such workers must not be almost certain to fail, and would not, if successful, be almost a calamity; whether what we see and hear is not an indication that these dread boundaries are narrow and not far off.

The question for us to-night is, Can this doubt be resolved? The question is not whether all men will ultimately be equal—that they certainly will not—but whether progress may not go on steadily if slowly, till the official distinction between working man and gentleman has passed away; till, by occupation at least, every man is a gentleman. I hold that it may, and that it will.

Let us first make clear to ourselves what it is that is really implied by the distinction established in usage between the occupation of a gentleman and that of a working man. This usage cannot be defended etymologically, but words better for the purpose are not forthcoming. The distinction is well established, but singularly difficult of definition; and some of those accounts of it which may most readily suggest themselves must be, in explicit terms, set aside if we would free from confusion the inquiry what are the special circumstances of the working classes on the removal of which their progress depends.

Who are the working classes? Of course they are not all who work; for every man, however wealthy he may be, if he be in health and a true man, does work, and work hard. They are not all who live by selling the work of their hands, for our noblest sculptors do that. They are not all who for payment serve and obey, for officers in the army serve for payment, and most implicitly obey. They are not all who for payment perform disagreeable duties, for the surgeon is paid to perform duties most disagreeable. They are not even all those who work hard for low pay, for hard is the work and low is the pay of the highly cultured governess. Who then are they?

Is it not true that when we say a man belongs to the working classes we are thinking of the effect that his work produces on him rather than of the effect that he produces on his work? If a man's daily task tends to give culture and refinement to his character, do we not, however coarse the individual man may happen to be, say that his occupation is that of a gentleman? If a man's daily task tends to keep his character rude and coarse, do we not, however truly refined the individual man may happen to be, say that he belongs to the working classes?

It is needful to examine more closely the characteristics of those occupations which directly promote culture and refinement of character. They demand powers and activities of mind of various kinds. They demand the faculty of maintaining social intercourse with a large number of persons; they demand, in appearance at least, the kindly habit of promptly anticipating the feelings of others on minor points, of ready watchfulness to

avoid each trivial word or deed that may pain or annoy. These qualities are required for success, and they are therefore prepared in youth by a careful and a long continued education. Throughout life they are fostered and improved by exercise and by contact with persons who have similar qualities and require them of their associates. A man's sympathies thus become broad because he knows much of life, and is adapted for taking interest in what he knows. He has a wide range of pleasures; each intellectual energy, each artistic perception, each fellow-feeling with men far off and near, gives him a new capacity of enjoyment, removes from him more and more the desire for coarse delights. Wealth is not indispensable; but it frequently gives its aid. It has been said that there is in the breast of every man some portion of the spirit of a flunkey. Possibly: but we do not respect a man half as much as we are wont to suppose we do, simply on account of what he *has*. We are thinking of what he *is* far more than we are aware. The qualities which win entrance into a lucrative career or success in any career are in general, to some extent, admirable. Wealth, in general, implies a liberal education in youth, and throughout life broad interests and refined associations; and it is to these effects on character that the chief attractiveness of wealth is due. Were it true that the homage paid to a wealthy man is in general direct worship of wealth, the prospects of the world would be darker than they are, and the topic to be discussed to-night would require a different treatment.

It is not, however, sufficient to remark that the occupations which we are wont to call the occupations of gentlemen elevate the character and educate the faculties, directly and indirectly, by training and by association, in hours of business and in hours of leisure. We must also remark that such occupations exclude almost entirely those lowering influences which will force themselves upon our notice when we come to examine the lot of the working classes.

We must pause to notice the intermediate class—a class whose occupations bring with them some influences that do elevate and refine, and some influences that do not. The sculptor, the products of whose chisel add to his country's fame, who lives amid material and intellectual luxuries, is distinctly a

gentleman by profession. Proceeding downwards along the scale of art, we come to the highly skilled, highly paid artisan, who adorns our public buildings with their exquisite carvings; but there is another long space to be traversed before we arrive at the ordinary mason, who, with much exertion of muscle, and with but little energy of thought, rounds off a block, or makes it square, in obedience to explicit directions. At what point, then, in the scale do we first meet the working man? It is an important and a hopeful fact that we cannot say where—that the chain is absolutely continuous and unbroken. There is a tendency to regard somewhat slightly the distinction between skilled and unskilled labour. But the fact remains that artisans whose manual labour is not heavy, who are paid chiefly for their skill and the work of their brains, are as conscious of the superiority of their lot over that of their poorer brethren as is the highest nobleman of the land. And they are right; for their lot does just offer them the opportunity of being gentlemen in spirit and in truth; and, to the great honour of the age be it said, many of them are steadily becoming gentlemen. They are steadily striving upwards; steadily aiming at a higher and more liberal preparation in youth; steadily learning to value time and leisure for themselves, learning to care more for this than for mere increase of wages and material comforts; steadily developing independence and a manly respect for themselves, and, therefore, a courteous respect for others; they are steadily accepting the private and public duties of a citizen; steadily increasing their grasp of the truth that they are men, and not producing machines. They are steadily becoming gentlemen. Steadily: we hope to be able ere long to say “steadily and rapidly”; but even now the picture is not altogether a gloomy one.

But let us turn our eyes on that darker scene which the lot of unskilled labour presents. Let us look at those vast masses of men who, after long hours of hard and unintellectual toil, are wont to return to their narrow homes with bodies exhausted and with minds dull and sluggish. That men do habitually sustain hard corporeal work for eight, ten or twelve hours a day, is a fact so familiar to us that we scarcely realize the extent to which it governs the moral and mental history of the world; we scarcely realize how subtle, all-pervading and powerful may be

the effect of the work of man's body in dwarfing the growth of the man.

Some of us, perhaps, scarcely know what is meant by violent and sustained physical exertion. Others have perhaps had occasional experience of it on walking tours. We are then enlivened by fresh air and by novelty of scene, and a light book or newspaper is never more grateful to us than then. But have we ever, when thoroughly fatigued, attempted really hard study? I remember once in the Alps, after three days of exceptionally severe climbing, resolving to take a day's rest and to read a book on Philosophy. I was in good training. I was not conscious of any but physical weariness; but when the first occasion for hard thought arrived, my mind absolutely refused to move. I was immensely angry with it, but my anger was in vain. A horse when harnessed to a load too great for his strength will sometimes plant his feet firmly in the ground, and back. That is just what my mind did, and I was defeated. I have found that in like cases others are in like manner defeated, though their minds be well broken in to study, even though they be students by profession. And physiologists tell us that it must be so; that by severe bodily exertion the blood is for a time impoverished; that so the brain is not nourished, and that when the brain is not vigorous the mind cannot think.

Is it, then, a wonderful thing that the leisure hours of a wearied labourer are not always seized eagerly for self-improvement? It is often a toil to him to read; how, then, can he be incited by the pleasures of study to contend against fatigue? The man born deaf knows not the pleasure of music, but he lives among those who know it, and he believes in it. But the poor labourer may live and die without ever realizing what a joy there is in knowledge, or what delight in art; he may never have conceived how glorious a thing it is to be able to think and to feel about things and with many men. Still he may not be wholly unblessed. He may pass a tranquil and restful evening in a healthy and a happy home, and so may win some of the best happiness that is granted to man. He may, but alas! if he be uneducated, he is not likely to have a very healthy home.

There is another terrible fact about exhausting work. It is that physical fatigue in its extremest forms causes physical

unrest and physical cravings that hound a man on to his undoing. There is overwhelming evidence that in all those occupations in which men are tempted to consume in a day's work almost more strength than the vital forces of the body suffice to repair, and in which work is therefore systematically irregular, the pleasures of home cannot compete with the coarse pleasures of the public-house. A man may seek in the public-house, as in a club, the pleasures of social intercourse, which will well supplement the pleasures of home, and will raise, not lower him. He may: but if his toil has been fierce, and so his brain is dulled, he is apt to seek there only the coarser pleasures—drink, ignoble jests, and noise. We have all heard what rude manners have been formed by the rough work of the miners; but even among them the rougher the work of the body, the lower the condition of the mind. Iron miners, for instance, are a superior race to colliers. And if it be true that men such as these do value high wages mainly as affording them an opportunity of using their bodies as furnaces for the conversion of alcohol into fumes, is it not a somewhat pitiful amusement merely to abuse them? is it not more profitable to raise the inquiry—must these things be?

There are some things which we have decided must *not* be. A Parliamentary Commission reports in 1866 of the training which the world had given to men such as these, and by which it had formed them. It tells us how lads and maidens, not eight years old, toiled in the brickfields under monstrous loads from five o'clock in the morning till eight o'clock at night; their faces haggard, their limbs misshaped by their work, their bodies clothed with mud, and their minds saturated with filth. Yes; but there is a thing worse than even such filth: that is despair. We are told that "the worst feature of all is that the brickmakers despair of themselves"; and the words of one of them are quoted—"You might as well try to raise and improve the devil as a brickie, sir." These things are not to be; but things nearly as bad are now (1873); and these things have formed the men whose words and deeds are quoted, when it is argued that the working classes cannot rise.

Thus awful, then, is the picture of unduly sustained work that is heavy. But can light work, however long sustained,

bring no curse? Let us look at one more picture—our sad old picture of the needle-woman:

Work, work, work,
From weary chime to chime;
Work, work, work,
As prisoners work for crime.
Band and gusset and seam,
Seam and gusset and band,
Till the heart is sick and the brain benumbed
As well as the weary hand.

Work, work, work,
In the dull December light,
And work, work, work
When the weather is warm and bright;
While underneath the eaves
The brooding swallows cling,
As if to show me their sunny backs,
And twit me with the spring.

Oh! but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet—
With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet!
For only one short hour
To feel as I used to feel
Before I knew the woes of want
And the walk that costs a meal!

Oh! but for one short hour,
A respite, however brief!
No blessed leisure for love or hope,
But only time for grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart,
But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
Hinders needle and thread.

“The heart is sick and the brain benumbed. No blessed leisure for love or hope, but only time for grief.” Surely we see here how work may depress, and keep low “the working classes.” Man ought to work in order to live: his life, physical, moral, and mental, should be strengthened and made full by his work. But what if his inner life be almost crushed by his work? Is there not then suggested a terrible truth by the term working man, when applied to the unskilled labourer—a man whose occupation tends in a greater or less degree to make him live for little save for that work that is a burden to bear?

The ancients argued that Nature had ordained slavery: that without slaves the world could not progress; no one would have time for culture; no one could discharge the duties of a citizen. We have outgrown this belief; we have got to see how slavery dries up the sap of moral life in every state, at whose roots it is laid. But our thoughts are from youth upwards dominated by a Pagan belief not very different from the old one—the belief that it is an ordinance of Nature that multitudes of men must toil a weary toil, which may give to others the means of refinement and luxury, but which can afford to themselves scarce any opportunity of mental growth. May not the world outgrow this belief, as it has outgrown the other? It may, and it will.

We shall find it easier to see how exaggerated have been the difficulties which lie in the way of the removal of those circumstances which are distinctive of the lot of the working classes in the narrower sense of the term, if we allow ourselves a little license. Let us venture to picture to ourselves the state of a country from which such circumstances have been excluded. We shall have made much progress on our way, when we have seen that such a country would contain within it no seeds of the ruin of its material or moral prosperity; that it would be vigorous and full of healthy life.

The picture to be drawn will resemble in many respects those which have been shown to us by some socialists, who attributed to every man an unlimited capacity for those self-forgetting virtues that they found in their own breasts; who recklessly suggested means which were always insufficient and not seldom pernicious—recklessly, because their minds were untrained, and their souls absorbed in the consciousness of the grandeur of their ends. Their memories are therefore scorned by all but a very few men: but among those very few is included perhaps every single man who has ever studied patiently the wild deep poetry of their faiths. The schemes of the socialists involved a subversion of existing arrangements, according to which the work of every man is chosen by himself and the remuneration he obtains for it is decided by free competition; and their schemes have failed.

But such a subversion is not required for the country which we are to picture to ourselves. All that is required is that no one

in it should have any occupation which tends to make him anything else than a gentleman.

We have seen that manual and disagreeable work is now performed for payment at competition prices by gentlemen. It is true that their work involves mental training, and that the associations by which they are surrounded are refined; but, since the brain cannot always be in full action, it is clear that, provided these associations be retained, we need not exclude from our new society even manual and disagreeable work that does not give direct training to the mental faculties. A moderate amount of such work is not inconsistent with refinement. Such work has to be done by every lady who takes part in the duties of a hospital. She sees that it is necessary, and she does not shrink from it; for, if she did, she would not be a lady. It is true that such work is not now willingly undertaken for payment by an educated man, because in general he can obtain higher pay for doing work in which the training of his mental faculties can be turned to account; and because, as his associates would be uneducated, he would incur incidental discomforts and would lose social position. But, by the very definition of the circumstances of our supposed country, such deterrent motives would not exist in it. An educated man, who took a share of such little unskilled labour as required to be done in such a country, would find that such labour was highly paid, because without high pay no one would undertake it: and as his associates would be as refined as himself and in the same position, he would have no social discomforts to undergo. We all require for the purposes of health an hour or two daily of bodily exercise, during which the mind is at rest, and, in general, a few hours more of such work would not interfere materially with our true life.

We know then pretty clearly what are the conditions under which our fancied country is to start; and we may formulate them as follows. It is to have a fair share of wealth, and not an abnormally large population. Everyone is to have in youth an education which is thorough while it lasts, and which lasts long. No one is to do in the day so much manual work as will leave him little time or little aptitude for intellectual and artistic enjoyment in the evening. Since there will be nothing tending to render the individual coarse and unrefined, there will

be nothing tending to render society coarse and unrefined. Exceptional morbid growths must exist in every society; but otherwise every man will be surrounded from birth upwards by almost all the influences which we have seen to be at present characteristic of the occupations of gentlemen; everyone who is not a gentleman will have himself alone to blame for it. This, then, is the condition in which our fancied country is to be when we first consider it. We have to inquire whether this condition can be maintained. Let us examine such obstacles to its maintenance as may be supposed to exist.

First, it may be argued that a great diminution of the hours of manual labour below their present amount would prevent the industry of the country from meeting its requirements, so that the wealth of the country could not be sustained. This objection is an instance of the difficulty with which we perceive things that are familiar. We all know that the progress of science and invention has multiplied enormously the efficiency of labour within the last century. We all know that even in agriculture the returns to labour have much increased; and most of us have heard that, if farmers had that little knowledge which is even now obtainable, the whole of the produce consumed in a country as thickly populated as England is, might be grown in it with less proportionate expenditure of labour than that now required. In most other branches of production the increase in the efficiency of labour has been almost past computation. Take a cotton factory for example. We must allow for the expense of making and driving the machinery; but when this is provided, a man working it will spin more than three thousand times as rapidly as he could by hand. With numbers such as this before us, can we believe that the resources of the world would fail if the hours of our daily labour were halved, and yet believe that our simple ancestors obtained an adequate subsistence? Should we not be driven to the conclusion that the accounts we have received of men who lived and flourished before the invention of the steam engine are myths? But, further, the only labour excluded from our new society is that which is so conducted as to stunt the mental growth, preventing people from rising out of old narrow grooves of thought and feeling, from obtaining increased knowledge, higher tastes, and more comprehensive interests. Now it

is to such stunting almost alone that indolence is due. Remove it, and work rightly applied, the vigorous exercise of faculties would be the main aim of every man. The total work done per head of the population would be greater than now. Less of it would be devoted directly to the increase of material wealth, but far more would be indirectly efficient for this end. Knowledge is power; and man would have knowledge. Inventions would increase, and they would be readily applied. All labour would be skilled, and there would be no premium on setting men to tasks that required no skill. The work which man directs the forces of nature to perform for him, would thus be incomparably greater than now. In the competition for employment between man's muscles and the forces of nature, victory would remain with the latter. This competition has been sustained so long, only because the supply of mere muscular force fit only to contend against nature has been so plentiful, and the supply of skill fit to direct nature has been so scarce. Recollect that even with the imperfect machinery we now have one pound of coal will raise a hundred pounds twelve thousand feet high; and that the daily work of a man cannot exceed this even if we work him into the dust, and obtain, in lieu of a man's life, so much pulling and pushing and hewing and hammering. Recollect that with an ordinary tide the water rushing in and out of a reservoir of a square mile in area, even if nine-tenths of its force were wasted through imperfections of machinery, would do as much work in a day as the muscles of one hundred thousand men.

But, secondly, it might be argued that short hours of work might ruin the foreign trade of the country. Such a doctrine might derive support from the language of some of our public men, even in recent times. But it is a fallacy. It contradicts a proposition which no one who had thought on the subject would dream of deliberately denying; one which is as well established and as rigorously proved as any in Euclid. This proposition is, that low wages, if common to all occupations, cannot enable one country to undersell another. A high rate of wages, or short hours of work, if common to all industries, cannot cause a country to be undersold: though, if they were confined to some industries, they might of course cause these particular industries to be undersold.

A danger, however, might be incurred by high wages or short hours of work. If the rate of profits were reduced thereby, capital would be tempted to migrate. But the country we are picturing to ourselves would be specially defended against such a danger. To begin with, its labourers would be highly skilled. And the history of the progress of manufactures in England and throughout the world proves that, if the number of hours' work per day be given, the capitalist can afford to pay almost any rate of wages in order to secure highly skilled labour. But such labour, partly as a cause and partly as a consequence of its skill, has in general not very many hours in its working-day; and for every hour, during which his untiring machinery is lying idle, the capitalist suffers loss. In our society the hours of labour are to be very short, but it does not follow that the hours of work of the machinery would be short too. The obstacles that now exist to the general adoption of the system of working in "shifts" are due partly to the unenlightened selfishness of workmen, partly to their careless and dishonest maltreatment of machinery, but mainly to the fact that, with the present number of hours' work done by each shift, one shift would have to commence work very early and the other to end work very late. But in our new society none of these obstacles would exist. A man would not in general perform manual work for more than six hours a day. Thus one set would work perhaps from 6 to 9.30 a.m. and from 2 to 4.30 p.m.; the other set from 10 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. and from 5 to 7.30 p.m. In heavy work three sets of men might each work a shift of four hours. For we must not suppose that an educated man would consent for any pay whatever to continue exhausting physical work so far as to cause the stupefaction of his intellect. For his severe work he would be highly paid; and, if necessary, he might add to his income by a few hours of lighter work.

But there is another special reason why capital should not leave our fancied country. All industries might be partly conducted by capitalists with labourers working for hire under them. But in many industries production would be mainly carried on, as Mr and Mrs Mill have prophesied, by "the association of labourers among themselves on terms of equality, collectively owning the capital with which they carry on their

operations, and working under managers elected and removable by themselves." It will be said that such associations have been tried, and have seldom succeeded. They have not been tried. What have been tried are associations among, comparatively speaking, uneducated men, men who are unable to follow even the financial calculations that are required for an extensive and complicated business. What have to be tried are associations among men as highly educated as are manufacturers now. Such associations could not but succeed; and the capital that belonged to them would run no risk of being separated from them.

Again, it might be objected that it would be impossible to maintain that high standard of education which we have throughout assumed. Some parents, it might be said, would neglect their duty to their children. A class of unskilled labourers might again grow up, competing for hard toil, ready to sacrifice the means of their own culture to increased wages and physical indulgences. This class would marry improvidently: an increased population would press on the means of subsistence, the difficulty of imparting a high education would increase, and society would retrograde until it had arrived at a position similar to that which it now occupies—a position in which man, to a great extent, ignores his duty of anticipating, before he marries, the requirements of the bodily and mental nurture of his children; and thereby compels Nature, with her sorrowful but stern hands, to thin out the young lives before they grow up to misery. This is the danger most to be dreaded. But even this danger is not so great as it appears. An educated man would not only have a high conception of his duty to his children; he would be deeply sensitive to the social degradation which he and they would incur if he failed in it. Society would be keenly alive to the peril to itself of such failure, and would punish it as a form of treason against the State. Education would be unfailingly maintained. Every man, before he married, would prepare for the expense of properly educating his family; since he could not, even if he would, shirk this expense. The population would, therefore, be retained within due limits. Thus every single condition would be fulfilled which was requisite for the continued and progressive prosperity of the country which we have pictured. It would grow in wealth—material and mental.

Vigorous mental faculties imply continual activity. Work, in its best sense, the healthy energetic exercise of faculties, is the aim of life, is life itself; and in this sense every one would be a worker more completely than now. But men would have ceased to carry on mere physical work to such an extent as to dull their higher energies. In the bad sense, in which work crushes a man's life, it would be regarded as a wrong. The active vigour of the people would continually increase; and in each successive generation it would be more completely true that every man was by occupation a gentleman.

Such a state of society in a country would then, if once attained, be ever maintained. Such a country would have in it the conditions of vitality more fully satisfied than any other country would. Is it not, then, a reasonable thing to believe that every movement towards the attainment of such conditions has vitality also? And, if we look around us, do we not find that we are steadily, if slowly, moving towards that attainment? All ranks of society are rising; on the whole they are better and more cultivated than their forefathers were; they are no less eager to do, and they are much more powerful greatly to bear, and greatly to forbear. Read of the ignorant crime that accompanied popular outbreaks even a generation ago, and then look at the orderly meetings by which the people now expresses its will. In the broad backbone of moral strength our people have never been wanting; but now, by the aid of education, their moral strength is gaining new life. Look at the grand conduct of the Lancashire artisans during the cotton famine. In old times of ignorance they would have struggled violently against the inevitable; but now their knowledge restrained them, and they suffered with quiet constancy. Nay, more; the Northern army was destroying the cotton on which their bread depended; yet, firm in their allegiance to the struggle against slavery, they never faltered. Listen to the reply that President Lincoln gave to the address of sympathy that they sent him: "Under the circumstances, I cannot but regard your decisive utterances upon the question as an instance of sublime Christian heroism which has not been surpassed in any age or country."

And thus it is. In every age of the world people have delighted

in piquant stories, which tell of some local or partial retrogression; but, if we look at the broad facts of history, we find progress. Of the progress of the artisans we have spoken; how all are rising; how some are, in the true sense of the word, becoming gentlemen. Some few of them may, indeed, interpret this to mean little more than becoming, at times, dandyfied perambulating machines, for the display of the cheaper triumphs of the haberdasher and the tailor. But many artisans are becoming artists, who take a proud interest in the glories of their art, are truly citizens, are courteous, gentle, thoughtful, able, and independent men. Even if we take the ruder labourers, we find something to set off against the accounts of their habits of indulging in drink and rough pastimes. Such habits were but a short time ago common among country squires. But country squires had in them the seeds of better things, and when a new age opened to them broader and higher interests, they threw off the old and narrow ones. And our colliers even are doing the same. A series of reports by well-informed, unprejudiced men proves that, on the whole, their faults have diminished and their virtues increased. And the late Parliamentary Committee has shown how a solid foundation of their further improvement has been laid in the improvement of their houses, how they are now learning to take pride in their homes and to love them.

What limits are there then to the rapidity of our progress? How are we let or hindered? History shows that on a basis of mere energy a marvellous edifice can be speedily erected. Two centuries ago England exported raw in exchange for manufactured produce; she had no mechanical skill, and imported foreigners one after another to overcome her engineering difficulties. A century ago the agriculture of the Scotch lowlands seemed as hopelessly bad as any in Europe: now it is a model school for the world. It was mainly from the rough uncultured population of the trading cities of Italy and the Netherlands that there arose that bright glory of art which in the middle ages illumined all Europe. Why then should not the energy which our working classes have, when once turned in the right direction, lead to a progress as rapid and as brilliant?

Alas! there is one great hindrance. One of the first uses we are making of our increased knowledge is, as it ought to be, to save from disease and want multitudes who, even a few years

ago, would have sunk under their influence. As a result, population is increasing rapidly. The truth that every father owes to his children the duty of providing them with a lot in life, happier and better than his own, has not yet been grasped. Men who have been brought up, to use their own phrase, "anyhow," are contented that their children should be brought up "anyhow." Thus there is kept up a constant supply of unskilled labourers, who have nothing but their hands to offer for hire, and who offer these without stint or reserve. Thus competition for food dogs the heels of progress, and perpetually hinders it. The first most difficult step is to get rid of this competition. It is difficult, but it can be made. We shall in vain tell the working man that he must raise his standard while we do not raise ours: he will laugh at us, or glare on us. But let the same measure be meted out to all. Let this one principle of action be adopted by us all—*just as a man who has borrowed money is bound to pay it back with interest, so a man is bound to give to his children an education better and more thorough than he has himself received.* This he is bound to do. We may hope that many will do more than they are bound to do.

And what is society bound to do? It is bound to see that no child grows up in ignorance, able only to be a producing machine, unable to be a man; himself low and limited in his thoughts, his tastes, his feelings, his interests and his aims, to some extent probably low and limited in his virtues, and in every way lowering and limiting his neighbours. It is bound to compel children, and to help them, to take the first step upwards; and it is bound to help them to make, if they will, many steps upwards. If the growth of a man's mind, if his spiritual cultivation be the end of life; and material wealth, houses and horses, carpets and French cookery merely means; what temporary pecuniary loss can we set against the education of the nation? It is abundantly clear that, unless we can compel children into the schools, we cannot enable multitudes of them to escape from a life of ignorance so complete that they cannot fail to be brutish and degraded. It is not denied that a school-board alone can save from this ruin those children whose parents are averse to education; that at least in our towns there are many whom no voluntary system can reach. And yet throughout the length and breadth of the country we are startled by finding that some

of those, who are most anxious that the Bible should be taught, are those who are most unwilling that a State, which has with success invested capital in telegraphs, should now venture to invest capital in men; that they are those who are most ready to urge men "not to rush headlong on" a rate of some pence in the pound. I will only urge that, for consistency, such people should teach an expurgated edition of the Bible. Let every page be cut out in which it is implied that material wealth may be less important than the culture of the man himself, the nurture of his inner life. They will not have heavy work, they will not have many pages left to teach.

But in truth material welfare, as well as spiritual, will be the lot of that country which, by public and private action, devotes its full energies to raising the standard of the culture of the people. The difference between the value of the labour of the educated man and that of the uneducated is, as a rule, many times greater than the difference between the costs of their education. If the difference between the value of the work done by a good breed of horses and a bad one be much greater than the difference between the costs of maintaining them, can there be any doubt that the good breed will drive out the bad one? But no individual reaps the full gains derived from educating a child, from taking a step towards supplanting the race of uneducated labourers by a race of educated labourers. Still, if the State work for this end, the State will gain. If we all work together for this end, we shall all gain together. Then will be removed every let and hindrance to the attainment of that condition which we have pictured—a condition which, if it be hard to be attained, is easy to be maintained—a condition in which every man's energies and activities will be fully developed—a condition in which men will work not less than they do now but more; only, to use a good old phrase, most of their work will be a work of love; it will be a work which, whether conducted for payment or not, will exercise and nurture their faculties. Manual work, carried to such an excess that it leaves little opportunity for the free growth of his higher nature, that alone will be absent; but that *will* be absent. In so far as the working classes are men who have such excessive work to do, in so far will the working classes have been abolished.