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**THE SCOTTISH
BANKING SYSTEM**

When any important branch of national polity has been impeached, arraigned, and brought to stand its trial before the bar of public opinion, it is satisfactory to know that the subject has been thoroughly investigated, since a searching investigation alone can excuse a verdict, be it of acquittal or of condemnation. That no man can be twice tried upon the same indictment, is a proud boast of the British constitution. It would be well if the same rule were always applied when mightier interests than those of individuals are at stake!

It is just eighteen years ago since a ministry, feeble in practice, but strong in speculative theory, ventured to put forth its hand against the monetary system of Scotland, under shelter of which the country had improved and thriven to a degree of prosperity never experienced to the north of the Tweed before, and at a

ratio which far exceeded that of any other nation in Europe. In the short space of half a century, the whole face of the country had changed. From a bleak, barren, and dilapidated region – for such she undoubtedly was for many years subsequent to the last rebellion of 1745 – Scotland became, with the shortest possible transition, a favourite land of husbandry. Mosses and muirs, which, at all events since the forgotten days of the Jameses, had borne no other crop than rugged bent or stubborn heather, were subjected to the discipline of the plough, and produced a golden harvest of grain. Woods sprang up as if by magic, from the roots of the old Caledonian forest, to hide the nakedness of the land and redeem the national reproach. The towns and boroughs – which had never recovered from the terrible blow inflicted upon them by the failure of the Darien scheme, in which nearly the whole capital of Scotland was embarked, and which had lost the greater and more valuable portion of their trade, and dwindled down into almost hopeless insignificance – began to revive again. New manufactures were established, the older ones were extended; the fisheries rose immensely in magnitude and importance; the mountainous districts were made profitable by the breeding and export of sheep and cattle; and even the rugged shores of the Hebrides furnished for a time a most profitable article of commerce. All this took place in a poor and very neglected country. England for a long time knew little of what was going on in the north; perhaps her eyes were then riveted, with more than the anxiety of a gamester's, upon the great stakes for

which she was contending on the red battle-fields of Europe. This much she knew, that Scotland could produce in time of need – ay, and did produce – levies of men, whose high heroic courage, steady discipline, and daring intrepidity, were the theme even of their enemies' admiration; and of these services she was, and is, justly and generously proud. But of the social condition of their northern neighbours, we repeat, the body of the English, at this period, were singularly ignorant. We had not very long before suffered the penalty of adherence to a fallen cause. We were considered to be still rather too irritable and dangerous for much interference; perhaps, also, it was thought that it might be *cheaper* to leave us to ourselves – and, so long as we paid our proportion of the common taxation, not to enquire too curiously into our own domestic system of management. In all respects, therefore, notwithstanding the war, we flourished.

Peace came; and with peace, as a matter of course, a more searching investigation into the internal state of the country. Then, for the first time, Scotland became a sort of marvel. Our agriculture, our commerce, our internal resources, so strangely and quickly augmented, attracted the attention of the politician; and the question was speedily mooted – "How, and by what means, have so poor a nation as the Scotch attained so singular a position?" And truly the facts were startling, and such as might justify an enquiry. *The whole coined money in Scotland, at the date of the Union, was known not to have exceeded the sum of one million sterling; and a large part of this paltry sum*

was necessarily hoarded, and so withdrawn from circulation, throughout the whole period of the intestine troubles. That single million, therefore, held the place both of that part of the wealth of the country which is now represented by bank-notes, and also of that which is now deposited in the hands of the bankers. Aladdin's palace, which sprang up in one night at the bidding of the slaves of the lamp, could scarcely have been a greater paradox to the aged Sultan, than this increase of prosperity on the part of Scotland was to our southern legislators. How to explain the metamorphosis seemed for a time a mystery. One thing, at all events, was clear – that English gold had no participation in the change. North of the Tweed, a guinea was a suspected article, apt to be rung, and examined, and curiously weighed, before it was received in currency, and even then accepted with a certain reluctance. The favourite medium of circulation was paper-notes of one pound each, of somewhat dubious complexion to the eye of the stranger, but received and circulated by the Scottish people with the utmost readiness and confidence. The answer to the question was a short one – "We have prospered through our banking system."

It was some time – not until ten years of peace had elapsed – before any open attack was made upon that system, which had proved, if facts can prove any thing, the greatest imaginable boon to the nation; and which, be it always specially remembered, did not originate with the state, but with private individuals – upright, honourable, and patriotic men – who better deserve a monument

to their memories, were that required, than the most successful conqueror whose march is on humbled thrones. During that period much was done with regard to internal relations, of which we, in common with every Scotsman who retains one spark of patriotic feeling, most heartily disapprove. The tendency towards centralization in London – the inevitable consequence of the Union treaty – was not only not counteracted, as we maintain it ought to have been, by a wise and paternal government, but forced and hurried on by an excessive exercise of power. Every remnant of our ancient institutions that could be rooted up, and all our local boards with hardly one exception, were transferred to the seat of government – regardless of the drain that was thereby made from the proper resources of the country, and the deep heart-burnings that such a system must necessarily create amongst a proud, observant, and jealous, though enduring people. These things we shall not dilate upon – though the temptation is triply strong, and we know how keenly that subject is felt by many of the best and most loyal of the land; – but in the mean time we shall pass over this period of gradual humiliation, and come at once to the first great attack that was made upon the source of all our national prosperity.

At the close of the year 1825, there arrived a period of public distress, followed by a panic which fortunately has but rarely been felt in this country. We attributed it then, and we attribute it now, to an unexampled glut in the money market, which we hold to be in this trading country the most destructive of any,

saving and excepting a glut in agricultural produce and labour; and for this very plain reason, that a glut of money resolves itself sooner or later into a glut of goods, thereby carrying the amount of production in the country far beyond the amount of the consumption and demand, and so necessarily for a time closing the door against all the outlets of industry. But it is of very little consequence to our present purpose how that distress was created. The effects were very grievous. In England the panic took effect, and a run was made upon the banks for gold; the consequence of which was, that a number of the private and joint-stock establishments failed. In Scotland, where the distress was certainly not less in proportion, there was not only no failure on the part of the banks, but no run, and no diminution in the usual credits. At this time, it is very proper to remark, that England had been thoroughly centralized; that is, that the whole course and tendency of its money market was to London; and indeed, for purposes of trade, the principal circulation of the important districts of Lancashire and others, seems to have been bills of exchange payable in London, with from twenty to fifty endorsements on each. With us such a system was unknown. Scotland, then as now, and we devoutly trust for ever, had her own internal circulation, and neither took nor gave, except when statutorily compelled, beyond the limits of her own jurisdiction.

The attention of the ministry was immediately directed to an investigation of the cause of the general distress. This was right and proper, and precisely what a cautious and well-

meaning government ought to do under such circumstances, in order to prevent, if possible, the recurrence of a similar disaster. But unfortunately the ministers of the day, though well-meaning, were any thing but cautious. The majority of them were imbued with speculative notions of political economy. They were disciples of a school which rejects facts and cleaves implicitly to theory – men who threw considerations of circumstance, time, and national characteristics aside, as prejudices too low for even the momentary regard of a philosopher; in short, they wished to introduce the standard of an untried rule as the *ne plus ultra* of human sagacity, and remorselessly to overturn every existing institution – no matter at what sacrifice or risk – if it only seemed to stand in the way of the operation of their darling theories.

It was easy for men so tutored and trained, to overlook the necessary effect which fluctuation of the seasons at home and abroad must have upon the prices of either produce, of the effect of these prices upon manufactures, and the manifest and established fact that there is a point when *production* will exceed *consumption*. This state of things it is totally beyond the power of man to remedy. The facts of nature will always be found too strong for the theories of the political economist; but our rulers in the plenitude of their wisdom thought otherwise; and began to search within the social system for a cause of that disorder, which was neither more nor less than an epidemic, as totally beyond the reach of their prevention as if the College of Physicians were to issue their solemn fiat – "This year there shall be neither cholera

nor fever." In searching for the cause, however, they stumbled upon an effect which they at once adroitly magnified into a cause. In England there had been a marked increase during the rise in the issue of the country banks. Here was an opportune discovery for the champions of metallic currency! and, accordingly, the paper system was prostrated in England to make way for its more glittering, often more slippery, and always more expensive rival.

Scotland, in the mean time, was going on in her old and steady footing. One and all of the banks – chartered, joint-stock, and private – were as firm as if each had been backed by the whole weight and responsibility of the state. Between them and the public the most perfect confidence subsisted; and very nobly indeed, in that time of trial and distress, did the banks behave, in maintaining credits grievously depressed for the moment, but certain to revive with the return of general prosperity. This mutual confidence is the great secret of the success of the Scottish system. The banker is to the trader as a commercial physician – sometimes restrictive, sometimes liberal, but always a judicious friend. It is impossible to separate the interests of the two; and as they have risen together, so, in the event of a change, must they both equally decline. But we will not anticipate our defence, before we have adduced the facts upon which that defence is founded.

All at once, and without sounding any note of preparation, the ministry announced, that after the expiry of a given season, the whole Scottish banking system was to be changed, all paper

currency under the five-pound note abolished, and a metallic circulation introduced and enforced. If Ben Nevis had burst forth at once in the full thunder of volcanic eruption, we could not have been more astonished. What! without complaint or enquiry – without the shadow of a cause shown, or a reason assigned, except it might be that reason – to a Scotsman the most unpalatable of all – the propriety of assimilating the institutions of both countries; in other words, of coercing Scotland to adopt the habit of her neighbours – to excavate the foundation-stone of our whole prosperity, and make us the victims of a theory which, even if sound, could not profess to give us one tittle more advantage than the course which we had so long pursued! We believe that if the annals of legislation were searched through, we could not find a parallel case of such wanton and unprovoked temerity!

We said then, and we say now, with even more emphatic earnestness, it is the curse of the age that every thing is to be managed by political economy and philosophy, and that local knowledge is to be utterly disregarded in the management of local interests. Centralize and assimilate – these were the watchwords of the ministers of that day; and for aught that we can see, Sir Robert Peel is determined to persevere in the theory. What excuse was there, *then*, for the attempt of any assimilation between the banking systems of the two countries? If it had been alleged that the Scotch paper currency was surreptitiously carried into England – that it was there supplanting the legal

currency, and absorbing the gold in exchange, there might have been some show of reason for a slight modification of the system – at all events for a more stringent preventive check. But no such allegation was made. The most determined hater of the Scottish banks knew well that their paper never crossed the Border; for the very best of all possible reasons, that the notes were not a legal tender, and that five persons out of six to whom they might happen to be offered, would unhesitatingly reject them. Again, to absorb the gold would have been neither more nor less than partially to carry out the views entertained by the supporters of a metallic currency, and therefore surely, in their eyes, a venal, if not a meritorious, offence. But such was not the fact. In Scotland there was no such a thing known as a gold circulation. The fishermen, the cattle dealers, and the small traders, would not so much as take it; and the stranger who, through ignorance, had provided himself with a stock of the precious metal, was forced to have recourse to a Scottish bank in order to have it exchanged for notes. Beyond what lay in the bank reserves, there was literally none in the country; and therefore any idea of the interference of the currencies was too preposterous to be maintained.

But it is not here, or at this point, that we intend to discuss the propriety of the measure which was then proposed. Unfortunately, we are called upon to do so with reference to our own times, as well as to those which are now matter of history; and the remarks which we shall have occasion to offer

are equally applicable to the one as to the other. In the mean time, let us see how the mere alarm engendered by that unlucky proposition affected Scotland, and what steps were taken to resist the threatened change.

First of all, we have it in evidence that the open threat of the ministerial scheme produced within the country more actual distress and bankruptcies than had previously occurred during the period of the previous depression. This may seem a paradox to a stranger; but the reason will be readily understood, and the fact candidly admitted by every one who is conversant with the Scottish system of banking. A short explanation may be necessary. One large department of the business of every bank was the granting of cash-credits; a method of accommodation to the public which the experience of *ninety-four years* (cash-credits were granted by the Royal Bank of Scotland so early as 1729) had shown not only to be the safest to the bank, but by far the most advantageous to the public. Indeed it is not too much to say, that were those credits prohibited, and no other alteration made in the existing system, the mainspring of the machinery of Scottish banking would be broken, and its general utility impaired. With that point we shall deal more fully when we come to the consideration of the system in detail; at present it is only necessary to remark, that these credits had been maintained unimpaired during the period of depression, and were the fortunate means of averting ruin from many.

But the attitude which the ministry assumed was so

formidable, and the prospect of a sweeping change so alarming, that the bankers were forced in self-defence, though sorely against their will, to make preparation for the worst contingencies. They were, so to speak, compelled to follow the example of England in 1745 – to recall all their outlying forces from abroad, concentrate them at home, and leave their allies to fight their own battles as they best could, and to conquer or fall according to their ability or weakness. Their first step was rigidly to refuse the granting of any new cash-credits; their second, to withdraw – with as much tenderness as might be, but still to withdraw – those which were already in existence. It was then that the country at large began to feel how terribly their interests were compromised. The trader, who was driving an active business on the strength of his cash-credit, and turning over the amount of his bank-account it may be thirty times in the course of the year, found himself suddenly brought to a standstill. The country gentleman, in the midst of his agricultural improvements, and at the very moment when their cessation would undo all that he had hitherto accomplished, was compelled either to desist for want of ready money, and throw his labourers on the parish, or to have recourse to the pernicious system of discounting bills at a ruinous rate of interest. The manufacturer, in despair, was reduced to close his works, and the operatives went forth to combine, or starve, or burn; for the hand of the ministry was upon them likewise, and their burden was sorer than their masters'.

These were the first fruits of the proposed metallic currency; and it soon became evident to all, that nothing was left for Scotland, if she wished to escape from universal ruin, but to offer a firm and most determined resistance. The struggle was felt throughout the length and breadth of the land to be one, which, if it did not actually involve existence, involved a greater commercial interest than had been at stake for more than a century before. The combination which took place in consequence was so extraordinary, that we may be pardoned if we express our wonder how any minister who witnessed it, can at this hour have the temerity to return to the charge. Party-spirit, always higher and keener in Scotland than elsewhere, was at once forgotten in the common cause. All ranks, from the peer to the peasant, rose up in wrath at the proposed innovation; and from every county, city, town, village, and corporation in the kingdom, indignant remonstrances were forwarded to the foot of the Throne, and to the Imperial Parliament of Great Britain. It was assuredly a dangerous experiment to make with a proud and jealous people. Old watchwords and old recollections, buried spells which it were safer to leave alone, began to revive amongst us; and many a lighter act of aggression, which had been passed over at the moment in silence, was then recalled and canvassed, and magnified into a serious grievance. In short, Scotland, from the bottom of her heart, felt herself most deeply insulted.

It was at this time that the celebrated letters of Malachi Malagrowther appeared. To the general sentiments contained in

that work, we subscribe without the slightest hesitation. Strong language is usually to be deprecated, but there are seasons when no language can be too strong. We think meanly of the man who can sit down to round his periods, and prune his language, and reduce his feelings to the level of cold mediocrity, when he knows that the best interests of his country are at stake, and that he is her chosen champion. And such, most assuredly, and beyond all comparison, was Sir Walter Scott. He went into that conflict like a giant, in a manner that disdained conventionalisms; he neither begged, nor prayed, nor conceded, but took his firm ground on the chartered liberties of his country, and spoke out in such manly and patriotic accents as Scotland has rarely heard since the days of Fletcher and Belhaven. All honour be to his memory! Were it for that good work alone, his name ought for ever to be immortal.

In consequence, ministry were condescending enough to allow a Parliamentary enquiry. Even that was not granted readily, as the prevailing impression in the cabinet seemed to be, that Scottish affairs were of too slight importance to occupy the time of the Imperial Parliament. The old country might be dealt with summarily, and left to remonstrate at its leisure. But the spirited resistance of our representatives, and it is no less incumbent upon us to add, that innate sense of justice in Englishmen, which will not suffer any one to be condemned unheard, procured us the investigation, upon the issue of which we were willing to rest our cause. The Scottish banking system underwent the severest of all

scrutinies before committees of the Houses of Peers and of the Commons; and the following was the nature of the reports.

The committee of the House of Commons, after recapitulating the leading points which were brought out in evidence before them, came to the following conclusions – which it is very important to bring before the public now, as they refer not only to the deductions which the committee had formed from the history of the past, but to the special reasons which were to influence the legislature in future and prospective change.

"Upon a review of the evidence tendered to your committee, and forming their judgment upon that evidence, your committee *cannot advise* that a law should now be passed, prohibiting, from a period to be therein determined, the future issue in Scotland of notes below five pounds: —

"There are, in the opinion of your committee, sufficient grounds in the experience of the past for permitting another trial to be made of the compatibility of a paper circulation in Scotland with a circulation of specie in this country.

"Looking at the amount of notes current in Scotland, below the value of five pounds, and comparing it with the total amount of the paper currency of that country, *it is very difficult to foresee the consequences of a law which should prohibit the future issue of notes constituting so large a proportion of the whole circulation.*

"Your committee are certainly not convinced that it would affect the cash-credits to the extent apprehended by some of the witnesses; but they are unwilling, without stronger proof of necessity, to incur the risk of deranging,

from any cause whatever, a system admirably calculated, in their opinion, to economize the use of capital, to excite and cherish a spirit of useful enterprise, and even to promote the moral habits of the people, by the direct inducements which it holds out to the maintenance of a character for industry, integrity, and prudence.

"At the same time that your committee recommend that the system of currency which has for so long a period prevailed in Scotland, should not, under existing circumstances, be disturbed, they feel it to be their duty to add, that they have formed their judgment upon a reference to the past, and upon the review of a state of things which may hereafter be considerably varied by the increasing wealth and commerce of Scotland, by the rapid extension of her commercial intercourse with England, and by the new circumstances that may affect that intercourse after the re-establishment of a metallic currency in this country.

"Apart from these general observations, bearing upon the conclusions at which they have arrived, there are two circumstances to which your committee must more particularly advert.

"It is evident that if the small notes issued in Scotland should be current beyond the Border, they would have the effect, in proportion as their circulation should extend itself, of displacing the specie, and even in some degree the local currency of England. Such an interference with the system established for England would be a manifest and gross injustice to the bankers of this part of the empire. If it should take place, and it should be found impossible to

frame a law consistent with sound and just principles of legislation, effectually restricting the circulation of Scotch notes within the limits of Scotland, there will be, in the opinion of your committee, no alternative but the extension to Scotland of the principle which the legislature has determined to apply to this country.

"The other circumstances to which your committee meant to refer, as bearing materially upon their present decision, will arise in the event of a considerable increase in the crime of forgery. Your committee called for returns of the number of prosecutions and convictions for forgery, and the offence of passing forged notes, during the last twenty years in Scotland, which returns will be found in the appendix. There appears to have been, during that period, no prosecutions for the crime of forgery; to have been eighty-six prosecutions for the offence of issuing forged promissory notes – fifty-two convictions; and eight instances in which the capital sentence of the law has been carried into effect."

This may, on the whole, be considered as an impartial report; and, as it is as well in every case to disencumber a question from specialties, we shall state here that experience has since shown that there has been no tendency whatever to the introduction of Scottish notes into England. With regard to the other special point referred to by the committee – that of forgery – such a thing as a forged bank-note is now unknown in Scotland. The evidence taken before the last committee on banks of issue in 1841, established the fact, that since the improved steel plates

were brought into general use, there has never been a forgery of a note. Such being the case, it is unnecessary here to dispute the wisdom of that policy which would leave a great national institution at the mercy of a single forger. The experience of this last month alone might show how wretchedly that test would operate if applied even to the Bank of England.

Setting these specialties aside, the only possibly grounds which this committee saw for any future legislative interference were, "the increasing wealth and commerce of Scotland, the rapid extension of her commercial intercourse with England, and the circumstances which may affect that intercourse after the re-establishment of an English metallic currency." To us the first part of this reservation sounds somewhat like a threat of future bleeding when Scotland shall have become more pury and plethoric. Nevertheless we are ready to join issue with our opponents on any of these grounds.

The report of the Lords was even more favourable; and, at the risk of being thought tedious, we cannot refrain from inserting their admirable digest of the evidence, which, for candour and clearness, might be taken as a universal model.

"With respect to Scotland, it is to be remarked, that during the period from 1766 to 1797, when no small notes were by law issuable in England, the portion of the currency in Scotland in which payments under five pounds were made, continued to consist almost entirely of notes of £1 and £1, 1s.; and that no inconvenience

is known to have resulted from this difference in the currency of the two countries. This circumstance, amongst others, tends to prove that uniformity, however desirable, is not indispensably necessary. It is also proved, by the evidence and by the documents, that the banks of Scotland, whether chartered or joint-stock companies or private establishments, *have for more than a century exhibited a stability which the committee believe to be unexampled in the history of banking*; that they supported themselves from 1797 to 1812 without any protection from the restriction by which the Bank of England and that of Ireland were relieved from cash payments; that there was little demand for gold during the late embarrassments in the circulation; and that, *in the whole period of their establishment*, there are not more than two or three instances of bankruptcy. As, during the whole of this period, a large portion of their issues consisted almost entirely of notes not exceeding £1 or £1, 1s., there is the strongest reason for concluding, that, as far as respects the banks of Scotland, the issue of paper of that description *has been found compatible with the highest degree of solidity*; and that there is not, therefore, while they are conducted upon their present system, sufficient ground for proposing any alteration, with the view of adding to a solidity which has been so long sufficiently established.

"This solidity appears to derive a great support from the constant exchange of notes between the different banks, by which they become checks upon each other, and by which any over-issue is subject to immediate observation and correction.

"There is also one part of the system, which is stated by all the witnesses (in the opinion of the committee very justly stated) to have had the best effects upon the people of Scotland, and particularly upon the middling and poorer classes of society, in producing and encouraging habits of frugality and industry. *The practice referred to is that of cash-credits.* Any person who applies to a bank for a cash-credit is called upon to produce two or more competent securities, who are jointly bound, and after a full enquiry into the character of the applicant, the nature of his business, and the sufficiency of his securities, he is allowed to open a credit, and to draw upon the bank for the whole of its amount, or for such part as his daily transactions may require. To the credit of this account he pays in such sums as he may not have occasion to use, and interest is charged or credited upon the daily balance, as the case may be. From the facility which these cash-credits give to all the small transactions of the country, and from the opportunities which they afford to persons who begin business with little or no capital but their character, to employ profitably the minutest products of their industry, it cannot be doubted that the most important advantages are derived to the whole community. The advantage to the banks who give those cash-credits arises from the call which they continually produce for the issue of their paper, and from the opportunity which they afford for the profitable employment of part of their deposits. The banks are indeed so sensible that, in order to make this part of their business advantageous and secure, it is necessary that their cash-

credits should (as they express it) be frequently operated upon, that they refuse to continue them unless this implied condition be fulfilled. The total amount of their cash-credits is stated by one witness to be five millions, on which the average amount advanced by the banks may be one-third.

"The manner in which the practice of deposits on receipt is conducted tends to produce the same desirable results. Sums to as low an amount as £10 (and in some instances lower) are taken by the banks from the depositor, who may claim them at demand. He receives an interest, usually about one per cent below the market rate. It is stated that these deposits are, to a great extent, left uncalled for from year to year, and that the depositors are in the habit of adding, at the end of each year, to the interest then accrued, the amount of their yearly savings; that the sums thus gradually accumulated belong chiefly to the labouring and industrious classes of the community; and that, when such accounts are closed, it is generally for the purpose of enabling the depositors either to purchase a house or to engage in business.

"It is contended by all the persons engaged in banking in Scotland, that the issue of one-pound notes is essential to the continuance both of their cash-credits and of the branch banks established in the poorest and most remote districts. Whether the discontinuance of one-pound notes would necessarily operate to the full extent which they apprehend, in either of these respects, may perhaps admit of doubt; but the apprehensions entertained on this head, by the persons most immediately concerned, might, for a time

at least, have nearly the same effect as the actual necessity; *and there is strong reason to believe, that if the prohibition of one-pound notes should not ultimately overturn the whole system, it must for a considerable time materially affect it.*

"The directors of the Bank of England, who have been examined before the committee, have given it as their opinion, that a circulation of notes of £1 in Scotland or in Ireland would not produce any effects injurious to the metallic circulation of England, provided such notes be respectively confined within the boundary of their own country.

"Notwithstanding the opinions which have been here detailed, the committee are, on the whole, so deeply impressed with the importance of a metallic circulation below £5 in England, not only for the benefit of England, but likewise for that of all the other parts of the empire, that if they were reduced to make an option between the establishment of such a metallic circulation in Scotland, or the abandonment of it in England, they would recommend the prohibition of small notes in Scotland. But they entertain a reasonable expectation, that legislative measures may be devised which will be effectual in preventing the introduction of Scotch paper into England; and unless such measures should in practice prove ineffectual, or *unless some new circumstance should arise* to derange the operations of the existing system in Scotland itself, or materially to affect the relations of trade and intercourse between Scotland and England, they are not disposed to recommend that the existing system of banking and

currency in Scotland should be disturbed."

This is just what a Parliamentary report ought to be – calm, perspicuous, and decided. There is no circumlocution nor ambiguity of expression here. After a patient investigation into the whole question, and a minute examination of enemies as well as friends, the Lords arrived at the opinion, that the existing banking system of Scotland ought on all points to be maintained, and they not only stated their general conviction, but gave their reasons for upholding each part in detail, in the luminous manner which has always been the characteristic of that august Assembly, and which has established its proud reputation as not only the noblest, but the most upright tribunal of the world. It is worthy of the most marked attention, that the committee of the Lords in this report, which afterwards received the sanction of the House, advocated no temporary continuance of the banking system in Scotland, but were clearly of opinion that it should remain as a permanent institution. They evidently entertained no ideas, grounded upon mere expediency, that it would be prudent to wait until Scotland, by means of her cherished institutions and her own internal industry, arrived at that point of condition when it might be expedient to introduce the lancet, and drain off a little of her superfluous blood. They vent upon the righteous maxim – that a nation, as well as a man, is entitled to work out its own resources in peace, so long as it does not trench upon the industry or prerogatives of its neighbour, and so long as no impeachment can be laid against the prudence and stability of its institutions.

We defy any man to read over this report, and to adduce one word from it which shall convey the idea that it was not intended as a final judgment, with the simple qualifications that we have stated in the last sentence.

These two reports saved the country – we trust we shall not hereafter be compelled to add, only for a time – from its great impending misfortune. The circulation in England became metallic, with what success it is not for us to say, whilst Scotland was allowed to retain her paper currency with at least most perfect satisfaction to herself. One pregnant fact, however, it would be unpardonable for us to omit – as showing the stability of the northern system when compared with that practised in the south – that at the last investigation before a committee of the House of Commons in 1841, it was stated, that whereas in Scotland the whole loss sustained by the public from bank failures, *for a century and a half*, amounted to L. 32,000, the loss to the public, *during the previous year in London alone*, was *estimated at ten times that amount!*

Since 1826, we have had eighteen years' further experience of the system, without either detecting derangement in its organization, or the slightest diminution of confidence on the part of the public. There has been no interference with the metallic currency of England. Forgery is a crime now utterly unknown, as is also coining, beyond the insignificant counterfeits of the silver issue. This, in fact, is a great advantage which we have above the English in point of security, since we are exempt

from the risk of receiving into circulation either base or light sovereigns, and since the banks provide for the deterioration of their notes by tear and wear, whilst the holder of a light sovereign has to pay the difference between the standard and the deficient weight. When we reflect upon the small amount of the wages of a labouring man, it is manifest how important this branch of the subject is; for were gold allowed in Scotland to supersede the paper currency, a fresh and most dangerous impetus would be given to the crime of coining; and there cannot be a doubt, that in the remoter districts, where gold is utterly unknown, a most lamentable series of frauds would be perpetrated, with little risk of detection, but with the cruelest consequences to the poor and illiterate classes.

We are not, however, inclined to adopt the opinion expressed by the committee of the House of Commons, to the extent of admitting that it would be either politic or just to disturb the whole banking system of a country on account of private frauds, whether forgeries or the fabrication of counterfeit coin. If their opinion was a sound one, the weight of evidence is now upon our side of the argument; but we hold that the interests at stake are far too great to be affected by any such minor details. If any new circumstance has arisen "to affect the relations of trade and intercourse between Scotland and England," we at least are wholly unconscious of the occurrence, and, of course, it is the duty of those who meditate a change to point it out, in order that it may be thoroughly scrutinized. Internally, the business

of the banks has been increasing, and, commensurate with that increase, there has been a vast addition to the number of branch banks spread over the face of the country; so that, whereas in 1825 there was but one office for every 13,170 individuals, in 1841 there was an office for every 6600 of the population. This is plainly the inevitable effect of competition; but lest that increase should be founded upon by our opponents as a proof of over-circulation, we shall say a few words upon the subject of the *exchange* between the banks themselves, which is a leading feature of our whole system, and the most complete check against over-trading which human ingenuity could devise. Fortunately we have ample *data* for our statement in the evidence tendered to the committee on banks of issue in 1841.

It is right, however, to premise that, strictly speaking, there are not more, nay, there are positively *fewer* banks in Scotland at the present moment than there were in 1825, though the amount of paid-up capital in the banks is more than doubled. It is the branches alone which make this astonishing increase. Now, as a branch is merely a local agency of the parent bank, established at a distance for the sake of outlying business, the number of parties engaged in banking who are responsible to the public is not thereby increased, nor is the amount in circulation extended. In fact, the multiplication of the branch banks has been of extraordinary benefit to the public, by affording the inhabitants of even the remotest districts a ready, easy, and favourite method of deposit, and by extinguishing all risks of credit. Further, it

has this manifest advantage, that the manager of the branch bank has far greater facilities of ascertaining the character, habits, and pursuits of those persons who may have received the advantage of a cash-credit accommodation, and can immediately report to his superiors any circumstances which may render it advisable that the credit should be contracted or withdrawn. So far are we from holding that the multiplication of branch banks is any evil or incumbrance, that we look upon it as an increased security not only to the banker but the dealer. The latter, in fact, is the principal gainer; because a competition among the banks has always the effect of heightening the rate of interest given upon deposits, and of lowering the rates charged upon advances. Nor does this give any impetus to rash speculation on the part of the dealer, but directly the reverse. The deposits always increase with the advancing rate of interest; and experience has shown, that it is not until that rate declines to two per cent that deposited money is usually withdrawn, which is the signal of commencing speculation. To the mere speculator the banks afford no facilities, but the reverse. Their cash credits are only granted for the daily operations of persons actively engaged in trade, business, or commerce. So soon as that credit appears to be converted into a different channel, it is withdrawn, as alike dangerous to the user and unprofitable to the bank which has given it.

Of thirty-one banks in Scotland which issue notes, five only are *chartered*— that is, the responsibility of the proprietors in those established is confined to the amount of their

subscribed capital. The remaining twenty-six are, with one or two exceptions, joint-stock banks, and the proprietors are liable to the public for the whole of the bank responsibilities to the last shilling of their private fortunes. The number of persons connected with these banks as shareholders is very great, almost every man of opulence in the country being a holder of stock to a greater or a less amount. That some jealousy must exist among so many competitors in a limited field, is an obvious matter of inference. Such jealousy, however, has only operated for the advantage of the public, by the maintenance of a common and vigilant watch upon the manner in which the affairs of each establishment are conducted, and against the intrusion of any new parties into the circle whose capital does not seem to warrant the likelihood of their ultimate stability. Accordingly, the Scottish bankers have arranged amongst themselves a mutual system of exchange, as stringent as if it had the force of statute, by means of which an over-issue of notes becomes a matter of perfect impossibility. *Twice in every week the whole notes deposited with the different bank offices in Scotland are regularly interchanged.* Now, with this system in operation, it is perfectly ludicrous to suppose that any bank would issue its paper rashly for the sake of an extended circulation. *The whole notes* in circulation throughout Scotland return to their respective banks in a period averaging from ten to eleven days in urban, and from a fortnight to three weeks in rural districts. In consequence of the rate of interest allowed by the banks, no person has any inducement

to keep bank paper by him, but the reverse, and the general practice of the country is to keep the circulation at as low a rate as possible. The numerous branch banks which are situated up and down the country, are the means of taking the notes of their neighbours out of the circle as speedily as possible. In this way it is not possible for the circulation to be more than what is absolutely necessary for the transactions of the country.

If, therefore, any bank had been so rash as to grant accommodation without proper security, merely for the sake of obtaining a circulation, in ten days, or a fortnight at the furthest, it is compelled to account with the other banks for every note they have received. If it does not hold enough of their paper to redeem its own upon exchange, it is compelled to pay the difference in exchequer bills, a certain amount of which every bank is bound by mutual agreement to hold, the fractional parts of each thousand pounds being payable in Bank of England notes or in gold. In this way over-trading, in so far as regards the issue of paper, is so effectually guarded and controlled, that it would puzzle Parliament, with all its conceded conventional wisdom, to devise any plan alike so simple and expeditious.

The amount of notes at present in circulation throughout Scotland is estimated at three millions, or at the very utmost three millions and a half. At certain times of the year, such as the great legal terms of Whitsunday and Martinmas, when money is universally paid over and received, there is, of course, a corresponding increase of issue for the moment which demands

an extra supply of notes. It is never considered safe for a bank to have a smaller amount of notes in stock than the average amount which is out in circulation; so that the whole amount of bank-notes, both in circulation and in hand, may be calculated at seven millions. The fluctuation at the above terms is so remarkable, that we are tempted to give an account of the number of notes delivered and received by the bank of Scotland in exchange with other banks during the months of May and November 1840: —

	Notes Delivered.	Notes Received.
1840		
May 1,	£ 51,000	£ 43,000
... 5,	52,000	32,000
... 8,	44,000	45,000
... 12,	43,000	48,000
... 15,	54,000	64,000
... 19,	*132,000	*172,000
... 22,	98,000	69,000
... 26,	38,000	33,000
Nov. 3,	38,000	32,000
... 6,	37,000	33,000
... 10,	51,000	61,000
... 13,	*99,000	*138,000
... 17,	67,000	80,000
... 20,	66,000	49,000
... 24,	52,000	33,000
... 27,	66,000	42,000
	*Term Settlements.	

It will be seen from the above table how rapidly the system of bank exchange absorbs the over-issue, and how instantaneously the paper drawn from one bank finds its way into the hands of another.

If further proof were required of the absurdity of the notion, that a paper circulation has a necessary tendency to over-issue, the following fact is conclusive. The banking capital in Scotland has *more than doubled* between the years 1825 and 1840 – a triumphant proof of their increased stability; whilst the circulation has been nearly stationary, but, if any thing, *rather diminished than otherwise*. We quote from a report to the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce.

"The first return of the circulation was made in Scotland in 1825. Every one knows the extraordinary advance which Scotland has made between that period and 1840; for instance, in the former of these years, she manufactured 55,000 bales of cotton, in the latter, 120,000 bales. In 1826, the produce of the iron furnaces was 33,500 tons; in 1840, about 250,000 tons. In 1826, the banking capital of Scotland was £4,900,000; in 1840, it was about £10,000,000; yet with all this progress in industry and wealth, the circulation of notes, which in 1825 varied from £3,400,000 to £4,700,000, was in 1839 from £2,960,000 to £3,670,000, and in the first three months of 1840, £2,940,000."

We are induced to dwell the more strongly upon these facts, because we have strong suspicions that our opponents will

endeavour to get at our monetary system by raising the senseless cry of over-issue – senseless at any time as a political maxim, it being the grossest fallacy to maintain that an increased issue is the cause of national distress, unless, indeed, it were possible to suppose that bankers were madmen enough to dispense their paper without receiving a proper equivalent – not only senseless, but positively nefarious, when the clear broad fact stares them in the face, that Scotland has in fifteen years thrown double the amount of capital into its banking establishments, increased its productions in a threefold, and in some cases a sevenfold ratio, augmented its population by nearly half a million, (one-fifth part of the whole,) and yet kept its circulation so low as to exhibit an actual decrease.

If we were called upon to state the cause of this certainly singular fact, we should, without any hesitation, attribute it to the great increase of the bank branches. The establishment of a branch in a remote locality, has invariably, from the thrifty habits of the Scottish people, absorbed all the paper which otherwise would have been hoarded for a time, and left in the hands of the holders without any interest. It would thus seem, from practice, that the doctrines of the political economists upon this head are absolutely fallacious; that the increase of banks, supposing these banks to issue paper and to give interest on deposits, has a direct tendency to check over-circulation, and in fact does partially supersede it.

With these facts before us, we consider that the measure of

last session, prohibiting any further issue of notes beyond those already taken out by the banks, is almost a dead letter. We have not the least fear, that under any circumstances there can be a call for a larger circulation; at the same time, we demur to the policy which ties our hands needlessly, and we object to all restriction where no case for restriction has been shown. We look upon that measure as especially unfair to the younger banks, whose circulation is not yet established, and whose progress has thus received a material check, from no fault of their own, but from want of ministerial notice. With every system where competition is the acknowledged principle, it is clearly impolitic to interfere; nor can we avoid the painful conviction, that this first measure, though comparatively light and generally unimportant, was put out by way of *feeler*, in order to test the temper of the Scottish people – to ascertain whether eighteen years of prosperity might not have made them a little more supple and pliable, and whether they were likely to oppose to innovation the same amount of obstinate resistance as before. It is dangerous to permit the smallest rent to be made in a wall, for, with dexterous management, that rent may be so widened, as to bring down the whole superstructure.

In the absence of any distinct charge against the Scottish banks, which were so honourably acquitted in 1826, we shall confine our further observations to the effects which must necessarily follow upon a change in the established currency. In doing so, we shall conjure up no phantoms of imaginary distress,

but merely state the consequences as they have already been explained to Parliament by men who are far better able to judge than ourselves, and even – with deference be it said – than our legislators, of the substitution in Scotland of a metallic for a paper currency. That measure is to be considered, 1st, as it will affect the banks; 2dly, as it will affect the public.

The general effect of the change would be to derange the whole of the present system. The first result would probably be the abolition and withdrawal of all the branch banks throughout the kingdom. These offices are at present fed with notes which are payable at the office of the parent bank, whither, accordingly, they invariably return. These are supplied to them at no risk or expense, whereas the transmission of gold would not only be dangerous, but so expensive as entirely to swallow up the profits. Add to this, that the banks would no longer be able to allow interest on deposit accounts; at all events such interest would be merely fractional, and too insignificant to induce the continuance of the saving habit which now so fortunately prevails. In short, all the branch business would stagnate and die. The consequence of the removal of the branch banks would be the ruin of the Highlands.

Mr Kennedy's account of the profits of banking will explain the sweeping nature of the change. "A banker's profits are derived from two sources – the brokerage upon the deposit money, and the returns that he gets from his circulation. We have tried to estimate the amount of deposits in Scotch banks, and we

calculate it at about thirty millions; that, at the brokerage of one and a half per cent, yields £450,000 annually. The currency we will take at three millions, and that, at 5 per cent, is £150,000: making a gross sum of £600,000, *which is the whole profit derived from banking in Scotland*. Out of that are to be deducted the whole of the charges. From these figures it will be perceived that the gross profit of the currency is a fourth part of the gross profit of banking; but the expense that falls upon the currency is not so large as the expense that falls upon the other portions of the banking business; so that I should be inclined to say that, upon the average, the profit derived from the circulation bore the proportion of a third to the aggregate profit of banking."

Assuming Mr Kennedy's calculation to be correct, the profit of £600,000, derived by the banks, would thus be reduced to £400,000 by the change of currency.

But the diminution would not rest there. The brokerage upon the deposits – that is, the difference between the rates of interest given and charged by the banks – on the present calculated amount of deposits, is £450,000. from which the charges are deducted. Now we have already seen that the banks find it necessary, in order to encourage deposits, to give a liberal rate of interest; and we have also seen that, whenever interest falls to two per cent, the deposits are gradually withdrawn, and a period of speculation begins. Let us hear Mr John Thomson, of the Royal Bank, on the effect of a gold currency on deposit accounts: – "I think, on the operating deposits, we could scarcely allow any

interest, and on the more steady deposits, that the rate of interest would require to be very considerably reduced."

It follows, therefore, according to all experience, that, if no interest were allowed, the deposits would be generally withdrawn for investment elsewhere; and thus another serious reduction would be made from the already attenuated amount of the Scottish bankers' profits. But besides the loss of profit on the small notes, there would be a further loss sustained by the necessity of keeping up a large stock of gold in the coffers of the bank. Hear Mr Thomson again upon this subject: —

"It would occasion greater loss than the mere profit on the small notes, inasmuch as at present we have to keep on hand a large stock of small notes, to fill up in the circle those that are taken from it by tear and wear, and to meet occasional demands. The present mode of keeping up this stock, which consists of our own notes, is done at no expense; if we had to keep a corresponding stock of gold to keep up the circle in the same proportion, we would, perhaps, if there is £1000 dispersed in small notes, require to keep up a protecting fund of £500 to meet that, or something in that proportion. So that, upon the whole, if there was £1,800,000, which was the sum assumed of notes in circulation, withdrawn, we would require to fill up the place, £1,800,000, in gold, and in order to fill our coffers with a protecting stock, perhaps from *seven to nine hundred thousand*, to keep up the stock; and, in addition to that, there is the expense of transmission from one part of the country

to another, and the bringing it from London."

The small note circulation is here estimated at £1,800,000 but there is no doubt that it is now considerably larger. Taking it, however, at Mr Thomson's calculation, what a fearful amount of unoccupied and inoperative capital is here! This, be it observed also, is only the first reserve, which at present is represented by the small notes of the bank. According to the later evidence of Mr Blair, the Scottish banks are in the habit of holding, *besides this*, a further reserve of gold and Bank of England notes, equal to *a fourth of their circulation*, without taking into account exchequer bills, or other convertible securities which bear interest.

Thus it follows, as a matter of course, that if the small notes were abolished, and a gold currency established, there would not be room in the country for one-fourth of the present number of banks. If the banks are removed, and more especially the branches, which must inevitably fall, we should like to know from any theoretical economist, even from Sir Robert Peel, how the country is to be supplied with money?

So much for the effect which the introduction of a metallic currency would have upon the banking establishments. Let us now see what would be the consequence of the change upon the interests of the public, who are the dealers.

Now, although we hold, that upon every principle of public expediency and justice, the legislature are bound to regard with particular tenderness the interests of a body of men, who, like the Scottish bankers, have not only established, but administered

for such a long time, the monetary system of the country with stability, temperance, indulgence, and success, equally removed from weak facility and from grasping avidity of gain; we must, nevertheless, allow that the interests of the public are paramount to theirs, and that if it can be shown that the public will be gainers, although the bankers should be losers by the change, the sooner the metallic currency is established amongst us the better. Here is the true test of the clause in the Treaty of Union, providing that no alteration shall be made on laws which concern private right excepting for the evident utility of the subjects *within* Scotland. There shall be no interference with private rights if that interference is not to benefit the public; if it does so, private right must of course give way, according to a rule universally adopted by every civilized nation. In speaking of the public, we, of course, restrict ourselves to Scotland; for although the Treaty of Union is not, strictly speaking, a federal one, and in the larger points of policy and general government is very clearly one of incorporation, it has yet this important ingredient of federality in its conception, that the laws of each country and their administration are left separate and entire, as also their customs and usages, so long as the same do not interfere with one another. It is a sore point with the supporters of a metallic currency, and a sad discouragement to their theories, that they have never been able in any way to shake the confidence of the Scottish public in the stability of their national bankers. It was no use drawing invidious comparisons between a weighty glittering

guinea, fresh started from the mint of Mammon, and the homely unpretending well-thumbed issue of the North; it was no use hinting that a system which professed to dispense with bullion must of necessity be a mere illusion, which would go down with the first blast of misfortune, as easily as its fragile notes could be dispersed before a breeze of wind. The shrewd Scotsman knew, what apparently the economist had forgotten, that the piece of gold exhibited by the latter was in itself but a representative, and not the reality of property; that the gold to be acquired *must be bought*; that all representation of wealth within a country must be conventional in order to have any value; and further, that however fragile the despised paper might appear, that it was by convention and by law the representative of things more weighty and more solid than metal – of the manufactures of the country, of its agricultural produce, and, finally, of the land itself; all which were mortgaged for its redemption. It was in vain to talk to him of the rates of foreign exchange in the mystic jargon of the Bourse. He knew well, that when the Scottish mint was abolished, and the bullion trade transferred to London, that branch of traffic was placed utterly beyond his reach. He knew further, that the circulation of Scotland did not ebb or flow in accordance with the fluctuation of foreign exchanges, but from causes which were always within the reach of his own ken and observance. All scrutiny beyond that he left to the bank, in the solvency of which he placed the most implicit confidence; and accordingly he dealt with it as freely and as confidently as his father and grandfather

had done before him, and laughed the theories of the political economists to scorn. Such is no overcharged statement of the sentiments which the Scottish customer entertains; – is he right, or is he wrong? and how would the change affect him?

In the first place, he would receive no interest upon his deposit account. This point we have already touched upon, when proving that the banks would sustain great loss by the inevitable withdrawal of their deposits; but of course the profit to the bank is one thing, and the profit to the customer is another. An operating deposit account on which a fixed and universal rate of interest is paid, is a thing unknown in England. In that country, according to Mr John Gladstone, a Liverpool merchant, and a declared enemy to the Scottish currency, the bankers only give interest on deposits by special bargain, according to the length of time that these deposits shall be entrusted to their hands. This is clearly neither more nor less than permanent loan to the bank, and, like every other private contract, is arbitrary. But an operating deposit is a totally different matter, by which the circulation of the bank paper is promoted, and which acquires actual value from the frequency of its fluctuations. It is a system so easy in its working, that no householder in Scotland is without it; and for every shilling that he deposits in the bank, he receives regular interest, calculated from day to day, without any deduction or commission, at as high a rate as if he had left, for a stipulated period, a million of money unrecallable by him, to be employed in its trade by the bank. This is surely

a great accommodation and encouragement to the trader. But see how the introduction of the metallic currency would affect us. Operating deposits there would be none; for, if the banker were not actually compelled to charge a certain per centage of commission, he would at least be able to pay no interest. Or let it be granted that, by great economy, (though we cannot well see how,) he could still afford to pay a diminished rate, the proportion would be too small to tempt the dealer to the constant system of deposit which now exists, and hoarding would be the inevitable result. Or suppose that the system of deposit should still continue in the large towns, what is to become of the country when the branch banks shall have been removed? A little topography might here be valuable, to correct the notions of the theorists, who would legislate precisely for the thinly inhabited districts of Kintail and Edderachylis, as they would for the town-covered surface of Lancashire.

But there would be more important losses to the public than the mere cessation of interest upon operating deposit accounts. All the witnesses who have been examined, agree that cash-credits must be immediately withdrawn. Of all the facilities that a mercantile country, or rather the foremost mercantile system of a country, can afford to industry, that of cash-credit is certainly the most unexceptionable. Take the case of a young man just about to start in business, whose connexion, habits, and education, are such as to give every possible augury for his future success. The *res angustæ domi* are probably hard upon

him. He has no patrimony; his friends, though in fair credit, are not capitalists; and he has not of himself the opportunity of launching into trade, for the want of that one talent, which, if judiciously used, would in time multiply itself into ten. He cannot ask his friends to assist him in the discount of bills. Large as the affection of a Scotchman may be for some descriptions of paper, he has a kind of inherent repugnance to that sort of floating private currency, which in three or in six months is sure to return, coupled with an awkward protest, to his door. Probably in his own early experience, or in the days of his father, he has received a salutary lesson, better than a thousand treatises upon the law and practice of acceptance; and accordingly, while he will lend you his purse with readiness, he will not, for almost any consideration, subscribe his name to a bill. To persons thus situated, the accommodation granted by the bank cash-credits, is the greatest commercial boon that ever was devised; but as the committee of the House of Lords, in the report already quoted, has borne ample testimony in their favour, it is unnecessary for us to dwell with further minuteness on their utility.

We must again have recourse to Mr Thomson for an exposition of the reasons which, if a metallic currency were forced upon us, would lead to the discontinuance of the cash-credits. "I do not think the cash-credits would be maintained at all; the banker's profits might be made up by the charge of a commission on each credit; but it is not probable that the holders of accounts would pay at such a rate, if they could borrow money

upon bills at a cheaper rate, which they would do. They would discount bills at five per cent. A banker would not be disposed to come under the obligation to give a running credit with a cash account, and thereby bind himself to keep in his hands a stock of gold to supply the daily operations of a cash-account, while he might find it perfectly convenient to discount a bill and give the money away at once." In short, it has been stated, and distinctly proved, that the difference to the trader between an operating cash-credit and accommodation by discount, *is the difference between paying five and a quarter by discount, and two and a half per cent by cash-credit.* Are our merchants and traders prepared or disposed to submit to such a sacrifice; more especially when it is considered, that a bank will often refuse to discount a bill for £100, when it would make no difficulty, from its opportunities of control, in granting a cash-credit for five times that amount?

If individuals are thus to be crippled, the general commercial business of the country must retrograde as a matter of course. Still Edinburgh, and Glasgow, and the larger towns might, although they would suffer immensely, get over the crisis by adopting some system of internal arrangement, without experiencing a general crash. The great question, however, yet remains behind – What is to become of the country districts? To us who are familiar with almost the whole face of Scotland, it seems a gross absurdity to suppose, that *under any circumstances*, if the branch banks were withdrawn, a gold metallic currency could be made operative in the remoter districts. Mr Dunsmore,

then secretary to the commissioners for the public fisheries, gave very singular evidence upon that point in 1826; so singular, indeed, that were it our purpose in this paper rather to amuse than to warn and protest, we should have dwelt more minutely upon his statements. Speaking of the silver currency, his evidence is as follows: – "The quantity of silver on the west coast is so very limited, that there is a great difficulty in getting a proper supply for the necessary purposes. *Some of the people have been obliged to issue promissory notes for 5s., long after they had been prohibited by act of Parliament.* I happened to be at Barra, and the officer there informed me that, having occasion to purchase some oats for a pony he found it necessary to keep, the farmer whom he paid for them declared he had not seen the face of a shilling for two years before." One of the individuals who was thus forced by necessity to contravene the statute, was a fish-curer and merchant, who kept a large store in Tobermory, and the form of his notes is at once curious and explanatory. "For want of change I owe you 5s., and for four of these tickets, I will give a one-pound note." The establishment of branch banks may somewhat have mended matters on the west coast, though we doubt if the improvement has been commensurate with that of other districts in Scotland, owing to the severe, and in our view mischievous, commercial enactment which supplanted the native manufacture of kelp, by the substitution of foreign barilla; but if the branches are removed, no discovery short of the philosopher's stone will establish the metallic currency there. Do our legislators

seriously mean to compel the population of about one-fourth of Scotland, comprehending the whole western and northern divisions, to accept the fish-curer's notes, instead of those of a joint-stock bank, with its paid-up capital for security?

We have not space here to proceed with a minute analysis of the evidence which was formerly given. Suffice it to say, that it is of a much more serious nature than even those who have general notions upon the question can possibly anticipate. In the event of any change which shall derange the present system of currency, the landowners and agriculturists of every class must prepare themselves for crippled markets, curtailment of the sales of their produce, and consequently for a great reduction in the rent and value of land. This will apply equally to the fisheries, the distilleries, and the linen trade – to every branch, in short, of internal manufacture, which is now prosperous, and which has become so from the superior ease, facility, and advantage of our present currency. Compared with these, the interests of the bankers are actually trifling. Such of them as may remain under the altered system, will no doubt, in one way or another, secure their profit; but for that profit the country at large will have to pay a heavy price.

The great question now for Scotland to determine is, whether these interests are to be sacrificed to the theories of any ministry whatever, without resistance of the most determined nature. That resistance, in our deliberate opinion, she is not only entitled, but bound, to make. We have purposely abstained

from dwelling – nay, we have scarcely even touched – upon any points of extraneous irritation which may exist between the sister countries. Our wish is, that this question should be tried upon its own merits, independently of any such considerations; and we are glad to see that this line of conduct has been adopted by every one of the numerous bodies who have hitherto met to protest against the change. Believing thoroughly and sincerely that we have a clear case, both on the score of justice and expediency, we do not wish to revive any warmer feeling, though we are convinced that a word could arouse it. Scotland in this matter feels, and will speak, like a single man. We are sure of the unanimous support and energy of the members for the ancient kingdom; and although that phalanx forms but an integral part of the legislature of Great Britain, we will not allow ourselves to believe that any minister will proceed with so obnoxious a measure in the face of their united opposition. One word only of advice we shall venture to offer them, before they leave their native country to do battle in her behalf. Compromise nothing! Do not, as you value the interests of Scotland, permit even the smallest interference with a system which has already obtained the unqualified approval of the state. If you do, rely upon it that one change will be merely the forerunner of another – that the statute-book, in each succeeding session of Parliament, will exhibit new changes and new modifications, until, gradually and by piecemeal, we shall lose all the benefits of those national institutions which you are now ready and pledged to maintain

whole and unimpaired. Any other line of tactics must, in the long run, prove not only injurious, but fatal, to the cause you support.

And now we have said our say. It is not for us – more especially as the batteries of our opponents are still masked – to remonstrate with an administration which assuredly, on many points, has a just claim to the support and confidence of the nation at large. Still we may insinuate the question – Is it very politic, in the present state of matters, to rouse up a feeling in peaceful Scotland which may, with little fanning of the fuel, terminate in an agitation quite as extensive as that which at present unhappily prevails in Ireland? It is not only wrong, but – what Talleyrand held to be a greater sin in a statesman – most injudicious, to overlook in such a matter the tendency of the national character. Scotchmen have long memories; and although the days of hereditary feuds have gone by, they are not the less apt to remember and to cherish injuries. Would it not, therefore, be prudent to adhere to the homely but excellent maxim, "Let well be alone;" and to abstain from forcing the country into a position which it is really unwilling to assume, merely for the sake of illustrating another proverb with which we close our remarks upon the Scottish Banking System – "It is possible to buy gold too dear."

THE MILKMAN OF WALWORTH

Chapter I

I was just fifteen, when the battle of Waterloo, (it will soon be thirty years ago,) by giving peace to Europe, enabled my father to gratify one of the principal desires of his heart, by sending me to finish my education at a German university. Our family was a Lincolnshire one, he its representative, and the inheritor of an encumbered estate, not much relieved by a portionless wife and several children, of whom I was the third and youngest son. My eldest brother was idle, lived at home, and played on the fiddle. Tom, my second brother, two years older than myself, had just entered the army time enough to be returned in the Gazette as severely wounded in the action of the 18th. I was destined for the church – as much, I believe, from my mother's proneness to Prelacy, (in a very different sense from its usual acceptation,) she being fond of expatiating on her descent from one of the Seven of immortal memory, as from my being a formal, bookish boy, of a reserved and rather contemplative disposition. The profession did not appear uncongenial to my taste; and although, from my classical education having been deplorably neglected, there was no small share of grinding and fag before me, I entered readily into my father's views; the more especially, as in them was

comprehended the preliminary visit to Germany, the land of my early visions, where I hoped to be on more intimate terms than ever with my old acquaintances, the Spirit of the Brocken, the Wild Hunter, &c. &c.; or, mayhap, to carry to practical results in the heart of the Black Forest the lessons of natural freedom I had so largely acquired from Schiller. My father's object in sending me to Heidelberg was not, I believe, quite of so elevated a character.

After a month's preliminary bustle, I set out. The Lincoln Light-o'-Heart coach took me up a couple of miles from my father's – and with me a chest of stores that would have sufficed for the north-west passage. Furnished with a letter to a friend in London, who was prepared to forward me by the first vessel offering for Holland, I accomplished the journey to town satisfactorily. On arriving in London, I found Mr Sainsbury, the friend already mentioned, awaiting me at the coach-office in Lad Lane. He was my father's banker – a little red-faced hospitable man, fond of Welsh rabbits, Hessian boots, and of wearing his watch-chain down to his knees. He welcomed me very cordially, said he had not had time as yet to make the necessary enquiries about my passage; but as he was sure no vessel would sail for Helvoetsluys for at least a week, he insisted upon my putting up at his residence while I remained. Oppressed as I was with fretting and fatigue, it was a matter of indifference to me at the moment where I stayed while in town. I therefore, with a proper expression of thanks, accepted the invitation. A job coach

conveyed us in a short time to Mr Sainsbury's abode. He lived at Walworth, at that period an extensive suburb on the Surrey side of London, but long since incorporated into the great mass of the metropolis. The street in which the mansion stood was large, the houses were spacious and handsome, their tenants, as I learned afterwards, opulent and respectable. It was late in August; my friend's family were all at Margate; and I found none to do the honours of the house but himself and his eldest son, a young man of prepossessing appearance and intelligent manners. On finding I was not disposed to go out the following morning, he recommended me to the library and some portfolios of choice engravings, and, promising to return early in the afternoon, departed for his haunts of business in the city.

I found the library tolerably comprehensive for its size; and having glanced along its ranges, I tumbled over Hogarth and Gillray on the print-stands for some time. I settled upon my usual efficacious remedy in desultory hours – old Burton's *Anatomie*, and dropped with it into the window-seat. I have seldom found him to fail me on such emergencies – his quaintness, his humour, the lavish prodigality of learning and extraordinary thinking that loads his pages, never to me lose their freshness. Yet on the present occasion I found them fix me with more difficulty than I ever before, or I believe since, experienced. My mind wandered constantly from the page back to home, forward to Heidelberg, and, after a while, I laid down the volume to gaze vacantly through the window. It overlooked the street. Yet here the day

was so piteously wet there was nothing to arrest my half-drowsy eye or half-dreamy attention. No young ladies in the opposite windows. They were all at Hastings or Brighton. No neat serving-wenchs chattering on the area steps – not even a barrel-organ to blow out one's patience – no vagabond on stilts, with a pipe and dancing-dogs – no Punch – no nothing! – Once, a ruffian with four *babbies*, two in his arms and two more at his ankles, strolled down the street, chanting – "In Jury is God known" – his hat off, and the rain streaming down at his nose as from a gable-spout. But he, too, vanished. Occasionally a dripping umbrella hurried past, showing nothing but thin legs in tights and top-boots, or thick ones in worsteds and pattens. At one o'clock the milkman passed along the street silently, and with a soberer knock than usually announces the presence of that functionary. I counted him at number 45, 46, 47, 48 – number 49 was beyond the range of the window; but I believe I accompanied him with my ear up to number 144 – where the multiplication-table ends. He was assisted in his vocation by his wife, who attended him – very devotedly too, for I remarked she seemed regardless of the weather, and carried no umbrella. Wearied out completely by the monotony and dulness of the street, I next sank into a doze, which destroyed one hour further towards dinner, and the remnant of time I managed to dispose of by writing a large portion of a long letter to my mother. My dinner was a tête-à-tête one with John Sainsbury – his father having been called away to Margate on affairs connected with the residents there. Finding

myself labouring under a cold, I avoided wine, and while my companion discussed his *Château Margaut*, I kept up a languid conversation with him, enlivened occasionally by the snap of a walnut-shell or indifferent pun, with now and then an enquiry or remark respecting the street passengers. Amongst those, the milk-vender and lady at the moment happened to pass along – "By the by," I said, "there is one peculiarity about that Pair I cannot help remarking. I observe, that wherever, or at whatever pace, the man moves, his female companion always keeps at the one exact distance behind him – about three yards or so – See, just as they stand now at No. 46! I never perceive her approach nearer. She seems a most assiduous wife."

"*Wife!*" rejoined Sainsbury, with a motion of the lip that might have been a smile, but for the gravity of his other features – "she is not his wife."

"Wife, or friend then," I said, correcting myself.

"She is not his friend either."

"Well, his sister or relative."

"Neither sister nor relative – in fact," he said, "I don't think she is any thing to him."

"But the deuce is in it, man, you don't mean to say that she is not a most devoted friend who thus so closely, and at all hours, it appears to me, attends him and assists" —

"She does not assist him," again interrupted Sainsbury.

"I mean, shares his toil."

"She has no participation whatever in his business. Come,"

he said, rising and advancing to the window, "I see you are puzzled; nor are you the first who has been at fault respecting that extraordinary Pair. Just observe them for a moment," and he threw up the sash to afford me the means of glancing after them along the street; "you perceive that there is not the slightest communication between them. He has just stopped at that house, No. 50, and there stands the woman, rigid as a statue, only three yards behind him; now he has done and moves rapidly on – how exactly she follows! He stops again, and see, she is motionless; now, he proceeds slowly across the street to that house with the lofty portico, but, slowly or quickly, there she is close at hand."

"How very odd!" I said; "they never speak."

"Speak! Watch him narrowly, and you will see he never for a single instant *looks behind him*. Here they come this way, on his return homewards. You hear the shout from those idle throngs that have just caught a glimpse of yonder balloon; you see *that* man never turns, never pauses, never looks up; he knows who is behind him, and hurries on. There, he has turned the corner, and, certain as his death, *she* has vanished in his footsteps. Singular – most singular!" he muttered to himself half musingly.

"But surely their home reconciles them?"

"They don't live together! On the contrary, I believe, they dwell far asunder; and we of this neighbourhood, who have seen them for years, have just as little cause to conclude that they are known personally to each other as you have, who have only beheld them once or twice."

"But this strange companionship, this existence of attraction and repulsion, which I have witnessed those two days, it surely does not always continue. You talk of years" —

"Yes, several years; and during that time the man has not been once missed from his business, nor ever found pursuing it unwatched or unattended by that woman, more constant, in truth, than his very shadow."

"Why, here is mystery and romance with a vengeance! ready made, too, at one's threshold, without having to seek it out in hall or bower. 'Tis a trifle *low* to be sure; had it been a shepherd and shepherdess it *might* do, but a milkman and a — may I say? — milkmaid."

"I assure you there is no quiz whatever in it. It is just as you see it and say it — a downright mystery, and one that, perhaps, will never be cleared up."

"I think the clue, my dear fellow, a very simple one — the woman is mad."

"Not a bit of it; she is perfectly rational; of intelligence, I am told, far beyond her apparent station in life — a little reserved, to be sure."

"Then he is a lunatic, and she his keeper — eh?"

"For that I refer you to the cook, and all of that respectable calling who transact business with the fellow. If he must be characterized by any one particular quality, I would say that there is far more of the villain than the fool about him."

"Pray, be kind enough," I said, "to tell me all you know

respecting this curious Pair. I am really interested in them."

"In what I have said already," replied Sainsbury, resuming his seat, "I have told you all, or very nearly all, that I, or I believe any body else, knows of them. My little information is chiefly acquired from hearing the servants gossip about them, but I very well remember that, on the first appearance of the Pair in this vicinity, they excited a good deal of speculation and enquiry amongst every class in Walworth. It is now more than eight years ago since this man's predecessor – the purveyor, as he grandiloquently was wont to call himself, of milk to this large district – died. His dairies, which I fancy were lucrative things enough, were immediately sold, and taken by a person who, we were informed, would not only continue to supply Walworth with their produce, but, from motives of caprice or economy, would deliver it himself. Accordingly, the man you have seen pass this evening appeared; and all was uniform and punctual as before. In a few days, however, he came, attended by that mysterious female, dogged precisely as you have seen him an hour ago, and at once the heart of every cook and kitchen-maid in the parish was on fire with curiosity and suspicion. From the kitchen the contagion spread to the drawing-room, and commissions of enquiry, in the shape of tea-parties, were held in every house relative to the strange milk-vender and his stranger shadow. To those who asked him any questions on the matter, and very few ventured to do so – for his manner, though civil, had reserve and sullenness, and there was in his deportment a decent propriety,

that repulsed, or rather prevented, enquiry – he usually answered that he 'knew nothing of the woman who followed him;' 'that he dared to say it was from some whim;' 'that she was welcome to do so if she pleased;' 'she had the same right of highway as any other person,' and suchlike evasive replies."

"But his companion – I should rather say, his attendant – from her sex, she would, at least, be something more communicative?"

"Not at all. She was very seldom spoken to upon any subject. She kept aloof from all who seemed disposed to be inquisitive; and if she ever came within range, as the sailors say, of a question, she never gave an intelligible, or at least satisfactory, answer. Besides, as she was never seen save in the track of him whom she lives but to pursue, her own sex have had no opportunity of conciliating her into an acquaintanceship, and their patience and curiosity have long consumed themselves away."

"Then, after all, it may be only the whim of an eccentric woman that leads her thus to persecute an inoffensive, industrious person?"

"I cannot think so. I am persuaded there is some peculiar occurrence in their past lives that has thus mysteriously associated them – some conscious secret that, by its influence, draws them forcibly into contact. What the nature of this strange sympathy may be, I cannot form the least idea."

"Has no one attempted to unriddle it before now?"

"Not with any prospect of success. Of course there have been

a thousand conjectures. Among the lower orders of people, the prevalent opinion is, that the woman once possessed a large sum of money, out of which this Maunsell (for such is his name) contrived to cheat her; and that she has ever since *haunted* him, as they very appropriately term it. But this offence I am inclined to think infinitely too light a one to draw upon him the grievous punishment which has been so many years inflicted on him. One of our neighbours, Rochfort, a very matter-of-fact sort of man, not at all given to the marvellous, asserts, that he witnessed by accident what he is sure was the first meeting of the Pair after the man's arrival in this quarter. It was late in the evening; Rochfort was standing, he says, in the shadow of a gateway that breaks up the long blank wall of a large timber-yard that belongs to him, at some distance from this, and which skirts a lonely and unfrequented road leading to Kennington. He is positive there was not a human being but himself within sight or hearing, when he perceived the milkman coming along by the wall, his footsteps echoing loudly up the dusty path. Not choosing to encounter a stranger at the moment in such a spot, my friend withdrew further into the shadow of the gateway. The man, in passing it, happening to drop some pieces of money from his hand, stooped to recover them; and while so engaged, a female, who, Rochfort asserts, must have risen out of the earth on the instant, suddenly appeared standing at the searcher's side, perfectly motionless, and muffled in those dark funereal garments that have since been so familiar to our eyes. On lifting his head the man perceived

her, started, but, my informant says, it was more the subdued start of one accustomed to face horror, than the overwhelming dismay of a person terrified for the first time: he folded his arms, as if endeavouring to collect himself, but his whole frame shook convulsively. He was about to speak, when a noise of workmen approaching up the archway stopped him, and, turning away, he hastened on – that dark spectral woman gliding noiselessly after him."

"Perhaps," I said, with a forced laugh – for, despite of myself, the story was exciting my imagination as well as curiosity – "she really *is* a visitant from another world."

"There are not wanting those who say so," replied my friend; "but however ghost-like her mission and appearance may be, I believe there is no doubt that as yet she is a denizen in the flesh."

"And this Pair – where and how do they reside?"

"The man lives at his dairies, a considerable way from here, and although he has, I am told, an extensive establishment, never goes out but on his daily business. He is of a serious, methodistical disposition, and, I understand, affects devotional reading a good deal; yet he is never seen at a place of worship. He is unmarried, nor does any relative or companion reside with him. The woman – it is hardly known where she lives; in some miserable lonely room far away, buried in the heart of one of those dismal courts that lurk in the outlets of London, her way of life and means of support equally unknown, the one object of her existence palpable to all – to come forth at

the grey of daybreak in winter and summer, in storm or shine, and seat herself at a little distance from that man's abode, until he makes his appearance: when he was passed her, to rise, to follow, to track him through the livelong day with that unflagging constancy poets are fond of ascribing to unquenchable love, which the early Greeks attributed to their impersonations of immortal Hate."

"Surely the wild and doubtful surmises that those circumstances have raised in people's minds must have had an injurious effect on Maunsell's business?"

"Not at all; on the contrary, I think it has assisted it. Every neighbourhood loves to have a mystery of its own, and we, you must confess, have got a superlative one. The man has been found scrupulously honest, regular, and exact in his dealings; and were we to lose him now, and get a mere common-place person to succeed him, half the housewives of Walworth would perish of inanition. And now," said Sainsbury, rising, "That I have imparted to you all I know respecting the milkman and his familiar, let us to the drawing-room and seek some coffee."

Chapter II

The night that followed this conversation was to me a most uncomfortable one. The episode in the day's occurrences had made so deep an impression on me, that it excluded all other thoughts from my mind, which it occupied so intently, that, upon retiring to my chamber, several hours elapsed before I sought repose. I did so at last, but in vain. Between the fever attendant upon my indisposition, and the irksomeness of frame caused by mental inquietude, sleep was completely banished from my eyelids, or visited them only in short and broken slumbers, peopled by the distorted images of my waking thoughts. The mysterious Pair were again before me. I saw them gliding through the long street, the man hastening on in that attitude, so strikingly described by Coleridge, like one

"Who walks in fear and dread;
And having once turn'd round, walks on,
And turns no more his head,
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread" —

the woman keeping on his track with the constancy of Doom. Or I was standing a witness to their first meeting in the grim Dark on that lonely road, their eyes of hate and fear staring wildly into each other. Sometimes I found myself spellbound

between the two, the centre upon which their fearful sympathies revolved, the object upon which their long pent-up passions were about to burst. Starting from those visions, my waking fancies were hardly less tormenting. I was just at that season of youth, before the calmer and nobler faculties have acquired maturity and tone; when incidents that vary but little from the ordinary economy of life, seen through the medium of the imagination, assume a magnitude of distinctness not properly their own. On the present occasion, however, my friend's recital was well calculated to arouse the speculations of a romantic fancy; and mine was now fully employed in forming a thousand conjectures in elucidation of the curious circumstances he had repeated to me. What could be the relation between those strange parties? Was it attachment in the one and aversion in the other? Or had one, as was commonly supposed, been the plundered victim — the other the Despoiler? Neither of these cases could be so. A petty office of police would have relieved the persecuted — a court of law would have redressed the robbery. *Monomania* had been known to instigate persons to a line of conduct as perseveringly painful as this woman pursued; but then there could be no motive why the object of her attention should, for years, resign himself to a system of annoyance that drew upon him so much of remark and obloquy. Or could the female be the hired instrument of persecution in the hands of others? The poverty, the utter joylessness of her solitary life, precluded the supposition. No! crime, I felt convinced — *crime* was at the

bottom of it all! and crime, too, of no ordinary quality. Was the man intent upon committing some deadly offence against society? and was it to prevent its commission that he was so assiduously watched by his companion? Perhaps he meditated breaking that instinctive canon which the Most High has so wisely fixed against "self-slaughter." Or had some hideous deed already been perpetrated? Was it by one, or both? or was one a soul black with guilt – the other a spirit of innocence? The more I indulged in those heated fancies, the wilder they became. Was the woman, after all, a Being endowed with vitality? The suddenness of her first appearance before the man watching at the gate – the fearful hour – the lonely spot – her noiseless tread – her silent demeanour – her sepulchral dress – almost warranted the contrary opinion. Had she fallen by the hand of this Maunsell? and was the apparition, which we are told ever lives by the side of the murderer, thus permitted to haunt him, embodied before the eyes of men? Such were the troubled thoughts that disturbed me throughout the night. Long before sunrise I was up, endeavouring to calm the fever into which I had wrought myself, by pacing my apartment in the cool of morning. A brilliant sunshine ushered in the day, and under its enlivening influence my perturbed spirits gradually subsided to their usual tone. At breakfast, I confess, I was disposed again to enter on the topic, if an opportunity occurred; but Sainsbury, occupied in some letters of importance that had arrived, talked but little, and did not recur to the subject of the previous evening. This did not

assist to allay the interest which had been so powerfully excited in my bosom. The continuance of my cold once more served me as a plea for remaining within doors; and, upon our parting for the day, I did not hesitate to retire to the dining-parlour, whose windows looked directly on the street, and there, shutting myself up, I awaited the arrival of the hour at which the extraordinary pair generally appeared, determined to satisfy myself by a closer observation than I had hitherto made.

Exactly as noon sounded, I saw *him* stop at an opposite door, and – did I see rightly? Yes – alone. No; I had not approached sufficiently close to the window; when I did, *she*, too, was there, at the same slight distance behind, in the same silent, patient, motionless attitude. He went on, and, steady as his shadow, she pursued. I now resolved to see them still closer, and for that purpose proceeded to the hall-door, where I remained carelessly standing until the man approached it. I could observe that he walked at an even deliberate pace; and as he carried none of the cumbrous machinery distinctive of his craft, his step was steady and unimpeded. He was a low-sized, well-made man, probably somewhat more than forty years of age. He was neatly dressed; his attire being a suit of some of those grave colours and primitive patterns which find so much favour in the eyes of staid Dissenters, and persons of that class. Indeed, I could see by his whole deportment, that the occupation he pursued was one of choice, not of necessity. His features were regular, nor was there in his countenance any thing remarkable, except

that it was pale and subdued, with a look of endurance which peculiar circumstances perhaps imparted to it. What I chiefly noticed, was an evident consciousness about the man that some disagreeable object lurked behind him; and when I caught his eye, which I did once or twice, I could see in its glance that he quite understood why my attention was directed to him. He did not utter a word in my hearing, and there was altogether in his appearance an air of depression and reserve which still further aided the impression Sainsbury's story had made on my imagination. When he next paused, his short progress brought his attendant close to me – in every way a more striking and interesting person. She was a woman tall in stature, of an erect figure, finely proportioned, as well as the coarse mourning garments and large dark cloak in which she was muffled allowed me to judge. She must have been, in youth, very handsome; but on her thin ashen cheek premature age had already made unusual ravage. She could not, from the unbroken and graceful outline of her form, be much more than thirty; but her face was marked with the passionate traces of nearly double that period. Nothing of life I ever beheld exhibited the paleness – the monumental paleness of that face. On the brow, on the cheek, all was the aspect of the grave. Yet life – intenser life than thrills the soul of Beauty in her bridal bower, dwelt in the working of those thin compressed lips – lurked beneath those heavy downcast lids, burned in those dark wild eyes, whose flashes I more than once arrested ere she passed from before

me. Writing at the interval of time I now do, and disposed as I am to deal severely with the fantastic imaginations of my youth, I have not in any way exaggerated the appearance this singular female exhibited. Should the reader suspect me of such an error, a moment's reflection will convince him that she who could – from whatever motive it might be – adopt the strange purpose to which she had devoted her solitary life, must have been characterized by energies of mind that would of necessity have filled and informed her frame, and imparted to her an air that altogether distinguished her from ordinary persons. I observed that she seemed wholly regardless of what was passing around her, appearing to be entirely absorbed in one great duty – the business of her existence – that of attending on the individual whose steps she so closely followed. He made no movement that, I thought, escaped her. Insensible, apparently, to every thing else, her glance showed that never for a moment did she cease to watch him, eager, my fancy suggested, to catch the slightest indication of his turning round and encountering her gaze. If so, her vigilance, as long as I beheld the Pair, was in vain. The man never ventured to look behind him. In half an hour they had vanished from the street.

They re-appeared in the evening again as usual, and then, and for several subsequent days, (for I did not feel well enough to undergo some twenty or thirty hours' sea-sickness in the packet that offered the Saturday after my arrival,) I took a morbid and eager pleasure in awaiting the visits and observing

the motions of those inscrutable beings. Sainsbury and his son were amused, but not surprised, at the anxiety I evinced to obtain a nearer insight into Maunsell's history. My curiosity and vigilance were, however, fruitless. The Pair performed their revolutions with a cold uniformity, a silent perseverance, that I found sufficiently monotonous; and at length, after one or two baffled attempts to engage the man in conversation, and which never proceeded beyond a few common-place words, (about his companion there was a something indefinable that prevented me from ever addressing *her*.) I relinquished any further hope of penetrating the mystery. Towards the close of my stay, and as my indisposition wore away, the Sainsburys complimented me by giving one or two dinner-parties, and these, with some morning visits and rambles with the men I met at the house, served to draw my attention from the matter; so that by the time I had fairly embarked on board the *Blitzen*, bound for Helvoetsluys, the circumstances which had occupied me so intently for the last fortnight were beginning to take their place among the remembrances of the past.

Chapter III

The passage to the Dutch coast, and my journey onward to Heidelberg, were performed without interruption, and were unenlivened by any incident that deserves relating. As it is not my intention to dwell upon the vicissitudes of my career at the high school and university, I shall merely say that, attending very little to the conventional and arbitrary distinctions by which the students of Germany choose to classify themselves – caring still less for *chores*, *brand-foxes*, and *Burschenschaft*, and nothing at all for noisy suppers and their drunken *refrain*—

"Toujours fidèle et sans souci
C'est l'ordre du Crambambuli!" —

I very earnestly bent myself to second the intentions of my father. For three years, diligently and indefatigably, I pursued a course of severe application to long-neglected studies, which enabled me fairly to redeem the time I had squandered in early youth. Nor is it unworthy of remark, that, as is often the case with imaginative people, the temptations which had appeared so inviting when beheld from a distance, failed in their powers of allurements on a nearer approach. The Spirit of the Brocken and I made no advances in intimacy, and I rode through the Black Forest without a desire to enroll myself amongst its freebooters.

The fourth year of my stay at Heidelberg was drawing to a close, when, in pursuance of arrangements entered into with my father, I returned to England. Upon reaching London, I drove to my kind friends at Walworth, where I experienced the same ready welcome as before, accompanied by many congratulations upon my academical success, of which they had heard from time to time from my family. It was the middle of winter – the second or third week in December – when London exhibits all that joyous bustle of plenteousness and good cheer, amidst which its citizens celebrate the festival of Christmas. As Mrs Sainsbury and her daughters were now at home, I was easily prevailed on to prolong my visit for a few days before I departed for Lincolnshire. The moment I entered the house, the rooms and their associations recalled to me forcibly the mysterious Pair, whose proceedings had filled my mind with so much of curiosity and interest when I was last a sojourner in the abode. During my residence in Germany I had not forgotten them; and although the austerity of my pursuits in that country had schooled my fancy to a soberer pace, I could not forbear from enquiring, in one or two letters which I had occasion to write to the younger Sainsbury, whether the milkman of Walworth and his Shadow still pursued their rounds uninterrupted, or if any thing had transpired that could enlighten our conjectures on their history. My correspondent always neglected, or forgot, to satisfy me in this particular; and it was therefore with something, I am ashamed to say, nearly approaching to anxiety, that on the morning after my arrival – for

the gay variety of the social circle had monopolized my attention until then – I once more, after so long an interval, seated myself in the library window, under pretence of seeking a passage in Herder, which I had quoted for Julia Sainsbury the preceding evening, and awaited the hour of noon.

And there, before the clock of the neighbouring church had ceased striking, with the selfsame step, in the same subdued attire in which I saw him four years ago, came gliding up the street the dark, sullen milkman; and there, too, close behind him as ever, followed his shadowy companion! It is in vain to deny it. I could feel my heart beating audibly when I beheld them, as if they were unsubstantial visitants, whose appearance I expected the grave would have interdicted from my eyes for ever. It was a dim, bitter, wintry day, and showers of sleet were drifting heavily on the fierce and angry wind, soaking the man's garments through and through, and sweeping aside the thin habiliments of the female, as though they would tear them from her slender form, and leave it a prey to the keen wrath of the elements. Yet the Pair passed upon their way, seemingly regardless of weather that had banished all other creatures from the streets. As they stopped beneath the window where I sat, I scrutinized them eagerly, to see whether time, or toil, or the terrors of such winters as that now raging, had wrought the work of ruin I would have expected in their frames. In that of the woman there was but little alteration. She was thinner and paler perhaps, and the pooriness of her dress betokened no doubt an increase in her

sufferings and privations; but her glance, when I could catch it, had more of fiery blackness: her mouth more of compressed determination than when I formerly beheld her. But in Maunsell there was a striking change: his figure was stooped, his cheek hollow, his eye sunk; in a word, his aspect now bore the signs of that mental misery which, on an earlier occasion, I had looked for in one subjected like him to such long, and steady, and undying persecution. Mournful beings! I internally exclaimed, as they proceeded from my sight, whatever sinful sorrow thus serves to link together your discordant existences, it must indeed be of a damning nature, if such a career as yours does not go far to expiate it!

That day, on the re-assembling of the family, I did not fail to allude to the subject of the milkman, and to express my surprise at his tenacity to life, as well as at the fixedness of purpose that enabled him to pursue his occupation through a long series of years, under such remarkable circumstances. I found, however, that the ladies only smiled at the interest which my manner exhibited; some of them assuring me, at the same time, that the neighbourhood was now so accustomed to the matter, that, although calculated to arrest the attention of a stranger, to them it had ceased to be either a source of curiosity or enquiry. I believe they added, that of late the man's health had begun to fail, and that once or twice, when he happened to be confined from indisposition, his companion's visits were interrupted by the occurrence, although she still kept her vigilance in exercise

by watching unremittingly for his re-appearance.

After a few pleasant days passed in London, I proceeded to Lincolnshire, and had the happiness of finding my family well when I arrived at home. My father was quite satisfied with the letters I conveyed from Professor Von Slammerbogen; my mother delighted to receive me in any character, whether that of pedant or prodigal. Nicholas, my elder brother, I found as much attached, as when I left him, to practising "Dull Care", upon the violin. In Tom, however, there was a considerable modification, he having left his sinister arm at Hougomont, in exchange for a three months' campaign in country quarters and a Waterloo medal. In the following term I entered at Cambridge, as my father had originally planned; and in due time, upon obtaining my degree, was admitted into holy orders. My first curacy, it is singular enough, was obtained through the influence of our friend the Walworth banker, and was that of St - 's, in his neighbourhood, but nearer to town, and the centre of a poor but densely peopled district. The scene of life I now entered upon was truly laborious and painful. Resolved to perform its duties diligently to the best of my ability, I found every moment I could spare from refreshment and sleep hardly sufficient for the claims which the Comfortless, whom I had to console, the Sick, whom I had to succour, the Profligate, to reclaim, the Sceptic, to convince, made upon my time. Wholesome and profitable to my spirit, I trust, was this discipline! It seems to me a thing inexplicable, how a man can advocate the interests,

the benefits of religion – can impress upon others the divine precepts of Christianity, and be himself not a partaker in the blessings he imparts. Such a one, I hope, I have long ceased to be; and although I do not profess to have attained that degree of zealous fervour and devotion, which sees, in the light and graceful relaxations of life nothing but the darkness and allurements of sin, I humbly believe I have endeavoured to make my course, as much as in me was possible, conformable to the doctrines I have taught.

Upon settling in London, I gladly renewed my acquaintance with the Sainsburys; yet so arduous were the duties of my profession, that, for the first two years in which I resided in St – 's parish, I saw but little of this amiable family. Towards the close of that period, the aid of an additional curate, appointed to assist in the district, afforded me a little more leisure time, and I was enabled occasionally to spend an evening at Walworth. In passing to and from my friend's house, I now and then met, and ever with renewed interest and surprise, the dark Pair still plodding their melancholy, interminable rounds. The last time I beheld them, I remember calculating, as they passed me, the number of years they had been thus incomprehensibly associated, and speculating on how many more should elapse before age and death terminated that melancholy partnership. In about two months after, I dined at the banker's, and the first intelligence with which John Sainsbury greeted me, was the news that the milkman of Walworth and his companion had at length

disappeared. Maunsell, he said, had died some weeks before, after a couple of days' illness. No one seemed to know of what disorder – general debility, it was thought; no doctor had been called in; and not having left a will, his property went to some distant relative. With respect to the woman, she was last noticed, the evening of his death, sitting in the usual spot – within sight of the gateway leading to his house – where she generally awaited his appearance. She was not there the following morning; nor was she seen again. As the deceased had made no disclosure respecting her, nor left any papers that could tend to explain their connexion, all chance, it was concluded, of clearing up the mystery was at an end for ever. I confess this disappointed me not a little. I found I had, whenever the strange Pair occurred to my recollection, unconsciously entertained a conviction that I should, at some period or other, learn their history; and now that all opportunity of so doing had vanished, the fancies of my early youth again returned, and occupied me with their wild suggestions for a longer time than was either pleasing or justifiable. The coincidence, however, which had brought me so often into contact with those singular persons, was not fated as yet to discontinue.

Chapter IV

It was, I think, about half a year from this period, that, in returning late one evening from the neighbourhood of Russell Square, where my father, during a short visit he was compelled to make to town, had taken lodgings, I missed my way, and got entangled in the intricacies of the numerous narrow streets and alleys that lie between that quarter of London and the eastern end of Holborn. Intending to avail myself of some of the public conveyances homewards, I had attempted to shorten my passage to the great thoroughfares, and in doing so had thus gone astray. As it was past ten o'clock I was necessarily hurried, and yet the heat and heaviness of the night – it was July – prevented me freeing myself as rapidly as I should otherwise have done from the squalid and disagreeable avenues in which I had got entangled. I was just pausing to enquire my way of a slatternly-looking woman, who stood considerably in front of the door of a dirty-looking house in one of the dirtiest lanes I had yet explored, and who, with an apron thrown round her shoulders, to supply, it seemed to me, the absence of their appropriate garments, appeared, from the direction of her looks, to be awaiting some one's arrival, when a lad hastened up the opposite side of the alley, and breathlessly announced to her, that "the docther wouldn't come 'thout he first got his fee."

"Holy Mary, mother of – ! Oh, wisha, what *am* I to do!"

exclaimed the woman in a strong Irish accent, with that elision of apostrophe into complaint peculiar to her country.

"If she goes on this way till mornin', two men wouldn't hold her, let alone one *colleen*.¹ Run, Micky, to the 'seer, an' let him get her to the hospiddle, or my heart 'll be broke from her."

"How dove I know where the 'seer lives at this hour o' the night?" expostulated the boy.

"There's a wake in Tim Reilly's second floor – can't you go there, and they'll tell you – can't you?"

The messenger disappeared, and I now, before putting the question for which I had stopped, asked the woman soothingly the cause of her perturbation.

"Is it what's the matter, sir? Matter enough thin – a poor crethur of a woman lodgin' with me is took very bad with the fever. She wasn't to say so bad entirely till this evenin', when she begin to rave, and 'sist upon gettin' up; an' goin' on with terrible talk, that it would frighten the heart o' you to hear her."

"How long," I said, "has she been ill?"

"Wisha, sir, she was never well since the day she darkened my dure; but I think 'tis the heat o' the weather, an' her never stirrin' out, an' the weakness entirely, an' the impression on her heart, that is killin' her now."

"And has she had no advice?"

"Sorrow the 'vice – you'd think she'd go into fits when I mentioned a dochter to her; and as to a priest or a minister –

¹ Little girl – or girl, merely.

my dear life, I might as well mention a blunderbush."

Well accustomed to hear of, and witness, such suffering as the woman described, I was about to proceed in quest of a physician myself, if she had paused in the first part of the sentence just finished. The concluding remarks arrested me.

"I am a clergyman," I said; "will you let me see this poor person?"

"An' a thousand welcomes, sir. I know you're not the Revern' Misthur Falvey, that I goes to a' Christmas an' Easter – nor the minister convenient here. Maybe you're" —

"I'm quite unknown here; but by allowing me to see your patient, I shall be able to judge if she is in a fit state to be removed to an hospital; or, if instantly necessary, I shall myself procure medical advice for her."

The woman entered the house and I followed her, waiting, as she requested me, in the dark entry, until she procured from the sick chamber the only light that I presume was burning in the dwelling. She then re-appeared at the head of the stairs, and requested me to ascend.

Lighting me up four ruinous flights of steps, leading to rooms that appeared to be tenanted by beings as miserable as herself, she ushered me into an apartment of such large dimensions that the weak rushlight she carried left its extremity in absolute darkness. It was wretchedly furnished. At the farthest end from the door was a bed, by the side of which stood a coarse-looking girl about fifteen, engaged in preventing – now by soothing,

now by forcible restraint – the invalid who occupied it from attempting to rise.

"Not another moment – not one moment longer! I *must* get up – he is waiting for me! See! I am late already, for 'tis daybreak – though you cannot see the dawn through that dismal rain. Let me go – wretch, wretch! – let me go; he shall not stir one step that I won't be near him to remind him of" —

Leaving the candle near the door, my guide approached the bed, and beckoned me to follow. I advanced, and even through the misty shadows that enveloped the place, I recognised, in the emaciated Form struggling on the couch, her wild flashing eyes now wilder with fever and insanity, the well-remembered wanderer who had so often excited my interest in Walworth.

"Ha!" she continued, after stopping suddenly, as lunatics will do when a stranger unexpectedly appears, and intently observing me for some minutes. "Ha! I knew I was late – see there. *He* has come to seek me, for the first time, too, for seventeen – eighteen – oh! so many long years. Ha, ha! all in black, too – Barnard – and you've brought your wealthy bride" – and she glanced at the woman, who stood beside me; "but, faugh, how her limbs rattle – not a whole bone," she said, with a hysterical laugh, "in her beautiful body!"

In this way she continued to rave, during the short time I remained in the apartment. I attempted to ask her a few questions, to ascertain, if possible, how far the distraction of her mind was consequent upon her disorder; but her only replies were

mad and incoherent allusions to past scenes and occurrences, that seemed entirely to engross her attention. Finding my presence of no avail, I quitted the place, and was about to deposit a small sum with the hostess for the sufferer's use, when she very ingenuously informed me it was not at the moment necessary, that person herself having always, in the payment of her weekly rent, entrusted to her hands money sufficient to supply the wants of several ensuing days.

"An' though we're sometimes bad enough off, sir, when the boys don't get the work at Mr Cubitt's, still, shure, if I was to wrong a poor sickly crethur like that of her thrifle of change, 'twould melt away the weight o' myself in goold if I had it."

I could not help smiling at this unwonted display of honesty in so unexpected a quarter, and promising her that such care and attention to her sick tenant should not go unrewarded, I departed, escorted by "Micky," who had returned to say that no intelligence of the 'seer was to be obtained at Tim Reilly's. On making our way into Holborn, I called at the nearest surgeon's, and, giving him my address, I dispatched him back with the boy, directing him, at the same time, not to allow the woman to be removed unless her disorder was a contagious one, (which, I was persuaded, it was not,) and requesting, should the aid of a physician be necessary, he would at once procure it, for which, with all other expenses, I would be answerable. Touching this latter point, the lad had informed me as we came along, that he did not think their lodger was at all at a loss for money, as she

procured it about once a-month, he thought, (the only time she ever went abroad,) from some "gentleman's office in the courts."

Although living at such a distance, I contrived to see the unfortunate invalid several times in the following week. I found I was right as to the nature of her disorder. An eminent physician had been called in once or twice during its most violent paroxysms, and stated, that it was likely her malady was not the cause, but the consequence, of some extraordinary mental excitement. Under the judicious treatment he pointed out, the fever gradually subsided, and for a short time there was an appearance in the patient of returning convalescence. But her physical energies were exhausted, and it was evident that a very short period would terminate her existence. Reason, too, never wholly resumed its functions, if indeed it had ever of late years exercised them in that wearied brain. Her ideas assumed a certain degree of coherency. She was able to converse occasionally with calmness, to recognise faces familiar to her, and appeared sensible of and even grateful for my visits, and the assiduity with which I sought to awaken her to some preparation for the great approaching change; but

"the delicate chain

Of thought, once tangled, never clear'd again:"

never *wholly* cleared. The lightning of insanity flashed continually from the heavy cloud that hung upon her soul. The allusions, too, she was in the habit of making to some transactions of bygone years, were of so startling a nature, that I was fully

confirmed in my early impression she had been at one time of her life implicated in some wonderful, nay, heinous occurrence. Upon this point it was my intention, if possible, to win her gradually to confide to me the secret of her guilt or wrongs, hoping by this means to relieve her spirit by seeming to share in its burdens and distress.

With the quick perception of persons labouring like her under mental aberration, she seemed to anticipate my purpose. I was one morning sitting by her bedside, when she suddenly began —

"You asked me yesterday if I remembered having ever seen you before this illness — this late attack — and I said no. It was false. I spoke as I thought at the time; but, in looking at you now, I recollect you were one of those people I often met at Walworth. I even think you once attempted to get into *his* confidence — (now, do not interrupt me.) You likewise desired to know why one like me, who appears superior in mind and language to the wretched class amongst whom you find her, should have led the life — Stay! send for a sheriff's officer, and I will tell you."

I assured her I saw no necessity at that moment for the presence of such a person; and, as she appeared somewhat more excited than I had seen her for several days, I endeavoured to lead her away from the subject that occupied her, by turning the conversation to some indifferent topic. But it would not do. She still reverted to the point at which she had broken off; and I was at length obliged to let her pursue the course of her own thoughts as she pleased.

"Did you ever think me handsome? Many once thought me so; but that is long ago. My father was still handsomer. He was the younger of two brothers, both wealthy. They were plain Devonshire farmers – each, too, was a widower, with each a daughter. So far for their likeness to one another. Now for the contrast. My father spent his wealth, died, and left me a beggar. *Her's* (my pretty cousin Martha's) saved it, and left his child an heiress – a Temptation – a prize for all the bumpkins and graziers about us. I was glad to live with her. We kept house together. We were both of an age – young, handsome, lively, and for our station, or rather for a higher one, well educated. Here again ceased the resemblance. Like my father, I was open, guileless, unsuspecting – and it destroyed me. She was mean, cunning, treacherous, and would – but hell was too strong for her – have triumphed. My cousin had numerous offers of marriage. I had none. Among several young men who frequented our society, was a substantial farmer named Barnard. You have seen him. When you first beheld him he was little altered. He had ever that cursed look of Cain upon his forehead, though I branded it a little deeper. Do not thus stop me! – breath! – I have breath enough. Barnard was gay, smooth, agreeable – what was more, he was *my* suitor – the only one amid throngs that was attentive, kind, obliging to me. I felt first grateful, and next loved him – you shall hear how well.

"Our match began to be talked of. Martha from some whim disapproved of it. He ceased to visit at the house – but I would

not give him up; and while he contemplated, as I thought, arrangements for our marriage, we often met alone. Judgment is over with him now – mine is at hand, and I will not load him with guilt that, after all, may not be his. He was the only being that cared for me on earth, and I clung to him with a tenfold affection. How do I know but it was this mad confidence that first awoke the villain in his soul? That wine" —

I held the glass to her lips; and, while I wiped the damp drops of agony from her brow, I besought her to defer the sequel of her story until she was more capable of pursuing it.

"No," she said; "it must be now, or not at all. I am stronger than I have been for months to-day. Where was I? – Stealing back day after day to Martha's, a trampled, but not an unhoping spirit; for I still looked forward to *his* fulfilling his promise. He once more was a visitor at our house. I did not know why – I did not care – he was there, and I was satisfied: I had no eyes for any thing else. But the blow was coming. It fell – it smote us all to dust.

"I was one morning occupied alone in some domestic duty, when I heard Barnard's name pronounced by two female servants of our farm, who were employed in the next apartment. I listened – poor souls! they were merely agreeing 'how natural it was for Mr Barnard to have jilted Miss – (but let my very name be unpronounced) – and taken up with Miss Martha, who had all the fortune.' Was it not a natural remark? So natural, that every being in the country had already made it but her whose heart it broke to hear it. I rushed from the spot, a mist spreading before

my eyes as I hastened on. I sought out Barnard; I found him, and alone. I told him of the report I had overheard. He said it was not new to him. I charged him with perfidy – he avowed it. Half-dreaming, I attempted to catch his hand. He coolly withdrew it. I knelt before him – I clasped his knees – I wept, and prayed he would bless me by treading me to death beneath his feet. He extricated himself with a laugh, bid me not be a fool, and left me.

"Before I rose from the spot where I had fallen, a dreadful shadow passed, as it were, suddenly across me, and some black passion I had never known till then took possession of my spirit. It was jealousy. I returned home, and hastened to have an interview with Martha. Hitherto I had been of a quiet, timid disposition – I was now bold from frenzy and betrayed affection. I upbraided my cousin with duplicity, with meanness in receiving the addresses of the man betrothed to her relative. She retorted by drawing comparisons between our attractions, personal as well as pecuniary. At these I smiled – bitterly perhaps, but still I smiled. She scoffed at my pleas that Barnard was my affianced husband, declared her intention of marrying him, and ended by insinuating that I had lost him by the very unguardedness of my affection. I never smiled again.

"I was mad from that day forward. My whole existence changed. I was a dissembler – a liar – for my life was a long lie – and, come near – I *am* a murderer. I lived blindly on – a day was fixed for their marriage – but, though I knew not *how it was to be* – I knew another would never stand at the altar as his bride.

"She and I had apparently been reconciled – I saw Barnard no more, save in her presence – I lulled them both into a belief that I was a poor, trodden, and stingless thing.

"The Sunday preceding the wedding-day arrived. It was a lovely evening in summer, and Martha and he and I wandered far away into the fields – they to taste the freshness of nature, I, to wonder the flowers did not wither beneath our tread; for we were all alike evil and abandoned. In our way, we visited a mill that was soon to become the property of Barnard in right of his bride. In passing through the different lofts into which it was divided, we paused in one to admire the immense and complicated machinery connected with the great wheel that worked the manufactory. Martha, ever capricious and perverse, wished to see the engine set in motion. But there was not a servant – not a creature, save ourselves – within a mile of the spot at the moment. Barnard, however, volunteered to go to the mill-dam outside, and, on a signal from us, to undo the wicket that kept back the waters from the wheel. I watched him from the window till he took his station at the spot. Just then Martha, who, with perverse inquisitiveness, had been standing caged within the iron framework of the engines, in hastening to leave it missed her footing, and stumbled backward again within its circle. A streak as of fire flashed through the place. I waved my hand; there was the sudden rush of tumbling water, a faint shriek, and then the roar and thunder of the enormous wheels hurrying on, grinding and tearing her to pieces. And then came the horrorstruck look

of Him, crying out to Heaven in his vain impotency, and my own mad laughter, ringing high over it all!

"His consternation and despair – his wild attempts to stay the progress of the crashing machinery – his wrath at my exultation – only raised me to a higher state of frenzy – that frenzy of heart and brain that never went from me more. I hollowed in his ear how I had done it – and when he flung himself on the ground in a passion of remorse and grief, I danced round him, proclaiming my hate and guilt, and summoning him to give me up to justice. It was now his turn to quiver under the lash of conscience. He accused himself of the ruin I had wrought – acknowledged his falsehood – cried aloud for mercy – and still I exulted with a fiercer laughter, with a louder demand that he would give me to the gibbet. He endeavored to fly from the spot. I pursued him. I never left him again. There was a long illness – a blot upon my memory. I cannot tell you any thing of its duration. *Her* remains were found – there was an enquiry – he was the only witness – he kept *our secret*. On my recovery, I found he had sold his property, and departed to some distant quarter in the north of England. I tracked him there. I had vowed to haunt his soul with the memory of my crime, until he surrendered me to justice. He sought to shun me, by changing his name and removing from one place of residence to another; but in vain. My revenge was as hard and cruel as his own look on the morning, in his orchard, when he spurned me fainting from his feet. Go where he would, I pursued. At last he settled near London – in that place where you first

beheld us. You know the rest of our career. If guilt can be atoned for by *human* suffering – the wrath of years – the raging wind – the scorching sun – ruined youth – premature age – privation, misery, madness, and hate, have well atoned for ours. You shake your head. It is not so? Well, you were the first to teach me to vent my burning thoughts in prayer. Pray with me now. I seem to have lived all my evil passions over again in this last hour. Do not leave me yet, but – pray!"

Such was the disastrous tale imparted to me in almost the last interview I had with its hapless narrator. Either the recollections she had lived through, as she said, in so short a space, or the exertions caused by its recital, were too much for her enfeebled intellect. Delirium shortly after returned, and continued to within a few hours of her dissolution, which occurred on the evening of the following day. I was present when she expired. She instructed me where to find the agent, who paid her a small stipend derived from a distant relative, (to whom, by her uncle's will, his property descended,) that I might apprise him of her death. She was quite sensible at the awful moment; and there is still a hope mingled with the melancholy remembrance that her last entreaty to me was – to "pray!"

INJURED IRELAND

The miseries of the Irish people, and the oppressions under which they groan, form the topics of conversation in every quarter of the globe – you hear of them at Rome and at Constantinople – they are discussed on the prairies of Texas and in the wilds of the Oregon – in Paris and at Vienna you are bored by their constant repetition. The "smart" American contributes his dollars, and the "pious Belgian"² his prayers, to effect their redress; and they have fairly driven from the field of compassion all sympathy for the plundered Jews and persecuted Poles. The restless Frenchman speculates on them as the certain means by which England may be humiliated; and impatiently awaits the moment when, under the guidance of the young De Joinville, fifty thousand of "les braves" may be thrown on the coast of Ireland, and take advantage of the national disaffection, for the double purpose of mortally wounding his ancient enemy, and of giving, as a boon to its oppressed inhabitants, that liberty of which he talks so much and knows so little. Doubtless the sufferings of this *patient* people have, before now, drawn tears from the sensitive eyes of "the brother of the sun;" and the "sagacious and enlightened Lin" has already suggested to his celestial master the propriety

² Mr O'Connell stated in his speech, after "the liberation," that that most unexpected and miraculous event had been publicly prayed for in all the churches of Belgium.

of dispatching some of his invincible war-junks to effect the liberation of the degraded slaves of the "red and blue devils" who have so cruelly annoyed him. Every one has heard, and every one talks, of Irish grievances; but no one seems to know exactly what those grievances are: their existence appears to be so unquestionable, that to dispute it is not only useless but almost disreputable; and yet if one venture to enquire of those who declaim most loudly against them wherein they consist, they limit themselves to generalities, and quote the admitted state of the country as proof positive of English injustice and Saxon misrule.

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