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National distress ; its causes and remedies

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On The Causes of, And Remedies for, The Existing Distress of The Country.

General Considerations—Absence of The Usual Historical Symptoms of National Decline—
Definition of The Evils which Threaten Society.

THE first step towards an inquiry into the causes and remedies of existing distress must be to define, with some tolerable approach to accuracy, the nature and symptoms of the disease whose origin we wish to trace, and for which we would endeavour to prescribe. This is the more necessary when the disease is of a different nature from those to which we have been accustomed, and appears rather to resemble one of the deep-seated organic maladies which the frame of society, like that of the individual, develops at certain critical periods of growth and transition, than one of the ordinary and obvious complaints whose treatment has been already brought within the domain of recognised rules. At former periods of history we have heard complaints of national distress, and witnessed instances of national decay ; but these have been occasioned by causes, and accompanied by symptoms, very different from those which characterize the present phase of social existence in England. For instance, invasion of foreign enemies, loss of national independence, decay of energy and martial spirit, domestic discord, religious persecution, financial embarrassment, sudden changes in the accustomed course of commerce, are all recognised causes and symptoms of the decline of nations. Of none of these do we find a trace in the present condition of England.

On the contrary, never, perhaps, was there a period when national prosperity, judged of by these outward historical tests, stood higher. England stands without dispute the first naval and commercial power in the world. Ships and money, the two great elements of superiority in modern warfare, she commands to an almost unlimited extent, and by the application of steam her relative superiority over other nations is daily increasing. Strong as she is in her resources, she is still stronger in the vigour and energy of her national character. The recent events in Syria, China, Affghanistan, and Scinde, whatever we may think of their policy, have had at least this advantage they have shown in the most signal manner that twenty-seven years of peace have not impaired the martial energy and cool resolute valour which have carried the English flag in triumph through so many bloody contests, from Crecy and Agincourt, to Trafalgar and Waterloo. Fortunately, however, at no period of her history was

there ever less prospect of a struggle which should again call forth the energies of England in defence of her national rights or independence. The adjustment of our differences with the United States, the triumphant conclusion of the wars in Affghanistan and China, and the return to a good understanding with France, have placed the foreign relations of the British empire on a footing the most secure and satisfactory.

Nor can it be said with any truth that the domestic symptoms usually enumerated as the precursors of national decay, are apparent in the present social condition of the British empire. Party spirit no doubt prevails, but scarcely to a dangerous extent. There is no line of demarcation which, as in countries less fortunately situated, separates society into hostile camps, arrayed under different political or religious banners. On the contrary, public opinion has led to the extinction of the last vestiges of religious exclusion, and political prejudices seldom interfere with the courtesies and kindly relations of social life. Notwithstanding the excitement of party contests, perhaps there have been few periods in English history when the differences between leading statesmen were more entirely nominal, and when measures, clearly seen to be necessary for the public welfare, were more certain to receive the united support of the most intelligent and influential men of all shades of political opinion. [1]

The state of Ireland is, by the conditions of this Essay, excluded from our consideration, or else it might not be difficult to show that the political, as distinguished from the agrarian agitation of that unhappy country, is to a great extent of our own making, and would probably, in a great measure, disappear, if we could make up our minds to the slight sacrifice of lingering prejudice, implied in admitting our Catholic fellow-subjects to a full, frank, and unreserved equality of political privilege.

The state of our vast colonial empire appears also to afford no ground for urgent apprehension. The seeds of political discontent, sown long ago in Canada by the injudicious attempt to graft a fac-simile of the British constitution on the old seigneurial institutions of feudal France, have been, in a great measure, eradicated, by the vigorous and judicious measure of uniting the two provinces. The successful issue of Lord Ashburton's negotiations with the government of the United States has removed the only threatening source of danger from without ; and on the whole there appears every reason to hope that by following up the principles of colonial policy established by Lord John Russell and Lord Sydenham, and by acting with common judgment in the selection of men of talent and integrity for the important office of governor, we may ensure a long career of prosperity for our North American dominions. The decided measure taken by Sir C. Bagot, of admitting the representatives of the French population to a share in the administration, is a continuation of the same policy, which may be summed up as that of governing in accordance with the wishes and wants of a majority in the colony, and not for the exclusive benefit of a little pseudo-aristocratic clique or family compact. Many years ago Sir J. Kempt recommended Papineau, then a talented young barrister at Montreal, for a judgeship : that recommendation was disregarded by the colonial secretary of the day, because it was contrary to all precedent to appoint a man of French descent, and not a member of the family compact, to an official situation. In that act originated the Canadian insurrection. At the expense of a million of money, and the imminent risk of losing our North American colonies, we have at length learned a little common sense. The same remark will apply to our other colonial possessions. In the West Indies, the success of the great experiment of emancipation has not only removed the stigma of slavery from the British name, but has placed our connexion with those magnificent possessions on a solid and secure basis. Instead of 800,000 dissolute and discontented slaves, we have 800,000 civilised Christian subjects, bound to the mother country by ties of gratitude and interest, and advancing rapidly in the scale of intelligence and material prosperity. The diminished profits of a few planters and merchants, more than half of whom are absentees, are a trifling set-off

against the advantages which, even in a political and commercial point of view, have resulted from the noble act of obedience to duty which prompted the people of England to strike the fetters from the slave. [2] The abolition of the East India Company's monopoly, and the adoption of a more liberal commercial policy, have, within the last few years, done wonders in calling forth the dormant energies and resources of our vast Indian empire. Already a supply of 60,000 tons of sugar is brought from a country which, before the year 1836, did not export a single pound ; and there seems scarcely any limit to the extension of the cultivation of sugar, coffee, cotton, and other staple articles, by the introduction and example of English capital and enterprise.

The enactment of a reasonable code of regulation for colonial commerce (by the bill introduced by Mr. Labouchere in 1841, and again brought forward by Mr. Gladstone, and passed into a law, in the course of last session), has done more than a series of successful wars for the consolidation of our colonial empire. Restrictions, partial and vexatious monopolies in favour of particular colonies, are swept away, and the British colonies now enjoy perfect free trade with the mother country and with one another ; and also with all foreign countries, subject to a slight differential duty of 7 per cent, imposed as a fair equivalent for the expense incurred by England in affording government and military defence. It is not too much to say that, had this act been in existence, the United States, whose original causes of discontent were entirely commercial, [3] might, and in all probability would, at this day, have formed a loyal and contented portion of the British dominions. To the vast colonies, which are fast filling the southern hemisphere with an English population, we will only allude, the rather as it will be necessary, in a later part of this Essay, to enter in more detail on the subject of emigration. In the meantime, it is enough to say, that with a few fluctuations, arising from over-trading and speculation, our Australian settlements, including Van Dieman's Land and the newly-founded colony of New Zealand, present a picture of progress unparalleled in the annals of colonial history. [4]

If then, as we have seen reason to believe, the political relations of England at home, abroad, and in the colonies, exhibit no symptom of declining vigour, still less can it be said that her financial resources are impaired, her credit exhausted, or that she shows any of the usual signs of an alarming diminution in the aggregate of national wealth. It is true that for the last three or four years we have struggled with some slight degree of financial embarrassment, and seen the revenue fall below the current expenditure. This, however, is clearly attributable to certain specific causes, and not to general decay. The produce of the revenue has fallen off, not because old taxes have become unproductive, but because an enormous amount of taxation has been taken off. Between 1815 and 1830 taxes to the amount of 30,000,000*l.* annually were repealed, while the produce of taxation was only reduced by 20,000,000*l.* [5] Between 1830 and 1837 further taxes, to the amount of upwards of 7,000,000*l.* annually were taken off ; and, finally, in 1839, a sacrifice of another million of revenue was made, in order to afford the country the boon of the penny postage.

The effect of these reductions since 1830 has been, in round numbers, to bring down the produce of the revenue from 51,000,000*l.* to 47,500,000*l.*, or to diminish revenue by not quite half the reduction in taxation ; a result which, although when coupled with the additional expenditure rendered necessary by negro emancipation, by the insurrection in Canada, by the wars in China and Affghanistan, and by the state of our political relations with France and in the Levant, was quite enough to involve the country in temporary embarrassment, is widely different from those symptoms of deep-rooted exhaustion which, as in the case of the Roman empire and old French monarchy, result from and indicate the impending bankruptcy of worn-out and corrupt societies.

The state of public credit indicated by the price of the funds is a sure test that in the opinion of those most qualified to form a correct judgment on the subject, the resources of the country are as yet unimpaired. Indeed, with the Three per Cents at 99, it appears almost ludicrous to talk seriously of financial embarrassments. In fact, the national burdens of England, enormous as they appear, are great only in themselves, and not when viewed, as they always ought to be, *relatively* to the still more enormous wealth and resources of the nation.

The national income has been estimated at an average of from 16*l.* to 17*l.* per head per annum. This would give a total gross income of about 297,000,000*l.* [6] Macculloch says, “ We believe we shall not be far wrong if we estimate the gross national income at from 290,000,000*l.* to 310,000,000*l.*” [7]

The national debt being about 760,000,000*l.*, is, therefore little more than two years’ purchase of the national income ; and the annual interest upon it, amounting to 29,000,000*l.*, constitutes a charge of only 8 or 9 per cent, upon this income. The whole amount of taxation, taking it at 50,000,000*l.*, does not exceed 15 per cent on the national income ; a burden which, although large, is far from overwhelming, or out of proportion to those borne by other countries.

The amount of national capital upon which the above income is based cannot be estimated with any approach to accuracy, but it is truly enormous. The rental of land alone, at the very moderate average of 17*s.* an acre for land under cultivation, is estimated at 32,000,000*l.*, and this estimate is confirmed by the returns in 1815 under the property-tax. [8] This, at the current market price of land, would give upwards of 900,000,000*l.* for the capital of the single class of landowners. Some idea of the extent of personal property may be formed from the fact that the average amount of capital which pays legacy duty in each year exceeds 40,000,000*l.*

Where, then, is the distress ? If neither the political circumstances, the financial condition, nor considered with reference only to the amount of wealth the economical state of the country, show any indications of decay or danger, how is it that so many serious men shake their heads with gloomy apprehensions, and at times feel tempted to doubt whether the amount of evil in the present social condition of England does not preponderate over the good ? It is in the condition of the labouring classes that the danger lies. Amidst the intoxication of wealth and progress, and the dreams of a millenium of material prosperity to be realized by the inventions of science, the discoveries of political economy, and the unrestricted application of man's energy and intelligence to outward objects, society has been startled by a discovery of the fearful fact, that as wealth increases, poverty increases in a faster ratio, and that in almost exact proportion to the advance of one portion of society in opulence, intelligence, and civilisation, has been the retrogression of another and more numerous class towards misery, degradation, and barbarism.

To speak more specifically, the leading facts to which the evils that, in one shape or other, are continually forcing themselves upon the attention of society, may be reduced, appear to be

1st. The existence of an intolerable mass of misery, including in the term both recognised and official pauperism, and the un- recognised destitution that preys, like a consuming ulcer, in the heart of our large cities and densely-peopled manufacturing districts.

2dly. The condition of a large proportion of the independent labouring class, who are unable

to secure a tolerably comfortable and stable existence in return for their labour, and are approximating, there is too much reason to fear, towards the gulf of pauperism, in which they will be, sooner or later, swallowed up. unless something effectual can be done to arrest their downward progress.

The researches of various Parliamentary committees and commissions, as well as those of philanthropic societies and individuals, during the last few years, have accumulated a vast mass of evidence bearing upon this all-important subject, from which we shall endeavour to select a few portions sufficient to satisfy our readers of the actual existence, and of the extent and nature, of these evils.

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EMIGRATION.

WHEN we consider the question of emigration in a general point of view, it must be evident that it is, of all others, the most important, and most intimately connected with the destinies of the English nation. The appointed mission of this nation evidently is to people the boundless regions of America and Australia with a race of men professing the purest religion, inheriting the richest literature and proudest history, and endowed by nature with the largest share of personal energy, perseverance, moral courage, self-command, habits of order and industry, and, in a word, possessing the highest degree of aptitude for practical civilisation, of any race which the world has yet seen. Already the flood of Anglo-Saxon population sweeps westward across the continent of America like a great tide, swallowing up the solitary prairies, and conquering every year from the Indian and the buffalo, a wide belt of six or seven miles along the line from the Rio Grande to Lake Huron. Already the outposts of the Australian continent are securely occupied, and the seeds of future empires planted in New Zealand, Van Dieman's Land, and wherever a favourable situation presents itself to British enterprise. The uneasiness and distress at home, the pressure of population on employment, the wonderful discoveries in science, and even the mechanical tendency, money-making spirit, and restless discontent of the age, are, to the eye of a philosophical observer, so many incentives and aids in the accomplishment of the two great missions of the English race first, that of filling new worlds with a civilised and Christian population ; secondly, that of bringing the religion and civilisation of Europe in contact with the stationary forms of society and religion which have existed for so many centuries in the ancient East. [9] Nor can it be well doubted that it is in a wise co-operation with these great designs of Providence that we are most likely to find a solution of our social difficulties, and relief from the evils which oppress us. When we descend, however, from these general considerations to practical details, the subject of emigration is surrounded with many difficulties, and it must be at once admitted that no feasible scheme has yet been suggested by experienced practical men, for conducting emigration on the extensive and systematic scale which would be required in order to make a sensible impression on the mass of distress at home.

The first point for inquiry is, what emigration has hitherto done, and what it is now doing. This will be seen at a glance from the following tables compiled from the Parliamentary Returns :

Population of Great Britain, 1821	14,391,631
Ditto ditto 1831	16,539,318
	Increase 2,137,677

Emigrated in 10 years, 1821-1831 145,857

Population of Great Britain, 1831	16,539,318
Ditto ditto 1841	18,540,682
	Increase 2,008,264
Emigrated in 10 years, 1831-1841	460,278 [9]

The result is, that about one-fifth of the annual increase of population has been disposed of by emigration, of whom, in round numbers, two-thirds go to America, and one-third to Australia. [The rate of emigration in 1841 to Australia has not been continued. Only 4097 emigrants to Australia and New Zealand left the United Kingdom in the half-year ending 5th July, 1842, against 14,552 during the corresponding period of 1841. The emigration from Ireland in 1841 was 32,428, of whom three-fourths went to the North American colonies.] Under the present system of leaving emigration entirely to be regulated by the laws of demand and supply, and by private enterprise, there seems no reason to expect that this amount of emigration will be very materially increased. [10] The highest estimate given by competent authorities of the number of able-bodied labourers who could be absorbed by the legitimate demand for labour in Canada in a year, does not reach 10,000, and with the present amount of emigration there are frequent symptoms of the labour-market in the North American colonies being overstocked. [11] Sir Charles Bagot, in his last despatch on the subject, observes, with reference to the emigration of 1841, “ that great difficulty had been found in procuring employment for emigrants who came merely as labourers, without any previous knowledge of agriculture, or of any mechanical trade. Under ordinary circumstances, the demand for unskilled labour is exceedingly small, and I should be disposed to dissuade rather than encourage the emigration of that class.” In New Brunswick the governor has been compelled to warn emigrants not to expect employment in that colony. [12] Even in the United States the demand for unskilled labour is frequently outstripped by the supply ; and, no later than last year, the Irish Emigrant Society of the city of New York published an address to their countrymen, cautioning them against embarking for the Atlantic cities without adequate resources. In considering emigration also as a source of relief to the labouring classes of Great Britain, we must bear in mind that the competition of Irish labour is felt in America as well as at home, and that more than half of the demand for unskilled labour which exists both in Canada and the United States is absorbed by the supply from Ireland. [13] On the whole, we may safely take it for granted, that without the assistance of the government, either by creating an extraordinary demand for labour by public works, or by locating settlers upon unoccupied lands, the North American colonies cannot, for several years to come, absorb an emigration of above 50,000 souls, equivalent to a supply of 12,000 or 15,000 able-bodied labourers, annually ; and of this at least two-thirds may be calculated upon as supplied by Ireland.

The amount of emigration to Australia, has, as we have seen, not exceeded one-fourth of that to America ; and we have the opinions of the local authorities that an annual supply of 8000 to 10,000 persons is sufficient to meet the demand for labour in the most important settlements. Sir George Gipps, the governor-general of New South Wales, has declared that “ a well regulated immigration of from 8000 to 10,000 souls is what he considers essential for the prosperity of the colony ;” and when the amount rose last year to 22,000, the danger to the colony, from the excessive influx of emigrants, appeared so great to the authorities at home, that Lord John Russell, and his successor, Lord Stanley, wrote in the strongest terms to the governor, to censure him for the indiscriminate issue of bounty orders to persons undertaking to import emigrants, and even prohibited, by notice in the *Gazette*, the sailing of any more ships [14] with bounty emigrants.

To Van Dieman’s Land emigration was for several years suspended, owing to the opinion of the local authorities that no adequate demand existed for labour, and it is only now recom-

mencing on a very limited scale. Sir J. Franklin, in a despatch dated December, 1841, observes, “ that the present state of the colony does not require, nor indeed could it bear, a large and indiscriminate influx of labourers ;” and he recommends that not above “ 500 thorough-bred farm labourers, and 400 or 500 female servants of good characters should be sent to the colony.” [15] In South Australia, the rapid increase of the first few years has received a sudden check, and we find, from the parliamentary inquiry, that it had actually become necessary to resort to a description of poor’s rate in order to support a large number of independent labourers ; [16] and that it was a general opinion that an extraordinary government expenditure was required to find employment for the labour already in the settlement. From later accounts it would appear that the colony is slowly recovering from the state of bankruptcy into which it was plunged by inordinate speculation and fictitious prosperity ; still there is no likelihood that, for many years to come, there will be an effective demand for more labour than would be supplied by the annual introduction of 2000 or 3000 emigrants. To Western Australia one ship only has been yet despatched, although the Emigration Commissioners have surplus funds from land sales in the colony at their disposal, in consequence, as they say, “ of a warning received from the governor against a too rapid introduction of labour into a colony where there is no large accumulation of capital applicable to its remuneration.” [17]

New Zealand has, during the last two years, succeeded to South Australia as the scene of what may be called colonial gambling, and the stream of emigration has been diverted from Adelaide to Auckland and Port Nicholson : still, however, the whole number who went from this country in the year 1841 did not amount to 4000 persons. When we consider that New Zealand has no extensive pastures, and no valuable staple product affording an inducement to the capitalist to settle there, after the fever of speculation has subsided, [18] it appears certain that this amount of emigration will not be exceeded for several years to come, and more than probable that it will not be maintained. On the whole, therefore, if we set down the annual amount of emigration to the Australian colonies, including New Zealand, at a third of that to America, or at about 20,000 persons, we shall make a liberal allowance for all that is likely to take place for the present under the existing system.

It has been said, however, that the discovery of what has been somewhat pompously announced as a new principle in the theory of colonisation, is likely to lead to results far beyond any thing that has been hitherto witnessed. This principle, which was first propounded by Mr. Wakefield, consists in the attempt to unite the interests, and proportion the supply of capital and labour, in a new colony, by affixing an artificial price to land. The chief obstacle to the introduction of capital into a new settlement consists, it is said, in the limited supply, and the exorbitant price, of labour. This, again, arises from two causes ; first, the want of means on the part of the unemployed labourers at home to transport themselves to a distant colony ; secondly, the abundance of unoccupied land, by which the labourers who arrive are tempted to exchange their condition for that of independent proprietors. The remedy proposed for both these evils is, to fix a comparatively high price for land, and to apply the proceeds in importing labour. By this means, it is strenuously maintained, all the evils attendant on early colonisation will be avoided ; a complete society, including within itself capital, intelligence, and all the elements for profitable production, will be at once transported to the wilderness, instead of growing up slowly and painfully ; emigration will go hand in hand with the natural influx of capital towards a new and profitable field of investment ; and the importation of labour will be carried on as a mercantile speculation to an unlimited extent.

These are certainly brilliant results to be attained by the simple process of *monopolising* land, for, in the last analysis, the discovery amounts to nothing more. The practical result of the experiment in South Australia makes it superfluous to pursue the subject further, and to

enter upon the details into which the main theory has been expanded with an affectation of mathematical precision. [19] It is no doubt true that the unoccupied land of a colony constitutes a fund which ought to be applied conscientiously for the benefit of the colony, and not jobbed away in lavish grants, or wasted in useless expenditure. It is also true that one of the most beneficial purposes for the general interests of the colony to which the funds realised from land sales can be applied, is the importation of emigrants, and that under particular circumstances this object may become of paramount importance. To this extent we cordially subscribe to the doctrines of the Wakefield school ; and although they have no claim to be considered as discoveries, we admit that great good has been done by the discussion which has forced them on the notice of the public and of the government. But the idea of a theorist at home fixing the precise proportions between capital, labour, and land, in South Australia, and determining, by a sort of mathematical calculation, the best possible price at which a given lot of land shall be sold in New Zealand, is simply an instance of the self-sufficient pedantry of political economy, and it is ridiculous to talk of it as founding a new era in colonisation. Indeed, the fundamental assumption, that the preservation of a strongly marked line of distinction between the class of capitalist and labourer is essential to the prosperity of a colony, is only true very partially. In an agricultural colony nothing is more desirable than that which it is the especial object of the Wakefield system to prevent—the formation of a body of small independent cultivators. [20] It is only where a colony is fitted by nature for the production of some valuable staple product, such as the wool of Australia, which affords ample scope for the profitable investment of capital on a large scale, that the system has a chance of success. [21] Admitting, which is the utmost that can be said, that the *indirect* method of raising the price of land is an improvement on the *direct* method formerly practised, of leaving each individual capitalist to import labourers for himself under engagements to work for him for a stipulated time, it can scarcely be maintained that the difference between the two methods, which are the same in principle, is so great as to lead us to expect results on a totally different scale from any thing that has been hitherto witnessed.

Even if the amount of emigration under the system of private enterprise was vastly greater, it would still be of very limited use as a means of relieving the mother country, for this obvious reason, that the class of emigrants will always be taken principally from the very part of the same population whom it would be desirable to retain. The demand in the colonies is for men of more than average intelligence, energy, and good conduct ; and parish paupers are as much a drug in Australia as in Kent or Sussex. The following passage from a report by Colonel Gawler, the Governor of South Australia, is adopted by the Emigration Commissioners and by the Colonial Secretary, as an expression of their views respecting pauper emigration :—“ For the clearing of a new country, and the labours of a new settlement, energy of mind and body are especially required ; while the unhappy beings to whom I have referred generally possess none of either, and their minds are also but too frequently as demoralised as their bodies are weak. After being thrown on our shores they remain a burden and disgrace to society, hopeless in themselves and in their offspring, who frequently inherit their vices, their debility, and their diseases.” [22] So strongly has the evil resulting from the arrival of emigrants in a state of destitution been felt in the North American colonies, that a poll-tax on all emigrants landing in the settlement has been imposed, even at the time when the utmost desire existed to promote emigration. Under the present system, the bulk of the emigrants proceeding to Australia, and a large proportion of those going to Canada, will always be persons possessing some capital, or capable of earning high wages if they had remained at home, and, therefore, the large export of British manufactures to some of the new settlements is not to be taken as clear gain, since an amount nearly, if not quite, corresponding must be deducted from the home consumption. It is even a serious question, whether the rapid increase in the relative amount of destitution, during the last ten or fifteen years, may not have been partly occasioned by the constant drain of the best and most energetic portion

of the population going on under the system of private emigration. [23] Be this as it may, it is clearly the duty of the government to afford every reasonable facility to private emigration, and to treat every portion of the British empire, however remote, as an integral part of the same family. To the extent to which it is the interest of a colony to import labour, and the interest of labour to transfer itself to the colony, there can be no question that the government ought to encourage emigration, both by applying the public resources of the colony in the most efficient and economical manner, and by removing obstacles at home arising from ignorance, prejudice, and timidity. [24]

But with a view to the object of our present inquiry, viz., the providing a sensible remedy for existing distress, it is evident that emigration, if applicable at all, must be taken up by the government on an extensive scale. The question is, whether any such system of wholesale emigration under government auspices is practicable or desirable. To this question we fear it is not yet possible to return a satisfactory answer. Every great experiment of the sort must be, in a great measure, tentative ; and success is only purchased by a series of partial failures. In the meantime we will confine ourselves to a few general considerations which appear to enter as principal elements in the problem proposed for solution :—

1. It is evident that any extensive and systematic emigration, undertaken with a view to the relief of large masses of distress, must provide for settling the emigrants upon allotments of land, as well as for transporting them to the colony. The inevitable effect of landing a large body of destitute emigrants in any one of our colonies, and leaving them to chance to find employment and subsistence, would, as we have already seen, be most disastrous for all parties.

2. It is evident also, that any such emigration must be directed to the North American colonies, the length of the passage, and the nature of the soil and climate, being conclusive arguments against the possibility of any other system of colonisation in Australia, than that which at present prevails.

3. The expense per head of removing a mass of emigrants to Quebec, Cape Breton, or Prince Edward's Island, is calculated by experienced witnesses at about 4*l.*, and to Upper Canada, from 5*l.* 10*s.* to 6*l.* [25] The cost of maintaining a family of four persons going on an allotment of land, until they could support themselves, has been estimated at 15*l.*, [26] but this is evidently far below the mark, as it supposes the emigrant to raise a crop in the autumn of the year of his arrival sufficient to support his family during the winter. This might be occasionally done under favourable circumstances, but as a general rule it would be necessary to provide for his support for a twelvemonth at least, and to give some assistance in raising a log-hut and clearing a little ground to begin with. On the whole, we should be inclined to estimate the cost of removing a mass of population and locating them upon land in Canada, at about 15*l.* a head, or 75*l.* for a family of five persons ; [27] but at this rate there appears to be no physical difficulty in the way of transporting a large number of families, and placing them in situations where, with prudence and good conduct, they would be certain to do well. When we consider that a sum of 20,000,000*l.* was cheerfully granted to emancipate 800,000 negroes, it is evident that the pecuniary part of the question presents no insuperable obstacle.

4. Much more serious difficulties, however, are presented by the moral certainty that the class of persons whom we should be most desirous to get rid of are utterly unsuited for emigration. The passage already quoted from Colonel Gawler's despatch is applicable, to the fullest extent, to the life of the Canadian backwoodsman. Any attempt to operate directly on the mass of dissolute pauperism in the agricultural counties, or of destitution and vice in the

large towns and manufacturing districts, would infallibly lead to disappointment ; and even the respectable manufacturing operative is, generally speaking, disqualified, by physical weakness and sedentary habits, from attempting, with any prospect of success, the enterprise of emigration. [28]

5. Even supposing emigration on a large scale to be practicable, it is certain that, unless combined with other measures by which the standard of the home population was permanently raised, the vacuum created would be speedily filled up, and the redundancy of unemployed labour be as great as ever. This is fully proved by the example of Ireland, from which country a more extensive emigration has been kept up for many years, than from any other country of Europe. [29] A remarkable instance of the little effect of emigration in diminishing pauperism, is given by Mr. Tufnell, the assistant poor-law commissioner, in a late report on the counties of Kent and Sussex. He mentions the Rye Union, and several other districts, from which as large a proportion as one-eighth of the whole population has been removed within a few years by emigration, without any sensible effect in diminishing either the progress of population or the amount of pauperism, and concludes that “ the above facts seem to prove the entire hopelessness of any attempt to benefit the country by any general or comprehensive system of emigration.” [30]

The result of these considerations certainly is to prove that emigration alone promises no panacea for existing evils, and that very great caution must be used in attempting any innovation on the present system. At the same time, we cannot resign ourselves to the conclusion, that any more general and comprehensive system of emigration than has been hitherto attempted is visionary and impracticable. The truth appears to be, that while emigration is advocated simply as a matter of profit and loss, and regarded as a cheap and convenient mode of shoving misery out of sight, it is not calculated to answer the selfish ends of its promoters. But if it were taken up in a spirit of charity, and as part and parcel of a comprehensive scheme for raising the condition of the poorer classes, and prosecuted by the government and society from a sense of duty rather than of self-interest, there seems every ground for hoping that emigration might become an instrument of great good, not only to the colonies, but to the mother country. If the owners of estates, for instance, where the agricultural population is clearly redundant, were, with a disinterested view to the good of their dependants, to assist them in emigrating, and if the government was, under proper guarantees, and with proper discrimination, to co-operate in the enterprise, there seems no doubt that much practical good might be accomplished. Colonies, like those of the Glengarry Highlanders, might be planted in the North American settlements with every prospect of success ; indeed with the certainty that those who, if they had remained at home, would have been squalid paupers, will, in a few years, become a body of respectable freeholders, and an important acquisition to their adopted country. [31] By the same process the condition of those at home might be greatly ameliorated, provided active steps were taken by the landlord to eradicate the evils which had led to the multiplication of a pauper population. In the instances quoted by Mr. Tufnell no such steps appear to have been taken, and the reason assigned for the inefficacy of the large emigration to repress pauperism is, that “ no sooner does a married couple depart, than its cottage is instantly taken by another couple, who are most likely only waiting for a habitation to get married.” This evidently would not apply to an emigration conducted from the Highlands or Ireland, in conjunction with intelligent and benevolent proprietors, whose object was to limit the population on their estates, with a view to elevating its character and improving its condition. On the whole, we think that the government might, with great propriety, commence the experiment of systematic emigration, by acting on the evidence contained in the Report of the Select Committee of 1841 on Emigration from the Highlands of Scotland. It appears that the Hebrides and Western Highlands contain a population of about 120,000, of whom nearly one-half may be considered as absolutely

redundant, and who exist in a state of hopeless and progressive destitution. They are a class of men well fitted to succeed as emigrants in Canada, where many of their countrymen have already settled, and risen to a state of independence and comfort. Numerous instances can be produced in which the experiment of an extensive emigration from particular estates and islands has been attended with the most complete success, both for the emigrants, the proprietor, and the remaining population. [32] The proprietors, however, as a body, are impoverished by circumstances over which they have no control, and are unable to bear the whole expense of such an emigration as would be requisite to place the population of the district on a sound and healthy footing. [33] Here, then, appears to be a case in which the experiment of a systematic emigration under government auspices might be tried with every prospect of advantage. The total number to be conveyed across the Atlantic is not so great as to make the experiment very hazardous, and the portion of the expense to be borne by the public would not be more than is frequently squandered on the most insignificant objects. Under any circumstances, the result could scarcely fail to be the rescue of many thousand of poor creatures from a situation of hopeless misery, and a most valuable accession to our knowledge in the important science of emigration. A great writer has said, “ Do the duty that lies nearest to thee, and already, in so doing, thy next duty will have become clearer.” [34] This sentence should be inscribed in letters of gold over the council-halls of kingdoms. Every step taken in advance with a good motive and in a right direction, clears away a thousand difficulties. When it is clearly seen that a measure will benefit human beings, and injure nothing but *abstract theories*, let the government strike boldly in, and the theories will soon vere round and prove that what has been done is right. This seems peculiarly applicable to the case of government emigration. Do not let the government risk the certain good that is effected under the present system by any hazardous experiment unsanctioned by experience ; but, on the other hand, do not let them sink spellbound under the influence of theories of *laissez faire*, and omit opportunities of doing practical good where it is in their power.

Let them leave the principle of self-interest to do all the good it can, but remember that it can never be a substitute for the higher principles of duty and charity, and that emigration, like any other expedient for the relief of society, must be conducted in a disinterested spirit of enlightened benevolence, in order to accomplish its object.

[1] This was written in 1842. Undoubtedly the approximation between moderate Whig and moderate Conservative has been since then occasionally interrupted, but it is still true that the distinctions of party in England are only skin-deep, and do not endanger the existence, or embitter the intercourse, of society.

[2] Declared value of exports of British produce and manufactures to the British West Indies

YEARS OF SLAVERY.	YEARS OF FREEDOM.
1830 2,838,448	1838 3,393,441
1831 2,581,919	1839 3,986,598
1832 2,439,808	1840 3,574,970

[3] Franklin’s Memoirs show, in the clearest and most instructive manner, how feelings of *political* discontent were gradually *forced* in the colonies, by the systematic sacrifice of their *commercial* rights and *material* interests.

[4] Declared value of exports of British produce and manufactures to the Australian settlements : 1830, 314,677*l.* ; 1835, 696,345*l.* ; 1840, 2,004,385*l.*

[5] See Porter’s Progress of the Nation, sec. iv., chap. 3.

[6] The amount of income actually assessed to the property-tax in 181415, amounted to 166,222,128*l.*, exclusive of all incomes below 50*l.* a year. The returns of Sir R. Peel’s property-tax show that in 1842 the income of the country, exclusive of incomes below 150*l.*, exceeded 180,000,000*l.*

[7] Macculloch’s Statistics of British Empire. Other statistical writers have estimated the

national income at a much higher amount, but the data are quite uncertain. We may, however, pronounce with confidence that the total annual income of the nation is now not below 350,000,000l., of which upwards of 200,000,000l. is composed of incomes above 1007. a year.

- [8] Macculloch's *Statistics of British Empire*, vol. i., p. 535.
- [9] The progress of British commerce, stimulated by the increasing difficulty of finding a market for its produce, has led, within the last few years, first, to throwing open India to private adventure ; secondly, to the war with China and opening of that extensive empire to commercial intercourse ; results which carry with them the germ of revolutions so extensive, that the destinies and distresses of this little corner of the globe sink into comparative insignificance.
- [9] These numbers being taken from the Custom-house Returns, which, before the passing of the acts regulating the passage of emigrants, were imperfect, are probably below the mark, but the error is not great. The annual average number of emigrants from the United Kingdom for the twelve years ending 1837, according to the Report of the Agent-General for Emigration, was 57,000.
- [10] At the present rate, nearly one-third of the annual increase of population in Great Britain is absorbed by emigration, and, by degrees, this proportion may become larger ; but there is no prospect of the amount of emigration ever approaching the whole annual increase of population.
- [11] The total emigration to all the North American colonies in 1841, from the United Kingdom, did not amount to 40,000 persons, which is scarcely equivalent to 10,000 labourers.
- [12] " I am bound to observe that the expected arrival of a number of indigent emigrants from Europe, and especially from Ireland, is regarded with great apprehension, as calculated to aggravate the public distress so generally prevailing." *Governor Sir W. Colcbrooke to Lord Stanley, 29th March, 1842. Emigration Papers, 1842, p. 834.*
- [13] Of 322,291 emigrants who landed at Quebec from 1829 to 1841, England and Wales furnished 74,073, Scotland 41,426, and Ireland 202,855. *Emigration—Canada. Parliamentary Papers, 1842.*
- [14] *Emigration Papers, 1842, p. 1. Report of Emigration Commissioners, 1842, p. 17.*
- [15] In the end of 1841, out of a population of 15,000, as many as 1200 were living as paupers upon public support.
- [16] *Emigration Papers, 1842, p. 120.*
- [17] *Report of Emigration Commissioners, 1842, p. 18.*
- [18] See Terry's *New Zealand*. The unbridled spirit of speculation which ran up the price of allotments in Adelaide and Auckland to 1000/. an acre and upwards, reminds us of the days of the South Sea Company, or Mississippi scheme. The ephemeral prosperity of these new settlements is supported for a time solely by the expenditure of the capital brought by emigrants.
- [19] Those who wish to pursue the subject in its details will find it very ably and dispassionately summed up in *Professor Merivale's Lectures on Colonisation*, Lecture XIII. XVI. The science of colonisation embraces many interesting questions such as the sale of lands at an uniform price or by auction ; the application of the land-fund to roads, surveys, police, and other purposes beside emigration; the proper manner of providing for education and religious instruction, &c. all of which are very important, but their discussion would lead us too far from the object of the present Essay.
- [20] This was the early condition of the settlements in the United States, especially of those in New England. By far the soundest condition of a colony is when, as Lord Sydenham says in his correspondence relative to emigration " it affords no lottery with a few exorbitant prizes and a large number of blanks, but a secure and certain investment, in which a prudent and reasonable man may safely embark."
- [21] Unless this is the case, it will be impossible to find purchasers at a high price. In the

North American Colonies, the vicinity of the United States is a complete check on any attempt to raise the price of land above its real value, which, where land is abundant, must always be very low.

- [22] Papers, relative to emigration from Cork Union, Poor-law Report, 1841, Appendix C. No. 7.
- [23] “ One great cause of the destitution in the Highlands is, that the present system of emigration has taken away the able-bodied, and left the old and infirm, the young and helpless, and the very poor. *C. K. Baird, Esq., Committee on Emigration, Scotland*, p. 49.
- [24] With this view the passing of the Colonial Passenger’s Act, and the establishment of the Board of Emigration Commissioners and of emigration agents at the different ports, and in the colonies, are highly proper measures. The colonies seem to have little more to desire from the government in the way of emigration, unless it be the devotion of a larger portion of the land-fund to the conveyance of emigrants. If any thing further is to be done, it must be with a primary view to the interest of the mother-country.
- [25] See Evidence of J. Bowie, Esq., before the Committee on Emigration from the Highlands, Session, 1841, p. 15. His estimate is *4l. 1s. 7d.* in the former case, and *5l. 11s. 1d.* in the latter, founded on a detailed calculation, including provisions and clothing for the voyage.
- [26] Evidence of T. Rolph, Esq., Emigration Agent for Canada, before the same committee.
- [27] The expense of locating emigrants upon lands in Canada is the subject of a detailed Report from the Commissioners of the British American Land Company, given in Appendix No. 2, to the Report of the Committee on Emigration in Scotland. The following is an abstract of their estimate :—

	£.	s.
Dwelling-house of logs, with stone chimney, &c., 20 feet by 16..	10	0
Clearing and preparing for crop four acres	12	0
Seed : wheat, barley, oats, and potatoes	5	10
Tools and implements for settler, &c	6	0
Necessary expense for a family	£33	10
To this is added as desirable but not necessary :—		
	£	s.
A cow	6	5
Two pigs	1	0
Additional clothing for winter	2	10
	£9	15

Making the total expense for a family, *43l. 5s.*, exclusive of the expense of transport from Britain to the location, which is estimated at *27l.* for each family. This shows clearly that the total expense of settling a number of poor families comfortably would not exceed *14l.* or *15l.* per head.

- [28] The Report of the Hand-loom Commissioners appear decisive on this head. The men themselves seem to be generally aware that they are not qualified to succeed as emigrants ; and lately, during the existence of the most extreme distress at Paisley, two vessels sent by the emigration commissioners to the Clyde, to carry emigrants gratis to New Zealand, found great difficulty in completing their numbers, scarcely any applicants coming forward from the manufacturing districts. A few weavers might possibly succeed as shepherds in Australia, and the remnant of the class of half-agricultural weavers might furnish a few fit subjects for emigration, but generally speaking this resource seems to be quite out of the question for a population bred to manufactures.
- [29] Humboldt estimates the emigration from Ireland in twenty years, from 1801 to 1821, at one million.
- [30] Population of Rye Union in 1831, 11,418 ; removed by emigration in five years ending 1841, upwards of 12,000 ; population in 1841, 11,792. Amount of poor-rate in 1837,

6710*l.* ; ditto in 1841, 8177*l.* In the parish of Ewhurst an emigration of one-fourth of the population between 1831 and 1841, left the population within thirty-seven of the original amount (1200 in 1831, 1163 in 1841), and the poor-rate at 20*s.* per head. *Appendix to Eighth Annual Report of Poor-law Commissioners*, p. 142.

- [31] The services of the Glengarry settlers, during the late insurrection in Canada, are well known. They afford an instance of the complete success of the emigration of a large body of men accompanied by their natural guides and protectors of the upper classes. This is an important element in the success of any comprehensive system of emigration. Every considerable body of emigrants should be accompanied by their clergyman and schoolmaster, and, if possible, by one or two persons of the upper class, to whom they are attached, and in whom they have confidence.
- [32] The following may be quoted as a contrast to the case of the Rye Union described by Mr. Tufnell. The little island of Canna contained a population of five hundred persons, living in a state of great wretchedness, when it was bought by the present proprietor, Mr. Macniell. He immediately shipped off two hundred of them, at his own expense, to Canada, where they have done exceedingly well, and built cottages, laid down strict rules, prohibited subletting and squatting on the land, would not suffer more than one family to live in the same house, and allowed no public-house in the island. The result is, that the people are “ in a most happy and flourishing state, and quite different from the general state of the Highlanders on the west coast.”—*Report of Committee on Emigration—Scotland*. This is only one instance of what has been frequently done, and might be done to-morrow on almost every estate in the West Highlands and in Ireland.
- [33] It is sometimes said that the landlords ought to bear the whole expense of clearing their estates. This is hardly fair, when we consider that they have the legal right of ejecting their tenants, and that society shares in the profit of converting paupers into useful citizens. At any rate, it is good policy not to go too closely to work, and to co-operate where a fair case is made out for assistance. As a rough estimate, it has been stated, that if the government would advance one-third of the expense, the colony would contribute another third, and the landlord the remaining third. If he did so, and became responsible for the maintenance of all subsequent poor on his estate, by consenting to a poor-law, it would be advisable not to press for more. The Highland proprietors are generally impoverished by causes over which they have no control, and to say that they shall bear the whole expense of the requisite emigration is, in other words, to say that nothing shall be done.

It will not escape notice that precisely the same principles are applicable to Ireland, and that emigration from the Hebrides maybe looked upon as preliminary to the far more extensive and important experiment of attempting, by a systematic emigration, to improve the condition of that unfortunate country.

- [34] Carlyle. Sartor Resartus.

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