The Morning Chronicle's

LABOUR AND THE POOR

Volume VII

THE RURAL DISTRICTS

ALEXANDER MACKAY & SHIRLEY BROOKS

Edited By

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Cover Image:
Labour
Engraving by J. Cousen after J. Linnell
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"We have not," the eldest daughter said, "tasted any bread for two days. We have had nowt but turmuts (turnips) to eat. We boil 'em for dinner, but the children are so hungry that they won't wait sometimes till they're biled, but eats 'em as they are."

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Preface

This work attempts to be a faithful reproduction of the "Labour and the Poor" letters as printed in *The Morning Chronicle*. Only obvious typographical errors and omissions have been corrected. Variations in the spelling and hyphenation of words have largely been retained. We hope any such inconsistencies prove to be of some historical interest to the reader.

As much as possible we have tried to recreate the original layout and styling of the text and all factual tables have been reproduced as closely to the originals as possible with only minimal alterations made where necessary to improve readability.

Not all letters were titled. Where missing we have added titles to the Table of Contents to assist navigation and explanation of content. The letters themselves are as per the originals.

A handful of illustrations have been added to each volume. These did not appear in the original text but hopefully provide added interest.

R. W.
K. B.

Introduction

In 1849 a leading London-based newspaper, *The Morning Chronicle*, undertook an investigation into the working and living conditions of the poor throughout England and Wales in the hope that their findings might lead to much needed change.

The reputed catalyst for their "Labour and the Poor" series was an article written by Henry Mayhew recording a journey into Bermondsey, one of the most deprived districts of London, which was printed in September 1849. Following this it was proposed that an in-depth investigation be carried out and "Special Correspondents", the investigators, were selected and distributed around the country. The first article or "Letter" appeared on the 18th of October 1849 and the series would run for almost 2 years and 222 letters.

The well-known and respected writers and journalists recruited for the task included Henry Mayhew who was assigned to the Metropolitan districts, Angus Bethune Reach to the Manufacturing districts, Alexander Mackay and Shirley Brooks to the Rural districts and Charles Mackay to investigate the cities of Birmingham and Liverpool. The author of the letters from Wales is as yet unknown.

It is clear from references made in the letters that Alexander Mackay commenced his investigation in the counties of Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Wiltshire, before examining the south western counties of Devon, Cornwall, Somerset and Dorset. He then proceeded eastward through Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex and Kent. He began an inquiry into the counties of Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire, but only one letter of this was published. In 1850 he accepted the task of travelling to India to investigate the viability of expanding the cotton producing areas and trade in the East Indies.

It is most likely that Shirley Brooks commenced his portion of the investigation in the eastern counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex, continuing on to cover Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire,

Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire, before proceeding to the midland counties of Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Rutland, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire.

The "Labour and the Poor" letters were extremely popular at the time, being widely read throughout the nation and even abroad. The revelations in them caused quite a stir amongst the middle and upper classes of Victorian society. *Letters to the Editor* poured in with donations for specific cases of distress that appeared in the letters and also for the general alleviation of the suffering of the poor. A special fund was set up by *The Morning Chronicle* to collect and distribute these donations.

These *Letters to the Editor* have been included in this series, predominantly in the Metropolitan district volumes whose letters elicited the majority of responses. They provide a unique window into the thoughts and sentiments of the Victorian readership as they react to the incredible accounts of misery and desperation being unveiled.

The Morning Chronicle's extraordinary and unsurpassed "Labour and the Poor" investigation provides an unparalleled insight into the people of the period, their living and working conditions, their feelings, their language, their sufferings and their struggles for survival amidst the poverty and destitution of 19th century Britain. An investigation of such magnitude had never before been attempted and the undertaking was truly of epic proportions. Its impact at the time was profound. Its historical importance today is without question.

The Morning Chronicle, Saturday, January 5, 1850.

LABOUR AND THE POOR.

THE RURAL DISTRICTS.

[FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.]

THE NORTHERN COUNTIES—DURHAM, NORTHUMBERLAND, CUMBERLAND, AND WESTMORELAND.

Letter XXIII.

To ascertain the state and prospects of the working-classes and the poor, especially of those who depend for their bread on agriculture, throughout the North of England, is the department which has been assigned to me in the prosecution of the important investigation that you have undertaken; and I now proceed to furnish your readers with such evidence on the subject as I have been able to collect, in the hope of thereby laying a solid foundation for a just judgment. I have spared no pains to collect information of every sort bearing upon the question, and I shall detail it fully and freely—with no bias, I trust, to one-sided views of any kind, and with an anxious desire to treat fairly every point of this very complex topic.

Before coming to the marrow of the matter, however, it is necessary to define the limits of our field of action, and to give a passing glance at its physical characteristics, and at certain internal relations subsisting unaltered through the revolutions of centuries, which must in every case materially modify the conditions of a social problem. The four northern counties—Durham, Northumberland, Cumberland, and Westmoreland—(together with the town or dominion of Berwick-on-Tweed)—cover an area of 5,253 square statute miles—about one-eleventh of the area of England and Wales, which is 57,812 square miles. Their population, by the census of 1841, was 809,064, or less than one-eighteenth part of the total population of England and Wales, which was 15,906,741. It thus appears that, whereas the population of England and Wales gives nearly 275 souls to a square mile, that of the four northern counties gives 154—showing a density of little more than one-half. To assign the proportion of inhabitants

to statute acres is a more difficult matter, for it appears that though we have fixed, or consider ourselves to have fixed, with accuracy, the number of square statute miles in England and Wales, we have not yet been able to determine with the same precision the number of square statute acres. Two different sets of numbers are given by the standard authority—which is, or should be, that of greatest mark and likelihood on the subject—the Population Returns. In the summary of the county of Durham (Enumeration Abstract, p. 88), the area in English statute acres is stated at 679,530; but the following note is subjoined:—"The area of the county of Durham is 1,097 square statute miles, and consequently 702,080 acres; while the area assigned to the several parishes amounts to no more than 679,530 acres; but no attempt to reconcile this apparent discrepancy has been deemed allowable." And so with all the other counties. I think most people will be disposed to agree with me that this is not merely an "*apparent discrepancy,*" but a real difference, of no small magnitude and consequence; and that in official statements put forth by the authority of Government, and professing to convey to the world the latest, most accurate, and most trustworthy results of scientific investigation and statistical research, the public have a right to look for less loose and unsatisfactory data. It is to be supposed that the two varying computations were made on diverse principles and methods; but as to the why and the how, we have no further explanation than is given in the following paragraph of the preface to the volume:—"The area, as assigned to the several parishes in England in the Abstract of 1831, has been adopted in the present Abstract. Attempts have been made without success to obtain authentic information whereby the apparent inaccuracies which exist in this computation of the area might have been remedied; but nothing short of an actual survey would be calculated to give a more accurate result than has been here obtained by the labours of the late Mr. Rickman." I draw attention to this point, partly on account of its intrinsic importance (for in some cases the diversity is still wider than in that which I have particularised), but chiefly as an illustration of the difficulties which one encounters in the search after truth, on the very threshold of the inquiry. If, in a document such as I have quoted, men cannot find exact information, where are they to look for it?

Taking, however, the statement embodied in the census as our basis, and leaving its framers to account for this glaring anomaly as best they may, it would appear that, whilst upon the whole area of

England and Wales there are nearly 2¼ acres for every individual of the population, there are in the northern counties (containing a population of 809,000, and a superficies of from 3,300,000 to 3,400,000 acres) about 4 1-12th acres for every individual. In Durham the number of inhabitants to 100 statute acres may be taken at 46; in Northumberland, at 20; in Cumberland, at 18; and in Westmoreland, at 11 only. This is, of course, to be accounted for by the wide extent of unimprovable moorland (from which, indeed, one of them derives its name) included within their boundaries. Whilst, therefore, their population might at first sight seem placed in happier circumstances, with reference to the amount of land available for their support, than that of any other district in England, it should not be forgotten that this amplitude is rather apparent than real. Much of the soil possesses little or no capability for the sustentation of man, and the population derive scarcely any further advantage from this territorial latitude than that of having near their own doors large tracts in which the sportsman may take his pleasure, ranging uncontrolled over the dun heath, or in which the admirer of nature may court her in her sylvan solitudes. The geographical conformation and ethnological peculiarities of the northern parts of England closely resemble those of the southern districts of Scotland, with which, indeed, they were long conjoined under the same dominion. The region is alike a land of mountain and fell, with fertile dales that stretch by rushing streams, and that afford many a broad strath, or sloping inch, or well-sheltered nook at the break of the holm, the value of which, for pasture or tillage, the farmer well knows how to estimate. On the east it stretches to the sea in the wooded dells and open downs of Durham, broken up by the untiring activity of the miner, and launching on the sea, through a score of crowded havens, its stores of wealth snatched from the bowels of the earth. The Cheviots bound it to the north, with the wide tract of moorland which, in the later times of the middle ages, formed the boundary between the dominions of the English and Scottish crowns; but from the Tweed to the Tees the plough, the axe, and the mattock rest not, and the land is vocal with the sounds of industry. In the west, from merry Carlisle to royal Lancaster, there is less of busy movement and enterprise, except along the course of the Solway; but here the lakes and streams and mountains combine, in shapes and groups of unsurpassed variety and beauty, to form the most picturesque portion of England. The territory that stretches from the slowly rolling Humber to the winding Forth is peopled by men for the most part

of Scandinavian extraction—the children of indomitable Northmen, in whom the blood of their ancestors yet runs strong; a hardy, enduring, stubborn race, accustomed beyond any other natives of the British territory to struggle with the elements, and to extort a subsistence more or less abundant from the niggard bounty of nature. The popular tongue still bespeaks its origin more strongly than all the testimonies of ancient chroniclers; numberless words are still in use which have long perished from the southern speech of England—or which, perhaps, never had existence in it—but which a kindred race who dwell in the great Northern Peninsula, and amongst the islands of the Baltic, would be at no loss to interpret. Of the romance with which mediæval reminiscences invest the country and its inhabitants, I need say little. It is the true heroic ground of England: many are its battle-fields, and many the tales and songs of old times with which the peasantry cheer their winter firesides. Northallerton, Neville's Cross, and Otterburn, with twenty other fields less renowned, are still peopled by the imagination with the shapes of skilled captains of the host, bold champions, and steel-clad warriors. The names of Douglas and Percy here at least retain their charm. "In the merry old times of our ancestors, when the Saxons and the Danes ruled here," Danish princes of Northumbria, at the bidding of Alfred, endowed St. Cuthbert with his ample patrimony; and the territory formed a principality, independent in all but name, down to, nay beyond, the coming of the Normans. For years its inhabitants opposed a stern and pertinacious, though fruitless resistance to the shock of the robber chivalry of William the Conqueror, and much of the best blood of the invaders was shed at the terrible sieges of York and Durham. In more than one family of the northern gentry, some of its earliest ancestors are thus honourably commemorated in the genealogical table, "*Cæsus in prœlio contra Gulielmum Ducem, ex parte Regis Haroldi.*" The Conqueror's host encountered the army of the Scots, and defeated the Saxons under King Malcolm and Prince Edgar, on the Northumbrian border, at Stanemoor, in Westmoreland—where a pillar was raised by way of solemn demarcation of the territories of the two crowns, the limits remaining the same for a century or more afterwards.

The four northern counties, and the larger portion of Yorkshire (despite the assertion of Mr. Rickman, which induced the Census Commissioners to believe that the boundaries of English counties have remained unchanged since the time of the Conquest), are not included in the survey of Doomsday. On the western coast the Celtic

element enters largely into the composition of the blood of the race, and is even probably predominant. There is no evidence to show that the counties of Lancaster, Cumberland, and Westmoreland, were ever incorporated in the kingdoms of Northumbria or Mercia, though they occasionally acknowledged a vassalage which they were ever ready to throw off at the dictate of convenience or caprice. At Carlisle, the princes of the ancient Britons kept their court in such regal state as the rudeness and imperfect civilization of the age permitted; yet those times were not altogether barbarous, since they furnished apostles and martyrs of the Christian faith to the benighted Pagans of the East and South—of the West, too, I might add, since St. Patrick, the apostle of Ireland, was a Briton of Strath-Clyde, and the name of Kilpatrick remains to indicate the seat of his ministrations and his probable birthplace. The sway of those British potentates stretched to Al-Clyde on the one hand, and (through Cheshire) extended to Wales on the other. Celtic bards chanted their power and heroism; Merlin and Thaliessin, twin peers of Cymric song, adorned their palaces, and flourished under royal patronage. Such was the state of this tract of country during the Heptarchy, and in the later times of the Saxon monarchy; whilst, down to a far more recent period of the middle ages, we know that Galloway, and perhaps Cumberland (*lit.* the land of the Kymri) for some time continued separate principalities, and in some parts of the south-west of Scotland, a Celtic dialect continued to be spoken until the time of the Reformation.

I have offered this brief retrospect of some of the least known portions of British history, because we cannot reason with confidence as to the character and condition of a people, unless we have ascertained something of their origin, and are acquainted with their historical antecedents. I do not mean to pretend that original characteristics which have so often passed through the crucible of time and change in the mutations and revolutions of ages, subsist in their pristine vigour at the present day; in many cases their influence may be faint, and hardly, or not at all, appreciable; but still we must search in the annals of former times to obtain a true explanation of many social or moral phenomena now observable amongst a population made up of so many heterogeneous elements. I am even disposed to think that a perfect system of educational culture should vary with the generic or national peculiarities of those who are to be its subjects; and certainly I cannot sympathise with those who would crush all provincial

character and every local peculiarity under the iron or leaden sceptre of centralization. Amongst the agricultural labouring population of this part of England, I believe, from all I have observed and heard, that the standard of comfort is considerably higher, and the means of enjoyment less stinted, than in most parts of the south and west. I know not to what cause this circumstance can be ascribed with any degree of plausibility, if the energetic, pertinacious, and determined character which they have inherited from their origin, and by which they have been distinguished almost since the first settlement of the country, is to count for nothing. They are a resolute, hard-headed, and above all, an independent set of men, who will not be trodden upon, and whom it is not easy to trick out of their rights. A thrifty, frugal, and industrious people, too; not given to squandering or junketing, and who can make little go far at need.

The great secret of knowing how to make both ends meet, however, is not more easy (nor perhaps so easy) of discovery in this than in other districts of England. A climate, raw, moist, and cold, beyond that of the south—and a soil poor and wet, though light and friable in its better aspect—oppose obstacles to the agriculturist which can be surmounted only (and as yet they are but very partially surmounted) by increased care and skill, by the attentive application of science, and by the liberal but judicious employment of capital. The state of agriculture, and of those labourers who depend upon it for subsistence, varies considerably—governed as it must be by the nature of the soil and the condition of the vicinity, the extent of farms, the greater or less opulence of the proprietors and tenantry, and the more or less perfect modes of culture pursued in different localities. These variations are generally observable between different counties, though sometimes subsisting in equal breadth and distinctness within the limits of the same county. Nowhere, indeed, can it be said, that agriculture has approached perfection. In some localities it is in a backward and unprosperous state; in all much remains to be done to make it not only what it should be, but what it easily might be. The general character of northern, as distinguished from southern agriculture, may, however, be pronounced good. The fields are invariably cleaner, freer from weeds and stones, and better drained; no space is lost, no sun and air are excluded by a thicket or hedge-row. The fences, in the pastoral districts, are often of rough stone or paling; but though more generally the ordinary thorn fence is seen, it is always confined to the smallest possible proportions. There are some

parts of our southern and western counties in which I do not hesitate, from my own observation, to pronounce the state of agriculture behind that of Italy, or even that of France—not to mention Belgium. No such reproach, however, can in any instance be cast upon that of the north. It is true that the march of improvement often lingers, from the limited means within the command of the cultivator. But resistance to improvement, as innovation, or on the ground of mere aversion to change, is unknown in the North; and everywhere a disposition is evinced to make the most of existing facilities, and, where practicable, to go ahead. Some parts of Northumberland, and especially the more northerly districts of Berwick, Glendale, Belford, and others, have been long renowned, and with justice, for high farming and advanced science. In this county farms are generally large, and the farming business is in the hands of men of considerable capital; in Durham, large farms are comparatively rare—they never, I believe, exceed five hundred acres. It is in the way of drainage, I should say, that most still remains to be done in Durham—though I have observed that much is doing, and I would not be thought to imply that this point is neglected. There are few grazing farms, except in the western or upper district of the county, of which I shall speak by-and-by. On the whole, though Durham can hardly boast that it equals its northern neighbours in the introduction and prompt employment of scientific methods, its farmers have no reason to be ashamed of the assiduity and practical skill with which they follow out their methods, nor of the disposition which I believe generally prevails amongst them to live and let live, and to deal liberally with those in their employment. This disposition, however, I am bound to add, appears lately to have undergone some diminution. Under cover of the outcry raised as to the low prices of agricultural produce, advantage has been taken in some cases, in the southern and south-eastern districts, to effect—and still more frequently to attempt—a reduction of the wages of labour. I shall speak more fully of this hereafter; at present I wish to indicate the existence of systems of tenure peculiar to this county, and which interpose serious obstacles to the amelioration and perfection of agriculture. I allude to the leasehold tenure of lands held under the Dean and Chapter of Durham, which constitute no inconsiderable portion of the soil of the county. I am informed that these leases are for very short terms, generally only for seven years, renewable upon one year's fine. No security can be felt by the tenant under such a system, and instances have even been mentioned to

me in which parties who had laid out money in improvements have found their situation very materially changed for the worse, in consequence of a greatly increased rent being exacted from them. On the large properties of Lord Londonderry, the Duke of Cleveland, the Earl of Durham, Lord Ravensworth, and others, the tenant-at-will system for the most part prevails. On the Seaham estates, about Stockton, some of the farmers have been encouraged to make considerable outlay under the able management to which they are entrusted; in other cases the farms are generally too small (no doubt partly in consequence of the land being so much broken up by collieries and mines) to enable agriculture to be pursued on such a scale as we often see it when the liberality of the outlay of capital is commensurate with the extent of the holding.

Generally, it is to be remarked that agriculture in the North is supported by, and leans upon, a vigorous and flourishing manufacturing industry. Large towns—for such may Sunderland, Shields, Newcastle, and Carlisle be called, though inferior in size to the growths of the factory system—are by no means rare; smaller towns, of from 10,000 to 15,000 inhabitants, such as Durham, Darlington, Berwick, Whitehaven, and Stockton, are still more common; whilst of places under 10,000, though still of some size and consequence, such as Hartlepool, Bishop's Auckland, Barnard Castle, Morpeth, and Alnwick, the number is considerable. In the sea-ports all the branches of trade connected with navigation—such as ship-building and carpentry, rope-making, sail-making, iron-works for the manufacture of chain cables, anchors, and other ship's furniture—are pursued on an extensive scale, and generally with adequate success. Besides these, some branch of manufactures is to be found established in almost every town. Thus, at Durham there are carpet-weaving and paper-making; at Barnard Castle, carpet-weaving, shoe-thread spinning, and flax-dressing; at Darlington, wool-combing and flax-spinning. Machine-making is followed in more towns than one—especially the construction of railway engines; for it is one of the peculiarities of Durham, that it contains more railways than any other county in England—though by this time Lancashire must be running it hard. Another branch of industry pursued more largely in Durham than anywhere else, is the manufacture of coke for railways, for which the abundant supply of coal, and the ready means of transport, present unequalled facilities. At Newcastle and Gateshead there are glass-houses and potteries, chemical and alkali works, manufactories of

fire-bricks and grindstones, &c. At Shields, there are various establishments of the same class; the alkali works here employ 800 labourers, furnace-men, and mechanics, whose wages are 12s. 6d., 18s., and 22s. 6d. a week. At Tynemouth there are iron, glass, copperas, alkali, brick and tile, linseed-oil, and salt works. All these branches of industry were, a few months back, in a state of great depression; and numbers of men were unemployed, or only partially employed. They have now recovered; the men being almost all at full work and in receipt of good wages. The business of retail traders, however, and some branches of manufacture, continue to suffer partially from the depression which still affects the coal trade. In the western part of the northern district, the movement of industry is less varied and active, though far from languid or life-less. Whitehaven, at the extreme north, and Ulverston in the south, are the two chief centres of manufactures. At the former place there are sail-cloth weaving and flax-spinning, besides other employments connected with the shipping, coal, and iron trades; at the latter there are cotton, flax, and saw mills, iron mines, slate quarries, copper mines, and smelting furnaces. I have been thus particular in enumerating these, because it is necessary to look at the condition of the whole industry of a district in order to arrive at a just opinion as to the state of any of its great divisions. It is vain to suppose that the condition of agriculture and agriculturists will not be materially influenced by that of manufacturing enterprise. It is the money amassed in trade, and the foreign and domestic commerce which manufactures call into action, that give agriculture the sharpest stimulus for exertion. Again, it is evidently a fortunate circumstance for the farm-labourer—should hard times, slack employment, or insufficient wages overtake him in his original occupation—to be able to betake himself to a large town, to carry his labour into its busy marts, and to obtain some employment where practised skill is not required. To what but to the absence of such facilities are we to attribute that hopeless prostration and despair which palsies the unfortunate labourer in less advantageously situated districts? Agriculture, again, is often pursued, though on a small scale, in combination with other employments, in counties noted for the vigour of their industrial operations, by the manufacturer, the professional man, the tradesman, the innkeeper. This affords a larger number of openings for the labourer, and must evidently have an essential influence on his general condition. With the views above stated, it may be well, before proceeding further, to consider more minutely

the proportion of persons engaged in agriculture to those engaged in trade, commerce, and manufactures, within the limits of the northern counties—and also to glance briefly at some very interesting general considerations which connect themselves with this topic.

By the last census the total number of persons, young and old, of both sexes, throughout England and Wales, engaged in trade, commerce, and manufactures, was 2,619,206—engaged in agriculture, 1,261,448. Excluding commerce and trade, and looking separately at the numbers engaged in manufactures, we find that they were 1,140,906. The proportion of persons engaged in trade, commerce, and manufactures, to persons engaged in all other occupations, was 40 per cent.—that of persons engaged in agriculture was 19 per cent. The persons engaged in trade, commerce, and manufactures, throughout the four northern counties, were 116,301—the agriculturists, 53,878; the proportions to all other occupations therein being, for trade, commerce, and manufactures, 36 per cent.—for agriculture, 18 per cent. The mass of the remaining population was composed of those coming under the somewhat vague head of "labourers," which includes all those working in mines of coal or metal. In Durham the proportion of these latter to the whole occupations is not less than 22 per cent.; in Northumberland, it is 15 per cent. The comparative numbers and proportions of different occupations vary considerably in the several counties, as will appear on analysis. Durham, by far the most thickly peopled of them all, contains a population of 324,284, on an area of 679,530 acres; 45,179 persons are engaged in trade, commerce, and manufactures; 14,362 in agriculture. In this county the disproportion between those two great divisions is greatest, the relative per centage on the total occupations being 37 and 11; whilst throughout England and Wales, as will be recollected, they are as 40 and 19. Of persons engaged in trade, &c., in this county, 33,691 were males of twenty years and upwards; 7,815 males under twenty; 3,058 females of twenty years and upwards; 615 under twenty. Of persons engaged in agriculture, 11,850 were males of twenty years and upwards; 1,284 under twenty; 954 females of twenty years and upwards; 274 under twenty. I may observe in passing, however, that the numbers of females engaged in agriculture are to be understood only of those permanently employed as farm-servants and labourers; there being necessarily regular employment for but few women in this branch of industry, and the number of those who obtain temporary employment in the course of the year being notoriously

much larger, though probably nowhere exactly ascertained. To proceed, Northumberland contains a population of 250,278, on an area of 1,165,430 acres—37,298 persons being engaged in trade, commerce, and manufactures—17,339 in agriculture; the relative per centages on the total occupations are 37 and 17. Of persons engaged in trade, &c., there were 27,451 males of twenty years of age and upwards, 5,769 under twenty. Of persons engaged in agriculture, there were 14,036 males of twenty years and upwards, 1,900 under twenty; 1,113 females of twenty and upwards, 290 under twenty. Cumberland contains a population of 178,038 on an area of 969,490 acres; of these 26,053 were persons engaged in trade, commerce, and manufactures, 15,611 in agriculture—the relative per centages on the total occupations being 36 and 21, showing a greater approximation to equality of proportion than either of the two former cases. Of the persons engaged in trade, &c., 16,969 were males of twenty and upwards, 3,659 under twenty; 4,111 were females of twenty and upwards, 1,314 under twenty. Of those engaged in agriculture, 12,613 were males of twenty and upwards, 1,121 under twenty; 1,519 were females of twenty and upwards, 358 under twenty. Westmoreland, the last on our list, and the most thinly peopled of all, is also one of the smallest of the English counties; there being only three—Rutland, Huntingdon, and Middlesex—of which the superficies is less. It contains a population of only 56,454 souls, on an area of 485,990 acres; of these 7,771 persons were engaged in trade, commerce and manufactures, 6,566 in agriculture; the relative per centages to the total occupations being 32 and 27, showing the nearest approximation to equality of all the cases passed under review. The North Riding of Yorkshire, it may be added, shows a similar approximation, the per centages being 29 and 34; whilst the East Riding of Yorkshire, and the counties of Dorset and Bucks, exhibit still closer approaches to equality of proportion in this respect. Of persons engaged in trade, &c., in Westmoreland, 5,259 were males of twenty and upwards, 1,152 under twenty; 1,067 females of twenty and upwards, 293 under twenty. Of those engaged in agriculture 5,481 were males of twenty and upwards, 728 under twenty; 297 were females of twenty and upwards, 60 under twenty.

For the sake of showing in a more general point of view the relative distribution of employment to various ages and sexes, furnished by the two great divisions of occupation, it may be advisable to advert to another topic appearing on the face of the returns. Of the

924,096 persons engaged throughout England and Wales in manufactures alone (excluding trade and commerce), 479,774 were males of twenty and upwards, 130,443 males under twenty; 191,968 were females of twenty and upwards, 121,911 females under twenty. Of the 1,269,941 persons engaged in agriculture, 1,049,255 were males of twenty and upwards, 162,378 males under twenty; 48,949 were females of twenty and upwards, 9,359 under twenty. With reference to the latter numbers, the remark introduced above relative to the employment of females in agriculture should be borne in mind.

The disproportion at present existing between the sexes in the population of this country is well known, but it seems worthy of remark that this is not caused by a corresponding disproportion in the births, as will appear by a short statement of figures. Of the 15,906,741 persons making up the population of England and Wales at the last census, 7,771,094 were male, and 8,135,647 female—the latter thus exceeding the former by nearly 400,000. But male births are more numerous than those of females. In the seven years, 1839-45, there were 1,863,892 males, and 1,772,491 females, born alive—the proportion in the whole country being nearly 20 boys to 19 girls. The proportion of boys born is greatest (1.0617 to 1.000) in the northern division, least (1.0455 to 1.000) in the south midland division. It becomes, then, an interesting subject of inquiry, to what this existing disproportion in the number of the sexes is to be ascribed. In some degree, no doubt, to the larger number of males who emigrate, but in a much greater degree, I am inclined to think, to the larger mortality amongst male children. The extent of this will be evident from looking at the comparative number of male and female deaths, in the years 1838-44. In that period the male deaths under one year ranged from 41,081 to 45,183; the female deaths under one year, only from 32,535 to 34,903; the male deaths under five years, from 70,990 to 77,988; the female deaths under five years, from 61,947 to 67,332; the male deaths at five years, from 8,306 to 10,199; the female deaths at five years, from 7,832 to 10,008; the male deaths at ten, from 4,278 to 4,722; the female deaths at ten, from 4,382 to 5,044, when the balance of mortality inclines against the female side. This is a curious branch of inquiry, which, however, rather falls within the province of the medical statist and the actuary.

In regard to the general mortality of its inhabitants, I find that the northern division is as favourably situated as most other districts of England. The general mortality of England (exclusively of Wales)

taking the mean of the years 1838-45, is 2.176 per cent.—or, in every year, there are 46 persons living to one who dies. The greatest mortality is in the northern district, including Cheshire and Lancashire, where it is at the rate of 2.591 per cent.—or there are 39 persons living for one who dies every year. In the metropolis it is 2.527—or there are 40 living for one dying; in Yorkshire the rate is 2.177—or there are 46 living for one dying. In the northern district, again, the rate of mortality is 2.087—or there are 48 persons living for one dying. The healthiest districts of all are the Welsh, south-western, and south-eastern. In the latter the rate of mortality is 1.901—or there are 53 persons living for one dying; a considerable superiority as compared with the general rate of England.

This seems the proper place to call attention to another point, established by the returns issued from the office of the Registrar-general of Births, Deaths, and Marriages, and which throws a curious and significant light on the distribution of education through the different districts of England, and amongst the various classes of its population. In the years 1839-45, the number of marriages ranged from 118,825 to 143,743. In each of these years a formidable proportion of persons, varying from 40 to 42 per cent., signed the marriage register with marks—thus clearly evincing (in the vast majority of cases, it may at least be assumed) their inability to write. Thus, in 1839, out of 242,000 persons married, 40,767 men, and 59,949 women—in all fully 100,000 persons—signed with marks; in 1845, out of 247,000 persons married, 47,665 men, and 71,229 women—in all nearly 119,000 persons—signed with marks. It is well worth while to advert to the proportions of persons signing with marks in some of the different districts into which England, for the purposes of eleemosynary, educational, and registrational inspection and regulation, is divided. In the metropolis, for the years 1839-45, the proportion of men signing with marks ranges from 11 to 12 per cent.; that of women signing with marks from 28 to 24,—the mean proportion for all England during these seven years, being, of men 32.9, or nearly 33 per cent., and of women 49.2, or more than 49 per cent. In the south-eastern division (Surrey, Kent, Sussex, Hants, Berks) the mean proportion for the same seven years was, of men 32.1 per cent., of women 39.4 per cent. In the south midland division (including Middlesex, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Huntingdonshire, Bedfordshire, and Cambridgeshire) the mean proportion of those signing with marks is, of men 42.4, or nearly 42½ per cent.—of

women 52 per cent. In the eastern division (embracing Essex, Suffolk, and Norfolk) the mean proportion is, of men 45.9, or nearly 46 per cent.—of women 51.6, or more than 51½ per cent. In the three latter districts, the agricultural population greatly preponderates. In the western district, where the population is agricultural and manufacturing, mixed in pretty nearly equal proportions (it embraces Gloucester, Hereford, Shropshire, Worcestershire, Staffordshire, and Warwickshire), the mean proportion is, of men 37.9, or nearly 38 per cent.; of women 51.9, or nearly 52 per cent. In the north-western district, comprehending Lancashire and Cheshire, the great seats of our manufactures, the mean proportion of men signing with marks is 38.7—of women 65.9, or nearly 66 per cent. The ignorance of Wales is yet more marked. But by far the most respectable figure of all is made by the northern division (comprising the four counties that form the immediate subject of our consideration), in which the mean proportion of men signing with marks is only 21.1 per cent., and of women only 41.6 per cent. These statistics of ignorance, fearful in one light, are very instructive in another. They teach us to estimate at its true value the pretensions to exclusive or special enlightenment occasionally put forward by those who assume to speak on behalf of a particular section of our population. Profound darkness is not always the lot of those who inhabit rural districts—nor is all illumination confined to great towns, or rather to large agglomerations of houses. I leave to others the duty of drawing the inferences which obviously present themselves to the mind on considering these tell-tale figures. I must hasten onwards with my appointed task.

The mean proportion per cent. of persons married under 21 years of age is less in the northern districts than in any other division, the metropolitan and Welsh excepted. In the northern it is 7.7, in the north-western 8.7, in the eastern 11.2, in Yorkshire 12.2, in the south-eastern 8.6, in the western the same, in the south-midland 13.5—the mean for all England being 8.7. The proportion of illegitimate children is also less in the northern than in some divisions, though greater than in others. Over England and Wales the proportion is 6.7, in the northern 7.4, north-midland 7.7, north-western 8.8—whilst the Welsh and western districts are 6.8, and the south-western 5.7. This latter figure, by-the-bye, shows, that in spite of the inadequate house accommodation of the south-western peasantry, the restraints of morality have not lost their force amongst that portion of our population.

Illegitimate births, among the peasantry, are in almost all cases followed by the marriage of the parents.

I now proceed to give a succinct sketch of the agricultural relations of the four counties with which we are dealing—shunning, however, minute details for the present, in order that your readers may have it in their power to institute some comparison between the relative condition of each. First, with regard to the relative amount of land in each—cultivated—uncultivated, but improvable—and unimprovable. It is calculated that Durham, upon a superficies of nearly 680,000 acres (I take the estimate of Mr. Couling, civil engineer and surveyor, given some years back in evidence before a select committee of the House of Commons, appointed to inquire into the subject of emigration), contains about 500,000 cultivated—100,000 uncultivated, but improvable—and upwards of 79,000 unimprovable, lying chiefly in the western portion of the county. The proportion of cultivated (or enclosed) to waste or unenclosed land is thus seen to be as 5 to 1—to land which may be pronounced wholly unimprovable in the present state of our agricultural knowledge, as 5 to 0.8—and to both together, as 5 to 1.8. The only large enclosures now proceeding in this county are those of Cornsay Common, a tract of 611 acres, situated eight miles westward of the city, for which powers were obtained three years ago; and of Cockfield Fell, a tract of 573 acres, near Staindrop, in the southern and least thickly populated part of the county. Northumberland again, upon a superficies of 1,197,400 acres (that is, as estimated by Mr. Couling), contains 900,000 acres of cultivated or enclosed land—160,000 acres entirely uncultivated, but capable of cultivation—and 137,000 which may be deemed wholly unprofitable. The proportion of cultivated to uncultivated soil in Northumberland is thus shown to be as 9 to 1.6, or 1 3-5 (rather less than in the former case)—to unprofitable land as 9 to 1.4, or 1 2-5 nearly—and to both together as about 3 to 1, or considerably less than in the case of Durham. There appears to be but one large enclosure in progress in Northumberland, that of East Coamwood, containing 1,580 acres, which I have not yet had an opportunity of seeing. The act authorizing its enclosure is the 10 Vict., c. 25, passed two years ago. Cumberland, upon a superficies of 946,000 acres (as estimated by Mr. Couling), contains 670,000 cultivated acres, 150,000 uncultivated, and 126,000 unimprovable. The proportion of cultivated to uncultivated or unenclosed land in this case is thus seen to be (nearly) as 7 to 1½—to unprofitable land as 7 to 1¼—and to both together as about 7 to 2—something

less than in the case of Northumberland, and very considerably less than in the case of Durham. In Cumberland there are several enclosures proceeding, some of them of considerable magnitude; by far the largest is that of Greyfell-common, containing 4,000 acres, powers for which were obtained two years ago. Those of smaller extent are Langwathby-moor, a tract of 507 acres, waste of a manor, in favour of which the Enclosure Commissioners reported in their fifth report, presented last session; Whitrigg-marsh, containing 272 acres, authorized by the act 10th Victoria, c. 25; Gamblesby-fell and Viol-moor, containing 1,268 acres, waste of a manor; Gamblesby and Biglands-common, 179 acres, waste of a manor; Talkin-fell, 1,700 acres, also described as waste of a manor (this does not appear to have been yet reported on); Ellenborough, 104 acres; Crosby and Birkby, 131 acres; Ponsonby and Calder, 200 acres, &c. The progress of enclosure appears more active in Cumberland than in any other part of the northern division. The last county on our list is Westmoreland, which, on a superficies of 488,000 acres, contains 180,000 cultivated—110,000 uncultivated, but supposed to be improvable—and 198,000 unprofitable. The proportion of enclosed and cultivated to waste but improvable land, is thus shown to be rather less than 2 to 1—to land believed altogether unprofitable nearly 1 to 1—and to both together nearly as 2 is to 3—showing by far the greatest proportion of waste and unimprovable land in any of the four counties. The enclosures proceeding, or recently effected here, are those of Sleddale Forest, containing 993 acres, authorized by the commissioners three years back; Asby Mask, containing 1,248 acres, waste of a manor; Smardale Fell, containing 643 acres, waste of a manor (in this township there are but 35 inhabitants, the farms being cultivated by the farmers and their families, with servants residing in their houses), authorized, as well as the preceding case, by the Act 11 and 12 Victoria, cap. 27; Newbiggin-moor, containing 500 acres, authorized by the Act 11 and 12 Victoria, cap. 109; the Low and High Intake, together 280 acres, authorized by the commissioners in 1847; Crosby Garrett, containing 434 acres, authorized by the commissioners in the course of last year; and Firbank Fells, containing 1,200 acres, authorized last session. The spirit of improvement appears thus to be active in Westmoreland, though the large proportion of land naturally valueless must restrict its sphere of operation within comparatively narrow limits.

With reference to the rate of increase of population in the four northern counties, as compared with each other and with that of Eng-

land and Scotland respectively, some interesting particulars are to be noted, and may as well be mentioned at this stage of our progress. In the ten years included between the census of 1831 and that of 1841, the actual increase per cent., of the whole population of England and Wales, was 14.4; that of the population of Scotland was 10.7; that of the whole of Great Britain, 13.1; that of Westmoreland (the smallest county on our list) was only 2.5—being the smallest rate of increase of all the English counties, with the exception of Hereford, where the rate was 2.4; that of Cumberland was 4.9; that of Northumberland was 12.2, or not quite equal to the rate of general increase; that of Durham was 27.7—showing the largest increase within those ten years of any county in England, Monmouth alone excepted, where the increase was 36.9 per cent.; the increase of Lancashire, I may mention, for the sake of comparison, being 24.7—of Cheshire 18.3—and of Stafford 24.3. The very large increase of 27.7 in the case of Durham is, of course, to be set down to the account of persons immigrating to work at the mines—the natural increase for the same period being only 13.2—about the same rate as those of Bedford and Cornwall.

The general observations which suggest themselves under this head, as necessary to complete the sketch which I have attempted to draw, may be brought into a short compass. Beginning with Durham—the appearance which the soil and its cultivation present to the eye corresponds with the impression which the reader of the above statistical details would be likely to form from their consideration. There are fewer tracts of land of any considerable extent entirely uncultivated than in any of the other counties, and a smaller proportion (according to the size of the county, and the area of unreclaimable land that it comprises) very well cultivated. The strictly rural part of the population of Durham is comparatively small, since the inhabitants of the "pit villages," as they are commonly called, which are scattered over the greater portion of the county (many of them more like towns than villages) can scarcely be said to belong to it. Many of the farm labourers occasionally work at the coal pits, and the fluctuation of trade in the collieries has a tendency to cause an irregular demand for labour in agriculture. A considerable proportion of the men employed in agriculture are hired into the farm-houses by the year and half-year—in the former case generally as hinds (I shall consider this subject more fully hereafter). When the coal trade is depressed, and the pitmen have not employment for more than six, seven, or eight days in a fortnight,

they often seek work upon the land, and glut the agricultural labour market; but as the regular pitmen are very inexpert, except in a few branches of farm labour, the countrymen have the advantage over them. In summer time the pitmen's wives are also employed a good deal in field labour. In Durham the accommodation for the labouring poor may be pronounced decidedly good—far superior to what appears to exist in some of the southern districts. A clay soil, but cold and wet, prevails in this country. Though some outlay of capital has already taken place, much more would be required in order to draw the greatest possible amount of advantage from a soil which is often of indifferent quality. I have already alluded to the obstacles to improvement which arise, whether from the fact of the tenants being very generally persons of scanty means, with small holdings—or from the peculiar tenure under which a considerable portion of the ground is held. In Northumberland the soil is generally a light friable loam, the farms large, with wealthy occupiers, who are in many cases disposed to a liberal outlay of capital; the crops are frequently luxuriant, the live stock abundant, and its quality excellent. This is particularly the case along the east coast, by Morpeth and Alnwick. To the south and west, in the neighbourhood of Rothbury, Bellingham, Hexham, and Haltwhistle, the land is chiefly in pasture, with extensive tracts of moorland, but the soil is capable of being much improved by thorough drainage and the use of artificial manure. Generally over the four counties the proportion of waste land in meadow and pasture, to land under the plough, considerably exceeds the average, which is three-fifths. The condition of the Northumbrian peasantry—or "bondagers," as they are otherwise termed—is one of great general comfort, though the cottage accommodation is inferior to that found in Durham. In Cumberland, the farms—though their size and destination vary with the nature of the district—generally consist of moderate holdings, the proportion of pasture to tillage being large. In many localities, as Carlisle, Bootle, and Penrith, agriculture is conducted on a liberal and advanced system, the farmers being in easy or affluent circumstances. Neither in this county nor in Westmoreland can the labouring population be said to be redundant; and employment, with fair wages, is to be had. But this is not the place to enter minutely on these topics, which must be postponed to another letter.

I have left myself but little space for treating of a very important subject, which cannot be left out of sight in any general description of

the social condition of the northern counties—that of pauperism. On a future occasion I may go at greater length into it; but the working of the present poor-law, and the amount of poor receiving parochial relief at the most recent period for which any official returns have been received, will be best shown by the following table, which is entitled to the utmost reliance. It shows the population of Durham, Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmoreland, according to the census of 1841—the number of paupers in the workhouses of each county—the number and cost of out-door paupers (exclusive of lunatics in asylums), for the week ending the 9th of September last, and also for the corresponding week in 1847, and the comparative increase or decrease. No statement of the amount of in-door maintenance, I am informed, has been returned since the introduction of the new order of union accounts in March, 1848. The table has been framed with the view of showing the state of things in the last quarter, and the calculations are made from the tenth week, because in the last week of the quarter; the cost of lunatics in asylums is added by many unions to the usual out-door relief returns—in some instances more than doubling the week's expenditure, and thus leading, if adopted, to erroneous conclusions.

Counties.	Popula-tion in 1841.	Number of In-door Paupers relieved week ended on the 9th Sep-tember, 1847.	Number of In-door Paupers relieved week ended on the 9th Sep-tember, 1849.	Increase.	Decrease.	Number of Out-door Paupers relieved week ended on the 9th Sep-tember, 1847.	Number of Out-door Paupers relieved week ended on the 9th Sep-tember, 1849.	Increase.	Decrease.	Cost of Out-door Paupers week ended 9th September, 1847.	Cost of Out-door Paupers week ended 9th September, 1849.	Increase.	Decrease.
										£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Cumberland ..	177,912	1,206	1,154	…	52	7,112	7,061	…	51	496 0 0	452 14 0	…	43 6 0
Durham ……	325,997	905	1,072	167	…	15,464	16,824	1,360	…	1,105 0 0	1,126 11 9	21 11 9	…
Northumberland	265,988	1,226	1,242	16	…	14,156	15,395	1,239	…	1,042 0 0	1,132 12 1	90 12 1	…
Westmoreland .	56,469	333	362	29	…	2,044	2,619	575	…	169 10 1	183 5 10	13 15 9	…

From this table it appears that during the last quarter the proportion of persons in the receipt of parochial relief, out-door or in-door, to the entire population, was—in the county of Cumberland 1 in 22, in Durham 1 in 19, in Northumberland 1 in 16 nearly, and in Westmoreland 1 in 19 nearly. The inferences to which these data lead, as compared with the circumstances of other parts of England, will be considered in a future letter.

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