

THE EFFECT OF THE NAPOLEONIC WARS ON GREAT BRITAIN.

By William W. Everts.

When Great Britain engaged in war with Napoleon, she was mistress of the seven seas, having taken South Africa from Holland, the West Indies from Spain, and the East Indies and Canada from France. By the invention of the spinning-mule by Crompton, and of the spinning jenny by Hargreaves, and of the power-loom by Cartwright, and of the water-frame by Arkwright, and of the steam engine by Watt, she had become the workshop of the world, and, under Pitt's economies, the most prosperous country on the earth. Her imports had increased in ten years from ten million to nineteen million pounds sterling, and her exports from thirteen million to twenty-five million pounds. But to keep the monopoly of foreign trade it was thought necessary to command cheap labor, in order to produce goods cheaply: therefore apprentices were multiplied, and women were called to work, all to depress the wages of men. Besides, machines run by power, slowly but inevitably introduced an industrial revolution. Handlooms and home industries, which had been in use for centuries, were displaced by the hard discipline of the factory system. With the increase of wealth came the disposition to dispossess the village communities of the commons, where games had been played, where cattle had been pastured, and produce had been raised by the inhabitants. So the reduction in wages, and the enclosure of the commons, greatly distressed the poor. "Give us back our commons," they said, "and we will do without relief." However, when the centennial of the glorious revolution of 1688 was celebrated, the people were still deceived into believing that they were living under the best government on earth.

Pitt boasted that the laws of England afford equal security and protection to high and low, to the rich and the poor. Indeed, Montesquieu and Voltaire had been holding up the Government of England as a model for France to follow. It was a limited monarchy, limited by the nobility, for both Tories and Whigs were aristocrats. The land-owners ruled the land: they ruled their seats in the House of Lords, and through their representatives in the House of Commons, from the three hundred and seven boroughs which they controlled. They ruled through the clergy, whom they patronized with their advowsons and livings. They ruled through the army and navy and all civil offices, of which they had the disposal. The government was Christian. No Jew had a place in it. It was Protestant. No Roman Catholic had a share in it. It was Episcopalian. No Dissenter could hold office. The Government was a privileged oligarchy, an exclusive monopoly, supported by the East India Company, the landlords, and the bishops. The middle and lower classes were taught, not to rule, but to obey. Bishop Horsley said, "I do not know what the mass of the people in any country have to do with the laws but to obey them." In Scotland there had been an uprising for a few years against the appointment of pastors. The people of Glasgow complained that "unless patronage was abolished, the people would lose all notion of liberty. The constitution of the church is republican, but patronage breathes the spirit of absolutism." The miners and operatives were left to the care of the Non-Conformists. The rectors had no patience with emotional or enthusiastic preaching, and in the days of Robert Hall and Rowland Hill, of Thomas Chalmers and Edward Irving, no great preachers appeared among them. Theirs was a religion of form and dress and manners, in which they easily excelled. The bishops of that day, in their pastoral charges, dealt generally in denunciation of Dissenters and the Evangelicals. There was a Society for the Promotion of Christian

Knowledge, but their cheapest Bibles cost five shillings sixpence, and in 1787 they could not furnish more than five hundred copies to supply a great demand in Wales. Principal Robertson of Edinburgh University thought that the popular election of pastors would lead to rioting. "If you open the gate of novelty," he said, "who will shut it?" The Moderate or Erastian party was then in control of the churches there. The ministers sought the favor of their patrons, the educated and governing classes.

In England a minister was not satisfied with one parish, but sought the income from several livings. He was often a non-resident rector—there were 6,311 of them in 1811—not even represented by a poor resident curate until the law of 1812 compelled a performance of that duty. The sacrament was usually celebrated only four times a year. The moral condition of the people is depicted in the novels of Charlotte Bronte. Walter Scott says that ballads were sung in the streets that were unfit to be heard, and that Mrs. Behn's lecherous novels were read aloud in parlors. Dr. Samuel Johnson advocated the public execution of criminals, on the double ground that it gratified the public and that the procession from the prison to the gallows was a support to the convict. In the year 1787 there were 97 executions for shop-lifting alone.

The French Revolution sent a thrill through the British nation. Its proclamation of the rights of man was popularized by Thomas Paine and by Godwin, and the disfranchised and downtrodden in England and Scotland looked up surprised and delighted at what had taken place across the Channel. The French States-General favored public schools, and sought the extermination of poverty and slavery, as well as of ignorance. They opened a new era with a new calendar from the year 1 of the French Republic. The Declaration of the Rights of Man was printed on a single page, but "that page outweighed whole libraries, and was worth more than armies." It

changed the course of history. It aroused a democratic movement that could not be stopped. The people took control in their own hands. Their first act had been the destruction of the Bastille, which despots had filled with the noblest heroes of France. Bastille after bastille of cruel oppression was swept away. Liberty, fraternity and equality were the glorious watchwords of 1789. The ill-gotten gains of bishop, noble and king were restored to the people from whom they had been taken. The people became citizens instead of serfs, rulers instead of subjects.

The most enlightened men of Great Britain joined in a chorus of praise of the Revolution. Robert Hall exclaimed, "The empire of darkness and of despair has been smitten with a stroke which has sounded through the universe." Burns compared the English to the French Revolution: "The recollection of that glorious struggle for freedom, associated with the glowing ideas of some other struggle of the same nature, not quite so ancient, roused my rhyming mania." In "A Man's a Man for a' That," he embodied not only the philosophy, but even the very words, of Thomas Paine. "Scot's Wha' Ha' Wi' Wallace Bled" starts from the same emotion. Wordsworth was in France in 1791. "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive." Thus he hailed with delight a reform which promised a government of equal rights and individual worth. He went back to England a changed man. The promise of the French Revolution had for the time eclipsed his love of nature. It was the same influence that held the vacillating Coleridge in a human world. He composed an ode on the fall of the Bastille:

"Fallen is the oppressor, friendless, ghastly, low,
And my heart aches, though mercy struck the blow."

Years afterwards he recalls,—

"I blessed the paeans of delivered France,
And hung my head and wept at Britain's name."

Statesmen, too, like Burke and Mackintosh, Fox and Sheridan, lauded the first achievements of the Republic; and Pitt had just proposed to abolish the slave-trade and to reform Parliament, when the Reign of Terror occurred in 1793, and enthusiasm for the Republic suddenly turned to dread and aversion. All thought of political and social reform was abandoned for nearly forty years. During all those years of Tory reaction, there was but one large reform put through Parliament,—the abolition of the slave-trade in the year 1807. All thought of political reform was forbidden during the twenty years' war, so that the good people of Great Britain were shut up to moral reform. Many moral reforms were carried through during this period outside of Parliament.

Clapham was the home of a company of rich evangelical philanthropists of the Church of England. They were William Wilberforce, Henry Thornton, Zachary Macaulay, Thomas Buxton, and others. Wilberforce had been converted by Milner during a tour of the Continent in the year 1784. It was he who as a friend of Pitt in Parliament at length secured the abolition of the slave-trade. "His eloquence and courtesy, his perfect honesty, his courage and perseverance, had proved to be irresistible." Largely through the influence of these gentlemen of Clapham, religion became the fashion in England. Seldom before or since has it claimed so much attention there. It was largely a laymen's movement. Family life was purified. Family prayers were instituted. J. H. Newman, F. W. Faber and T. B. Macaulay were trained in this atmosphere. Though the leaders belonged to the Church of England, they worked together with "the three denominations." Indeed, Baring Gould traces the evangelical movement in the Church of England to the Scotch. In Scotland, Robert Haldane, also a man of wealth, was awakened from the sleep of spiritual death by the trumpet of the French Revolution. He read the writings of Burke, Mackintosh and Priestley, and looked to politics for the

improvement of human affairs. "I eagerly clutched at politics," he says, "as a pleasing speculation. As a fleeting phantom it eluded my grasp; but, missing the shadow, I caught the substance." The rest of his life was devoted to the propagation of the Gospel as a Baptist Evangelist. He sold his estate, and bought the Edinburgh Circus, and transformed it into a tabernacle. He went to France and Switzerland, and awakened Daubigne Gausen, Caesar Malan and Monod. His brother, James, of like spirit, refused permission to make a Christian settlement in India, started a Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Home. It was this society which introduced the whole evangelical movement in Scotland.

In 1791 Thornton formed a society to introduce trade, industry and Christian knowledge into Sierra Leone. At a dinner at Thornton's in 1797 Wilberforce suggested the formation of a Church Missionary Society. It was a church society, but neither high church nor diocesan, because the peers and the prelates did not join it. Dr. Porteus said, "This whole missionary business grows from a democratic root." The same group of men founded the Religious Tract Society in 1799, which was followed by the British and Foreign Bible Society. They furnished Scriptures at half the cost price. When a carload of Bibles arrived in Wales, it was met by the peasants as the cart that carried the Ark of the Testimony had been welcomed by the ancient Israelites. The cheap repository tracts edited by their colaborer Hannah More were circulated by the million. The British and Foreign School Society, started in 1804, was another expression of the zeal of the Clapham men, who added to their labors, in 1809, the Society for the Conversion of the Jews, and in 1811 the Society for the Education of the Poor. Their power was not in their numbers, but in the societies which they organized. The writings of these men may be forgotten now, but their lives and deeds brighten a dark page of history.

But this, the best type of religion of that day, was still under the control of the philosophy of Locke, who looked upon property as the mainstay of the State. Therefore, Evangelicals and Methodists alike dwelt on the future rather than the present welfare of the poor. They favored the Government in its efforts to prevent the laboring classes from bettering their condition. They taught obedience to authority, and resignation to poverty, without thinking that workers have rights as well as employers, or that Government should look after the many rather than the few. They cared for the black slaves in the West Indies, while they neglected the white slaves in Lancashire. In the year 1819, at a great Methodist meeting at Hunslet Moor, a resolution was passed which "deeply deplored the religious and moral state of the world, especially of the Pagans, Mohammedans, and Jews."

While the well-to-do classes were busy with these many reforms, the poorer classes were suffering from the high cost of living caused by the war. Wheat that had brought forty-three shillings a quarter in 1792 could not be had in 1795 for less than seventy-five shillings, and soon it averaged ninety-eight shillings till 1820. In 1800 wages purchased only one-half of the provisions they had equalled ten years before. The Government placed restrictions on the use of grain by brewers, and commandeered neutral vessels, with their food supplies, to stop the rise in prices. Forestalling and regrating were made crimes. The first year of the war a hundred of the four hundred banks in England closed their doors, and in 1797 the Bank of England ceased the payment of its notes in gold, and did not resume specie payment until four years after the war was over. Paper money fell to a discount of fourteen percent. in 1810. Napoleon's Berlin decree blockaded the Continent to England, and his Milan decree blockaded England to the Continent, with the result that in 1809 thirty-two cotton mills in Manchester alone became idle. Indeed, English commerce was almost par-

alyzed. Warehouses were soon clogged with goods, and no more goods could be manufactured. Byron describes the scene:

“The idle merchant on the useless quay
Droops o’er the bales no bark may bear away,
Or back returning sees rejected stores
Rot piecemeal on his own encumbered shores.
One starved mechanic breaks his rusty loom,
And, desperate, mans himself ’gainst the coming doom.”

He said that he had seen no such squalid wretchedness in Spain or Turkey as he had seen in our Christian country in 1812. In 1813 the premium on gold was twenty-nine per cent. As gold rose in value, prices went up with it; and as paper money went down, wages went down with it. A workman’s wages of ten shillings bought for him little more than seven shilling’s worth of goods bought by the merchant on the gold level of prices.

However, the national revenue doubled each decade of the war. Commercial men agreed to take Pitt’s banknotes and subscribe to his loans. The annual expenditure rose from twenty million pounds in 1792 to a hundred and six million in 1814, when the national debt had climbed from two hundred and forty million pounds to eight hundred and eighty-five millions. Exports increased in the same period from eighteen to fifty-eight million, and the population rose from fourteen to nineteen million inhabitants. During the peace of 1802, the number of marriages, which had fallen to sixty-nine thousand in 1800, rose at once to ninety thousand.

The weavers and cotton-spinners said, “Our troubles began with the war with France, when the law that fixed the minimum wage and the law that fixed the price of provisions according to the rate of wages, and the law that limited the employment of apprentices, were all abrogated.” Fortunes were made during the war, but the lot of the working people grew worse and worse. Low as wages were, they were lowered still more by the method

of paying by tally, by credit at the factory store, where goods had to be purchased at exorbitant prices. Gangs of children were sent from London to the cotton mills, with no human being to whom they could look for redress. They were bought and sold as slaves. The manufacturers agreed to receive one idiot child in every batch of twenty. They were taken in factories as young as seven, and even five, and in coal mines as young as four. This called from Mrs. Browning her "Cry of the Children." When in 1819 the hours of the children working in a factory were reduced to twelve, the law was condemned because it encouraged idleness and vice.

The spirit of the workingman was broken by the insolence and the meanness of his employer. His meetings were infested with spies of the Government, which combined with capital against labor. If a master broke a contract with his men, the worst penalty was a fine. If the men broke a contract, the least penalty was a term in prison. The factory system with its fines made the workmen slaves. Men in distress get out of humor, will not listen to reason, and wreak their vengeance on the machinery that takes away their work, or on the butcher and baker, whose prices they cannot pay. In Blackburn every power-loom was broken. In 1811, when stocking and lace frames run by power were introduced, to the destruction of the trade of the hand-loomers, the distracted men broke the machines until breaking of looms was made a capital offence. Byron attacked the law, and proposed a Jeffrey for judge and twelve butchers for the jury. After two years it was repealed. Byron aroused men to wrath. He expressed the feelings of the multitude, and awakened a universal response of unyielding resolution.

"Yet, Freedom, yet, thy banners torn but flying,
Stream like the thunder-cloud against the wind."

When Macaulay boasted that "nowhere does man exercise such dominion over matter," it would have been

quite as true to have said, "Nowhere does matter exercise such dominion over man." The people had a double fear,—militarism, and its twin evil, wealth. For,—

"Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay."

At the outbreak of the war the people had been loyal to Church and King, and they had cursed the Reformers as Jacobins and atheists; but after forty years of ever-increasing oppression by the Church and the King, they cursed them both, and hailed Byron, Shelley and Cobbett as their only friends. Hunger and famine taught them the first lessons of reform. When bread was high, and hours were long, and wages were low, and work was so scarce that they had to underbid each other to get it, they began to complain, and hold meetings to protest; but they were dragooned by new laws, which treated complaints as sedition, and protests as anarchy. Coleridge showed some pity for the wage-earner when he wrote in "The Friend," "Those institutions of society which should condemn me to the necessity of twelve hours' toil would make my soul a slave." While the rich were oppressing the poor, the Government was always afraid that the poor would oppress the rich. The chief concern of the Government seemed to be to keep working men out of mischief. The longer the hours of labor, the less time there would be for dissipation. All the profit is made in the last hour of work, they claimed. Appeals were made to charitable people to relieve the distress, but charity only aggravated the feelings of honest workmen. As every one admits now, charity is no way to settle the question of the share the laboring man should have in the profits of his labor.

The pauper population, which had counted two million in 1785, was doubled in twenty years. The poor rates, which were two million pounds in 1793, were trebled before the war ended. In 1817 one-fourth of the population of Liverpool were on the town. Edwin Chadwick (the

Tom Thurnall of Kingsley's "Two Years Ago") found that paupers were largely made by preventable diseases, that threw men out of work, and threw their families on the town. The diseases produced listlessness, mental inertia, and desire for alcohol.

The masses of the people inspired the Government for forty years with ever-increasing suspicion and dread. The old English rights which had been enjoyed for centuries were taken away. The whole nation was in a state of siege; not so much by Napoleon as by Pitt and Castlereagh and Wellington. Combinations of laboring men were dreaded then as the Industrial Workers of the World, the Syndicalists, and the Bolsheviki are regarded by us now. In 1800 there were forty laws on the statute books against the combination of laboring men to raise wages or shorten hours, and new and more drastic measures were adopted to prevent the rise of trade unions. The shock of the French Revolution had completely reversed the attitude of the British Government to the British people. Their peace of mind was gone. They believed every story concocted by informers and spies. Instead of listening to the righteous demands of honest laboring men, they turned the militia and the yeomanry on them. The expense of living had increased until it reached an amount five times as great as it had been before the war; but nothing was done except to overawe the hungry people. To carry on the war, everything that the laborer used was heavily taxed.

The misery of the common people was explained by Malthus as due to the increase of population. The land cannot feed so many mouths. Ricardo said, "The fund for wages depends entirely on the proportion of population to capital." Pitt said, "Supply and demand, prices and wages, must be left to find their own level." Such were the accepted theories of the dismal science of those evil days. Poverty was looked upon by the well-to-do as providential. The poor should not complain against the

laws of nature, which are the laws of God. But when the few grew rich at the expense of the many poor, it was laws of man, and not of nature, that controlled the division of profit. There were laws to keep up the price of corn and of rents, but not of labor, the worker's only capital.

When the promised reforms were postponed, the people were told to wait until the war was over. It is not wise to repair your house in a hurricane. Beware of the awful example of a neighboring nation. Justice Braxfield declared that preaching reform in a time of excitement is sedition. The war inflamed the hatred of both rulers and employers. To speak of men as citizens, as in France, aroused suspicion that the speaker was an atheist. The new laws made new crimes. The undue severity of the criminal code defeated its own object. From 1811 to 1818, one hundred forgers were hanged. The criminal cases tried increased from forty-six hundred a year in 1805 to fourteen thousand in 1819. In that year there were two hundred kinds of capital offences. The liberty of the press was assailed as it had not been since the days of the Stuarts. Every political writer was in peril. Before the right of trial by jury had been taken away, William Hone, a political writer, defended himself three times before London juries, and was acquitted, though he was prosecuted by the Attorney-General himself. Juries would not condemn a soldier to death for begging, or a beggar for stealing from a shop goods worth five shillings. When it was proposed that transportation should be substituted for the death penalty, twelve judges stepped down from their pedestals in protest against the abridgment of their powers of life and death.

Religion did something to improve the condition of the poor. The rustic missionaries of the Evangelical sects heightened the tone of morality, and, by teaching temperance, in so far improved the material condition of many a community. Their Sunday schools furnished the only opportunity that the masses of the poor of England had for

the education of their children. Popular education was frowned upon by rulers and employers alike, because, they said, "It will make the people discontented with their lot, and prove a danger to the State. If they learn to read, they will get vicious and atheistical books into their hands." In 1816 Lord Brougham calculated that there were twenty thousand children in London totally uneducated. In 1820 there were thirty-five hundred parishes with no more means of education than is found among the Hottentots. But still the Government was afraid of the effect of the ink-horn and the alphabet on the poor. Even Hannah More, with her female schools, stopped short at writing, for she said, "I will not make fanatics." When Whitbread urged that nothing conduces to the stability of government like the education of the people, the Government paid no heed. When Bell and Lancaster introduced the factory method into schools and let the older pupils teach the younger, the Church opposed the innovation. In Derbyshire the children of colliers were explicitly excluded from the schools. A bill for general primary education, which was introduced in 1807, was successfully opposed by Justice Eldon and the Archbishop of Canterbury. As late as 1818 only one-fourth of the children of the poor attended school. The president of the Royal Society expressed the opinion that "the education of the laboring class would be prejudicial to their happiness and to their morals, and would make them refractory. More drastic laws would be called for to check their insolence to their superiors." In 1819 the magistrates of Cheshire sought to suppress the Sunday schools.

The year 1815 brought peace, but not prosperity; glory, but not liberty. Government expenditures fell from one hundred to fifty-three million pounds. Imports fell off six million, and exports seven million, because Europe was too exhausted by the war to buy. Copper fell from a hundred and eighty to eighty pound a ton, and iron from twenty to eight. In Shropshire twenty-four blast furnaces ceased working, and seven thousand

iron workers were thrown out of work. Three hundred thousand soldiers and sailors returned to civil life, just when the ranks of labor were flooded, and wages were low, and staple goods had lost half of their value. Wheat fell to fifty-eight shillings a quarter. This caused distress to the farming population, who had succeeded in over-producing wheat. In 1816 ruin stared the farmers in the face. In 1819 Shelley cried:

“No, in countries that are free
Such starvation cannot be
As in England now we see.”

It was to come to the rescue of the farming interest, to keep up land rents and the price of wheat, that the infamous Corn Law had been passed in 1815. By this law no grain could be imported into England until the price had risen to eighty shillings a quarter.

When it was proposed after the war to maintain a standing army of a hundred and fifty thousand men, and to perpetuate the income tax that had been voted to continue only until the war was over, the people were alarmed lest the country, like the Continental nations, was to be saddled with militarism. The years immediately succeeding the peace were the darkest period in modern English history. The battle of Waterloo, which marked the zenith of England's military prestige, marked the nadir of her industrial, social and political life. Until 1822 she was linked politically with the unholy alliance of the Continental powers, who were determined to restore conditions as they had been before the French Revolution, and fasten the chains of tyranny on the people again. Socially, conditions were so bad, that in a village in Dorsetshire, out of 575 inhabitants, 419 were receiving parish relief. The year 1819 was long known as the “black year.”

In 1824 the Chancellor boasted of the prosperity of the nation. Specie payments had been resumed by the Bank of England, the currency was inflated by the issue of paper money, stock companies arose on every hand, but then

England passed through another experience like the South Sea Bubble a century before; but this time it was the South American Trade Bubble. A widespread passion for wild speculation began in 1824, and was followed the next year by a commercial panic. Sixty country banks closed their doors. Even the Bank of England was shaken. Walter Scott was one of the victims of this bankrupt period, which lasted until 1830.

This period of bankruptcy and unparalleled distress coincided with the era of great reforms. It had been a long time coming. The war had made life more and more unendurable, until patience ceased to be a virtue; and when it looked as though another revolution was brewing, and civil war was inevitable, the reactionary government gave way, and let the people have the laws and government they wanted. Much as the Iron Duke dreaded popular government, he dreaded still more the thought of civil war, and for that reason only he yielded to the people. The rumblings of the French Revolution of 1830 reminded him that the English people would not remain supine while their neighbors had again thrown off the yoke of the Bourbon dynasty. But it was only after repressive laws, far from cowing the people, had aroused in them a mutinous and seditious spirit, that fundamental reforms could be forced upon the Government. In 1770 Burke had said, "The people have no interest in disorder. Something must be wrong in the Constitution or the conduct of the Government. The people have no desire to attack: they are only impatient under suffering." In 1817 there was a march of helpless people who implored the help of Parliament in their distress. They marched much as Coxey's Army of the Commonweal went to Washington. They were called Blanketeers, because they carried blankets to sleep in at night. It broke up itself, as Coxey's stragglers gave out, but not until it had occasioned great alarm. Habeas corpus was again suspended to expedite arrests without regard to justice. That year the Prince Regent declared that the English had the

most perfected system of government in the world; but when the Corporation of London demanded of him the representation of the common people in Parliament, they were snubbed. As a marked expression of the popular resentment, the windows of his carriage were smashed as he was returning from Westminster. In 1819 the massacre of Peterloo occurred at Manchester. A mass meeting was held there. The people came from towns around with flags flying, with a liberty cap held aloft, with "Liberty and Fraternity" as mottoes, and saying, "We, the mill spinners, confined in the bastiles of Manchester, demand annual Parliaments." George Cruikshank pilloried the Administration in "Punch" for turning the mounted yeomanry on the multitude. He pictured horsemen charging men, women and children. The commander is shouting, "So go to it, lads! Show your courage and your loyalty! Down with them! Shoot 'em! They want to take our beef and pudding from us! Remember, the more you kill, the less poor rates you'll have to pay." The Government blamed the agitators, and defended the action of the yeomanry, and proceeded at once to pass the notorious "Six Acts" to prevent the repetition of such a gathering of the people, to prevent all criticism of the Government, to punish seditious libels, and to raise the stamp duty so as to cut off the sale of Cobbett's twopenny "Political Register," which had been the bold tribune of the disfranchised multitude. Cobbett, deprived of the right of a trial by his peers, fled to America. Shelley cried out against

"Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know,
But leech-like to their fainting country cling."

At length, when the Government began to yield to the threatening clamor for reform, reforms came rapidly one after the other. In 1828 Lord Brougham said to the Duke of Wellington, "Today not the soldier, but the schoolmaster is abroad." As early as 1808 the revision of the criminal code had begun with the exemption of the pick-pocket from the hangman's noose, until at last Peel struck

a hundred felonies from the list at one stroke. No one was put in the pillory after 1815, and no women were flogged in public after 1817. In 1812 the Five-Mile Act, which forbade Non-Conformists to preach within five miles of a parish church, was repealed. In 1828, by the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, Dissenters obtained the right to sit in Parliament,—a right which Daniel O’Connell secured next year for Roman Catholics by defying the law and running for Parliament in Ireland. A Factory Act, the first of a long series of laws ameliorating the condition of the laboring classes, was passed in 1831, and in 1832 followed the great Parliamentary Reform Bill, which took the control of the House from the land-owners, and gave it to the commercial classes. The bill abolished fifty-six rotten boroughs, and diminished by half the representation of thirty more, while it gave seats to three cities and thirty-nine towns. It was a ten-pound franchise, limited to persons who were able to pay ten pounds rent a year. It was many years before the suffrage was granted to the laboring man; but much had been gained, because henceforth, not aristocrats, but the great middle class controlled the destiny of the empire. In 1833 the Government paid thirty-two million pounds to redeem from slavery all of the seven hundred and seventy thousand persons who were in bondage within the empire. Further reforms were demanded by the Chartists, who are the theme of Disraeli’s novel “*Sybil*.” The hero of the story is a Baptist. Indeed, the whole movement, with its demands for universal suffrage and the separation of Church and State, voiced the aspiration of the Baptists of England. No other denomination approved these sentiments enough to send delegates to the great meeting in 1844. Three of the leaders—Cooper, O’neil and Vince—were Baptist preachers. Many years have since elapsed, and universal suffrage has at last been granted; and now that a Baptist is Prime Minister of Great Britain, the hope of the Chartists for a free Church in a free State may be nearing consummation.