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JESUS,
SHELLEY, AND MALTHUS;

OR,

PIOUS POVERTY AND HETERODOX
HAPPINESS.

BY

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JESUS, SHELLEY, AND MALTHUS.

By a very considerable portion of the inhabitants of Great Britain, Jesus is worshipped as God incarnate. By even a larger portion of the population his doctrines are admitted as unimpeachable, the teachings attributed to him being regarded as containing a perfect code of morality. In dispraise of Jesus one is scarcely permitted to speak, save at the risk of social outlawry. Shelley, admired by the appreciative few for his poetry, is repudiated by the fanatical on account of his heresy. Malthus is one whose writings scarcely any one reads, and whom many occupy themselves in abusing. The three names represent three distinct and two conflicting teachings. The first, that voluntary submission to wrong, and contentment under injustice, is a virtue. The second, that it is man's duty to resist wrong and to refuse submission to evil, "that he who allows oppression shares the crime." The third, that so far from it being the duty of man to submit to wrong, or to place himself in the situation in which evil can be inflicted upon him, it is man's duty to endeavour to prevent evil, to discover the causes of wrong, with a view to their removal.

The three names also represent two phases of humanity. That of the prostration of the intellect before some fetish or authority, at the bidding of persons professing to be in its confidence. The second, the assertion of manhood, if necessary, in defiance alike of king, or priest, or custom.

Jesus, Shelley, and Malthus, also represent three conditions of thought. The first, that of thought fettered. The second, Freethought:—learning, but not yet learned; honest, but sometimes erring. The third, the special application of educated thought to the relief of the human family from at least some of the many evils under which its members suffer.

I do not in these pages profess to fairly represent the

complete views of either Jesus, Shelley, or Malthus; the scope of this essay being limited to the phase of thought with which Malthus chiefly dealt.

I assail the teachings of Jesus, because the Gospel doctrines are claimed as the central point upon which all morality must rest, and the circle within which all teaching must be limited. The teachings of Jesus are made a very wall, built round the brightest intellects, hiding their beauty from the world without, and within killing them with jail fever. Prisoned body may be sustained by hope for freedom yet to be attained; but prisoned thought not only is crushed itself, but crushes with it all hope for struggling peoples. The teachings of Jesus should be assailed because they claim to suffice for yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow; whereas teachings of the past should never irrevocably fetter the present, much less bind the future. Humanity is progressive—civilization means going forward; but Christianity is rather retrogressive, or, at best, is ever looking back to 2000 years ago. The teachings of Jesus are, that poverty is a virtue, that men who are poor are blessed, and that wealth is an obstacle to the attainment of eternal happiness. "Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God?" Have the poor the kingdom of God? Surely not, unless by the kingdom of God is meant the empire of misery. The writer of the *Elements of Social Science* (a work in which the whole question of the cause and cure of poverty is elaborately treated) emphatically declares that "poverty is the most appalling of all the evils which oppress mankind." Go into the narrow wynds of Glasgow, the old town of Edinburgh, the maze in Cork; walk through the poor districts of Bethnal Green, Spitalfields, or Shoreditch, in London, or through the habitations of the poor and wretched in Liverpool and Manchester; or visit the over-crowded rooms in Birmingham, in which human beings are crowded together like vermin—unlike men. See the squalor, wretchedness, filth, crime, and misery there prevalent; look on the gaunt and unhealthy visages, the diseased and decrepid frames, the ill-clad and squalid figures, and tell me, do these betoken the prevalence of God's kingdom? Examine some of the dens in the old parts of New York; climb to the *cinquième* of one of the worst remains of *le vieux Paris*; or penetrate between the almost touching houses of Madrid or Naples, where foul misery crouches in the shade of a grand *palazzo*, and then tell me whether you preach

the doctrine that the poor are blessed. Or do you think the meaning of the text to be, "Blessed are ye *who are poor now*, for yours *will be* the kingdom of God at *some future date*." If so, I impeach the doctrine: prevalence of wrong to-day can never be the premium for an after continuance of right. Misery *now* is no insurement of happiness in some period yet to come. It is urged by the orthodox that it is not a fair representation of the doctrine of Jesus to represent him as recommending poverty of goods: that the text in Luke c. vi., v. 20 should be collated with the passage in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;" that poverty of spirit should be understood in both instances. First, this is not true; and, if true, even to the inculcation of poverty of spirit I object as strenuously, as I do the teaching contentment under poverty. Poverty of spirit is no virtue. Honesty of spirit, manliness of spirit, bold, uncompromising, determined resistance of wrong, and assertion of right, should be taught in lieu of that poverty of spirit which allows the proud and haughty in spirit to trample upon and oppress the highest human rights. We who war against the Gospel doctrine of poverty of spirit, fight a battle not only for ourselves, but for all mankind.

The cultivation of a self-reliant spirit by the peoples, will give to them the rights of manhood, now trampled upon by that triple-armed empire of state theology—triple-armed by ignorance, fraud, and credulity. These rights of manhood, involving Freethought and freest utterance, will give us full ability for the vanquishing of a too long dominant priestly lie, and will insure for us the proclamation of liberty of conscience—a proclamation which in time shall be for the whole world. Poverty of spirit, wherever taught, has been the curse of the people receiving the doctrine. Where there is slavery, there also you will most surely find tyranny rearing its head, as in some dark damp and noisome cellar foul fungus growth flourishes. Where there are no slaves, in that country neither are there any tyrants. Where men are not taught to be poor in spirit, there is little likelihood that teachers, themselves proud and haughty in spirit, will dare to trample their scholars to the earth on which they humbly kneel. Poverty of spirit is no virtue, but, indeed, a vice, a disease, a leprosy which taints and disfigures the whole humanity.

Dignity, liberty, and independence, in contradistinction to

this poverty of spirit, are well urged by the writer quoted above.

"Independence," he says, "or the ability for self-maintenance, is indeed the foundation of all other advantages; and from it comes the delightful sense of dignity and liberty, which is essential to happiness. The great aim in social economy should be, *that every adult should be independent*; that every one should be able to obtain for himself the necessaries of life, and that no one in this essential respect should be more in the power of his neighbour than the latter is of him. Of course there must exist a mutual dependence, which indeed is the great bond and condition of society; but this should be reciprocal, and as equal as possible, else there can be no satisfactory liberty. Upon individual independence alone, possessed by every adult member of the community, can social freedom or secure political institutions be based; for a state of dependence on others is so opposed to the welfare of man, that discontent and disorder are sure to result where it exists. No man, even if he had the wish, could provide for another as well as the latter could for himself; and whenever one man has undue power over another, we know from too sad experience, it is certain to be abused. Hence it is that all institutions and systems, which have for their objects to make one part of mankind dependent on another, are radically erroneous; and that the patriarchal forms of government, and the feudal ideas of noble beneficence surrounded by grateful dependents, are rapidly giving way to the far truer and more ennobling principle of universal independence in the essentials of life, which is, it may be said, the great leading idea of the civilised nations of modern times. Even if charity and brotherly love could be secured on the side of the more fortunate among us towards the more destitute, charity is no proper support for man, and grateful dependence no fit sphere for him. It is well that each of us should give and receive *mutually* for each other, and where there is this feeling of equality, there will be true gratitude and love; but where the favours are all on one side, the natural feelings of independence revolt from them, and gratitude or content, even under the best treatment, is not to be expected. But a dependent need never look for good treatment; for the only true foundation of this between man and man, is a mutual reverence, arising from equal independence. The noble desire for independence is one of the finest points in the English character, the main cause of the country's unrivalled progress in the industrial arts; and it has enabled her to struggle onward under the most overwhelming social difficulties.

"But notwithstanding all our struggles for these grand essentials of life—liberty and independence—society is still very, very far from having attained such an aim. In fact, if we look around us on the various individuals of whom our society is composed, we will find very few who can be said to enjoy an adequately free or independent life.

"In the first place, there is a mass of *paupers*, to the humiliation of our race, who are unable to find employment, and are utterly dependent for their bare life on the charity of others. Helpless and dejected, covered with shame and contumely, their lot is a constant wretchedness to themselves, and a misery and reproach to the rest of us, who cannot find the means to prevent such awful calamities.

"If we now regard the condition of the *working classes*, we shall find that there are few, if any, among them, who can be said to enjoy much

freedom or independence. In the hot-press of competition, at present existing among us, all their energies are enslaved to the gain of their daily bread, and they are dependent on the least smile or frown of fortune. The fear of destitution always hangs over them, and even their greatest efforts are often insufficient to prevent them from sinking into the gulph of pauperism or crime. Those cannot be said to be free men who are forced to toil from morning to night at a work, from which their jaded limbs revolt; and who, after all, are perhaps half-starved. It matters little whether it be fortune or a tyrant that sets the task; the state of slavery is nearly the same. They can have little sense of man's dignity, who are subject to so many hardships, and put to so many sordid shifts; and who are besides exposed to the caprices of a master, on whose favour they are dependent. The working classes are as a body dependent on the richer classes, for the difficulty of procuring a livelihood is so great, that to offend an employer is ruinous. Hence the marked subservience of the poorer among us to the richer; a thing which should by no means exist, as there should be an equal mutual reverence among all men. All have an equal natural dignity and title to reverence, whatever be their occupations, whether a prime minister or a costermonger; and it is most pernicious that this reverence should be given to certain classes alone, for it is man himself, and not his accidental external condition, that claims our reverence. But as long as the poorer classes, from an overcrowded state of the population, are dependent for their livelihood on the favour of the richer, there never can be either adequate mutual respect, or a due feeling of independence and freedom in every bosom; and discontent and unhappiness must result."

The Bible blasphemes humanity by asserting that "the poor shall never cease out of the land," and, in perpetuation of this horrid declaration, Christian teachers repeat, "Blessed be ye poor;" "Blessed be ye that hunger." What mockery to preach to the poor that their poverty is a blessing, when indeed it is a hydra-headed curse, the fruitful source of a stream of frightful ills. "Poverty," says the author of the *Elements of Social Science*, "is the fountain head of evils innumerable—crime, disease, prostitution, ignorance, drunkenness, and all imaginable miseries spring from it in endless exuberance: and while poverty continues, every one must feel that all efforts at social improvement will be of little avail." Yet Jesus encouraged poverty, and held out inducements to men to be not only content if poor, but actually to desire poverty. He preached that it would be as difficult for a rich man to obtain admittance into heaven as for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. Those anti-Christian bishops who enjoy large incomes, probably consider that "a bird in hand is worth two in a bush," that the treasure certain here is more acceptable than the treasure so far off in the uncertain, and perhaps never to

be enjoyed, hereafter. Like the unjust steward, they make to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. Poverty is the lot of the people, not the heritage of the Church.

Instead of teaching you to be content with poverty, I would, in the language of Shelley, say—

“ Let a great assembly be
Of the fearless and the free,
On some spot of English ground
Where the plains stretch wide around.”

In his words I would call you

“ From the corners uttermost
Of the bounds of English coast--
From every hut, village, and town,
Where those who live, and suffer, moan
For others' misery and their own ;
From the workhouse and the prison,
Where, pale as corpses newly risen,
Women, children, young and old,
Groan for pain and weep for cold ;
From the haunts of daily life,
Where is waged the daily strife
With common wants and common cares,
Which sow the human heart with tares.”

Having summoned the people out, I would earnestly implore them to inquire whether possibly the cure of their evil condition did not rest with themselves, whereas before, they had been constrained to believe that all was in the hands of God.

Shelley, a warm and generous-hearted pleader against wrong, like some of our present popular advocates thought political economy hostile to the people. Shelley, therefore, did not regard Malthus as a true friend of humanity, but rather as one whose writings would serve the purpose of those who desired to oppress the poorer classes.

Between Shelley and Malthus, as between Jesus and Shelley, and as between Jesus and Malthus, the reader must arbitrate, hearing each before condemning either. I introduce Shelley because of the strong contrast afforded by his ennobling and manly poems to the Gospel doctrine of submission to wrong :—

“ What is freedom? Ye can tell
That which Slavery is too well ;
For its very name has grown
To an echo of your own.

"Tis to work and have such pay
 As just keeps life from day to day
 In your limbs, as in a cell,
 For the tyrants use to dwell ;

So that ye for them are made
 Loom and plough, and sword and spade,
 With or without your own will bent
 To their defence and nourishment."

Having thus briefly pointed to the contrast between the doctrines of Jesus and Shelley on the subject of poverty, I turn to Malthus.

More than seventy-five years ago, Thomas Robert Malthus, a clergyman of the Church of England, wrote an Essay on the Principle of Population. In this Essay he sought to "*investigate the causes that have hitherto impeded the progress of human kind towards happiness.*" How tremendous is the effect of the admission contained in this sentence, as coming from the pen of a member of the Established Church! It is an admission that causes do exist which have impeded the progress of human kind towards happiness. This is, in fact, an atheistic position. "The assertion of the existence of such causes is a denial either of infinite goodness or of infinite wisdom, or of infinite power. Infinite goodness would desire for human kind the most perfect happiness, infinite wisdom would know how to obtain that happiness, and infinite power would be able to carry out the dictates of wisdom and goodness. If causes exist which impede mankind in their progress towards happiness, they must exist either because God does not desire to remove them ; in which case he is not infinitely good, that is, he is not God—or, because God does not know how to remove them ; in which case he is not all-wise, that is, he is not God—or, because God is not able to remove them, in which case he is not omnipotent ; that is, he is not God. Malthus not only sought to discover the impediments to human happiness, but also to examine the probability of the total or partial removal of those impediments in the future. While Jesus preached, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," Malthus, in substance, replied, "No ; endeavour first to establish on purer foundations the republic of man." The principal object of Mr. Malthus was to examine the results of the constant tendency in all animated life to increase more rapidly than its means of nourishment. Wherever there is liberty, the power of plants and animals to increase their

species is exerted ; this increase is ultimately checked by want of room and nourishment. In man the operation of these checks involves results of the most terrible and saddening description. Food being necessary to the sustenance of life, the difficulty of acquiring food forms a strong check on population. Mr. Malthus taught that the population question was one which ought to be rightly understood by the masses, and involved the investigation of the most prominent, if not the entire, cause of poverty, the most fruitful cause of misery, to the human race.

Mr. Malthus advanced three propositions :—

1. That population is necessarily limited by the means of subsistence.

2. That population invariably increases when the means of subsistence increase.

3. The checks which suppress the superior power of population, and keep its effects on a level with the means of subsistence, are all resolvable into moral restraint, vice, and misery.

On these points the reader is referred to John Stuart Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*, Book 2, chapters 11, 12, and 13 ; *Political Economy for Beginners*, by Millicent Garrett Fawcett, page 109 ; Malthus on *The Principles of Population ; Manual of Political Economy*, by Professor Fawcett. As to details and for definitions of moral restraint and vice, I refer my readers to the anonymous author of the *Elements of Social Science*. His work I especially recommend for careful study, although there are in it many matters of physiology on which I am incompetent to express an opinion, and some points of ethics on which I dissent ; from its price the book is within the reach of most working men, and it is from the pen of a man who is thoroughly versed in the subject he deals with. I write with the view of inducing Freethinkers to read the works of great thinkers on this grave subject.

And this essay will effect its object if it induces a few working men to examine views hitherto disregarded by them. Political economy has been regarded by many of the people as being an abstruse matter, in which they had no interest, when, in truth, it is the science of the laws which determine the happiness or misery of their lives. The wide-spread development of the Co-operative Movement amongst English Secularists induces me to hope that

they will consider the whole of the question of which co-operation is but a section, and thus save themselves from converting partial success into failure.

An acquaintance with political economy is as necessary to the working man as is a knowledge of navigation to the master of a ship. It is the science of social life, the social science: "Political economy," writes James Mill, "is to the state what domestic economy is to the family." It has been objected that political economy, dealing as it does with the laws which regulate production, distribution, exchange, and consumption, has more to do with the wealth of the nation than the happiness of the individual. That is, political economy is regarded as a sort of cold-blooded, iron-handed, stony-hearted monster, which crushes the man to make the state. This is a sad mistake. The greatest political economists teach, in effect, the doctrine that the state exists for the benefit of the citizen, and not that the citizen exists for the benefit of the state. In dealing with the laws of wealth they deal as much with happiness as in dealing with the laws of health. The sick man cannot be so happy as the man who is in the enjoyment of good health. The poor wretch, destitute, ragged, and ill fed, cannot be so happy as the man who is well housed, well fed, and well clad. I do not mean that there are no exceptions to this, but the exceptions, carefully examined, will add force to my general argument. "The object of political economy," says Mr. McCulloch, "is to point out the means by which the industry of man may be rendered most productive of those necessities, comforts, and enjoyments which constitute wealth; to ascertain the circumstances most favourable for its accumulation, the proportion in which it is divided among the different classes of the community, and the mode in which it may be most advantageously consumed."

It seems a startling paradox, that while an immense proportion of the wealth produced is resultant from the labour of the masses, the wealth producers should be themselves so poor. The author of *Elements of Social Science* who has evidently not only mourned the evil, but has powerfully exerted himself to prevent its increase, writes:—

"The life of our working classes is worse than that of most of the beasts of burden. They toil unremittingly for ten or twelve hours a-day at a laborious, monotonous, and in many cases a deadly occupation; without hope of advancement, or personal interest in the success of the work they are engaged in. At night their jaded frames are too tired to

permit their enjoyment of the few leisure hours ; and the morn wakens them to the same dreary day of ceaseless toil. Even the seventh day, their only holiday, brings them in this country little gaiety, little recreation ; a solemn sermon, and two hours of sedentary constraint is all that is provided for them. The clergy and others, who are indignant that a poor working man does not go to church on his only holiday should themselves try his life for six months, and see then what appetite they will have for church ; when their limbs are wasting with incessant toil, their nerves beginning to give way, and their hearts embittered by a life of constant drudgery and care.

“ Thus have the poor to toil on, as long as their strength permits. At last some organ gives way, the stomach, the eyes, or the brain ; and the unfortunate sufferer is thrown out of work, and sent to the hospital, while his wife and family are reduced to the brink of starvation. Often the man, rendered desperate by his hopeless condition, plunges into drink and gives himself over to ruin. At other times, the working classes, in a frenzy of rage at their infernal circumstances, determine that they will have higher wages or perish. Hence result the disastrous strikes, and the terrible social revolutions that have in recent times so often convulsed society. But they are in vain ; they are but the blind effort of men to do something or die, the fruitless heavings of a man in a nightmare. The mountain of misery invariably falls back again upon their breasts with only increased pressure ; and forces them, worn out by impotent struggles, to bear it quietly for another little season.

“ ‘ By what means then,’ says Mr. Mill, in an eloquent passage, which I cannot refrain from quoting, as it shows how utterly delusive are all the common views on the subject of poverty (every remedy, in fact, except that of restraining the reproductive powers) in the eyes of the profoundest social philosopher, the truest friend of the working classes of our day,—‘ by what means is poverty to be contended against ? How is the evil of low wages to be remedied ? If the expedients usually recommended for the purpose are not adopted for it, can no others be thought of ? Is the problem incapable of solution ? Can political economy do nothing but only object to everything, and demonstrate that nothing can be done ?

“ ‘ If this were so, political economy might have a needful, but would have a melancholy and a thankless task. If the bulk of the human race are always to remain as at present, slaves to toil in which they *have* no interest, and therefore *feel* no interest—drudging from early morning till late at night for bare necessities, and with all the intellectual and moral deficiencies which that implies—without resources either in mind or feelings—untaught, for they cannot be better taught than fed ; selfish, for all their thoughts are required for themselves ; without interests or sentiments as citizens or members of society, and with a sense of injustice rankling in their breasts, equally for what they have not, and for what others have ; I know not what there is which should make a person with any capacity for reason concern himself about the destinies of the human race. There would be no wisdom for any one but in extracting from life, with epicurean indifference, as much personal satisfaction for himself and others with whom he sympathises, as it can yield without injury to any one, and letting the unmeaning bustle of so-called civilised existence roll by unheeded. *But there is no ground for such a view of human affairs.*’

“ Mr. Mill then states that *the only possible mode* of raising wages and benefiting the poor is by inducing them to exercise a greater control over their reproductive powers. He says that this has never yet been seriously tried ; but, on the contrary, that almost all public men, whether statesmen, moralists, or clergymen, have rather encouraged marriage and multiplication (provided it were sanctioned by the marriage bond), than otherwise ; many having still a religious prejudice against the true doctrines, and believing that it is opposed to the goodness of the Deity, or the usual bounty of nature, that the indulgence in a natural passion should cause such miseries. The confusion of ideas upon this subject is, he says, in great measure owing to spurious delicacy, which prohibits the open discussion of these matters ; but ‘ the diseases of society can, no more than corporeal maladies, be prevented or cured without being spoken about in plain language.’ (*Political Economy*, Book II., cap. 13, Section I.)

“ The great object of statesmanship should be to raise the habitual standard of comfort among the working classes, and to bring them into such a position as shows them most clearly, that their welfare depends upon themselves, upon their control over their reproductive powers. For this purpose he advises that there should be, first, an extended scheme of national emigration, so as to produce a striking and sudden improvement in the condition of the labourers left at home, and raise their standard of comfort ; also that the population truths should be disseminated as widely as possible, so that a powerful public feeling should be awakened among the working classes, against undue procreation on the part of any individual among them—a feeling which could not fail greatly to influence individual conduct ; and also that we should use every endeavour to get rid of the present system of labour, namely, that of employers and employed, and adopt to a great extent that of independent *or associated industry*. His reason for this is, that a hired labourer, who has no personal interest in the work he is engaged in, is generally reckless and without foresight, living from hand to mouth, and exerting little control over his powers of procreation ; whereas the labourer who has a personal stake in his work, and the feeling of independence and self-reliance which the possession of property gives, as, for instance, the peasant proprietor, or member of a co-partnership, has far stronger motives for self-restraint, and can see much more clearly the evil effects of having a large family.”

Surely it is time that churches and chapels should be occupied by preachers whose sermons should convey to the people “ how to live ” instead of “ how to die.” Many of the masses are ever just struggling against death—they never live at all. The doctrine is—“ Take no thought what ye shall eat or drink, or wherewithal shall ye be clothed ; your heavenly Father will look after these things for you.” Have you nothing to eat?—then, “ Blessed be ye that hunger.” Are you ragged, wretched, and weeping?—then, “ Blessed be ye poor, and blessed are ye that mourn.”

Those who have advocated Malthusian views have been

denounced sometimes as enthusiasts, at other times as Infidels, and often as enemies of the people. Are political economists really cold, callous men, who are against the people? Nay, read some of their descriptions of the people's wrongs, written in glowing and eloquent language, full of earnest sympathy. Are they enthusiasts? Are they Infidels? Are they really not like pious Ebenezer Maw-worm, who, enjoying comfort himself, snuffles out thanks to God for chastising his wayward people? So much the better.

Compared with the well-paid preacher who, protected from personal poverty, teaches contentment to the poor, how preferable is the rôle of the enthusiast or the Infidel, whose interest and purpose is to alleviate the suffering and the misery, and to remedy the crime and poverty, which disfigure our humanity.

Malthus, personally, was a man who, by his kindness and goodness, won the admiration of all who knew him. Those who have abused and maligned him the most are those who have known him the least, and have probably never read his works at all.

A writer in the *Edinburgh Review* for Jan., 1837, says:—

“Mr. Malthus possessed, in their utmost perfection, the two great philosophical qualities of single-mindedness and patience. * * * While intemperate opponents rashly misrepresented him, and extravagant admirers as rashly misunderstood or caricatured him; while he was abused by the vulgar, who knew not what they did, and neglected by the powerful, who had no such excuse, he himself was calm and silent. * * * We remember Sir James Mackintosh saying, that he had known ‘Adam Smith slightly, Ricardo well, Malthus intimately.’ He added, ‘Is it not something to say for a science that three of its greatest masters were about three of the best men I ever knew?’”

For those who urge that Malthus was the mouthpiece of the misgoverning classes, and who continue to press this point without first carefully perusing his works or considering the facts on which his Essay is founded, I will beg them to remember that he toiled on, regardless of calumny and detraction, moved by desire for the alleviation of human misery, upheld by the grandeur of his subject, and sustained by the consciousness of permanent utility in his labours. Those who now advocate the views of Malthus and James Mill do not demand faith, but hearing. The writers who seek to instruct the masses in political economy can command no Government influence for the enforcement of their

views ; nor will the occupiers of the pulpits preach damnation against the non-recipients of the doctrines taught by such as McCulloch or John Stuart Mill. If the facts are not strong enough—if the reasonings are not put forward so powerfully as they should be—then there is not even one ounce of brimstone in reserve wherewith to frighten those who cannot be convinced. Political economy has truth and utility for its sole weapons. The battle it fights is a war for the people ; it is the St. George warring against the dragon Poverty—this dragon, a foul monster, which has, alas ! too long devoured, with greedy appetite, our sons and daughters. In the contest we have not only to encounter the direct hostility of those class interests which are opposed to the elevation of the masses—not alone to encounter the misrepresentations of the bulk of the clergy who stand in the way of political education—teaching, in effect, the old doctrine of Bishop Horsley, “that all the people had to do with the laws was to obey them”—not simply this, but we find also amongst the people whom we would serve, men honest enough but mistaken, by whom our service is regarded as injury. We find intelligent men by whom the advocacy of Malthusian views is regarded as treachery to the popular cause. To all these we say, “Hear us ; answer, if you can, and we will listen, but do not reject our views unheard.”

I appeal to you in the names of your brothers and sisters, whose wage is being reduced as in Northumberland and Durham, and who are crowded together and starving, as in London, where children might say, in the words of Elliott—

“Mother has sold her bed,
Better to die than wed !
Where shall she lay her head ?
Home we have none.”

I appeal to you in the name of many an agricultural labourer, whose wretched pittance serves to enable him to rear up a new generation of plough-companioning human machines, who never grow to be men and women. I appeal to you on behalf of the ragged, wretched, pale, and pining pauper children, half hidden from humanity in their filth and misery, but on whom the sun doth sometimes shine, in our narrow lanes and most ill-conditioned suburbs.

And my appeal is that, instead of trusting unthinkingly

to God and Jesus to redress your woes, you will inquire whether these are not resultant, as certainly as any given effect from cause, and whether by knowing the cause you may not do something to prevent the recurrence of the effect, and I quote, as a fitting ending, these pointed rhymes of Ebenezer Elliot—

“ ‘Why, faded wretch, that stoop’st like age,
Art thou so grey and lean?’
‘My husband hates and starves us all.
He married at sixteen.’

‘Why dost thou toil, poor dwindled lad
Twelve hours for pennies three?’
‘My father married when a boy,
My mother young as he;
And Times are hard, for work is scarce;
We’re twelve, Sir—nine and three.’”

