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THE
WORKMAN AND THE SUFFRAGE.

LETTERS

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE LORD JOHN RUSSELL, M.P.,

AND THE "DAILY NEWS."

BY GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE.

AUTHOR OF "SELF-HELP BY THE PEOPLE."

"Certainly a good working measure that stopped many mouths, and sent the whole topic right to the end of the century, would be worth a little trouble."—*Times*, Nov., 1858.

"The real problem, of which no real solution has perhaps yet been published, is—By what enactment can skilled artizans be admitted to vote without swamping them and us by an unintelligent mass whether of peasants or of town population?"—*Westminster Review*, Jan. 1, 1859. Art. 1, "Reform in Parliament."



PEOPLE'S EDITION.—PRICE TWOPENCE.

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The Workman and the Suffrage.

THE CHEAP VOTE.

TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD JOHN RUSSELL, M.P.

LETTER I.

147, Fleet Street, E.C., Dec. 1, 1858.

MY LORD,

When a constituent has any political wishes, the constitutional course seems to be that he should communicate them to his representative in Parliament, who, if he shall deem them relevant to the public situation, may find some opportunity of giving them effect. On this ground I, as a constituent of your Lordship, now respectfully solicit your attention. The first vote recorded in the Parish of St. Bride at the last election for the City of London, was given by me, and given to your Lordship. It was also the first vote I ever was able to give to a Member of Parliament. It is with politicians so astute as Count Montalembert, a recognised feature of English political contests, that with us a party is defeated but never beaten. We reserve to conviction other chances of asserting itself. Before Montalembert told this to Europe, your Lordship had said that the 'consciences of minorities ought to be respected.' I know of no other Statesman who ever said this before your Lordship. For this sentiment I gave you my vote, and co-operated with those who stood by you in the late organised attempt to eject you from the representation of the City of London.

Permit me to inscribe to your Lordship's name the letter I here subjoin from the *Daily News*. The worst thing that can be said against the species of franchise I describe is, that it constitutes a cheap vote. It can be attained by thought without money; and the idea of a cheap vote is received now with the same kind of distrust as the cheap Newspaper was a few years ago. Mr. Milner Gibson had to meet precisely the same kind of objection when seeking the repeal of the Newspaper Stamp. In a public letter I addressed to him in the *Leader*, in 1853, there occurred the words I shall place by the side of words written by Lord Stanley in the *Press* of 1855, two years later:—

G. J. HOLYOAKE TO THE HON.

T. M. GIBSON, M.P., 1853.

"And here lies close to our hands a clear answer to all who fear that an untaxed press would, in this country, descend to the level of the 'rowdy' portion of the American press. Never! unless English nature and English culture should also be changed by the same Act of Parliament which unstamps the press. Can the skilful mechanic endure bad machinery? Will the cultivated architect endure an incongruous building? or a painter endure a daub? or an orator spouting? or a practical politician loud-mouthed rant? or the scholar illiterateness? or the artist bad taste? And as of art and manners, so of newspapers. The cultivated, thoughtful operative will not tolerate a paper inflated, antagonistic, and superficial. 'Rowdy' journals will never sell in Great Britain until we possess a 'rowdy' population and Yankee backwoods. In the United States the same law holds good. The first-class journals of that country are supported by the cream of the inhabitants, and the rising tone of the American press generally indicates what it will be on the social consolidation of the great Transatlantic Republic." — *Leader*, April, 1853.

Lord Stanley is the only Statesman whom I have noticed as coinciding in any idea before made public, by one not a member of his own party, nor a compeer in Parliament. There is hope, therefore, in this country that any suggestion that may have the fortune to prove relevant and practical will receive as much attention as it shall deserve; and I know no Statesman from whose independent character this hope may be better entertained than from your Lordship.

I have the honour to be your Lordship's faithful Constituent,
G. J. HOLYOAKE.

LORD STANLEY TO THE "PRESS,"
1855.

"To the vague and angry declamation of those who cry, 'You want to pull down English journalism and substitute an American press in its place,' I scarcely hold it worth while to reply. The plain answer is—like people like press. The American press (which by the way does not by any means universally deserve the bad character given to it in this country) reflects, faithfully enough, the prevailing sentiment of American citizens. It is democratic—so are they. It is often vulgar, violent, abusive, addicted to braggadocio, and credulous of marvels—these are exactly the faults, a little exaggerated in copying, of a young and growing nation, in which material prosperity has advanced faster than the arts and refinements of life. If in the English mind there be a corresponding state of feeling, by all means let it be exposed rather than concealed. An evil fully brought to light is half remedied. But, in truth, the English character differs widely from the American; and a popular press, though ultimately, it may help in forming, must follow, and be suited to, the bias of the popular mind." — *Press*, February, 1855.

THE WORKMAN AND THE SUFFRAGE.

FROM THE "DAILY NEWS" OF NOV. 23, 1858.

LETTER II.

147, Fleet Street, E.C., November 20, 1858.

SIR,—It is, I readily own, one of the privileges conferred in these days by the great press of this country upon the working class, that their claims are heard in the columns, where those who influence public affairs are likely to read the statements preferred. It is, Sir, under this impression that I, a member of the old Birmingham Political Union of 1831-2, and now an honorary member of the Northern Reform Union, solicit the favour of saying a few words upon the qualification of the franchise in the pending Reform Bill. If members of the working class do not speak out now, the time will soon pass when their voices can be regarded.

No programme of the contingent bill yet described is likely to satisfy those whom I presume statesmen of all parties desire to satisfy—the people. In each species of suffrage proposed by any party likely to carry anything, a large portion of the working class who will feel the disappointment the most, and resent it with bitterness, will be excluded. Universal suffrage is a thing of the future. No statesman will propose it now, and no Cabinet could carry it in England. Not that any government need fear it; so many of the people are uninformed, prejudiced, and indifferent upon politics, that ignorance, animus, and bigotry may be relied upon to vote for "things as they are." And were votes given to all, means would exist, and means would be used, for limiting any "dangerous" operation against established influences. For myself, I doubt the wisdom of carrying universal suffrage by popular forces—if it could be so carried—so long as the influential classes deem it "dangerous," because it would generate on their part, or through them, new elements of corruption and intrigue in the state in their endeavours to circumscribe the operation of the dreaded franchise; for men outraged or alarmed naturally seek to protect themselves by any means. In our country, at this time when no class seriously intends the injury of another, I would no more lend myself to set up a tyranny of the working classes over gentlemen and scholars, than I would sit quietly under a tyranny of the rich over the poor, which under present arrangements certainly occurs. Universal suffrage, if adopted frankly by the "governing classes," would work well in this country, where reverence for law, for rank, and wealth, is the religion of the streets and lanes; but I agree with Mr. Bright, that while a politician may reason from his own convictions

and plead for their prevalence, a statesman can only govern well with the highest consent of all classes. I for one should be sorry to see the day in England when a member of parliament shall be the mere mouthpiece of a section, or the fanatic of a political school, instead of being the expositor of the true interests of the whole people.

But universal suffrage is not the question yet. Reformers themselves are not in earnest about enfranchising everybody. Walk on any promenade—stand in any thoroughfare, and say who need give his days and nights to an agitation for endowing with the suffrage all he will see there? Who cares to give votes to “fast men,” who think more of the cut of their collar than the welfare of their country, and who have a deeper respect for their tailor than for any statesman—to selfish men, who care only for themselves—to ignorant men, incapable of judging anybody—to indifferent men, who care for nobody—to sensualists, sots, and all the descending grades of “rabble,” who are, unfortunately, included in the general public, and whose political right to the suffrage every advocate of universal enfranchisement must hamper himself with maintaining? Not more than one man in a hundred in this country, gives time, money, serious thought, or takes an earnest part in public affairs. Why should any one die of exhaustion in endeavouring to enfranchise so many as comprise a mere apathetic mob, who put no value on a vote? At the same time, many would work hard and work long that even a limited number of men, intelligent and earnest, who desire to take part in securing the well-being of their country, should be enabled to do so. Now, any mere mechanical suffrage founded on rating, or rent, or occupation, will, as the existing suffrage does, include many utterly worthless persons, and exclude numerous deserving, intelligent, but poor men, who might by a simple expedient be included. What is wanted is an expansive suffrage which shall be open to the worthy and shut out the unfit. The *Spectator* (a sound political thermometer of what it is safe to attempt) has recently said—and I think you have expressed some analogous opinion—that “there is no reason why a large and substantial extension of the franchise should not be accompanied by the construction of other forms of the franchise, introducing into parliament the representation of other influences.” To this question I address myself.

In the contemplated Reform Bill what is wanted is some security that every elector shall have knowledge enough not to behave stupidly in matters of industry and commerce, nor vote blindly or recklessly for parliamentary candidates likely to disgrace the state or disorganise society.

Then let our contingent Reform Bill be based on a rating suffrage, or moderate rental, but provide for the admission of all to the franchise, not otherwise to be included, who may possess or acquire a certain intelligence qualification. This might consist of readings in political economy and English constitutional history. John

Stuart Mill's "Principles of Political Economy," or some popular digest of it, such as the Dean of Hereford has written or might write,* might be one book decided upon to be read by the candidate for the franchise. Hallam's "Constitutional History of England," and Warren's† "Blackstone," or popular abstracts thereof (as authorised by "appointment"), are possible works which might be chosen. Let the selected books be read at home, in classes, at Mechanics' Institutions, in private or public schools, and let all readers pass a public examination to be held twice a year, or oftener, in each town or village, by certain Franchise Examiners, appointed by local authorities, and the certificate that such readers had passed such examination—which should not be pedantic, difficult, or capricious, nor turn upon any agreement of opinion with the examiners nor the authors, but merely upon intelligent comprehension of the purport of the appointed books—should be a certificate of the franchise, and its production at the polling-booth entitle the holder, he being of the electoral age, and neither criminal nor pauper, to vote in the election of members of parliament. John Stuart Mill, the Rev. Dean Trench, Professor Key, Archbishop Whately, Professor Newman, the Rev. Charles Kingsley, Lord Stanley, M.P., General Thompson, M.P., and Professor Maurice, or any similar quality of scholars whom learning does not override, and who retain, with a knowledge of what is sound, a healthy instinct for what is possible and practical to our mechanics, could select two or three suitable books, and draw up a short series of questions, which would be unanimously accepted as suitable, sensible, and unobjectionable, as permanent test questions.

My reason for thinking some such arrangement as this would be acceptable to the people generally, is, that it would be satisfactory even to extreme sections on whose behalf I write, who go farther than any other party in politics. To them the "six points of the charter" seem tame and restricted. They hold principles of democracy which imply that womanhood, as well as manhood, is included in humanity. They would not stop at the establishment of the aristocracy of men (which is all that the charter proposes) as the final effort of political justice. They admit the reasonableness of women being ultimately admitted to some direct voice in the affairs of the state, to the extent to which it exacts from them taxes and imposes upon them responsibility. They do not see why parliament should not include colonial representatives. New political blood from the confines of the empire might be found to invigorate the centre. But they are not so mad

* Vide "Lessons on the Phenomena of Industrial Life." By the Rev. Richard Dawes, Dean of Hereford.

† Mr. F. R. Jones, solicitor, County Court, Huddersfield, protests against Mr. Warren's edition, as poor, trifling, irrelevant, and characterised by a poverty of expression dishonourable to Blackstone.—*Letter to the Writer.*

as they seem : while they would advocate the principle they deem intrinsically right, they would go with the strongest party likely to carry the most practical measure in that direction—holding that conviction is not honesty, but obstinacy, when it becomes an obstruction, and that it is fanaticism when it refuses instalments of its own truth.

The advantages of the kind of self-acquired suffrage I suggest would be, among others, these :

1. All demagogues (using the term in Mr Grote's sense), advocates, and agitators, would accept it, because they are all in favour of popular knowledge.

2. All persons and partisans likely to give the government trouble, if excluded, would be satisfied with the opportunity of an intelligence franchise, cease agitating in a discontented spirit, and commence to study and qualify themselves.

3. All teachers, instructors, lecturers, and clergy of all denominations, favourable to popular knowledge, would probably be in favour of this species of suffrage, and give it the moral force of their recommendation—it being a tribute in aid of and in appreciation of their secular endeavours.

4. It would give political importance without imparting a political character to mechanics' institutions, working men's colleges, and improvement classes. It would add a popular interest to these institutions which they have always wanted and never yet possessed.

5. It would give parents a political motive for having their children educated. It would infuse some purpose into the present injurious desultoriness of reading, by connecting it with citizenship.

6. It would set thousands of young men reading whose minds are now unoccupied, and attract others from low associations and familiarise them with public duties.

7. This self-acquired suffrage would become a matter of pride, and many otherwise enfranchised would qualify themselves in this way as a matter of credit.

8. For the first time in England this franchise would, to use a popular phrase, set "brains above bricks." Political virtue would no longer be confined to the purse, but depend upon the understanding.

9. It would diminish that worship of materialism and property which is attaining a deplorable prevalence in England, so destructive of the finer qualities of man. How can the preacher censure or reproach the gross materialism of the times, so long as Christian statesmen continue to sum up all political virtue in paying a substantial rental to your landlord, and in having a balance at your banker's ?

10. No intelligent, earnest, honest men would any longer feel themselves outcasts from the State because they were poor and unfortunate. The door would be open through which modest capacity and moderate intellectual industry could enter into citizenship. In this competitive scramble, dignified with the name of "our commer-

cial system," the prize is not always to the honest or hardworking. Property is not always possible to the artisan, but intelligence is. Then, the just thing is to recognise understanding and moral worth, and no longer to add to the penalties of inevitable misfortune that of political disqualification.

11. This suffrage would create a new body of voters, whom the State could trust to substantially understand its interests, who would possess what it cannot now be said that all electors possess—viz., "intelligence, love of order, the instinct of public management." *

12. It would benefit every man who attained this description of franchise. The intelligence he would thus acquire would be a personal advantage to him, even if the exercise of the vote were not.

13. A Reform Bill settled with this proviso would be final, and not lead, as it otherwise must, to an interregnum of discontent and a renewed agitation a few years hence. The voters would augment as natural intelligence extended—they would be admitted as fast as they were qualified. Such a bill would regulate itself, and keep pace with all possible progress.

14. It would exclude the incapable, the idle, the apathetic—also the ignorant, whom statesmen most affect to dread, and most of the vicious, whom statesmen ought most to dread.

15. It would shut out the "mob" without offence. It would be a select franchise without insulting exclusiveness. It would not brand poverty—it would brand ignorance only, and open the door for its instruction. The apathetic would not have the energy to complain of exclusion, and the idle would not be listened to if they did. Prejudice would hardly object to this franchise. Property could not be endangered by it, and hereditary timidity need not be afraid of it.

16. If any future agitation arise touching the franchise, it will chiefly relate to facilities for instructing the people. Thus, Sir, popular intelligence would be linked inseparably with popular freedom—a connection worthy of leaders of the people, worthy of England, and one that has never yet been consummated in any country.

If this franchise be devised liberally, without pedantry and in a practical spirit, might it not be tenable? It is not likely to be ridiculed in these days when noble Lords attend Liverpool Conferences for the promotion of popular knowledge, and when Whig and Tory peers lecture weekly to Mechanics' Institutions.

Compare with this the probable suggestions that have been made. I will enumerate three.

(a) A character franchise, which a gentleman† of great soundness

* Vide "SPECTATOR," No. 1,538, Dec. 19, 1857.

† Mr. Francis, of the "ATHENÆUM."

of judgment has mentioned, would be objected to by the people, as making the working classes dependent for it upon their employers and "betters," from whom it is intended they should obtain the certificate which should enable them to vote.

(b.) A savings' bank franchise would often include the selfish, and exclude the son who expended all he could spare in supporting an aged father or mother, or helpless brother or sister—who would be ten times more worthy of the franchise than hundreds who would get it.

(c.) A benefit society and club franchise is no guarantee of intelligence or of interest in public affairs. Private prudence is not always, nor generally, identical with political knowledge and public virtue.

These proposals, however, are not devoid of merit: whether the one I make is on the whole preferable must be left to judgments more impartial than my own.

Agreeing as to the moral right of the claim for the Suffrage advanced by the Northern Reform Union and the Political Reform League of London, permit me, in conclusion, to notice the apparently unanticipated operation of the extent of franchise they demand.

The *Manchester Guardian* (No. 3,812) expresses an objection to a wide suffrage which will be renewed in higher quarters. "Our Borough Members," it urges, "would be made, by the immense extension of the franchise, the mere creatures of the lowest class of the electors, by whom all other classes would be swamped. They would cease to represent intelligence, education, and all that really constitutes public opinion, when they were not the nominees of the rabble, where they were not the choice of a self-elected caucus." This might happen sometimes, and when it did it would be as unjust and undesirable, but not more so, than when, under existing arrangements, a Member of Parliament merely represents certain select interests, and not the people.

In England, assuredly, though the very "rabble" had votes, learning and wealth would know how to take care of themselves. Florian, the fabulist, tells us that when the iron pot swam down the river, all porcelain vessels launched on the same element had to look out. Riches and intellect are the iron pots sent by the governing classes down the river of politics, and the fragile clay jars floated there by the people will do well if they escape unsmashed; certainly they stand a poor chance of success in any competition with rivals of such density and superior momentum.

Do not think that members of the working class will very soon find their way into the House of Commons. And if they did, are they more to be feared than the Irish Members were at the period of Catholic emancipation, and may they not hope to acquit themselves as well? And if a few working men do get there, will they even endanger the State or lower the character of the House? I think not. What they can do, and all they can do, is perfectly well known

now. Until there is payment provided for Members of Parliament, Brown and Smith would soon find their way into the *Gazette*, or be starved to death through want of means to support their position. Besides, they would soon be discharged from their situations in the factory through their losing time in attending "the House." Or if they had indulgent employers and were able to keep their "places," we should see them running down from the forge or the foundry with faces like Ethiopian serenaders, to be present at a "division." The electric wires that now summon the Marquis of Claret from the Carlton, or Sir Henry Madeira from the Reform Club, must telegraph to Buggins in a coal mine, and communicate with Sykes at a ginger beer factory. How often would Stiggins in a fustian jacket catch the eye of the Speaker? Would Bob Martin be presentable at court in a paper cap? Would Snooks, M.P., be eligible to waltz at St. James's in his shirt sleeves? And how would the working class M.P. transact the business of his borough? Would he give the town-clerk an audience at a coffee-house after seven o'clock, when his work was over? His annual speech to his constituents must be delivered on a Saturday afternoon. When the bankers or the corporation of the town wanted the services of their member, to watch some bill before the House, would they endeavour "to catch him at a dinner time?" If a proposed railway were about to chop up the ancient landed estates of the neighbourhood, would the Earl of Whitechokerlea and Lord Fitzsatin, constituting, with others, a deputation, wait upon the sitting member, in the hope of seeing him as he left the factory gates at "bell ringing?" The whole thing is so supremely absurd that nobody but a Tory could imagine it, and nobody but a Whig of antique faith could believe it.

And when payment of representatives is conceded, which will be somewhere about the year 1898, only here and there a workman, and he of known integrity of character, would be elected. The presumption against all others would be that they were merely seeking wages otherwise unattainable, which supposition would exclude them from the votes even of their own order.

Granting that now and then a working class member may be elected (after 1898), could their fatuity, garrulity, and dropsical oratory exceed what we now witness on the part of certain highly respectable and right honourable boobies, who never lifted a hammer or earned a shilling by manly toil? The workman is not particularly likely to lower the character of the house. Would he exercise any "dangerous influence" by his presence there? What weight would he have except upon a few questions which he might happen to understand? If he had the vanity, the folly, or stupidity to speak on any other, he would sink at once to the level of those distinguished bores whom nobody reports except for derision, and whom nobody regards. Deprived by birth, position, and indigence, of sound various political education, he must be generally silent, or be the echo of opinions known

not to be his own. A man may conceal his ignorance among his equals, but among those who know more than himself, disguise of his incapacity is impossible. A representative of the working classes would find that the actual business of government must always be in the hands of men of intellect. Upon many local, municipal, and industrial questions, and upon many general questions, where common sense and incorruptible honesty are required, he would be a desirable addition to the deliberative composition of the House, and having the good sense to restrict himself to such topics he might hope to have weight with the House according to his capacity. But as for making any other impression by illicit or blatant means upon an assembly of 650 English gentlemen, conservative by position and by birth, proud by nature, jealous by education, and independent by wealth, he would soon find, as everybody knows, the thing to be utterly impossible.

There is hardly any probability, with the widest extension of the franchise, that any workman will be elected this generation. Henry Hunt, with wealth, connections, and popular prestige, obtained a seat only at the close of his life. Cobbett, with acquired fortune, rare political capacity, and a reputation which no English writer had possessed since the days of Swift, grew old before he became a member of parliament. W. J. Fox, distinguished in many ways, and the greatest orator of the Anti-Corn-Law League, was grey with years before he was accorded a seat—and there is not a second constituency in the empire that would do as Oldham has done. Where then is the prospect of seats for men of lesser means, lesser power, lesser mark, and still more unacceptable opinions? To widen the electoral basis may give satisfaction where there is now discontent, but it will in no way alter the instincts of Englishmen. We are not Frenchmen, and we are not Americans. Liberty with us is progress, not a capricious extreme; and parliament has no more to fear in the way of degeneracy from the presence of a few workmen, than the army has to fear demoralisation from the incorporation of a band of acrobats.

These suggestions, which, submitted by a friend, received some consideration from some members of the late government, are now deferentially submitted to you. In my opinion, the franchise I describe, if acted upon, might enable the country to realise that condition sketched by the statesman whom the Duke of Argyle quoted at Dundee the other day: "Happy is that people between whose past and whose present no gulf of forgetfulness has been fixed; whose progress has been steady progress, under the guidance and protection of their ancient laws; no national element of life rejected, no national memory forgotten."

I am, Sir, your obedient Servant,

G. J. HOLYOAKE.

THE UTILITY OF A MUNICIPAL FRANCHISE

TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD JOHN RUSSELL, M.P.

LETTER III.

147, Fleet Street, E.C., Dec. 4, 1858.

MY LORD,—I am no Reform Bill maker. This new pastime of connoisseurs in politics I do not meddle with. The actual work will be done by professional or accredited hands. But upon the destiny of any possible Bill no voice in Parliament is likely to be more influential than your Lordship's. Though dogmatism will be deservedly neglected, the impressions of those outside may be recognized in a country where public opinion is assumed to be the inspiration of law; and, therefore, one may ask, since the idea of a rating suffrage has been started, why cannot we have the thorough thing done? Any minister having a Reform Bill to negotiate might save himself a world of trouble by relegating its legal difficulties to the municipal sphere. Why not (after deciding what places or congeries of places shall send members to parliament) settle such vexed questions as the nature of the franchise and the ballot, on the permissive principle? Give powers to the municipalities to determine the future nature of the franchise for themselves. Who outside a town know so well who is fit to vote as the people within it? Were the franchise left as it is, and boroughs permitted to extend it when and as the Town Council—the best judges in the matter—may determine, it would render that national self-government which Count Montalembert has so praised in the English people, something like a reality, and would infuse new life and dignity into local action—it would relieve Parliament from the perplexity of a settlement which will probably satisfy nobody—it would dissipate the idea of a restricted suffrage being a Parliamentary tyranny, and turn men's attention home, and put the "affairs of the people" where the late Sir Robert Peel said they ought to be found, "in the hands of the people." How this plan might be adapted also to counties, the resources of your Lordship's sagacity would quickly determine.

As one who travels much in the provinces, I know that few books would be more valuable than a volume upon the Borough Politics of England. Here and there knotty political questions are settled by local common sense, over which the collective wisdom of the nation bungles for a generation. A debate in a corporation is, I grant, often as vapid as some debates in the Commons, but invested with national functions, a competition in excellence will spring up in Town Councils, which will become, as they ought to be, the normal schools of our Members of Parliament.

I have the honour to be,

Your Lordship's faithful Constituent,

G. J. HOLYOAKE.

PROTECTION TO WORKING CLASS INTERESTS.

TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD JOHN RUSSELL, M.P.

LETTER IV.

147, Fleet Street, E.C., January 20, 1859

MY LORD,—I write short letters because in the nature of things a statesman cannot be expected, amid his many duties, to read long ones. Were not the occasion imminent, and the time relevant, I had not troubled your Lordship at all.

By birth and life I belong to the order of the people. Like Lord Grey I am disposed to stand by my order, and for the same reason that Lord Grey was disposed to stand by his. It is because to the order of industry no direct recognition is designed in the projected Reform Bill, that I write to your Lordship. Every order in Great Britain but this, has the benefit of Parliamentary protection. When will the turn of the people come? That every tenth man of the working class should be in receipt of parochial relief, is a condition of degradation which every member of that class shares who silently suffers it. If the "out-door relief of the aristocracy" be disgraceful, the out-door relief of the democracy is no less so. The pauperism of the working class is treated like petty larceny, and there is not a parish in the kingdom where the recipient of "relief" is not made to feel this. We perform a sufficient part in the production of the enormous wealth of this country to be entitled to such a share of it as shall save all honest members of our order from this disgraceful contingency. The dishonest you may denounce and we will disown them. Therefore, as one of the people, I claim the vote, not as a "charity," which I despise, nor as a "privilege" (for it is more or less than that), nor as a "right," which Parliament deems revolutionary, but as a means of defence and protection against depredators whom the magistrate does not recognise nor society brand; but which are not the less real and serious. Give protection then to the interest of poverty—no interest needs it half so much. Give Industry, which toils without proportional rewards, probably to die on pauper bread, power of self-defence. Are landlords, bankers, merchants, and shopkeepers eternally to be consulted, and never the workman? Why are the people alone to be told to look to frugality as their means of competence? "Frugality" is the fair sounding term in which the counsel of *privation* is disguised to them. Why should not the opulent be advised to practise the wholesome virtue of frugality (good for all conditions)? They might then live on much less than they now have need to appropriate from the aggregate earnings of labour. There then would remain an immense surplus, which might be added to the income of the workman, since the wealthy would not want it. My

Lord, why should advice be given to us which is never taken by those who offer it, and which is intended to reconcile us to an indefensible and unnecessary inequality? We covet no man's riches (not his lawful riches, because he has a right to them—not the unlawful accumulations, that would be criminal); we envy no man's legitimate fortune, nor do we propose to attack it, but we demand that Parliament shall no longer secure to wealth and intellect a monopoly of political power wherewith to combat men their inferiors in knowledge, and who are almost without means. Poverty wishes to save itself from the necessity and discredit of mendicancy. It has always been patient, it is beginning to have pride. It objects to the protracted doom of direct labour, direct dependence, and indirect representation. From this injustice it is more in your Lordship's power than that of any other statesman in the House of Commons to save the people. On the question of Reform no man's word will be weightier. When the electoral margin is widened, as it is agreed by late and present governments it ought to be, the door ought to be left open whereby well-intending but poverty-stricken intelligence may obtain admission. He who by any just service secures this, will save future Parliaments renewed contests, the country renewed agitations, and the people from abiding and justly entertained discontent.

A story was told the other day of a Dublin cabman who had carried a rather heavy gentleman a full mile, and who was offered the precise fare of sixpence. Before taking it, he covered his horse's head with the horse cloth, giving as his reason for it that his horse was a "dacent baste," whom he should be sorry to see how great a weight he had carried for so small a reward. And certainly, unless John Bull gets a substantial and expansive extension of the suffrage, he ought, on the day a meagre and disappointing Bill passes, to have his head covered, lest the people should see how great a load of taxation they have endured, what rivers of blood they have spilled in defence of their "betters," and how great a load of the aristocracy they have carried for so poor and mean a remuneration.

I have the honour to be,

Your Lordship's faithful Constituent,

G. J. HOLYOAKE.

APPENDIX TO THE LETTER TO THE "DAILY NEWS."

FROM MR. J. FRANCIS.

"Athenæum" Office, Wellington Street, Strand, Dec. 3rd, 1858.

DEAR SIR,—I have to thank you for the courteous manner in which you have introduced my name into an important letter written by you, and inserted in the *DAILY NEWS*, on the "Workman and the Suffrage." The suggested character franchise you judge would be objected to, as the certificate would be issued by employers and betters. I am aware how difficult it is to remove prejudice from the mind of a working-man. I should, however, hope that the option when presented him thus easily to obtain what is so much desired, on reflection—and working-men do reflect—the reluctance would be overcome, and thus many thousands who should be voters would possess the privilege. I like much your proposed educational examination. Many no doubt would avail themselves of it; but the time and application required to qualify I fear would prove too restrictive. Why should not both plans be adopted? Fortunately, of late years, feeling has been an influence at work in the framing of laws; hence, in regard to marriage, those who object to its being solemnized at church, can avail themselves of the service of the dissenting minister, while such as desire neither can with equal validity sign the marriage contract at the registration office. Let but a kindred influence operate in the proposed extension of the suffrage, and the intelligent working-man will find himself in the enjoyment of a privilege that shall bind him still more strongly to the institution which in principle I believe he loves.

I am, dear Sir, yours truly,

JOHN FRANCIS.

To Mr. G. J. Holyoake.

The *WESTERN TIMES*, of Dec. 25th ult., republishes the letter to the *DAILY NEWS* entire. Along letter discussing it, in the *STATESMAN*, Dec. 4, signed "A Macclesfield Weaver," accepts it "as a pledge of moderation, not only for the writer, but for the thousands of intelligent men represented by him." The *NORTHERN WHIG*, Nov. 25, in a long leader upon it, finds "some things which it is important to press on public attention at this period." The *BEACON AND CHRISTIAN TIMES*, Nov. 24, considers "among other advantages of the scheme, the plea that it would be a self-acting franchise, continually widening with the diffusion of intelligence. There is something in the suggestion. An educational franchise ought no longer to be insuperable in these days of competitive and middle-class examinations." Many political associations have considered it. These quotations sufficiently illustrate the sense in which the suggestion has been regarded. But it deserves to be added that the *NATIONAL REVIEW* (for January, 1859) observes, "Mr. Holyoake proposes that the franchise should be given to those who could pass a political examination; an examination that is in some standard text-book—Mill's 'Principles of Political Economy,' or some work of equal reputation. But it does not need to be explained that this would enfranchise extremely few people in a country. [It would be enough if it enfranchised all whose exclusion would be discreditable to the State.] Only a few persons give, or can give, a scientific attention to politics, and very many who cannot, are in every respect competent to give their votes as electors, and even to serve as representatives. [A valuable admission.] It is probable that such an examination suffrage, in addition to the kinds of suffrage which exist now, would not add one per cent. to the present constituencies. [Its value does not turn upon the numbers it might include, but upon its enfranchising those who would give vitality to discontent if excluded.] And if it were made a necessary qualification for the possession of a vote, we should thereby disfranchise ninety-nine hundredths of the country." [Nobody proposes anything so absurd as a retrospective qualification. The Editor of a Tyneside newspaper told me that an imperative Intelligence Suffrage would disfranchise half the magistrates of his county.]

John Watts, Printer, Fleet Street, London.