



ADDRESS

Of the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of National Industry, to the Citizens of the United States.

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FELLOW CITIZENS—Various causes concur to produce the present unhappy state of affairs. It is our belief, however, that the main root, whence branch all the evils we suffer, is the neglect of furnishing full employment, to the productive labor of the country.

National wealth does not consist in land, people or the precious metals, but in the possession of products or values, created by labor.

A country with an extended territory, and a scattered population, must be poor and feeble. Such is Spain at this moment, and such was this country when in the state of colonies.

There is a paper in the Spectator, No. 200, that contains some excellent reflections on this subject, which, as they cannot be better expressed, we shall extract in full:

"If the same omnipotent power, which made the world, should at this time raise out of the ocean and join to Great-Britain, an equal extent of land, with equal buildings, corn, cattle, and other conveniences and necessities of life, but no men, women, nor children, I should hardly believe this would add either to the riches of the people, or revenue of the Prince."

And again— "That paradox, therefore, in old Hesiod, that 'half is more than the whole,' is very applicable to the present case; since nothing is more true in political arithmetic, than that the same people with half a country, is more valuable, than with the whole. I begin to think there was nothing absurd in Sir W. Pitt, when he fancied if all the Highlands of Scotland and the whole Kingdom of Ireland, were sunk into the ocean, so that the people were all saved and brought into the lowlands of Great-Britain; nay, though they were to be reimbursed the value of their estates by the body of the people, yet both the sovereign and the subjects in general, would be enriched by the very loss."

The same sentiment is contained, and placed in a striking point of view with relation to this country, in a petition to parliament, in the year 1767. Gen. Paines Lyman, it appears, contemplated the establishment of a settlement, on the Ohio, in the present State of Illinois; and for this purpose, applied to parliament for a tract of land. He enforced the propriety of the measure, by the argument, that there could be little danger of the colonies becoming independent, if confined to agricultural pursuits, & the inhabitants were diffused over the country. The position is perfectly correct, and is a very suitable and forcible reply to those, who are incessantly advising the same policy to these free and independent states, instead of promoting manufacturing industry on the seaboard, and the already thickly settled parts of the country. This is purely an English doctrine, and one which the English government, unquestionably, warmly approves.

"A period," the petition we allude to observes, "will doubtless come, when North-America will no longer acknowledge a dependence on any part of Europe. But that period seems to be so remote, as not to be at present an object of rational policy or human prevention [and] it will be made still more remote, by opening new scenes of agriculture, and widening the space, which the colonists must first completely occupy."

While it is thus demonstrated, that territory thinly peopled, confers neither riches nor power, we have examples in Egypt, modern Greece, and other provinces of the Turkish empire and in Persia, that people deficient in industry, contribute as little to national wealth; while Spain and Portugal are familiar instances, that they are not necessarily concomitant with the possession of the precious metals.

When we reflect on the distribution of labor in Society, which is necessary to give value to production, we shall be more sensible of the truth and operation of the principles laid down.

It has been judged from experience, and admitted by the best authorities, that the labor of twenty-five persons, will procure all the common necessities of life, as food, drink, apparel, housing, furniture, &c. for one hundred persons. This supposition takes the above articles as coarse, though plentiful and good. One-third, it is supposed, from being too old or too young, sick or infirm, will produce nothing. There will, then, remain about thirty-one individuals of every hundred, capable of working, who are necessarily idle or non-productive. Now, on the quantity and quality of the employment, with which these thirty-one individuals are occupied, depends the wealth, power, intelligence, and degree of civilization of a nation.

The objects which can alone occupy this class, which, for the sake of distinction, we shall call necessary producers, as there is sufficient of sustenance and raiment, &c. for necessary wants, produced without them, must be, in part

to give to those products greater refinement, and consequent value: that is, to give to food a higher relish and more diversity; and to apparel, furniture, &c. more of ornament & beauty. These operations are the chief constituents of manufacturing industry, and absorb a considerable part of the labor, which would otherwise be idle. The cultivation of letters, of the fine arts, of the physical and abstract sciences, the offices of state, and its protection in the army or navy, in civilized society, give occupation to the remainder.

When that portion, which is employed in creating material products or values, finds full occupation, and is predominant, then national wealth is on the increase; circulation is kept full, brisk and steady; contentment and ease, comfort and happiness, are in the power of each individual to obtain; the government is invigorated, and its finances in a flourishing state. This is the situation of a prosperous people, and to attain and preserve it, should be the constant aim of an enlightened government.

The reverse of this state of productive industry, brings on a lamentable change in the fortunes of a nation. In proportion as the employment of this class diminishes, national production or wealth declines—circulation becomes dull, languid and stagnant; embarrassments and difficulties surround traders; poverty & misery assail laborers; being idle, they become vicious; and oppressed by pauperism, they become criminal. The materials for riots, and civil commotions; the ready instruments of designing demagogues, are formed and accumulated, to the hazard of all good citizens, and the safety of civil government.

It is not improbable, that it was this state of things, which was one of the principal causes of the violence of the French revolution. The derangement of the finances; the immense and unequal exactions of the government, which fell chiefly on the industrious poor; the vacillation of its measures, which overthrew all confidence; and the operation of the impolitic treaty of commerce with England of 1786, all tended to ruin the productive industry of France. Large fragments of its population, were thus disjoined from their usual situation, and floated loose and unemployed, endangering the existence of organized society, with the first agitations that should arise.

The commencement of the revolution seems a demonstration of the fact. A starving multitude surrounded the Hotel de Ville, vociferating for bread; & when the King appeared in public, his ears were stung with the same incessant clamor from the crowd that thronged around his coach.

The same principle, explains satisfactorily the cause of the extraordinary military energy of France, at that period. Her commerce ruined; her manufactures languid; her grades sinking from diminished consumption; her agriculture oppressed and declining; and the total destruction of her finances, threw an immense mass of physical and labor-power out of employment. The army offered the only mode of occupation by which it could be absorbed. Hence, more than a moiety of the non-necessary producers, whose labor had been appropriated on a thousand different objects, was suddenly devoted to arms. In the armies of the Republic were found every rank and grade of society, and every variety of trade and profession.

Europe, which had confederated against that devoted country, anticipated an easy conquest, was surprised, alarmed, and confounded, at the spectacle presented by this nation, which had seemed prostrated with calamity, sending forth at one time "eleven distinct armies" to the field, and her extended frontier bristling with bayonets.

This principle was so well understood in England, before the establishment of manufacturing industry, secured permanent employment, that it became a maxim with her kings to engage in wars, whenever this portion of her population accumulating, became idle, restless, and discontented.

"It was the dying injunction of the late King, (Henry IV.) to his son, not to allow the English to remain long in peace, which was apt to breed intestine commotions; but to employ them in foreign expeditions by which the prince might acquire honor; the nobility by sharing his dangers might attach themselves to his person; and all the restless spirits, find occupation for their inquietude."

By this means, employment was found for their superabundant labor, which had become oppressive and troublesome to the government, because it could not find any other occupation.

On the disposition which is made by the government, of this class of non-necessary producers, depends the character of a nation. If the greater portion be occupied in agricultural and manufacturing industry, the nation will be wealthy and prosperous, but not enlightened. This is the case with China and Hindostan.

If engaged in arts, letters, and sciences, it will be distinguished for its writers, poets, philosophers, historians, orators, statesmen, sculptors & painters. Greece in its maturity, Rome in the Augustan

age, and Italy at the time of the revival of letters, illustrate our doctrine.

If arms be made their trade, the people become warlike, make extensive conquests, and are renowned for heroes, commanders and warriors. This was the character of Greece in its early history of Macedon, and of Rome. It is also the condition of most semi-barbarous states like the Scythian tribes, which destroyed the western empire; and the Arabs, who carried the crescent over more than half the world, and have thundered at the gates of most of the capitals of Europe.— In the vigor of its feudal institutions, Europe presented the same aspect. Arms and a rude agriculture constituted the chief employment of its inhabitants, who poor and oppressed, were the dependant vassals of their lords.

Unoccupied by trades or manufactures, they were ever ready to follow their chieftains to the field, reckless of the cause which summoned them to the work of destruction. Under the banners of the cross, were arrayed such multitudes, that Europe, remarks Anna Commena, loosened from its foundations, and impelled by its moving principle, seemed in one united body to precipitate itself on Asia. The plains of Palestine & the borders of the Nile, for near two centuries, were deluged with the blood of millions of human beings, vainly shed in the fruitless battles of the crusades.

When the exertions of a population of this character, are not directed on some one object, and combined by the control of an efficient government, or by some ruling motive of religion or interest, society is in complete disorganization. Civil wars, the contests of petty chieftains, plundering and robbing by armed bands, ranging over the country, are then the predominant features. The dominions of the Grand Seigneur, Africa, and many Asiatic states, are instances of this constitution of things; and there are strong indications of its commencement in Spain.

This was the condition of feudal Europe. The crown possessed little constraint over its great feudatories. Each of which avenged his own wrong, with his sword; and most of them supported their petty dignity, and their retainers, by predatory incursions on the domains of his neighbors.

From the disorders incident to, and the degradation consequent on feudalism, man was rescued by the establishment of manufactures. They drew him into towns and villages, and association sharpening his intellectual faculties, he began to understand his rights. By his labor, wealth was created; and with his wealth, and by his combination, he acquired power to enforce his rights, or the means to purchase their enjoyment.

Tracing the causes, whence have proceeded the abrogation of feudal institutions, and the emancipation of society from the debasing and depraving influence of feudal obligations, it will be seen, that they have disappeared, like darkness yielding to the day dawn, before the genial and invigorating influence of manufacturing industry.

The people of Italy, acquiring wealth and power, arts, letters and science, by their industry, first cast aside the shackles of feudal bondage. Flanders and the Netherlands, trading in her steps, next succeeded in the list of free states. As manufactures progressed in England, the people gradually rose into consequence and independence. Yet, from the many obstructions they met with, by the impolicy of the different kings, vassalage was not completely annulled until 1574. In that year Elizabeth, in order to raise money, directed in a charter to her lord treasurer Burleigh, and Sir Wm. Mildmay, chancellor of the exchequer, "to enquire into the lands, tenements & other goods of all her bond-men and bond-women in the counties of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, and Gloucester, viz. such as were by blood, (i.e. birth in a slavish condition) by being born in any of her manors; and to compound with all or any such bond-men or bond-women in these four counties, for their manumission or freedom; & for enjoying their said lands, tenements and goods as freemen." This terminated feudalism in England, from the commonalty being enabled, by the wealth acquired by manufacturing industry, to purchase their emancipation.

In France, the progress of commerce and manufactures was slower, than in England, and a consequent slower progress is observable in escaping from feudal oppression. Those who had engaged in commerce and manufactures, were, however, the first who became exempt; and the agriculturalist, at the period of the revolution, which brought it to a close, alone was subject to its hardships. The peasantry of nearly all the Germanic states, of Hungary, and of Russia, are at this time trammelled with its fetters. But the period of their liberation rapidly hastens on. The immense sums, disbursed by the contending powers in the late contests, have diffused much property amongst the commonalty, and excited their industry. The continental system of Bonaparte, started to a spirit of manufacturing, which is still maintained. The sovereigns in the last grand confederacy against Napoleon, could not rely as formerly, solely on mercenary

troops, but were thrown on the people for support. A military spirit, and the sentiments it gives birth to have thus been infused amongst their subjects, who have learnt the dangerous secret of their power and its extent. The consequences have been, that Bavaria and Baden, now enjoy the best constituted and free governments in Europe, while almost all the people of the states of Germany, are perseveringly and anxiously demanding from their rulers, an acknowledgment and guarantee of their rights in written constitutions, and a participation, by their representatives, in the government.

The more close and attentive the examination of this interesting subject, the more conclusively will be established the position, that the modern principles and practice of free governments; the amelioration and refinement of society; the advancement of civilization; and the cultivation of the higher intellectual pursuits; have grown out of the diffusion and division of productive labor, and the multiplication of the objects of its exercise.

When the labor or producing power of a nation, is not too much concentrated, on any one or two particular occupations, but is diffused in due and regular proportion, amongst those professions that constitute civilization, such a nation is, then, in its most prosperous, happy, powerful, and intelligent condition. It will be equally famed for its wealth, its power, its laws, its arms, its letters, its sciences, and its arts. This constitutes the most improved state of Society, which it is the duty of governments to establish and cherish. In different degrees, this is the case with different nations of Europe.— There are various causes, into the detail of which, we have not leisure, and which would lead us too far from our object to enter, that cast over each of them, different complexions and tints, but which do not, however, destroy their similitude.

We shall barely confine ourselves to remark, that in England, her political policy, and her labor saving machinery, produce modifications of the general result on her population, which at first view, seem to militate against our proposition. But a little inspection will dissipate the incongruity.

The population of Great Britain is estimated at 17,000,000. Let us allow three-fourths to be productive of material values, which will make 12,750,000, as the physical labor population. But according to Mr. Owen of Lanark, the machinery of Great Britain, creates a production equivalent to the labor of 189,000,000 individuals. The physical population, therefore, of G. Britain is, to what may be called her moral population, as 1 is to 14. Now, it is chiefly the labor population, and that generally which is devoted to the coarsest and lowest labor, that is subject to pauperism. They are made paupers, by whatever interferes with their industry, or competes with their labor.— But as a moral or machinery labor power, is similar to, and equivalent in its production, to a physical labor power, the physical labor power of Great Britain, that is rendered paupers, ought in strictness to be compared, not to its physical productive power alone, but to its whole productive power; that is not to twelve or seventeen millions, but to 192 or 197,000,000. Let us suppose Mr. Owen's calculation to be erroneous, and let us strike off eighty millions, and take the productive power of machinery in England as equal to 100,000,000 of people, still will it appear in the light we have presented, the discrepancy, that is often pointed out, disappears.

The aristocratic provisions of the English constitution; and the operation of the vast funding system now established, also disturb that equal and regular diffusion of labor, production, and the burthens for the support of government, throughout the community, which is essential to the highest state of political prosperity and happiness.

Its order of nobility is supported in the magnificence and splendor of an illustrious rank by inordinate salaries, attached to petty and mostly useless offices of the state, by enormous pensions and extravagant sinecures. These are taxes, levied on the industrious and productive members of society, to pamper the luxury, and glut the pride of the idle and non-productive.

The laws of primogeniture and of entailments, abstract and withhold from the general circulation, a large portion of the landed property, in favor of this privileged rank, to the manifest detriment and oppression of the industrious class; and as lord Coke observes, "what contentions and mischiefs have crept into the quiet of the law, by these fettered inheritances daily experience teacheth."

The limits of these essays, forbid us to develop through all their ramifications, the operation of circumstances peculiar to European society, and of the political policy of its governments, which counteract and frequently destroy the beneficial results of its economical policy. The one, with ease, can be embraced, without adopting the other. We have confined ourselves exclusively to the consideration of the political economy of England and other European powers, without reference to their politics. Whatever prosperity they are found to possess, can be

attributed solely to its operation. We have, therefore, recommended it to the imitation of this country. But we have to lament, that some of those who have opposed our views, have refused to draw the distinction, and have seized on the vices of their politics, as objections to the principles of their economy.

Applying the above principles to the United States, we shall discover, that during the prosperity which they enjoyed in the first twelve or fifteen years subsequent to the French revolution, the labor power of the country was fully exerted. The wars in Europe creating a constant market for their agricultural products; the carrying trade, & the various branches of business connected with it, gave employment to the greater portion of their labor. Agriculture and commerce were, then, the characteristic pursuits of the nation. Literature, science, and the arts, were but little cultivated; and few original works of importance, were produced. Those liberal professions, however, which are connected with the ordinary transactions of society, and are made the business of individuals, flourished with a vigor unsurpassed in any other country. Of this character are politics, medicine and law. The improvements those sciences have undergone, and the ability of those devoted to them, p. e. the United States in a very favorable light, as respects its intellectual powers, and excite auspicious hopes for the future.

Turning our attention to the situation of the nation, at the present time, with reference to the principles laid down, it is obvious, that the sources, which formerly absorbed the superabounding labor power of our country, have ceased to exist, and consequently, that a portion of the population which was occupied by them, is daily thrown out of employment. Hence we notice the effects, we have described, as characteristic of such a state of things. Consumption is less in amount, and consequently the value of almost every species of property is on the decline; bankruptcies are numerous; credit nearly extinct; the circulation stagnant; labor fallen in price; workmen discharged by their employers; and the number of the poor augmenting.

As this is the most unfavorable state, in which a nation can find itself placed, it is the duty of the statesman, in whose hands is confided its direction, to inquire into the causes, which have created these unfavorable circumstances. If they find them to be merely transient, temporary remedies adapted to alleviate present distress, or to enable the community to sustain the shock of passing events, should be sought for and applied. But if found to originate in causes, which cannot be confidently anticipated to disappear of themselves, it is also their duty to devise a new system of policy, adapted to the new situation of the nation. If the class of the industrious poor be found unemployed, and their production at a stand, the state should devise some mode to procure them employment, and give a fresh start, or a new direction to their production. If the consumption of the productions of the industrious poor, on which they depend or obtain the comforts and necessities of life, and to pay the taxes, that are required for the support of society, be diminishing, remedies should speedily be applied to counteract this injurious operation. The neglect of these important points in legislation, may overwhelm a large portion of society, hitherto happy, prosperous, and contented, with suffering and calamity; and a consequent feeling of discontent and inflammatory excitement be occasioned, which is greatly to be deprecated.

We apprehend the situation of our country, is of the above character. Agriculture, commerce, the retailing of the fabrics of foreign countries, and the branches of business subordinate thereto, formerly gave full occupation to the greater part of our people; but the foreign markets which were heretofore opened being now closed to our agriculture; our commerce, much contracted; the capacity of the people to consume diminished; those occupations have become overstocked, and no longer give full or profitable employment to those, who are engaged in them.

In the present posture of affairs, there are no rational indications, which can lead us to expect, that those pursuits, while it continues, will give full employment to our industry; and it surely cannot be urged, that this or any nation, should trust its prosperity to the possible occurrence of favorable accidents. Yet, while we continue to direct our industry chiefly to those employments, we must depend on the contingent circumstances of a war, or deficient harvests in Europe, for its maintenance, and to procure adequate markets for our productions, when carried in the extent of our productive power. In the meantime, the non-necessary class of producers, must constantly increase; its capacity to pursue the vocations, in which it was engaged, must lessen; its means of sustenance daily decline; and the whole retrograde from the higher species of labor to the lower. The inferior laborers thus pressed upon, while employment is decreased, must turn into pauperism, and come on the public for support.