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Jane Haldimand Marcet, *Essays (Glamorgan Pamphlets)*
[1831]



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Author: [Jane Haldimand Marcet](#)

About This Title:

These economic fairy tales and parables published by Jane Marcet in the 1830s charm with their light-hearted wit. In language less difficult than that of Smith, Ricardo, Malthus, and Mill, she illustrates such topics as the economics of wages and income distribution. The *John Hopkins* series reprinted and expanded on the popular earlier *Glamorgan Essays*. Marcet originally earned her fame by writing about chemistry for the layman (in the process influencing Michael Faraday), and branched out with equal success to other fields, including primarily economics.

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STORY THE FIRST. The Rich And The Poor.

A Fairy Tale.

In the time of the Fairies things went on no better than they do at present. John Hopkins, a poor labourer, who had a large family of children to support upon very scanty wages, applied to a Fairy for assistance. "Here am I half starving," said he, "while my landlord rides about in a fine carriage; his children are pampered with the most dainty fare, and even his servants bedizened with gaudy liveries; in a word, rich men by their extravagance deprive us poor men of bread. In order to gratify *them* with luxuries, *we* are debarred almost the necessaries of life." — "Tis a pitiable case, honest friend," replied the Fairy, "and I am ready to do all in my power to assist you and your distressed friends. Shall I, by a stroke of my wand, destroy all the handsome equipages, fine clothes, and dainty dishes, which offend you?"—"Since you are so very obliging," said honest John in the joy of his heart, "it would perhaps be better to destroy all luxuries whatever; for if you confined yourself to those you mention, the rich would soon have recourse to others, and it will scarcely cost you more than an additional stroke of your wand to do the business out right, and get rid of the evil root and branch."

No sooner said than done. The good natured Fairy waved her all-powerful wand, and wonderful to behold, the superb mansion of the landlord shrunk beneath its stroke, and was reduced to a humble thatched cottage. The gay colours and delicate textures of the apparel of its inhabitants faded and thickened, and were transformed into the most ordinary clothing; the greenhouse plants sprouted out cabbages, and the pinery produced potatoes. A similar change took place in the stables and coachhouse; the elegant landau was seen varying in form, and enlarging in dimensions, till it became a waggon, while the smart gig shrunk and thickened into a plough. The manes of the horses grew coarse and shaggy, their coats lost all their softness and brilliancy, and their legs became thick and clumsy; in a word, they were adapted to the new vehicles they were henceforward to draw.

Honest John was profuse in his thanks, but the Fairy stopped him short. "Return to me at the end of the week," said she, "it will be time enough for you to express your gratitude when you can judge how much you are obliged to me."

Delighted with his success, and eager to communicate the happy tidings to his wife and family, John returned home. "I shall no longer," said he to himself, "be disgusted with the contrast of the rich and the poor; what *they* lose must better *us*, and we shall see whether things will not now go on in a different manner." His wife, however, did not receive him with equal satisfaction; for on having gone to dress herself (it being Sunday) in her best cotton gown, she beheld it changed to a homely stuff; and her China tea pot, given her by her landlord's wife, and on which she set no small store though the handle was broken, was converted into crockery ware!

She came with a woeful countenance to communicate these sad tidings to her husband. John hemmed and hawed, and at length wisely determined to keep his own counsel, instead of boasting of being the author of the wonderful changes which had taken place. Presently his little boy came in crying. "What ails you, Tommy?" said the father, half pettishly, and somewhat suspecting that he might have caused his tears also. "Why, daddy," replied the urchin, "as I was playing at battledore with Dick, the shuttlecock flew away and was lost, and the battledores turned into two dry sticks good for nothing but to be burnt," upon which he cast his angrily into the fire. "Pshaw!" cried the father, who was beginning to entertain some doubts whether he had not done an injudicious act. In order to take time to turn over the subject in his mind, and console himself for his disappointment, he called for his pipe. The good wife ran with alacrity to fetch it, when, lo and behold! the pipes were all dissolved! there was pipe clay in plenty, but no means of smoking. Poor John could not refrain from an oath and in order to pacify him, his wife kindly offered him a pinch of snuff. He took the box, it felt light, and his mind misgave him as he tapped it: it was but with too much cause, for, on opening it, he found it empty! At length, being alone, he gave vent to his vexation and disappointment. "I was a fool," cried he, "not to desire the Fairy to meddle with the luxuries of the rich only. God knows that we have so few, that it is very hard we should be deprived of them. I will return to her at the end of the week, and beg her to make an exception in our favour." This thought afforded him some consolation, but long before the end of the week arrived, poor John had abundance of cause to repent of all he had done. His brother Tom, who was engaged in a silk manufactory, was, with all the other weavers turned out of work. The silk had disappeared, the manufacturers had ruin staring them in the face, and had turned their workmen out upon the wide world. Poor John, conscience struck, received his starving brother into his house. "You will see great changes for the better soon," said he, "and get plenty of work."—"Where and how?" cried Tom. But that was more than John could explain.

Soon after, Jack his eldest son, returned home from the coachmaker with whom he worked, all the carriages being changed into waggons, carts, and ploughs. "But why not remain with your master and work at the carts instead of the coaches?" said his father. "Nay, but he would not keep me," replied the son; "he had no work for me; he had more carts and waggons than he could dispose of for many a day; the farmers, he said, had more than they wanted, and the cartwright business was at an end, as well as coachmaking."

John sighed! indeed, he well nigh groaned with compunction. "It is, however, fortunate for me," said he, "that I earn my livelihood as a labourer in the fields. Corn and hay, thank God, are not luxuries, and I, at least, shall not be thrown out of work."

In a few days, however, his landlord, on whose estate he worked, walked into the cottage. John did not immediately know him, so much was his appearance altered by a bob wig, a russet suit of clothes, and worsted stockings. "John," said he, "you are an honest hard working man, and I should be sorry you should come to distress, here are a couple of guineas to help you on till you can find some new employment, for I have no further occasion for your services." John's countenance, which had brightened up at the sight of the gold, now fell most heavily. He half suspected that his landlord

might have discovered the author of all the mischief, (for such he could no longer conceal from himself that the change really was,) and he muttered, that "he hoped he had not offended his Honour?" "Do not *Honour* me," said the landlord, "we are all now, methinks, peasants alike. I have the good fortune, however, to retain my land, since that is not a luxury; but the farm is so much larger than, in my present style of living, I have any occasion for, that I mean to turn the greater part into a sheep walk, or let it remain uncultivated."—"Bless your Honour," cried John, "that would be a sad pity! such fine meadows, and such corn! but cannot you sell the produce as before? for corn and hay are not luxuries."—"True," replied the landlord, "but I am now living on produce of less than half my estate; and why take the trouble to cultivate more? for since there are no luxuries to purchase, I want no more money than to pay my labourers, and buy the homely clothes I and my family are now obliged to wear. Half the produce of my land will be quite sufficient for these purposes."

Poor John was now reduced to despair. The cries of distress from people thrown out of work every where assailed his ears. He knew not where to hide his shame and mortification till the eventful week had expired, when he hastened to the Fairy, threw himself on his knees, and implored her to reverse her fatal decree, and to bring back things to what they had been before. The light wand once more waved in the air, but in a direction opposite to that in which it before moved, and immediately the stately mansion rose from the lowly cottage; the heavy teams began to prance and snort, and shook their clumsy harness till they became elegant trappings; but most of all was it delightful to see the turned off workmen running to their looms and their spindles; the young girls and old women enchanted to regain possession of their lost lace-cushions, on which they depended for a livelihood, and every thing offering a prospect of wealth and happiness, compared to the week of misery they had passed.

John grew wise by this lesson, and whenever any one complained of the hardness of the times, and laid it to the score of the expenses of the rich, took upon him to prove that the poor were gainers, not losers, by luxuries; and when argument failed to convince his hearers, he related his wonderful tale. One night at the public house, Bob Scarecrow, who was one of the listeners, cried out, "Ay, it is all fine talk, folks being turned out of work if there were no luxuries; but for his part, he knew it to his cost, that he at least lost *his* livelihood because his master spent his all in luxuries. The young lord whom he served as gamekeeper, set no bounds to his extravagance, until he had not a farthing left, and then his huntsmen, his hounds, his gamekeeper, and his laced livery servants, were all sent off together! Now I should be glad to know, honest John," added Bob, "whether *we* lost our places because there was too much luxury, or too little?" John felt that there was some truth in what Bob said, but he was unwilling to give up the point; at length a bright thought struck him, and he triumphantly exclaimed, "Too *few*, Bob! why, don't you see, that as long as your master spent his money too freely in luxuries, you kept your places, and when he was ruined and spent no more, you were turned off?"

Bob, who was a sharp fellow, saw the weakness of John's argument, and replied, "that it was neither more nor less than a quibble, fit for a lawyer; for," said he, "suppose that every man of substance was to spend his all and come to ruin, a pretty plight we poor folks should be in; and you can't deny, that if the rich lived with prudence, and

spent only what they could afford, they would continue to keep us in employment." John felt convinced, and he was above disowning it. "I grant you," said he, "that there may be too much luxury as well as too little, as was the case with your young lord. But then you must allow, that if a man don't spend more than he can afford, that is, if he don't injure *himself*, we have no reason to complain of his luxuries, whatever they may, be, because they give us work, and that not for a short time after which we are turned off, as was your case, but regularly and for a continuance."

John now went home satisfied, that the expenses of the rich could not harm the poor, unless the expenses first injured the rich themselves. No bad safeguard, thought he; and as he trudged on, pondering it in his mind, he came to this conclusion:

"Why then, after all, the rich and the poor have but one and the same interest—that is very strange! I always thought they had been as wide apart as the east is from the west! But now I am convinced that the comforts of the poor are derived from the riches of the rich."

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STORY THE SECOND.

Wages.

Another Fairy Tale.

John Hopkins did not soon forget this lesson, although he was far from deriving all the benefit from it that he ought. He acknowledged that he had not hit upon the right remedy; but after having long turned the subject in his mind, and talked it over with his neighbours, he came at length to this conclusion. "Let the rich have as many luxuries as they can pay for, but let them give us higher wages for our labour. It is by the sweat of our brow, and by the work of our hands, that every thing is produced. Why! the rich would not have even bread to put into their mouths, unless we ploughed the ground, and sowed the seed for them. So it is but fair that we should be better paid for our services. If wages were doubled, we should be as well off again as we are now, and the rich would be but a trifle the poorer; for double wages would be nothing for a man who is rolling in wealth to pay, and yet it would be a mighty matter for us poor fellows to receive."

Chuckling over this discovery, John sets off for the abode of the Fairy, and begs her with the stroke of her wand to cause wages to be doubled. "Are you sure," inquired the Fairy, "that you will have no reason to repent of this second request, if I should grant it?"—"No, no," said John, "this time I cannot be mistaken, for I have considered the matter thoroughly."—"Well, then," replied she, "we will make the trial, but it shall be for one month only. After that time, we shall see whether you wish your present scheme to be continued."

As John was returning home, he could not help thinking, that this time at least he should not meet with a discontented reception from his wife; yet as he opened the door of his cottage, he looked rather anxiously in her face. It beamed with joy. "Good news for you, husband," cried she, "the bailiff has been here to pay your week's wages, and see here, he has given me all this money, for he says there is a new law in the land, and every one must pay double wages." John thanked the Fairy in his heart for the expedition she had used in complying with his wishes. The news soon spread through the village, all received double wages, and the rejoicing was universal.

John was resolved to make a holiday of so lucky a day, so instead of sending his wife to market, he proposed to go himself, and to lay out his store of money in clothes for his ragged children. This was readily agreed to, provided he would take a basket of green peas, and a bundle of straw plait which one of his little girls had made, and sell them. To market he went, and what was his delight to learn that green peas and straw plait had risen considerably in price. He little dreamed that this was owing to his good offices; but on enquiring the cause, he was told that now wages were double, tradesmen could not afford to sell their goods as low as before. John did not quite understand this; but it shews, thought he, that I have hit the right nail on the head at last. It seems that as much unforeseen good luck comes of the Fairy's wand this time,

as there came unforeseen bad luck before. He made haste to sell the peas and the plait, though he had some difficulty at first to find a customer; and then went on to the woollen draper to buy cloth for the children's jackets. He looked rather black, however, when on entering the shop, he found that cloth too had risen in price, and was two shillings a yard dearer than before. He expressed his surprise, and grumbled at the price, when the draper said, "Nay, nay, I have more reason to complain than you have. High as I sell it, I get scarcely any thing by it. Think what it stands the manufacturer in, now he is compelled to pay his workmen double wages. I must pay him in proportion, and if I cannot get it back from my customers, I may as well shut up my shop at once. We make little profit now, God knows, for we sell our goods as cheap as we can, not to lose our customers. But one can't afford to sell cloth or any thing else for less than it costs one." The same thing happened when he went to buy a cotton gown for Jenny, and in short he found every thing so unconscionably dear, that his money would not last out to buy all he had intended, even with the addition of the higher price which he had got for the peas and the plait.

His wife and children waited impatiently for his return. Jem had been promised a penny whistle, and Jenny a new pincushion, if there was any money left after the more necessary purchases had been made. When John came in, he began by boasting of the high price he had so unexpectedly got for the peas and the plait. His wife gave him a hearty kiss, and the children crowded round his knees, and began to untie the bundle he had brought home; but the contents fell far short of their expectations, and they rummaged in vain for the little presents they had expected. Then followed the indispensable explanation of the rise in the price of every kind of goods, in consequence of the rise of wages. "Humph;" said the good wife, "if we must pay so much more for every thing we buy, I don't see that we shall be any the better off for the double wages we get."—"Well, but," retorted her husband, "there are Dick and Sally at the manufactories, who will have double wages too, and I am sure they will be willing to lend us a hand. So we need not complain yet."

Some days after Dick came home, but alas, far from lending a hand, it was to tell them the sad news of his being discharged from the manufactory. "Why, how so Dick?" said his father, "were you not satisfied with double wages?"—"I had little reason to be so," replied Dick, "double wages one week and none at all the next, I would rather by half have had the common wages without being turned off."—"But why should you be turned off," inquired the father, "if you did your duty?"—"Oh for that matter," returned Dick, "there was no fault found with me; but the master had not money enough to pay us all double wages, so he turned off half his men, and I happened to be one of the number."—"Well, but," said John, "by turning off half his men, he can get only half the work done; and then, how can he furnish the shopkeepers with as much goods as they want to supply their customers?"—"Aye, but master says," replied Dick, "that many people can't afford to buy the goods now they can't be made as cheap as before; and that even those who can, will buy less than they used to do."—"To be sure," said John, "if less goods are wanted, fewer workmen will be wanted to make them;" and he could not help thinking that he, too, had not been able to buy some things which he had intended, the day he went to market. "Besides," continued Dick, "wanted or not, the master can't afford to pay them all at the new rate of wages. For observe, if he is obliged to give 30 shillings a week to each of his

workmen, instead of 15 shillings, why, he must charge so much the more for his goods to the tradesman; and if the tradesman is obliged to buy dearer, he must sell dearer in his turn. And when every thing is dearer, money won't go so far as it used. People buy less cloth, they wear an old coat instead of getting a new one." "Well but, how is he to get the loads of cloth trade that you send to foreign parts, if he turns off half his workmen?"—"So I said to him, father, but he says that the sending of his goods abroad will be quite stopped. Foreigners will not pay the advanced price; they will get their cloth from other countries, where wages are lower and cloth cheaper."

"Nay, but your master does not look to his own interest after all, by discharging half his workmen, for don't you see, that by making half the goods, he loses half the profits?"—"But if he can't sell his goods after he has made them," retorted Dick, "he would be a greater loser still, for they would bring no money by lying on the shelf. And sure enough he would never sell any thing at all at the price it is now. Half the profits will half ruin him, poor man! and if things don't change, why he will be a bankrupt, and there will be work neither at 30 shillings a week, no, nor 15 shillings neither. The fault is in the law that raised the price of wages, and it is to be hoped that those who did it will soon see the folly of it, and bring us back to the natural wages." This observation came home to poor John, who kept his own secret, but vowed in his heart, that when once out of this scrape, he would never more apply to the Fairy.

A short time after, Sally, who worked at the mills, came home with the same story as her brother. "So here we are saddled with two more children," cried his wife, "and this comes of high wages." "Well at least I have got high wages to maintain them with," replied John, who was not very ready to confess that he had been in the wrong.

As he was speaking, the bailiff entered the door. "Good morrow to you John," said he, "why methinks you do not look in such glee, as you did last week, about the rise of wages." "Nor have I cause," muttered John, "see here are two of my grown children sent home to me, out of work. But mayhap," added he, brightening up at the thought, "mayhap you Master Barnes might get them some work at the farm. Though they are not used to that kind of labour, I am sure they will turn their hand to it, and thank you heartily too." "Ah! I might have given them work before this change," answered the bailiff. "But my master cannot afford to pay double wages, and the new law will not allow us to give less. To say the truth, I am now come upon a very different errand; or we are trying, instead of increasing the number of our workmen, to do what we can to reduce them. My master says he has too great a respect for you John to turn you off; you have worked nigh a score of years for him, and you have a large family to maintain." "Thank his Honour kindly," said John, "I have worked for him long and hard too, Master Barnes, I am sure I have followed the precepts of the Bible and earned my bread by the sweat of my brow. Thank his Honour." "Aye, but John," interrupted the bailiff, "you stopped my mouth with your thanks before you had heard me out. Now, you know, however willing the Squire may be, he can't coin money; so what is he to do? Now this is what he has thought of; he says he will employ you three days of the week instead of six."—"And what am I to do the other three?" asked John. "Why you must seek for work elsewhere." "Seek indeed I may, but I shall not find," quoth John; "why there are Dick and Sally both turned adrift, and if they can't find work, an old man like me stands no chance." "Well," said the bailiff, "if you sit

with your hands across three days of the week, you are as well paid for the three others, as you used to be for the whole week. Besides his Honour is stretching a point for your sake John; for he pays you the same wages a week as before and yet he will have only half the work done." John thought that but poor comfort, when he saw he had two children more on his hands, and remembered that everything had risen so much in price. The bailiff took his departure, and as he shut the door, the poor wife lifted up her hands, drew a deep sigh, and said, "Ah well-a-day how little did we understand these matters; who would not have thought that, when the law obliged the rich to pay us double wages, it would have made us much richer, and made them only a trifle poorer? but now it seems it will bring us all to ruin together."

"Never fear," said John, "it is the Fairy's doing; it will all end in a month, and a fortnight of it is gone already."—So it was; at the expiration of the month, the influence of the Fairy's wand ceased; wages returned to their usual rate; prices fell to their common standard; Dick and Sally were restored to their work, and John laboured with more good will six days of the week, than he had done when he was employed only three, though at double wages.

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THIRD STORY.

Population:

Or

Patty's Marriage.

"It is no use grumbling, good woman," said John one day, when his wife was complaining of the difficulty of keeping her children decently clothed, or tolerably fed, "I shall go to the Fairy no more; for she never did us any good, and always proved me to be a fool, and that you know is no satisfaction."

"Well, but it is very hard," replied his wife, "that I who have brought sixteen children into the world, and worked, as one may say, day and night for them, should not be able to give them clothes to their backs, or a hearty meal of wholesome food, no, nor a bit of learning to give them a lift in the world. You know what a hard matter we have had to place out Dick and Nance, and now that I am looking out for Jenny, there is nothing to be had. I sent her after Farmer Wilkin's place, but there were no less than six girls about it already, so they underbid each other, and one of them got it, who offered to go for nothing more than her board and a pair of shoes a year."

"That is because there are more girls than places for them," said John.

"Well, and what is to be done with them at home is more than I can tell! Why there's Jenny gets such an appetite now a day, there is no satisfying her. She would be willing enough to earn the bread she eats if she knew but how; but they won't take her in at the mills, and there is no want of hands at the manufactory."—"That is because there are more hands to work than work to be done,"—"replied her husband. "Don't be telling me of your 'cause this, and 'cause t'other," cried the impatient wife, "but tell me what is much more to the purpose, how am I to get bread to put in my children's mouths?" But John said with a sigh, that was more than he could tell.

"But I suppose you can tell the cause," retorted his discontented wife?"—"Yes, that is easy enough, replied John, "there are more mouths to be fed than there is bread to feed them."—"Well, and where is the remedy?"—"That is a harder matter, wife. Now we have got the children we must make the best of it we can, and divide what we have among them; but if you had not had such a swarm of brats, we should all have fared better. Look at neighbour Fairburn, why they never want for any thing!"—"Aye, that is true enough," replied his wife; "why there was his Sukey at Church last Sunday in as neat a cotton gown as I would wish to set eyes on; and, God forgive me! I could not but cast a look of envy on it when I compared it with our poor girls' patched rags.—Well I remember the time when Patty there was but a little one, she had as good a gown to her back as Sukey Fairborn; but times are sadly changed now a day!"—"As for that matter, Dame," cried John, "cotton gowns are a deal cheaper now than they were then; but you have had thirteen children since Patty, so it is no wonder you can't give them a new gown so often, even though you may buy the cotton at half

price. When we had only three children, why it was natural we should do as well as Fairborn does with his three, for both he and I get the same wages; but when you come to divide among three or among sixteen, there is a wide difference."—"Nay, but you know, John we never had sixteen alive at once, nor near, cried the wife." "That is true," said he, "but so many dying is but a proof we had more than we could rear. If you and I had not married till the time of life Fairburn and his wife did, we should not have been troubled with such a monstrous family." The good Dame, who could not bear any reflection to be cast on the number of her children, and yet was at a loss for an argument in its favour, said coaxingly to her husband, "Well but, John, you know the proverb says, 'The more the merrier.' "—"But you forget what follows, wife, 'The fewer the better cheer.' "

John then went on to show that if the labourers took care to have small families, they would gain another and a still greater advantage; not only would they have fewer children to clothe and feed, and therefore their money would go farther, but also their wages would necessarily be higher. The rich, instead of having too many workmen, would have too few. His wife thought that this would not mend matters, for that the fewer the labourers, the more work would each have to do. But John replied very properly, "Nay, nay, we are not slaves, and cannot be forced to work more than we are willing. Now," continued he, "if we were fewer in number, the rich would be looking out for workmen, instead of workmen looking out for employers, as is the case now. And if there was a want of hands instead of a want of work, those who wanted work to be done would be ready enough to pay higher wages. We might say to our employers, if you do not choose to give us a better price for our labour, we will go elsewhere to others who will. But if any of us were to say that now, when there are so many all wanting work, we should starve in idleness, for others would consent to work at the low prices which we had refused."

"I can't think the rich would ever allow us to fix our own price," said the wife, "for they are wiser by far than we are, and they are mighty clever at having things their own way. They would get a law made to forbid the raising of wages mayhap? It is true, as you say, they can't oblige us to work, but they may oblige us by law to take low wages if we do work, and you know well enough we cannot live without it."—"That is so," says John, "and it reminds me that when I went to pay the last quarter's schooling, I found the master musing over an old book, and he bade me stop to hear what it said, for that it was a curious thing and concerned the labouring people; and moreover that it was true. Well, as far as I can recollect, he read that once upon a time there was a mortal disease fell upon the people of England called the plague, and that as many as half of them died of it."—"Poor creatures!" exclaimed the wife, with air accent of compassion, "how shocking!" Then after a little thought, she added, "Labourers must have been scarce enough then, God knows!"—"Well," continued John, "the book went on to say, that those who survived took advantage of their being so few to ask higher wages."—"Aye, but there is one thing I can't understand," said the wife, "why should there be a call for more labourers? for if there were fewer poor folks to labour, there were fewer rich folks to labour for; for the plague is no respecter of persons, and falls on the rich as well as the poor, as we read in the Bible it did in the time of Pharaoh."—"Sure enough," replied John, "but then the rich can pay for Doctor's stuff, and all manner of things to help them through it; so

more of them are like to recover than of the poor folk, who are pent up in their small cottages, and have no money to pay nurses or doctors. However there is no doubt but that many of the rich died too. But look ye, wife, when they go down to the grave, their money is not buried with them; no, no, that remains above ground and goes to their friends and relations; so you see the plague did not take the money, and there was not less of that in the land though there were fewer people. Now mind ye, wife, it is money that sets the people to work. So if half the rich folk had died, others would have come in for their wealth, and becoming so much richer than they were before, would have wanted more people to work for them."

"They might *want* and welcome," said the wife; "but how could they get them if they were dead?—"And it is just because they *cannot* get them, that those they *can* get, (I mean those that survived) are sure to get higher wages; for as I said before, when labourers are scarce the rich are ready enough to pay them high wages. But the book went on to say, that when the King who reigned in those times heard that his subjects would not work without higher wages, he fell into a rage, and made a law such as you were thinking of, wife, to forbid under severe pains and penalties that the poor should take higher wages than they had before the plague."—"Why then, I think he was no better than a tyrant, to hinder the poor from getting what they fairly could: he must have been quite another sort of man from our good King William."—"That he was," said John, "but it would not do; and after a hard struggle, the King was obliged to give in, and the people got the wages they asked."

"Well, but I do not know how it is," said his wife, after a pause, "my mind sadly misgives me about high wages ever since the Fairy's wand brought on such a train of ill luck, that we so little looked for."—"That was because the high wages then was not the natural rate of wages, as one might say. The Fairy forced wages up, and had no better success than the King's law to force wages down; but you see, wife, that the nature of things is stronger than King's laws or Fairy's wands; and that when the number of labourers was so much lessened by the plague, it was quite natural that the wages should be high, and so they were without any ill luck coming of it."

"Well, for my part I can't see the difference," said the good Dame. "Why should not the manufacturers send away half their workmen when wages rise after the plague, just as they did when the Fairy's wand did the business."

"Mercy on me," cried John, "how thick headed you are, wife. Don't you see that half of them are sent away already by the plague, for good and all; so instead of discharging any more they must pay high wages if they wish to keep those that remain, for when labourers are scarce and there is a great call for them, they won't work without good pay."

"Then," said his wife, returning to her favourite subject "when the labouring people were so well off, they might marry young, for they could afford to provide for a large family if they chanced to have one?" John readily agreed to the truth of this, remarking at the same time, "that people must take care not to overshoot the mark, for that if they increased and multiplied so that in the end the market were to be overstocked with labourers, wages would naturally lower again, and they would be in

no better plight than they were before the plague. And that is the plight we are in now," continued John. "But God forbid that a plague should ever come to thin our ranks."—"Heaven preserve us from it," cried his wife, "for though those that outlive it may fare the better, who knows John that you and I should escape with our lives; and I'll promise you," added she, with a look of affright, "it would snatch away some of the children that are still left to us."

"Aye, I trust the plague will never return, but we may learn a lesson from that which is past, though it be so many years back. For we may be sure that if we have but small, or at least moderate sized families, in the course of a few years it will bring about the same good to the working people."

"To be sure," said his wife, "if there had been only one or two girls after Farmer Wilkin's place, Jenny would have stood a much better chance of getting it, and perhaps have had two or three guineas wages; for if girls were scarce, they would not be so simple as to be satisfied with their board and a pair of shoes."

"Well, Dame, the country is like our family, there are too many of them for every one to get a livelihood."—"God help the country!" cried the wife, "it is more than we can do to help ourselves. Why what is a country made up of, but of families like ours? and if every family had taken care of themselves there would have been no distress in the country. When God has given us hands to labour with, and heads with common sense to teach us what we ought to do, we have no ground for complaint, and it is our own fault if we do not by prudence and saving guard against poverty."

"We ought not to have married so young," replied John, "and then we should not have been troubled with so large a family. But what is done can't be undone, only it should serve as a warning against another time."

"We are little likely to marry again either of us," cried the good wife, "and it we did, such enough it would not be over young."

"I was not thinking of you and me, wife," said Joint, "but of the young ones. There is our boy, George, who is but two and twenty, and he is hankering after Betsey Bloomfeld, and she is but nineteen. Now George has not a farthing more than the labour of his hands to support her and the dozen of children they are likely to have at those years. I say I will not hear of it. George must work hard and lay up something before he marries the girl. And let her go to service and get something to lay by too; and then they may come together when they have a little money in hand, and a few more years over their heads."

"Mercy on us! what will they say to that," cried his wife, "it will be a hard thing upon them, John." "But it would be harder still upon their children if we let them marry so young. They would be half starved, and ricketty and breed all sorts of distempers, and so they would die off and be an affliction instead of blessing to their parents."

"Ah!" cried the good woman, heaving a sigh, "like our poor babes." Then after a pause of painful remembrance, she added, "But one of them, you know, John, was

carried off by the measles, and that is not bred by lack of good food, but comes of the will of God."—"Yes," returned John, "but if it had not been a poor weakly thing, it might have got through the measles as well as the rest of them. Why to be sure they none of them died of starvation; but who knows but that they might all have lived had they been reared in plenty."—"Alack!" said the poor woman, drawing the back of her hand across her eyes; "it was not so much their deaths I minded, for I knew they would want for nothing in a better world; but it was their puling and crying as if they had no peace of their lives, poor babes! They were a sore trouble to me, for the more I loved them the harder it was to bear. One while," continued the poor woman, "we lost our children by the shall pox; and when the cow pox was found out, I thought they would be safe, but they went off the same, one by one sickness, another by another! so I can't but think, husband, that it is the will of God that poor babes should often drop off, as the blossom drops from the trees, for it never all comes to fruit."—"It is the will of God," answered John, "that children should die if their parents do not provide for them so that they may live. And when there is no more small pox, why the sickly ones fall victims to the measles, or hooping cough, nay, even a cold will carry them off, for die some of them *must* when there is not good food to rear them all."

"Nay, John," cried the wife "I can't bear to hear you talk after that fashion. It seems for all the world as if you thought their dying a good riddance."

"No," replied her husband, "but I think it a sin and a shame, to bring children into the world just to suffer and send them out of it—first a cradle and then a coffin, and little else between than fretting. Ah! I would not have married so young if I had known that all this trouble would have come upon us! but let us have no grand children born to die off in that way at least; we must live and learn, or we shall live to little purpose. So get Betsey Bloomfield a service as soon as you can."

"Well," said Dame Hopkins, after a little thought, "There is the Squire's Lady was here last week in want of a girl for her nursery. I begged hard for our Jenny, it would have been the making of her; but it was lost labour, for she would have it she was too young. She cast an eye upon Patty there," added she in a half whisper, "but I told the lady she had other thoughts in her head. Now this place would just suit Betsey, who is a nice tidy body, and has reared up her brothers and sisters, and is fit for a nursery."

John turned towards his daughter Patty, who was sitting by the casement window, sewing. When she saw that her father observed her, a blush came over her face, for she could not conceal the tears that were trickling down her cheeks. "Hey day, what is to do now?" cried he, "have you and Tom Barton had a lover's quarrel? never fear girl, you will soon make it up again."—"Oh no," cried Patty, "he never gives me so much as a cross word; but I have heard all you have been saying, and I am no older you know than Betsey; nay, even younger by three months, so I suppose," added she, sobbing, "I must give up the wedding, and think of going out to service as well as Betsey."

"Hey, never take on so, child," cried the father, "that is quite another thing, Barton is able to support you, aye, and as many brats as you may chance to have. He has neither kith nor kin, and his father has left him the shop and all the stock in trade, and a good

lot of money beside, so there is no harm can come of your marrying him. Quite the reverse you see, deary, for you are a burthen upon us, who have so many of your brothers and sisters to maintain." Patty cast up her tearful eyes, which seemed to lament that she should be thought a burthen. The mother, who understood her looks, said, "your father does not mean that we shall be glad to be rid of you, Patty; nay, nay, child, but we shall be glad to see you happy, and to have your share of the meals to give to your brothers and sisters."

Patty brightened up at these words; but a cloud passed over her brow as she thought of poor Betsey!

The Plague having been mentioned in the foregoing Story, it may not be amiss to inform our readers that what has been emphatically called *the great plague*, was the most terrible, but also the last of those calamitous visitations so often mentioned in the earlier History of England. It took place in the year 1665, nearly 170 years ago. It is thus awfully described in "God's terrible Voice to the City, by Plague and Fire."—"Now the cloud is very black, and the storm comes down very sharp. Death rides triumphant on his pale horse through our streets, and breaks into almost every house, where the inhabitants are to be found: people falls as thick as leaves from the trees in Autumn, when shaken by a mighty wind. There is a dismal solitude in London streets: every day looks with the face of a Sabbath, observed with a greater solemnity than it would be in the city. Shops are shut up; people run; and few that walk about, insomuch that grass begins to grow in some places, and a deep silence in almost every place, especially within the city walls."

Why has the plague not visited England for nearly two centuries? because the habits of the people, and with them their morals, have greatly improved. There is now more cleanliness, a better arrangement of dwellings, both for convenience and for air; more sobriety; more healthful diet; better medical attendance for the poor as well as the rich; laws of quarantine established. Many countries of Europe have been visited lately by a disorder scarcely less disastrous, though in many respects totally different. Hitherto this country has escaped it; our improved habits, if we persevere in them and carry them still further, are the most likely means of softening and shortening the calamity, should it reach our shores.

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FOURTH STORY.

The Poor's Rate:

Or

The Treacherous Friend.

"Good morrow to you, Dame Hopkins," said Farmer Stubbs, as he entered her cottage, "how fares it with you and your family?"

"Pretty well in health, thank you Sir," said she, wiping a chair with the corner of her apron for him to sit down, "but with such a family as ours it's a hard matter to make all ends meet; and indeed we never could do it without the help of the parish. John is gone down just now to get the weekly allowance."

"Indeed!" cried Stubbs, "I thought Hopkins held himself above receiving relief from the parish rates."

"And so he did," returned the Dame, "till the children were well nigh starved. Ah, I shall never forget it! It's just two years come Michaelmas! we had five of them ill of the measles at once. And there were but four got through it," added she, a tear starting from her eye. "And as soon as the fever was off, though the poor things were so weak they could scarce crawl about, they had such craving appetites, and a morsel of food did them so much good, that when I had not enough to satisfy their hunger, I told John I could bear it no longer. So bring down your proud spirit," said I, "and go and claim your dues; we have a right to the parish money as well, aye, and better than many of our neighbours who make no scruple about it. It is better to come to the parish than to come to be beggars, and I would rather ask alms than see my children starve. Then John said, I had thought to have gone through the world without demeaning myself by asking ought of the parish! and I do think that a tear came into his eye; but I did not dare notice it. So he took his hat and trudged off with a heavy heart; and to this very day he never goes with a light one, but use blunts the edge of things we can't help," said she with a sigh.

"True enough you can't help it now," returned the farmer, "but if your husband had been a prudent man and had belonged to the benefit club, he might have got relief when his children were sick without going to the parish."

"Aye, but that weekly six-pence to be paid down every Saturday, when, God knows, that when the Saturday comes, we have a six-pence too little rather than one to spare for the club!B six-pence seems a mighty small matter to you, Master Stubbs, but to come every week it's a heavy call upon a man with so large a family."

"He should not have had such a large family, Dame, if he could not provide for them in sickness and in health, for he knows that sickness and trouble is the lot of man in this world."

"We have good reason to know it," retorted Dame Hopkins, who was nettled at the farmer's rebuke, "for we have had our full share. And as for the number of our children, we know the hardships *that* brings on us too, pretty well by experience,—and has not John been breaking off the match between George and Betsey Bloomfield on purpose?"

"A very prudent step," replied the cautious farmer, "but here he comes."—"Well," said he, addressing John, "how much have you got from the Overseers?"

"Not more than I had need of," replied John, sulkily, as if he thought that was no business of Farmer Stubbs!—"Why I want to know how much of it comes out of my pocket, man?"

"And if some of it does," retorted John, "I owe you no thanks, for it is not I that take it from you, but the law of the land."

"Aye, but if you, and such as you, did not come to want, the law of the land would not meddle with my money."

"You are well to do in the world, and can afford to pay the poor's rate; and let me tell you, that if you have little pleasure in paying it, why we have not much more in receiving it. It is dealt out in such a niggardly grudging manner, and with such a surly tone that one would think the Overseers were giving you their own."

"Why, for that matter," said Stubbs, "they pay pretty heavily towards it, so they have some cause to be discontented."

"Well it is hard," said John, "to grudge us the only law that is made to favor the poor, when there are so many to favor the rich."

"Why by your own account, John, it is not a good law, for you allow that it is both paid and received with an ill-will."

"Yes, but it gets us bread which we can't do without, either with a good will or a bad one," said Dame Hopkins; "and I don't take it over kind of you, Master Stubbs, to be grumbling at my good man about the parish money, when I have just been telling you how he hated to go to those grudging Overseers."

"Why, look ye John," cried the farmer, "it's natural enough that I and the Overseers, and the rest of us that pay the poor's rate, should grumble at it. You say I am well to do in the world, and it is true I have a little property, but I have a large family as well as you."

"Aye, but they live in clover," cried John.

"Why, I wish to do the best I can by my children, as we all do; and to turn my means to the best account. Well here are these 20 acres of common, I have been turning up; I could have brought them to good account, if I could have bought as much manure, and have paid as many hands as the land required, to bring it into good order. But

while I am reckoning up my means, and turning in my head how I can manage it, in comes the Collector for the poor's rate, five shillings in the pound! and when I complain, he tells me that besides the large families, there are I don't know how many able bodied single men who can get no work, and must be maintained by the parish. Then, indeed, I fell in a passion, and said, you are going to maintain them in idleness with the very money which I should have paid for their labour if they had come to work for me. 'Oh they will be ready enough to work for you.'—Well, replied I, then leave me the money to pay them; but he answered, 'you know well enough that I must collect the rate that has been assessed, make what agreement you will afterwards.'— I can make none, replied I; when you take away my money you take away my means. Now if this happened to me only, you might say that I argued for my own interest, but it happens to every one who pays the poor's rate throughout the kingdom; and that not once and away, but every year regularly, more or less."

"Well, but you don't reckon fairly," said John, "if you say that the rate you pay is all sheer loss; for depend on it, if the Overseers did not pay a part of the maintenance of children, farmers would be obliged to give higher wages, else the families would be starved to death, and then I should be glad to know how you would get your work done?"

"I would willingly pay higher wages, aye, and employ more hands too, could I once be rid of this poor's rate; for then I should get the value of my money in labour; whilst now I get nothing in return, and it goes to support a set of idle vagabonds who can't get work. And I will tell you why, because they won't seek it, and because their labour is not worth having: and so these lazy fellows are employed idling their time away over some parish labour; and taking away the money that would have employed an honest hard working man, and have enabled him to have maintained his family without going upon the parish."

"Get me paid wages enough to maintain my family, and I promise you the Overseers shall not see my face again."

"But you have such a swarm of children, John now I pay a man the value of the work he does for me, without minding the number of his children; that is his business not mine."

"Then the poor's rate must make up what's wanting," cried Dame Hopkins, "for mothers won't let their own flesh and blood starve, and if they can't maintain them by their labour, why they would beg, borrow, or steal, sooner than come to that. And as for the poor's rate, Master Stubbs, there can be no harm in taking what the law gives you."

"I tell you it's a bad law," cried Stubbs, "bad for the rich, because it hinders them from employing the poor, at least so far as the rate goes—bad for the poor, because it encourages them to increase and multiply, till they come to rags and starvation. Let me ask you, Hopkins, when you married your wife, had not you an eye to the parish relief, in case you should come to distress?"—"Mayhap I might," said John, "and sure a prudent man ought to look forward to the changes and chances that may happen in

life; and so he is the better able to provide for them when they do come."—"Better to provide against them when they do come," replied Stubbs, "but you counted not on your own efforts, but on the parish for helping you in distress."

"And could I do better when the law makes such a provision for those that come to poverty, and can't help themselves out of it?" said John.

"They would not have got into it if the law did not make such a provision for them," said Stubbs. "You yourself own you would not have married so early had you not reckoned on the parish. Others would not either; families would have been smaller, labourers would have been fewer; they would more easily have got employment, aye, and have been better paid too."

"Why, that is just all I have been telling my wife," cried John, "but I never thought the poor's rate had any thing to do with it. I am sure our distress all comes from having too many children, not from the poor's rate which helps to maintain them."—"But what is it encourages large families?" cried Stubbs, "why the poor's rate."—"What is it lowers wages? why the poor's rate, you can't deny that?"

"No I don't, but I tell you again it's the poor's rate that brings them to the brink of starvation! for is it not large families, low wages, and want of work that does it? Aye, and it is not receiving it only that does the damage, for paying it many a time brings those to poverty who would else have been able to keep their heads above water."

"That's true enough of one I saw this morning at the Vestry," said John, "and a hard matter I had to see her, for she wrapped herself up in her cloak, and pulled her bonnet over her face; but my heart misgave me it was the widow Dixon; and so I turned short upon her, and when she saw me right before her the blood came up into her face, which is you know as white as a sheet, and has been so ever since she lost poor Dixon, except round her eyes. And when I asked her how she came to be so reduced, thinking her husband had left her pretty well off," she said, "No, Master Hopkins, he did all he could, not to bring me down to a lower station while he lived, but his means were but small, and the profits of our little shop did but just serve to maintain us—we should have laid by a trifle every year if it had not been for the poor's rate, but that eat up all our savings. However I ought not to complain of it now since it brings me relief; but it's hard to have shame and sorrow come upon me at once," and the tears streamed down her cheeks. "I told her there was no shame in taking her own again; she who had paid it so long had more right to it than any of us." She said, "God 's will be done!"—"But she looked as though sorrow and shame would break her heart! It was a piteous sight to see her!"

"And why should you needs be thrusting yourself upon her," cried his wife, "when you saw she had no mind to be noticed; you should just have let her have her way, poor woman, since you could not give her any help."

"Aye, but it lightens the load upon the heart when any one gives you a good word and a kind look, as much as to say you should not have come to this pass if I could have

helped you; for the widow Dixon thinks more of the disgrace than of the want of bread, or she would not have been so shamefaced."

"Well, if the poor's rate goes on increasing and increasing as it has done of late years, it's what we shall all come to at last," said the farmer, "and then who is to pay it?"

"Nay, it will never come to that pass, Master Stubbs," said John.

"Mayhap not but the time may come when the Collector will not be able to raise the rate that is assessed; and that time is well nigh come in some parts of the country, as I can tell you, John, of my own knowledge; for bad as the poor's rate is here, there are some places in which it is still worse; that is some comfort."

"Much good may it do you, Farmer Stubbs," cried John, "but in my mind it is a poor comfort that comes from the distress of one's neighbour."

"As for that," returned Stubbs, "there is not much neighbourhood in the matter, for I am talking of the counties in the south of England, and that is some hundred miles off."

"Aye, but what does the Scripture teach us, Master Stubbs?" cried Dame Hopkins, "we are to love our neighbour as ourselves, and that neighbour, the Parson tells us, does not mean the next door neighbour only, no, nor the next market town, but every body and every where. So we ought not to get comfort from our neighbour's trouble any more than from our own."

"Well, but how is the poor's rate managed in the south?" said John.

"Why, I will tell you," replied Stubbs, "if your Dame has ended her sermon. The men are paid according to the number of their children, not according to the value of their work."

"Well but, asking your pardon, Master Stubbs," cried John, "you said a bit ago that farmers care much more for the goodness of the workman than for the number of his children; and that they will employ an able bodied hard working man, without asking whether he be married or single."

"To be sure they will," cried Stubbs, "but let me go on with my story. Well, as I was saying, this regulation began in Berkshire. The magistrates declared that it was very unfair that the single and the married should get the same wages; and as they could not oblige the farmers to give the one more than the other, they agreed to make up the difference from the poor's rate. So they made a table of the rate of wages; saying so much would maintain a single man, and then they doubled it for a married man with one or two children; then it went on so much more for five, and so much more for seven children. Then again the wages was to depend on the price of bread also."

"Well one must say that was very thoughtful of the magistrates," exclaimed the good wife, "and very humane too; I did not think they cared so much about the poor as to portion out his lot to each so fairly and honestly."

"Stop a bit till you have heard the end of it, Dame," cried Stubbs, "and then if you give them credit for good will, you won't for clear sightedness. I heard all about it from an uncle of mine, who is a landholder in those parts, and he says the poor's rate is intolerable to those that have to pay it; and as to those it maintains, they are worse off than in any other part of the country."

"But how is that, when there is such a provision for them?" cried John.

"Why when the regulation was first made it did well enough for a while. But no sooner did the young lads find that a married man got double wages, and more too if he had several children, than their heads were all agog after getting wives, for you know its natural enough they should fancy the girls when they get the money to boot. My uncle says that he remembers the time when a decent young man never thought of a wife till he had put by 40 or 50 pounds, and some much more; but now instead of working hard to save up the money, and so getting habits of industry before they marry, they take a wife in order to get the money without working for it and so begin life with habits of indolence. Why the magistrates might just as well have gone about driving the young couples into church, as you would sheep into a fold. Well, the next year the children swarm, increased rates must be raised, and so it goes on year after year, till the young ones grow up fit for work. But there is no work for such numbers, so they come more and more to the parish, till at last the parish is forced to give in and can't keep to its agreement, for no rate will satisfy so many mouths. So then the youngsters fall to grumbling, and after that to poaching and pilfering; for when a man cannot get a livelihood honestly by his labour, he is little like to resist a temptation that falls in his way to get it otherwise, especially when he has been bred up to indolence; then come prisons and trials and transportations, and sometimes the gallows; and though it's no more than their deserts, they won't put up with it; and so at last they come to rioting, and sending threatening letters and burning of farms and all that; as you know they did last autumn."

"God forgive them, poor souls!" ejaculated the good wife, "seeing it's no fault of theirs, but of their parents, who brought them into the world before there was room for them."

"Yes, but they should know how to behave themselves when they are in it," replied Stubbs.

"Where is the use of being industrious and hard working," cried John, "when you get nothing by it? We don't work for the pleasure of the thing, Master Stubbs, as you well know, but for the gain it brings us; and if the parish will maintain them without it, they won't wear themselves out for nothing. And then as for laying by 40 or 50 pounds, as you said they did formerly, why it would be impossible with these regulations even if they had no mind to marry, for while wages are so low to a single man he can make no savings."

"When wages were alike to all," said Stubbs, "the single man had to spare and could lay by, though the married one was straightened."

"And do you call that fair and honest," said the Dame, "to straighten the man with a family, in order to give the single man more than he can spend?"

"I believe it's wise and prudent, wife," said John, "for instead of driving the lads into wedlock, it would make them keep out of it, at least till they had got somewhat to maintain a wife and family."

"True enough," cried Stubbs, "so you see that this humane regulation of the magistrates encourages idleness just as much as it encourages early marriages, and a superabundance of children."

"But the worst of all," said the wife, "is that it teaches them to be idle, discontented and riotous, and madly to burn the very ricks of corn that might have made them bread."

"Yes, my uncle said that the labourers now a days were quite different from what they used to be. Their characters quite changed within his memory; not but there may be some among them right minded still but take the general run they are a bad set. There was one of them so impudent as to say to his employer, 'If you don't give me better wages, I will marry to morrow, and then you must maintain me at double cost.' For the fellow was sharp enough to know that though the magistrates paid the difference, it came out of the farmer's pocket in the shape of poor's rate."

"But when the parish maintains them the parish ought to make them work," said John.

"So they do as far as they can," replied Stubbs, "they send them round to the farmers in gangs, and when the farmer can find them work, they pay the wages to the parish, who let them come off cheap, as they help to maintain these paupers."

"The more fools they," cried John, "for the farmer will turn off his labourers at regular wages to employ these cheaper hands, and then the others will come upon the parish too."

"And cruel it is," said the wife, "upon those that are turned out of their natural work by these gangs, and so forced to go upon the parish themselves."

"However," continued Stubbs, "the farmers find they make no great savings by employing these gangs of roundsmen, as they call them, for they don't do half the work of a common day labourer."

"Why should they? cried John; do little, do much, they get no reward but their maintenance just like an ox or a horse that won't work without the whip."

"Or like the negro slaves in the West Indies," said Stubbs, "who want the whip too, to stir their indolence."

"What a sin and a shame!" cried the Dame, "to use men like negro slaves and brute beasts!"

"Why it all comes of your fair, honest, and humane regulations made by the magistrates," cried the farmer laughing at her.

"It is no laughing matter methinks, Master Stubbs," said the good woman, "you may be in the right and I in the wrong; and if I am, why I am free to confess it; but I can't but think that in all this talk, you have had more an eye to your own interest, than to the good of others."

"And if my interest and the good of others, go along together cheek by jowl, where is the harm of thinking of one's own interest? Let us each take care of number one, say I."

"No objections to that," said the Dame, "if you don't forget number two when your interests don't jog on together."

"Well, I maintain that it would be for the good of one and all to put down these poor rates. Did you ever hear what a sum they amount to?—Why above six millions."

"Gracious me!" cried the wife, "what a power of money that must be! though I can't at all understand how much it is."

"Well, and all this to be employed in doing more harm than good,—for I don't pretend to say that it does no good. No; when the large families are there, and the distress and poverty that keep close at their heels, then the poor's rate lends a helping hand it is true. But it is a treacherous friend that pretends to do a mighty deal of good by giving you a mouthful, after it has taken away a whole meal. You don't think of the last meal, because you never saw it, and don't understand it. But just think if a bit of this enormous sum of money, instead of being paid in poor's rate, was employed in setting people to work; why the poor would earn the same money by labour that they get now as paupers, and the hard working and industrious would come in for the best share, which now falls to the lot of idle vagabonds."

"There is some sense in all that no doubt," said John; "but still, though we should get the money another way, there would not be enough for all, any more than there is now."

"I don't know that," replied Farmer Stubbs, "for look ye, the poor's rate is the root of the evil; now if you cut down the tree root and branch, there is no saying how much good may come of it. Poor folks would not marry so early in life and have such swarms of children; in the course of time, labourers would become scarce, and they would get higher wages, and so after a while all would be set to rights."

"If there never had been any poor's rate," said John, "mayhap it would have been better; but now that we have the large families, and the low wages, and the want of work, we can't do without it."

"More is the harm of having brought the poor to such a condition," cried Stubbs,— "but it might be done by degrees."

"I don't see how it can, but by starving half our children, and I shan't agree to that I promise you," said John.

"Mercy on me" cried the wife, raising up her hands, "how can you talk after that manner, husband! And how can you put such thoughts into his head, Master Stubbs?"

"No, no, I am not so hard hearted as that comes to," cried Stubbs; "but suppose a law was made that no child born after three or four years from this time, should be entitled to parish relief, why that would give time for people to think of the consequences; large families would thus be discouraged; and when those who receive relief from the parish die off in the course of nature, why the poor's rate would die of a natural death too; for if there was none to want it, it would not be raised; so the landholders would get their own again, the labourers higher wages and plenty of work, and the world would jog on merrily."

"Aye, but do what you will, Master Stubbs, a poor man is always falling in with bad luck; first there is sickness; then there are accidents."

"Here and there a case," said Stubbs, "but that is not an every day evil; besides when a man gets good wages, he may put aside a penny, against the evil day, and lock it up safe in the club box that he may not be tempted in a merry freak to spend it at the alehouse; or what is better still put it in the saving's bank, where it is safe and sure, and gives you interest into the bargain. Besides you know John, that in case of accident there is no want of hospitals, where there are as skilful doctors, and as handy nurses as the rich have themselves. And then the great folks, are many of them very good to the poor in case of need, and would do still more for them when they knew they had not the parish to go to for help."

"Well, it is a hard matter to understand the right and the wrong of these things," said John, "and if we did not feel them any more than we can understand them, why I should not trouble my head about it. But a hungry stomach is apt to make one discontented, and turn it in one's mind how things might be changed for the better. They are bad enough now, God knows! so I am one that would not object to make trial of some change, so as they went to work fairly and softly."

"Well, I hope we shall live to see it," said the farmer, taking up his hat, "and so a good day to you, John; and to you too, Dame, if you bear me no ill will."

Dame Hopkins contented herself with dropping him a slight curtesy as he went out, and no sooner was he gone than she exclaimed, "Have a care, John, how you are led by that man, though he is one of your betters; for it is as clear as broad day that he thinks of nothing but his own good."

"Aye, one may see that with half an eye," said John, "but for all that, he has his wits about him, and knows more than I do of these matters; and I can't but think that what he said was very near the truth."

"True or false," cried the Dame, "I can't abide to tear him talk in so hard hearted a manner."

Aye, but the matter is much more the point than the manner; and I do agree with him that, if we understood it rightly, the interest of the rich and poor might go hand in hand, like a loving man and wife, who, though they may fall out now and then, jog on together till death parts them."

"Ah, John!" returned the wife, "if the husband were rich and the wife poor, they would not long go on lovingly together."

"Well, you wont believe me because you don't understand it," cried John, "but come now, Tom shall read you a Fable, and an apt one it is,—it shews how the rich stand in need of the poor, as much as the poor in need of the rich, and if so, their interests must be the same way."

Then he called Tom to bring his book, and bid him read the Fable of the Belly and the Limbs.

Tom, who had been some time monitor at the Village School, began in an audible voice, and we shall now leave them to their lecture.

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FIFTH STORY.

Foreign Trade:

Or

The Wedding Gown.

One evening when John returned from his work, he found his daughter Patty shewing off a new silk gown to her mother. It was a present which her lover had just given her for the approaching wedding day. Patty's eyes, which had seldom beheld any thing so beautiful, shone with delight, as her mother admired it; and her father gave her a hearty kiss, and said she would be as smart a bride as had ever been married in the village. "Aye, and it is a French silk too, mother," exclaimed Patty. "Why as for that," replied her mother, "I don't see the more merit in it on that account; and I did not think, Patty, you were such a silly girl as to have all that nonsense in your head about French frippery. It is bad enough for the great lady folks to make such a fuss about French finery, so that they can't wear a bit of honest English ribbon. I don't like your gown a bit the better for being French. No, and I should have thought that your husband that is to be, might have given you an English silk instead."

Patty did not like her mother to find any fault with her new present, and was a little nettled that her lover should be blamed; so she said, she thought there was no harm in the gown being French, if Barton could afford to give it to her, "and for my own wedding too," added she, with a blush. "It is not that he can't afford it, child; but don't you see the shame of an Englishman going to buy French silks, while his own countrymen are working so hard for their bread at the manufactories at home? Why they can get nobody to buy their English goods now, and the poor workmen will soon have to go to the parish or starve, and all because the fine ladies must be for ever sending over to foreign parts for their lace and silks and all that."

Poor Patty was sadly disconcerted; but her mother did not perceive her sorrowful looks, and she went on abusing the gown, which she had admired so much till she learned that it was French. "No, no," she continued, "I shall be ashamed, if my girl is not married in an English gown, and tell Barton so," she added, pushing aside the smart present.

Patty tried to put in a word but in vain. "Why there is our girl Nance who works for a ribbon weaver at Nottingham, your father wrote to ask whether she could get in one of her youngest sisters, but she sent back word that trade was very slack, and that they were more likely to turn off hands, than to take any more in. That while so many ribbons came from France, one could expect no better, and it was well if we did not see her home again for want of work. It is a crying sin," added the Dame indignantly; "and I should be glad to know whether my Nance can't make as good a ribbon as any of the French girls? I'm sure the one she sent me was as pretty as any one need wish to look on." John readily agreed that the English could make these things just as well at home, as others could in foreign countries. "Nay, and even if we did not," said the

wife, "I think the great people ought to give a turn to their own country folks, and encourage home manufactures instead of having all their finery made by foreign hands, and sent to them from foreign parts. Why I have heard Lady Charlotte's maid up at the Castle say, there's no end to the loads of silks and laces and ribbons and flowers her ladyship gets from beyond seas; and instead of being ashamed of it, she is proud to wear them and to show them off to her acquaintances."

Now John had a son about twelve years old, who was a good sharp lad and given to be waggish—"I wish," cried he, "that the French mounseers instead of sending so much frippery for the rich, would send some good bread and cheese for us poor folks"—"And so they would, if you would pay for it," replied his father. "Why you don't think, son, they are such fools as to send us their goods for nothing."—"Well but how are the goods paid for?" asked Tom, "for uncle Bob who has been over the sea to foreign lands, told me that when he goes to an alehouse in those outlandish parts and has to pay for a draught of beer, they won't take our English money?" Uncle Bob, although he had not yet joined in the talk, had been in the room all the while; for he had come up from Liverpool on purpose to be present at Patty's wedding. He now pulled off his spectacles, and laying down the newspaper which he had been quietly reading in a corner, said, "that is true, but you should not say an alehouse, Tom, for there is little enough of ale or beer to be had there, they give nothing but wine at their public houses. And sure enough they would take neither pence nor shillings, nor pounds neither, (if I had had them.) The French will be paid in their own money, which they calls sols and francs, and the Spaniards will have their own dollars."—"And how do you manage to pay for what you buy there?" asked John. "Why," replied uncle Bob, "I get my English money changed into the money of the country where I happen to be. That is easy enough for the little I want; but it would never do to pay for all the goods that come over here from foreign parts."

This puzzled John not a little, when suddenly a wiser thought than usual came across him. "If they won't take the money," said he, "they will take the money's worth, and that is all one."—"What do you mean by the money's worth, Father?"—"Why something that's worth as much as the money. They will take goods for instance instead of money. Aye, for now I remember, when I went over to Leeds to see your brother that works in the cloth manufactory; there was such a power of broad cloth piled up of all sorts and fashions. There were some with mighty fine patterns. And I thought them rather queer for its Englishmen to wear; but Dick said that all those pieces were for foreign parts, and that if they did not please the fancy of foreigners, who liked shewy patterns, they would not take our goods; you may guess," added Dick, by the piles you see of them yonder, how much they like these; and he told me they had orders for much more, so that they should be wanting more hands, and that if I sent one of the boys next spring, he thought they could find work for him."—"Now don't you see Tom," added John, addressing his boy, this is the way we pay for French goods. We pay them in kind, as it were, goods for goods; and the goods being worth as much as the money we should have paid for them, it is all one, as if we had paid in money."—"Why it is much like my changing my top again Harry Fairborn's marbles," said Tom. "And do they send us as much goods as we send them?"

"Why, as for that," replied his father, scratching his head while he was thinking of all answer, "as broadcloth is much more bulky than laces or silks, we must send over larger cargoes, than we receive in return. But, mind you not more costly. No, no, we are sharper than that comes to. We should never be such fools as to send to foreigners what was worth more than they sent us. We give money's worth for money's worth."

"Then if they work for us, as much as we work for them," said Tom shrewdly, "methinks it's tit for tat; and there is no one turned out of work neither here nor there."

"Why have not you just heard that your sister Nance is like to be turned off at Nottingham; because they will wear so many French ribbons?"

"Aye, but," said Tom archly, who could not help thinking of his own prospect, "but have not you said that I am likely to be taken in at Leeds; because foreigners wear our English cloths. So you see, father, it is as broad as it is long."

The father was puzzled, and he could think of nothing, to reply to Tom, who had certainly the best of argument. While he remained half grumbling at being set down by so young a lad, uncle Bob exclaimed, "the boy is right enough. Where is the sense of crying down French silks? why it is just crying down our own broad cloth." Patty's face brightened up, and she thought, that Barton was right after all, and that she should wear her gay gown at the wedding. Uncle Bob continued—"if we won't wear any more foreign merchandize, why foreigners won't wear any more of ours; for we shan't send ours over for nothing, that is quite certain."—"So much the better," muttered John, "let us each wear our own manufactures."

"Better for Nance, but worse for Dick and Tom too," cried uncle Bob "for if there are no French silks and ribbons to pay for, there will be no cloth made to pay them with. I say, and I'll maintain it too, that every piece of silk, and not silk only, but lace, or cambric, or wine or what not, that comes from France or Spain or Germany, or even from as far off as the Indies, East or West, (for Bob was fond of talking of the many countries he had seen;) I say every piece of foreign goods that comes over to England employs just as many of our workmen, as if they made it themselves. What care our workmen whether they are making ribbons and silks for their own countryfolk, or broad cloth for foreigners. What they want is to be employed and that is all. Why it is as clear as broad day, though it never struck me before, till the lad hit on it."

John was not much pleased to find his brother take part with Tom, however he could not but think they seemed to be in the right, and that foreign trade did neither good nor harm. But they had not got at the whole truth yet, as the second part of this story will shew.

Second Part

John had pondered all these things a good deal in his mind, at a loss what to think or what to believe, when one day his landlord looked in upon him to talk over farming matters. Before the Squire went away, John took courage to ask him about what was uppermost in his mind, and said, "may I be so bold as to ask your Honor a question?"

the landlord nodded good naturedly. "Why then, my brother Bob and my son Tom, but a bit of a chap as he is, have been arguing with me that we neither gain nor lose by trading with foreign parts, and wearing foreign manufactures." Then observing the landlord smile, "you may think perhaps," added he, twirling his hat in his hands, "that I ought to be minding my own concerns, and not troubling my head about what is above my capacity."

"I am very far from thinking," said the landlord, "that it is not your business to reflect and consider what is, or what is not good for your country. It is not only the right, but the duty of every free-born Englishman to do so to the best of his abilities. This, thank God, is not a land in which we are afraid of the people learning to distinguish between right and wrong even in matters which concern the welfare of the country."

John was pleased; he held up his head and seemed to think all the better of himself for being counted among those who had a right to think about the welfare of the country. "I am sure," thought he, "if I had informed myself to the best of my ability before I went to the Fairy, I should never have been such a fool as to have made her turn every thing upside down, as I did twice running." Then addressing the landlord, he said, "Indeed your Honour's right, for in my mind there is more mischief done for want of knowing better than there is from sheer wickedness."

"I am quite of your opinion," replied the landlord, "but as for Bob and young Tom there, I think they are somewhat mistaken in supposing that the country neither loses nor gains by foreign trade."

"Aye, I told you so," said John exultingly, addressing himself to his brother and the boy.

"Then I hope your Honour will set us right," replied Bob. "Why," said the landlord, "I maintain that when two countries trade feely with each other, they are both gainers."—"Hear what his Honour says now," cried Bob; "no loss on either side, but both gainers—all prizes and no blanks!"

"This requires some explanation, it is true," said the landlord, "which I will try to give you. Foreigners send over to us such goods as they can make or produce cheaper and better than we can; therefore when we buy those goods, we get them cheaper or better than we could have made them ourselves."

"There's no denying that," cried Bob, while Tom chuckled in a corner, though he did not dare open his mouth.

"Now for instance," continued the landlord, observing the piece of silk for Patty's wedding gown which was laid upon the table; "they have the art of making silks cheaper in France than we have in England. You may buy a silk in France for the value of two shillings a yard, which would cost you three in England. Well then, every yard of French silk sold in England (supposing there were no duty) would be a shilling saved to those who buy it."

"And a shilling saved is a shilling gained," thought Bob. "Then she who buys a French instead of an English silk gown, (supposing it took ten yards) would have ten shillings left in her pocket, would she not?"

"Certainly," said John, "and so if many French gowns were bought, there would be many a ten shillings saved."

"This money," continued the landlord, "might be laid by till wanted; or it might be spent immediately, in cotton gowns perhaps for the children, or shoes and stockings, or pots and pans; in short, whatever article may chance to be wanted; but whatever it be, it will have employed people to produce it, and there is so much the more work for the labouring classes. While if she had bought an English silk gown, the ten shillings saved would have been spent, and nothing more could have been purchased." "Then it is very clear," said Bob, "that if people wear the dear English silk gowns instead of the cheaper French ones, there is less work for our work people."

"You are quite right," answered the landlord, "and it is just the same with every other article that is purchased from abroad as it is with silk; so long as we get it cheaper we make a saving, and that saving sets more hands to work."

"Aye," said John, "that is all very well for us; but your Honour told us that the French were gainers by the trade as well as ourselves; now it seems to me that what we gain must be their loss?"

"Why so?" cried the landlord. "Take an example or two: We have more iron in the bowels of the earth here than they have in France; we are therefore more used to work it, and do it better than they do. Then we know how to construct steam engines better, so that the French can purchase wrought iron and steam engines cheaper and better of us than they can make them at home. If then we send them iron and steam engines in exchange for their silks, they are gainers as well as we."

"But I thought," said John, "that we sent the French people broad cloths in exchange for their silk and laces?"

"No, the broadcloths I believe," said the landlord, "are exported to Spain, Portugal, and other countries. But the name of the country is of no consequence, any more than the name of the goods exchanged, the principle is the same. Buy the goods wherever they are to be had cheapest and best."

"To be sure," cried Dame Hopkins, "that is just what we do ourselves, husband, often is the time that I trudge over to the market to buy things a trifle cheaper than I can get them in the village."—"Yes, and when you get there," cried Bob, "you go to the best shop, without caring whether it be friend or foe."

"But," said John, "we don't go over to France to choose the goods as we do at the market. It is they send them over to us, and they may chance to send us such goods as we can make as well and as cheap at home; in a word, goods that we don't want from them."

"I can assure you," replied the landlord, "that merchants often do go to foreign countries for the very purpose of choosing such goods as will be most wanted in England. And when they don't go they write, which answers much the same purpose."—"But how can they tell what is wanted?" cried Bob, "for one wants one thing; another wants another; but to say what most people want, must be a hard matter to make out."—"Far from it," said the landlord, "there is as sure a means of knowing it as if the different sorts of goods had each a voice, and one cried out, I am the most wanted; another, I am next; and another, I not at all."

This made them all stare, and they listened with great attention to learn what this voice could be.—"It is neither more nor less than the *price* of the goods," said the landlord. "The more goods are wanted, the better price they will fetch; so it is the price which I call their voice, and moreover, a voice that always speaks the truth."—This set them all laughing. "Now," continued the landlord, as soon as they had had their laugh out, "we cannot expect that the French or any other foreigners should send over such goods as we want just for the pleasure of obliging us; their view is to make money."—"As every dealer's is and ought to be;" interrupted Bob, "when it is done above board, that is, fairly and honestly; so we need bear them no grudge for that."

"Very true;" continued the landlord, "they seek their own interest, not ours, and send over the goods that will fetch the best price, because those will give them the greatest profit"

"If they don't seek our interest, they find it nevertheless;" said Bob, "for the goods which will fetch the best price, are just those which we most want. So what suits them to sell, suits us to buy; well, to be sure that is cleverly contrived!"

"No wonder that it is clever," replied the landlord, "for it is in the nature of things, which means that it is so ordained by the Author of Nature, an allwise and beneficent Providence."

"Well you see my good friends, continued the landlord, "that foreign trade, that is, trading with foreign countries is advantageous to every country engaged in it, for what is true of one is true of all; and when we buy a piece of foreign goods, be it what it may, or come from whence it will, we encourage the British manufacture thereby, just as much as if we bought the piece of goods at Leeds or Manchester."

"Aye, and a little more too," cried Bob, "according to your Honour's reckoning; for you have forgot to take into the account the money saved by buying the cheaper goods, which is laid out in something else, and so sets more hands to work."

"That is true," cried the landlord, "I was falling into your argument, my honest Tar, that there was neither loss nor gain in foreign trade; but I am glad to find you steer so clear of error, that you can become my pilot. We are agreed then that there is gain on both sides, and I hope John, that you begin to think so too?"

"Why," said John "to be sure your Honour must know best and if all you say be true, as no doubt it is, why I can't but say it must be so."

"Well," continued the landlord, "but there is another advantage in foreign trade which I have not yet mentioned. There are some things, such as good wine, that it would be impossible for us to make, because our climate is not hot enough to cultivate vineyards, so if we did not get it from other countries we should be obliged to go without."

"Oh! for the matter of that," cried John, "foreign wines will never come within our reach; we poor folk should not be the better for them even if they paid no duty at all."

"But you are sometimes the better for foreign spirits, John, I take it?" said the landlord.

"And sometimes the worse too," said his wife. "However I have no right to complain, for that is only once in a way."

"Well, to say nothing of the wine and the spirits," continued the landlord, addressing himself to the wife; "you good Dame would not have a spoonful of sugar to sweeten your tea without foreign trade. Nor could you give me a pinch of snuff;" added he, holding out his hand to John, who first tapped his box and then opening it, respectfully offered it to his landlord. "And as for the English silks," said Bob, "why we should have had none to dispute about without foreign trade; for though we can spin and weave silk, we can't breed silkworms, in our climate."—"Nor could you smoke your pipe," said the landlord, "for tobacco is not raised in England any more than silk."—"But I have heard some talk," said John "of passing a law to let them grow tobacco in Ireland."

"If the law of the land should allow them, I doubt whether the law of nature would replied the landlord, "for the warm climate of Virginia, in America, whence it comes, is much more favorable to its growth, and if they attempt to raise it in Ireland I doubt but that it will cost them dearer, and not be so good."—"Why then," said John, "it would be wiser to make a law to prevent instead of to allow them to grow it."

"The best way would be to pass no law either for or against," replied the landlord." Let men have their own way and plant and sow, buy and sell, just where and how they like; they will soon find out what will answer. If they can raise tobacco in Ireland as cheap and as good as in America, they will do it, and if they cannot they will let it alone."

"Aye," cried Bob, "a man has a sharper look out for his own interest than any other man can have for him."

"So you see, my friends," continued the landlord, "foreign trade has two advantages; for, it not only procures things better and cheaper, but things which our climate renders it impossible for us to produce at home, such as wine, sugar, tobacco, plums, currants, rice, spices, cotton, silks and other things without number."

"Oh, then," cried the good woman, "I could not even treat my children with a plum pudding at Christmas without foreign trade, for there's no making it without plums and spices."

Patty smiled, and cast a look upon her wedding gown, which her mother observing, said, "Well take it up child and make it up. I should be loth to say or think ill of it, after all the Squire has told us."

Third Part

"Well, after all," said John, "it's lucky for us they won't take our English money for their goods in foreign countries; for if we sent them money instead of goods, it might be quite another story."—"And why not send them money?" enquired the landlord. "Why your Honor's joking now," said John, with a smile and a shrug; "you know it would not encourage our manufactures, for we do not manufacture money. We get it from South America as I have heard."—"And have you heard," asked the landlord "how we pay for it?"—"Why no I can't say I have," said John ruminating; "pay for money, why it's like giving them the money back again, it can't be so; and yet it must be paid somehow."—"It's sure enough," cried Bob, "the Americans will not send it us for nothing; They would no more do that than the French would send us their silks for nothing; and yet how to pay for money I can't well guess. We cannot give gold for gold, that would be sending coals to Newcastle."

"If we paid for the money in cash," said John, "it would be just sending them back what they had sent us. And there would be all the expense of sending it across the ocean and back again just for nothing at all."

"Besides, I doubt their taking it back," said Bob, "for they want any thing there rather than money."—"True," said the landlord, "they are all so busy digging for gold and silver there, that they have no time to manufacture goods, so it is manufactured goods they want."

"Then we pay for money with manufactured goods," said John, "that seems very odd to us who are so used to do just the contrary, and pay for goods with money,"—"And what do the Americans do?" said the landlord. "They give us the money in return for our goods," replied John.

"Why father," cried Tom, "methinks that's no more nor less than buying our goods."

"Sure enough," cried Bob, "they buy our goods with gold; and we buy their gold with goods."

"Now," said the landlord, "supposing that you sent money to France to pay for their silks and laces, you would want more gold from America, and you must manufacture more goods to pay for that gold."

"Ah! so it is," cried John, as the truth suddenly came across his mind; "and it's all one whether we send the goods to America to pay for the gold or to France to pay for the silks."

"In both cases," continued the landlord, "the labouring manufacturer will have employment."

"Thus you see my friends, work in one country is sure to produce work in another country, provided a free trade that is liberty to exchange goods, be allowed. But though this advantage will be general, I do not mean to say that it will be without exception: some manufactures may occasionally suffer. If we import French silks and French china, we shall make less silks and china at home; but then other manufactures will flourish in proportion as these fail; so that if workmen are turned off in the one, they may find employment in the other."

"Aye, but" observed John "it's no such easy matter to turn one's hand from one sort of work to another."

"That's very true," replied the landlord "and many are the poor who suffer from being obliged to make such a change. This world is not perfect as we all well know; but it is improving, and a free foreign trade would do much towards increasing the industry, wealth, and comforts of the poor. For I trust you are now satisfied that the country which deals with foreign nations will employ considerably more labourers than those which produce and manufacture only for themselves."

The landlord now took his leave! and John confessed that he had explained it all so clearly, that he had quite brought him over to his way of thinking. Patty had understood so far as related to her wedding gown; which she now took up, and skipt away in great glee to the semstress to have it made up.