

The Examiner.

"THIS IS TRUE LIBERTY, WHEN FREEBORN MEN—HAVING TO ADVISE THE PUBLIC, MAY SPEAK FREE."—EURIPIDES.

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SPIRIT OF THE ENGLISH PRESS.

THE COLONIAL OFFICE.

We perceive by our English files, that Mr. James Stephen, commonly called King Stephen, so long the master spirit of the Colonial Office, and the bane of the Colonies, has been removed from that Department. His removal will be regretted by every Tory who has a suit to urge or an intrigue to forward. But for this gentleman the Colonies would have had much less to complain of in times past. Familiar with the details of a system which made the Colonial Office, instead of the Colonies, the Court where every petty grievance was tried, Mr. Stephen acquired a position and influence which was alike fatal to the interests of the Colonies and to the several Secretaries who presided over the Department.

Educated under such a system the late Under Secretary had no affection for that more enlarged and liberal plan of Colonial Government propounded by Lord Durham and ultimately conceded by Her Majesty's Ministers. The official party on this side of the water, with Mr. Stephen in the Colonial Office, were never without a friend to help them in their hour of need, to defeat the action of the Local Legislature. For a quarter of a century the master spirit and guardian of the old Colonial system, he has at length yielded to the pressure of public opinion and the enlightened spirit of the age. A late No. of the *Daily News* furnishes the following account of the late Under Secretary:—

Mr. James Stephen has at last resigned the office of Under Secretary of the Colonial Department, and by his resignation has terminated a career of great misfortune to the public, and of sad injustice to a large number of unfortunate persons who have served the crown under that department during his tenure of office. He has certainly retired as gracefully as circumstances would permit. He has been saved the mortification of yielding to the storm of indignation and popular reprobation which so frequently raged around him, and has had his reputation protected, as far as protection could be given to it, by a summons to a seat in Her Majesty's Privy Council. Henceforth he is the Right Honourable James Stephen; but henceforward he is no longer Under Secretary for the Colonies. The empty honour is his: the real gain is to the public.

We have no desire to do injustice to the right honourable gentleman. Mr. Stephen is undoubtedly a man of very great intellectual power; his mind has been highly cultivated; his views are frequently original and always worthy of consideration; his information is varied and extensive; and his style of literary composition is rhetorical and glittering. He failed in the Colonial Office, and injured both this country and its colonies, not from want of ability, and certainly not from absence of opportunity to serve them, but because he had been educated in a hollow, insincere, presumptuous, selfish, and intolerant school, and became master of that school. Craft, policy, intrigue, jealousy, and chicanery were the characteristics of the Colonial office during Mr. Stephen's long direction of it. No one connected with it had, till lately, confidence in its justice, its honour, its integrity, or its generosity; the colonies feared it; the colonies hated it; merchants connected with the colonies despised it; and every one who knew aught of its mechanism, attributed its defeats, its faults, its crimes to Mr. James Stephen. Some of the ablest statesmen of the day were its chiefs whilst Mr. Stephen was Under Secretary—Lord Ripon, Lord Stanley, Lord John Russell, Mr. Gladstone, for example; but all failed, signally and disastrously therein.

These statesmen failed, because success under our present colonial system is not within the range of possibilities or of human ability, for it is a system that teases, irritates, worries, and overgoverns the colonies; and of that system Mr. Stephen was the life, whence it moved, breathed, and had its being. No one in our time had

such an ample opportunity of seeing and feeling its consequences, he saw and felt them in rebellions in Canada, in Caffre wars at the Cape, in war and insolvency in New Zealand, in crimes abhorrent to human nature in Van Dieman's Land, in ruin and devastation in New South Wales, in the gradual extinction of capital in the West Indies, in dissatisfaction and animosity in every colony and in every colonist. But experience taught him nothing; he persisted in the system which a stroke of his pen, or one generous thought, might have altered; and he leaves the system rampant in mischief.

But, it will be asked, if all this be true of Mr. Stephen, how came he to be retained so long in office? We reply that he was pushed into the Colonial Department by the clique to which he belonged, at a period when its influence was paramount: at a time when the then head of the clique declared, in a letter which accidentally transpired, that 'all the Colonial Office wanted was to be saved from the trouble of thinking.' The influence of that party, unfortunately prolonged by Lord Glenelg, and revived, when about expiring, by Mr. Gladstone, added to his own ability and cunning, and the ignorance of his superiors, maintained him there, despite the outcry of the victims of the disastrous policy of which he was the instrument. And it is only at last, when the consequences of that policy have been brought home to public conviction, that his retirement is made a tardy offer upon the altar of public opinion.

[From the London Times.]

CAUSES OF PANICS.

In a mercantile country it is very intelligible that at a period of frequent disaster sympathy for the great who are fallen, for the wealthy who are destitute, and for the children of ease who are forthwith consigned to drudgery, privation, and dependence, should prevail over every other feeling. The constellations that have disappeared from the firmament are enumerated in obituaries, and lamented in orations. Whole neighbourhoods are described as saddened by the downfall of all established families. We are told of princely houses that have grown with our growth, and strengthened by our strength, that were the pillars of our social state and the representatives of our greatness and honour. Certainly, it is a most lamentable spectacle to see a hundred companies and private firms, involving several hundred families, suddenly smitten down, and their members doomed to struggle for life through the bypaths, the steeps, and the shades of society. Meanwhile they who are numbered and not named are almost forgotten. Descending through managers, foremen, clerks, and other confidential servants, we come to the rank and file of industry, the thousands upon thousands who are thrown out of work and subsistence by blighted speculation. We fix our eyes on a few great historical groups, and do not see the dark background of distress. The commercial barometer rises and falls, and men speculate on its fluctuations; the temperature of enterprise is alternately genial and keen; but as surely as the keen frost of autumn levels the pride of the garden, and destroys whole tribes of animated beings, credit cannot touch its freezing point without condemning whole classes to misery. The day has come, the inevitable day, that compels the suspension of a mass of railway works utterly beyond the resources of this country. Cassandra has long prophesied, and long been disregarded; but the day has at length come when the sufferings of the people must atone for the follies of the chiefs. *Quicquid delirant reges plectuntur Achivi*; and while we write we learn with unfeigned concern of thousands and tens of thousands suddenly thrown out of employment.

Such is the most lamentable result of great social errors. Far a time, like a bad argument, they seem to support themselves with sophistry, declamation, and, above all, with a show of success. They assimilate to

themselves the whole state of society, and create the medium in which they are seen. The plea of useful and flourishing results has been continually urged in favour of excessive railway undertakings. Peel viewed with ecstasy the growing consumption, and struck off another tax. Cattle were imported, butter, and cheese and bacon could not be landed fast enough on our quays, yet prices still rose, merchants prospered, and farmers were happy. Hudson, the pet of the aristocracy, pointed with triumph to the armies he maintained, the poor rates he relieved, and the price he gave the landlords for their land. In this way the delusion, for such in its extent it was, defended and propagated itself. A theory was invented for the occasion which told with wonderful effect on the noodles. Capital that was spent—circulated. Expense was reproduction. Money paid to the labourer went to the shop, and from the shop returned to the tradesman, the farmer and the merchant, who, by re-investing it in railways, were thus enabled to keep prosperity in perpetual motion. After a most lavish and accelerated consumption, the country was each month richer than before. If we do not now stay to investigate the vice of this circle, it is because we need not waste time on so transparent a humbug, and, moreover, are now speaking of results. There was, however, at that time, no arguing with men who could show two or three hundred thousand labourers at full wages. The argument was unanswerable as long as the funds were forthcoming, and the bread, cheese, butter, bacon, and beer at command. The larder is now empty, and the bubble has burst.

The disbanding of armed retainers in the reign of Henry VII., and the clearance of another sort which distinguished his successor, and, to pass over many similar incidents on a less scale, the reduction of our own army and navy in 1815, threw vast masses into extreme destitution. All capricious, fantastic, and excessive expenditure does the same. The safest expenditure is that which is most common, necessary and regular. Whims and manias give a sudden fillip to labour, and then leave it in the lurch. Luxuries and extravagancies alternately overwork the people, and consign them to inactivity. The man who draws on his capital to build a castle or lay out a park, to give his name to an ornamental suburb, or do any other great thing above his means, generally finds that he is brought to a standstill; he is obliged to dismiss his men, and is saddled with an unfinished work which has not the slightest power of paying its own way to completion.

It is a very heartless thing to misdirect labour to precarious and unprofitable employments. Labour, energetic, confiding, and docile, but ignorant and incapable of self-guidance, is at the mercy of wealth and every other dominant quality. It can be led as a child. Compelled to consult its daily necessities, and taking everything on trust, the smallest difference of wages will seduce it from the cultivation of the soil, or from the other primary arts that supply our sustenance, our clothing, or our shelter, to the most foolish, the most injurious, the most destructive occupations. If a poor fellow can get sixpence a week more by helping to raise an artificial mountain than he can by preparing the soil for seed, he will be obliged to follow his fortune, get sixpence more, and be an useless man. It is positively cruel to impose on the helplessness of a being so little able to choose for himself. We have all along felt this, and have most earnestly deprecated the employment of useful and industrious myriads in undertakings which could not do anything to repay their own cost for several years at least, and which were certain to come to a standstill as soon as the capital of the country had been exhausted. Others, however, urged on the enterprise with all the infatuation of Napoleon redoubling his conscriptions, and driving half Europe before him to perish in the snow-drifts of Russia. That cruel trifler with the destinies of our race thought man was food for powder. It