

**THE GLORY AND THE SHAME OF BRITAIN
: AN ESSAY ON THE CONDITION AND
CLAIMS OF THE WORKING CLASSES,
TOGETHER WITH THE MEANS OF
SECURING THEIR ELEVATION**

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The glory and the shame of Britain : an essay on the condition and claims of the working classes, together with the means of securing their elevation by Henry Dunckley

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HENRY DUNCKLEY

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INTRODUCTION.

THE circumstances which have led to the publication of the following Essay are briefly these:— In the year 1849, the Committee of the Religious Tract Society offered two prizes of 100*l.* and 50*l.* respectively, for the best and second best Essays on “The present condition of the manufacturing and other working classes, so far as the same is affected by moral causes and personal character and habits, together with the best means of promoting their temporal and spiritual welfare.” Having frequently been brought into contact with the classes in question, the author’s attention was powerfully drawn towards the subject: he finally resolved to transmit his thoughts respecting it for competition, and subsequently had the gratification of being informed that his Essay had been honoured with the first prize.

The author trusts he will not be thought wanting in the diffidence appropriate to one who asks for the first time the hearing of the public, if from motives of deference to the auspices by which his request is sanctioned, he waives those apologetic remarks which he might otherwise deem necessary. Gladly availing himself of the circumstances which, if they do not impose silence, render it at least graceful, he would beg merely to add a preliminary sentence or two in reference to the subject which he has ventured to treat. When this discussion was first invited, various causes contributed to invest it with special interest. Recent political events, the depression of trade, the effects of famine, and the impending scourge of cholera, all combined to throw into bold relief the state of our working population, and roused the middle and upper classes to unwonted enthusiasm on their behalf. Those causes have for the present ceased to operate, but it would be folly to suppose that the evils they forced into temporary notice have become extinct. We are now enjoying an interval of comparative prosperity; popular sensibilities are no longer fretted by the rumours of foreign insurrections; generally speaking, the artisan has plenty of work, his children are well fed, and political grievances are in abeyance. Still the state of things is essentially

unchanged, the core of the evil is untouched. There is as much improvidence, ignorance, and irreligion among the masses now as at any past period. That signs of improvement are apparent is joyfully conceded; but the only change worth speaking of has yet to be brought about, and must be secured by the patient, united, and well-directed toils of half a century. The author cannot hope that everything he has written will be so fortunate as to meet with the approval of the reader; he trusts, however, that as his sentiments are expressed with honesty, they will be received with candour, and prove the means, in some humble measure, of hastening the fulfilment of the cherished schemes of patriotism and piety.

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