

**THE REAL EXHIBITORS EXHIBITED; OR,
AN INQUIRY INTO THE CONDITION
OF THOSE INDUSTRIAL CLASSES
WHO HAVE REALLY REPRESENTED
ENGLAND AT THE GREAT EXHIBITION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649504688

The Real Exhibitors Exhibited; Or, an Inquiry into the Condition of Those Industrial Classes
Who Have Really Represented England at the Great Exhibition by John Richardson

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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BY THE

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LONDON:
WERTHEIM AND MACINTOSH,
24, PATERNOSTER ROW.

—
1851.

232. c. 108.

THE

REAL EXHIBITORS EXHIBITED;

ETC. ETC.

THE accounts which our forefathers have left us of the condition of our island some century or two ago, as compared with what we witness now, lead us to the conclusion, that changes of a very marked and highly beneficial character have taken place in the climate of this country.

The deep snows and severe frosts of the protracted winters of former times are now comparatively unknown amongst us. The Thames is now no longer conscious of the strange burden of the roasting ox; her icy shackles have been transferred to more northern streams, and passing from the category of the Volga, the Dnieper, the Danube, she claims companionship with the Tagus, the Tiber, and the Po.

Now they who investigate the causes of such a change, ascribe it in no small degree, to the progress which has been made in the agricultural improvements of our country. The felling of forests, the draining of marshes, the more uniform and skilful cultivation of the general surface of the land, are assigned as causes adequate to account for the climatorial and atmospheric change. If such may truly be regarded as sufficient to explain this change, then we have at once an instance, in physical things, of a *great principle*, which will apply with no less force in

social matters—namely, that local and individual improvements issue in general amelioration; and that the greatest aggregate of real prosperity is but the best combination of the greatest number of particular instances of well-being.

It is such a consideration as this that gives weight and importance to the subject of our present investigation. If we would see the moral atmosphere of our country free from those sudden and extreme variations which cripple a nation's energies, freeze up a nation's charity, and thus entail a nation's poverty, and perpetuate its misery—if we would provide that what, under wiser regulations, would shine with a genial, fertilising, and cheering ray, should not call forth only noxious exhalations which shall hide from view the only source of happiness and health, and then return to desolate society, and propagate its own mischief-making influence—if we would wisely and effectually promote the general peace and prosperity of the community—then does it become us cautiously to examine the condition of each section of the body social, diligently to watch its progress, prudently to minister to its health, and delicately to stimulate the development of the principles of its improvement. The noxious gases which rise from the putrescent stagnations of the lower classes, float, with disease and death in their train, to the apparent security and fancied exemption of the higher ranks of society. The entire body politic becomes tainted, its strength droops, and remedial measures of a sharp and painful nature are then found to be necessary, because preventive or corrective measures have been forgotten or despised.

The subject of our present inquiry is the condition of the industrial classes—whether their feelings, principles, aspirations, habits, are such as constitute them happy in themselves, and hopeful as the supporters of the nation's greatness. In the prosecution of this inquiry, men of all ranks ought to feel an interest. The class that is the subject of it, our *working fellow-countrymen*, have, in such a *subject*, much that deserves their serious attention. We *profess to turn* the light of their own and of other men's

observation in upon their own position and prospects, that they may be enabled, as rational and responsible beings, to realize their true state, to remedy evils, if such shall appear, and to collect and arrange materials out of which to construct the fabric of their future peace.

To refuse to pause and ponder, is alike indicative of imbecility of mind, and prophetic of coming evil. Coolly and calmly to contemplate his position, is wisdom *in the weak man*; as it suggests a check to the career of misfortune, points to the causes of failure and to the openings of hope, familiarizes the mind to the worst, and allows it to collect its scattered energies that the anticipation of uncertain evil had dispersed. *To the strong man* it gives confidence and communicates resolution, as it exhibits the secret of his strength, and explains the process of his success. The calm, dispassionate attention, therefore, of the operative and productive classes is especially invited, while their candid consideration and charitable appreciation of motives are asked, if, in attempting to probe faithfully to the very bottom of any deeply-seated sore, the operator's hand should seem unfeelingly and unnecessarily to wound.

But this too is a subject full of interest to *employers*. Let not such think that they are already sufficiently acquainted with it. Their business engagements may bring them into frequent contact with the working man, but they see him often in a false and unnatural position. A sense of constraint in their master's presence, or a spirit of suspicion, will oft-times induce the cloaking of the inner man; and on subjects that greatly affect his interest, the employer is often the very person to be kept longest in the dark. It is into the ear of him that shares his situation, or that has won his confidence, that the real sentiments of the workman's heart are poured. Noble sentiments, at times, they are, gushing forth at the magic touch of some trusted one, from the deep fountains of feeling, and sparkling in the transparency of ingenuous honesty; but oh! how dark, how deadly, when fermenting under the bitter recollection of fancied

wrongs, or poisoned by the insinuations of evil advisers, they secretly instil into kindred minds. Wise is he who shall be content to investigate so interesting a theme, that he may be able to cast in the salt of truth, heal the bitter waters of minds like these, and change them in their hidden and unhappy fountain.

Neither let employers despise this subject, as though they were inaccessible to harm. Their prosperity, to a greater extent than at first sight may appear, is mixed up with the prosperity of their operatives. The security of their property, the quality of the goods produced, the amount of waste in the different productive processes, all are influenced by the character of the persons employed, and the estimation in which they hold him whose servants they are.

"The master's eye fattens the horse," is a wise proverb, intimating the advantages which personal inspection and supervision ensure; but how much more is his interest secured when the regulating principle in his workmen is "Ye who are servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward" (1 Pet. ii. 18), or, "Servants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, *as unto Christ*" (Ephes. vi. 6). This is the best, because the loftiest and holiest and most uniform standard by which the characters of the employed are to be tested; and even if there were no considerations of duty, regard for mere pecuniary benefit will urge every wise employer to consider how best he may elevate his servants the nearest to this principle of action.

But considerations of duty cannot, must not be put out of sight, where immortal beings act upon each other.

The capitalist, in the selection and employment of mere material machines, may choose those of old or new, good or bad construction, as he sees fit, and may allow them to remain in perfect or imperfect repair, as he pleases. Though glaring evidences of his folly, and busy workers of *his ruin*, they cannot become loud-tongued accusers of *his neglect*. It is not, however, thus in reference to that

wondrously complex, and mysteriously constructed machine of strange destiny, that originates the conception, or manipulates the construction, or directs the motion of that merely material mechanism. No! he is a fellow-immortal, that dependent operative. A relationship springs up between him and his employer. The common master of them both has linked their destinies together. Having put into the power of one the control of the supply of the bodily wants of the other, the Almighty has given that one an influence over his fellow; and it is at his peril that he uses it otherwise than for good and for God.

Masters, therefore, are urged to study this question, and to promote means for its true solution. But *rulers* likewise have duties in reference to this subject. To these, as the political fathers of the social family, the individual members have committed their particular rights, in order that they may receive them again at their hands, to be exercised in due subordination to the common interests of the mass. Deriving their authority from the entire community, rulers are required to promote the conjoint good of the whole; and abstracting themselves from the partial consideration of merely sectional interests, so to influence, direct, control, combine and blend the various constituent elements of society, as to secure to all the blessings of order, liberty, peace, protection, happiness.

In order to this, intelligence, as well as integrity is needed, enlarged views as to the requisite arrangement of comprehensive plans, and accurate information as to the peculiar condition and rights of different classes. Fearful mistakes, fraught with injustice and danger, may be the consequence of undue attention to any particular class. The evil results may not be at once apparent on the commission of a political solecism, but time serves only to develop and strengthen the latent mischief.

The town of Rotherham is built on ground beneath which is a seam of coal, that has now for years been *on fire*. The inhabitants, from familiarity with the