

for employment, disturbs the social machine, and arrests its progress. By a stoppage in the movements of a single wheel or pinion, the whole engine is brought to a stand. The inventive power is quickened, through the necessity thus created, to originate some mode of supplying the place of the refractory bit or segment; the ingenuity exerted at length proves successful; wood, iron, and leather, are made to perform the work of human nerve and muscle; and a province of industry is divested of its living workmen, and occupied by dead machines. We believe, one of the last instances of this kind furnished by the history of strikes took place in the flax manufacture. Simple as the work of the heckler may seem, it was long found impossible to supersede him by machinery. In drawing the tangled flax through the bristling hedge of steel employed in disentangling and straightening its fibres, the human hand had a nice adaptability to the ever varying necessities of the tuft in process of being sorted, which, for so long a period, could not be communicated to the movements of the unconscious machine, that the mechanist at length fairly gave up the attempt, and sat down in despair. A series of strikes, however, on the part of the hecklers, roused him anew to the work. Necessity at length proved the mother of invention. After repeated failures, he ultimately succeeded in making a most accomplished heckler of wood and metal, who never strikes work so long as he gets a few shovelfuls of coal to consume; and the flesh-and-blood hecklers, driven out of the field, have had to seek in other countries, and in other walks of exertion, the employment which, in consequence of his overmastering competition, they can no longer secure in their own.

Strikes are unquestionably great evils. In the case of the hecklers, what they effected was, not the ruin of the flax trade in Scotland, but simply the ruin of the class of mechanics that lived by the heckle. A series of strikes among the