

are the suffering masses to be ventilated, and their condition permanently improved? It does not do to grope in the dark in such matters. It is well, surely, to meet with the evil in *its effects* when it has become utter misery and destitution, and to employ every possible means for relieving its victims. It is infinitely better, however, to meet with it in *its causes*,—to meet with it in the forming, and to check it there. It was not by baling back the waters of the river that Cyrus laid bare the bed of the Euphrates;—it was by cutting off the supply. Where are the sources of this fearfully accumulated and still accumulating misery to be found? At what particular point, or in what particular manner, should the enlightened benefactor of the suffering classes interfere to cut off the supply? The reader anticipates a truism,—one of those important and unquestioned truths which, according to Goethe, seem divested of their proper effect, as *important* just from the circumstance of their being *unquestioned*, and which, gliding inefficiently along the stream of universal assentation, are allowed to weigh less with the public mind than the short-lived and unfruitful paradoxes of the passing time. Instead, however, of laying down a principle, we shall simply state a few facts of a kind which many of our humbler readers—the “men of handicraft and hard labour”—will be able fully to verify from their own experience, and that embody the principle which seems to bear most directly on the subject.

We passed part of two years in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh immediately before the great crisis of 1825, and knew perhaps more about the working-classes of the place than can well be known by men who do not live on their own level. The speculations of the time had given an impulse to the trading world. Employment was abundant, and wages high; and we had a full opportunity of seeing in what degree the mere commercial and trading prosperity of a country,—the mere money-welfare which men such as Joseph Hume can