

that at a very moderate computation the increase in these great centres of population would be found by the census of next year to amount to considerably more than two millions. But the total increase in the realm in the same period would appear to be about three millions and a half. There was, therefore, little reason to doubt that when they had the figures of the fifteen or twenty next largest cities, it would be found that the whole of the additional population of the kingdom was concentrated in the towns. Formerly this was not the case, but of late years Ireland and some agricultural counties in England, as well as many of the smaller country towns, had steadily decreased in population. He would not discuss the causes which had led to this important change in our vital statistics. The successive alterations made in the law of chargeability had, he believed, a great deal to do with it. Modifications in our system of trade had in some places a great deal more. All he desired was that note should be taken of the fact as one that was essential. If the large towns had become the places where great fortunes were to be made, they were also the places where great masses of poverty were accumulated. Now, this was the question to which he had to ask the serious attention of the House. He hoped that question would not be evaded by the attempt to raise any false issue as to the general causes of increasing poverty. He had heard it sometimes said that if there were no trades' unions the people would be all employed, well off, and contented. He had never spoken a sentence or written a line in favour of resort to strikes, which had frequently, he believed, done much harm. But the man must be profoundly ignorant of the actual condition of things around him who believed that they were to be accounted for mainly, or to any important extent, by misdirected combinations among workmen. Their total number in the United Kingdom had been estimated at upwards of 5,000,000; while the minority enrolled in trades' unions of all kinds did not exceed 800,000; and of these it was notorious that a large proportion had not for many years been engaged in any contention with their employers. Take Birmingham for example, which was said to be the place where unionism was weakest, and where accordingly he might be told that employment was good. He rejoiced to believe that, comparatively speaking, it was so. But