

town. I was, however, much struck with the stupid indifference of a large part of the lower class of the population, as compared with the great, and sometimes self-baffling readiness and eagerness of the population of any large town in England, in similar circumstances. No inducement or excitement beyond that of present pay and reward seemed sufficient to rouse one of the hundreds of great idle fellows that stood around to stir hand or foot for the preservation of the houses and property about. I was afterwards told, indeed, that by far too many of the population looked upon a fire as a godsend, more especially if it reached or threatened a merchant's store, when a regular system of plunder was carried out unblushingly, and, as it were, by prescriptive right.

I think I afterwards perceived the causes of the low state of moral feeling* exhibited on this and one or two similar points, by people that in other respects had many excellent qualities.

* The former state of vassalage in which they were held by the merchants,—the adventurous nature of their pursuits leading them to look on danger or misfortune as necessary and inevitable,—as also the want of education, and community of feeling, and of a popular opinion, are among the causes alluded to.