

This was enough to make him an unhappy man. But it did not stand alone. Everything seemed to him to be going wrong. All good things, public and private, seemed to be verging on their ends. The world as he had known it for sixty years was crumbling about his ears. It was time that he was gone.

Certainly the days of that Protection with which he believed the welfare of the land to be bound up were numbered. In the House Lord George and Mr. Disraeli—those strangest of bed-fellows!—might rage, the old Protectionist party might foam, invective and sarcasm, taunt and sneer might rain upon the traitor as he sat with folded arms and hat drawn down to his eyes, rectors might fume and squires swear; the end was certain, and Stubbs saw that it was. Those rascals in the North, they and their greed and smoke, that stained the face of England, would win and were winning. He had saved Riddsley by nine—but to what end? What was one vote among so many? He thought of the nut-brown ale, the teeming stacks, the wagoner's home,

Hard-by, a cottage chimney smokes
From betwixt two aged oaks.

He thought of the sweet cow-stalls, the brook where he had bent his first pin, and he sighed. Half the country folk would be ruined, and Shoddy from Halifax and Brass from Bury would buy their lands and walk in gaiters where better men had foundered. The country would be full of new men—Peels!

Well, it would last his time. But some day there would rise another Buonaparte, and they would find Cobden with his calico millennium a poor stay against starvation, his lean and flashy songs a poor substitute for wheat. It was all money now; the kindly feeling, the Christmas dole, the human ties where father had worked for father and son for son, and the thatch had covered three generations—all these were past and gone. He found one fault, it is true, in the past. He had one regret, as he looked back. The labourers