

The Triumph of the Anti-Corn Law League, and of Free Trade Principles

"A perfect Democracy with the unity of a Despotism."—"Its origin was in rectitude; its course in justice; its end in blessing."

This year will be ever-memorable for the triumphant result of the seven years' agitation by the League to obtain a repeal of those oppressive statutes which taxed the food of the many to enrich the few, and for the concomitant triumph of the great and natural laws which should ever regulate the commercial intercourse of all nations. "The 27th of June, 1846, is a day much to be observed"—a day which should ever be remembered with devout gratitude and thankfulness by the whole Empire; because, on that day, those obnoxious and cruel statutes, restricting and preventing the importation of food, were for ever repealed, and the new law went into operation.

The simplicity, the moral character, and gigantic power of the means employed by the League to effect this great revolution, commands the admiration of the world. It has erected a lofty monument, whose inscription shall proclaim, from age to age, to the oppressed of all nations, that the voice of public opinion—of enlightened and combined public intelligence—is able, under the guidance of philanthropic spirits, such as Richard Cobden and his associates, to effect by its peaceful but irresistible power, every desirable reformation. The League may be said to have begun its operations 19th March, 1839, when Mr. Paulton, an eminent lecturer on Free Trade principles, was appointed to superintend its organization; and on the 20th June, 1846, having nobly and peacefully fought the great battle of economic truth and justice for seven years, and accomplished the great object for which it was created, it voluntarily expired in the greatness of its strength, and in the very hour of its victory.

To effect a change in the law of the land, in the face of the combined influences of a powerful and hostile aristocracy, the ignorance and prejudice of the labourer, and the inequality of the popular representation in Parliament, seemed almost impossible; but a reliance upon the power of Truth, calmly but firmly reiterated by an awakened people in the ears of Royalty and of Parliament, sustained the noble spirits who first marshalled the legions, and led them on to victory. The means employed were—

- 1st. *To diffuse intelligence on the great principles of Trade and Commerce, by Public Lectures, Tracts, and Newspapers, shewing that Free Trade in grain, as in all other things, would promote the general good; and that all PROTECTION was based upon injustice, that it only enriched the few at the expense of the many, and deprived labour of its fair remuneration; according to the language of the English farmer, "We be protected, but we be starving."*
- 2nd. *To organize, enlarge, and combine the popular Representative influence in Parliament, by teaching the importance of universal fidelity at the hustings, and in the Registration Courts, and by legally assisting the small capitalists, while making investments, to become 40s. freeholders and electors.*