

The author also speaks of these stock-gamblers as using the most insidious means to influence public opinion in favor of their measures; and then proposes, seriously, a change in various matters of detail, thinking that this would prove a sufficient remedy for an evil which had its roots far down in the whole system of irredeemable currency. As well might a physician prescribe a pimple wash for a diseased liver.*

Now began to be seen more plainly some of the many ways in which an inflation policy robs the working class. As these knots of plotting schemers at the city centers were becoming bloated with sudden wealth, the producing classes of the country, though having in their possession more and more currency, grew lean. In the schemes and speculations put forth by stock-jobbers and stimulated by the printing of more currency, multitudes of small fortunes were absorbed and lost while a few swollen fortunes were rapidly aggregated in the larger cities. This crippled a large class in the country districts, which had employed a great number of workmen.

In the leading French cities now arose a luxury and license which was a greater evil even than the plundering which ministered to it. In the country the gambling spirit spread more and more. Says the same thoughtful historian whom I have already quoted: "What a prospect for a country when its rural population was changed into a great band of gamblers!"†

Nor was this reckless and corrupt spirit confined to business men; it began to break out in official circles, and public men who, a few years before, had been thought above all possibility of taint, became luxurious, reckless, cynical and finally corrupt. Mirabeau himself, who, not many months previous, had risked imprisonment and even death to establish constitutional government, was now—at this very time—secretly receiving heavy bribes. When, at the downfall of the monarchy a few years later, the famous iron chest of the Tuilleries was opened, there were found evidences that, in this carnival of inflation and corruption, he had been

* See "Extrait du registre des délibérations de la section de la bibliothèque," May 3, 1791, pp. 4, 5.

† Von Sybel, vol. 1, p. 273.