

Even the agricultural classes, landowners and farmers, then, as now, Protectionists at heart, were silenced. The ruin which they had feared and prophesied failed to descend upon them. The production increased, agricultural prices, on the whole, advanced, and the rents of agricultural land went up. During this period Free Trade appeared to have demonstrated to the whole people of this country its universal advantage.

But a new period was about to dawn. English Free Trade was to be put to a harder proof; it had to demonstrate its advantage not only in the form of a free exchange, or virtually a free exchange of commodities, but in the form of what our Protectionists call "one-sided Free Trade"—a system of free imports from countries which were one by one endeavouring by duties of constantly increasing severity to keep out our goods. Germany—at least, so far as Prussia is concerned—had begun the last century as almost a Free Trade country, so much so that William Huskisson, our earliest Parliamentary Free Trader, in 1825, expressed a hope in the House of Commons that "the time would