

national ideal was achieved that dark side was seen to be intensely black and lowering. Britain was ceasing to be only these small islands, and was becoming the British Empire; this involved economic revolution, and we have noticed how the sensitiveness and adaptability were attained which rendered this revolution possible; this sensitiveness was sufficient to make the revolution possible, but it was not nearly sufficient to remove all friction. The weak, the ignorant, and the backward always suffer when there is an economic upheaval, unless the process is conducted with transcendent skill and elaborate method; no such skill or method was at our disposal, but we established a vast system of public and private charity to save the myriads who fell out of the ranks from actual starvation and despair.

Here, at the risk of complexity, it is necessary to review the period of preparation (roughly speaking, from the accession of Elizabeth to the fall of Charles I); in the sixteenth century there was very generally over Europe an economic upheaval, consequent on the break-up of the Middle Ages and the discovery of the New World; to meet the stress there was very generally a poor-law system established. In England, as in other countries, the Government exerted itself to stem the economic tide, to maintain a vigorous and contented peasantry on the soil, and to save the corporate life and traditions of the craftsmen from the economic flood. Thus far indeed the national policy of work rather than life, the idea of hammering the world into shape at all costs, including the sacrifice of one's own comfort if need be, and one's own health, had perhaps been envisaged but had not been embarked upon. But with the fall of Charles I this conservative and domestic policy collapsed, the