

*Rural Ride, from Highworth to Cricklade, and thence  
to Malmsbury.*

HIGHWORTH (WILTS), MONDAY, 4th SEPT. 1826.—When I got to Devizes on Saturday evening, and came to look out of the inn-window into the street, I perceived, that *I had seen this place before*, and, always having thought, that *I should like to see Devizes*, of which I had heard so much talk as a famous corn-market, I was very much surprised to find, that it was *not new* to me. Presently a stage-coach came up to the door, with "*Bath and London*" upon its panels, and then I recollected, that I had been at this place, on my way to Bristol, last year. Devizes is, as nearly as possible, in the centre of the county, and the *canal* that passes close by it, is the great channel through which the produce of the country is carried away to be devoured by the idlers, the thieves and prostitutes, who are *all tax-eaters*, in the Wens of Bath and London. Pottern, which I passed through in my way from Warminster to Devizes, was once a place much larger than Devizes; it is now a mere ragged villiage, with a church large, very ancient, and of most costly structure. The whole of the people, here, might, as in most other cases, be placed in the *belfry*, or the church-porches. All the way along, the *mansion-houses* are nearly all gone. There is now and then a *great place*, belonging to a *boroughmonger*, or some one connected with boroughmongers; but, all the *little gentlemen* are gone; and hence it is, that parsons are now made *Justices of the Peace*! There are few other persons left, who are at all capable of filling the office *in a way to suit the system*! The *monopolizing brewers and rag-rooks* are, in some places, the "*magistrates*"; and thus is the whole thing *changed*, and England is no more what it was. Very near to the sides of my road from Warminster to Devizes, there were formerly (within a hundred years), 22 mansion-houses of sufficient note to be marked as such in the *county map*, then made. There are now only *seven* of them remaining. There were five parish-churches nearly close to my road; and in one parish out of the five the *parsonage-house* is in the parliamentary return said to be "*too small*" for the parson to live in, though the church would contain two or three thousand people, and though the living is a Rectory, and a rich one too! Thus has the church-property, or rather that public property which is called church-property, been *dilapidated*! The parsons have swallowed the tithes and the *rent of the glebes*; and have, successively suffered the parsonages-houses to fall into decay. But these parsonages-houses were indeed, *not intended for large families*. They were intended for a *priest*, a man part of whose business it was to distribute the tithes amongst the

of whose business it was to distribute the tithes amongst the poor and the strangers! The parson, in this case, as Corsley says, "*too small for an incumbent with a family*. Ah! there is the mischief. - It was never intended to give men tithes as a *premium for breeding!* Malthus does not seem to see any harm in *this sort of increase* of population. It is the *working* population, those who raise the food and the clothing, that he and Scarlett want to *put a stop to the breeding of*.

I saw, on my way through the down-countries, hundreds of acres of ploughed land in *shelves*. What I mean is, the side of a steep hill, made into the shape of a *pair of stairs*, only the *rising parts* more sloping than those of a stairs, and deeper in proportion. The side of the Hill, in its original form was too *steep to be ploughed*, or even to be worked with a spade. The earth as soon as moved, would have rolled down the hill; and besides, the rains would have soon washed down all the surface earth, and have left nothing for plants of any sort to grow in. Therefore the sides of hills, where the land was sufficiently good, and where it was wanted for the growing of corn, were thus made into a sort of *steps or shelves*; and the horizontal parts (representing the parts of the stairs that we put our feet upon,) *were ploughed and mowed*, as they generally are indeed, to this day. Now no man not even the hireling Chalmers, will have the impudence to say that these shelves amounting to thousands and thousands of acres in Wiltshire alone, were *not made by the hand of man*. It would be impudent to contend that these shelves were not formed by that cause. Yet, thus the scotch scribes must contend; or they must give up all assertions about the ancient beggary and want of population in England; for, as in the case of the churches, what were these shelves made FOR! And could they be made at all, without a great abundance of *hands*? These shelves are every where to be seen throughout the down countries of Sussex, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, Devonshire and Cornwall; and, besides this, large tracts of land amounting to millions of acres, perhaps, which are now down heaths, or woodlands, still if you examine closely, bear the marks of the plough. The fact is, I dare say, that the country has never varied much in the gross amount of its population, but, formerly the people were pretty evenly spread over the country, instead of being, as the greater part of them now are, collected together in great masses, where, for the greater part, the idlers live on the labour of the industrious.

In quitting Devizes yesterday morning, I saw, just on the outside of the town, a monstrous building which I took for a barrack; but upon asking what it was, I found it was one of those other marks of the Jubilee Reign; namely a *most magnificent gaol!* It seemed to me sufficient to hold one

half of the able bodied men in the country ! And it would do it too, and do it well ! Such a system must come to an end, and the end must be dreadful. As I came on the road, for the first three or four miles, I saw a great number of labourers either digging potatoes for their Sunday's dinner, or coming home with them, or going out to dig them. The land-owners or occupiers *let small pieces of land to labourers*, and these they cultivate with the spade for their own use. They pay in all cases, an enormous rent. The practice prevails all the way from Warminster to Devizes, and from Devizes to nearly this place (Highworth.) The rent is, in some places, *a shilling a rod*, which is, mind, 160*s.* or 8*l.* an acre ! Still the poor creatures like to have the land : they work in it at their spare hours ; and on Sunday mornings early : and the overseers, sharp as they may be, cannot *ascertain precisely* how much they get of their plat of ground. But, good God ! what a life to live ! What a life to see people live ? to see this sight in our own country, and to have the base vanity to boast of that country, and to talk of our "constitution" and our "*liberty*" and to affect to pity the Spaniards whose working people live like gentleman, compared with our miserable creatures. Again I say give me an inquisition and well healed cheeks and ribs, rather than "civil and religious liberty;" and skin and bone. But, the fact is, that, where honest and laborious men can be *compelled to starve quiet'y*, whether all at once or by inches, with old wheat ricks and fat cattle under their eye, it is mockery to talk of their "*liberty*," of any sort ; for the sum total of their state is this, they have "*liberty*" to choose between death by starvation (quick or slow) and death by the halter ! Between Warminster and Westbury I saw thirty or more men *digging* a great field of, I dare say, twelve acres. I thought, "surely, that '*humane*,' half-mad, and beastly fellow "Owen, is not got at work here, that Owen, who, the beastly "*scelosophers* tell us, went to the Continent, to find out how to "teach the labouring people *to live in a married state without having children.*" No : it was not Owen : it was the overseer of the parish, who had set these men to dig up this field, previously to its being *sown with wheat*. In short, it was a digging instead of a ploughing. The men, I found upon inquiry, got 9*d.* a day for their work. Plain digging, in the market gardens near London, is, I beleive, 3*d.* or 4*d.* a rod. If these poor men, who were chiefly weavers or spinners from Westbury, or had come home to their parish from Bradford or Trowbridge ; if they digged six rods each in a day, and fairly did it, they must work well. This would be 3 half-pence a rod, or 20*s.* an acre and that is as cheap as ploughing, and *four times as good*. But how much better to give the men



£100, or 20s. an acre and that is as cheap as ploughing, and four times as good. But how much better to give the men higher wages, and let them do more work? If married, how are their miserable families to live on 4s. 6d. a week? And if single, they must and will have more, either by *poaching*, or by taking without leave. At any rate, this is better than the road-work: I mean better for those who pay the rates; for here is something which they get for the money, that they give to the poor; whereas in the case of the road work, the money given in relief is generally wholly so much lost to the rate-payer. What a curious spectacle this is, the manufactories throwing the people back on the land! It is not about eighteen months ago that the Scotch Feelosofers, and especially Dr. Black, were calling upon the farm-labourers to become manufacturers! I remonstated with the Doctor at the time; but, he still insisted, that such a transfer of hands was the only remedy for the distress in the farming districts! However (and I thank God for it) the feelosofers have enough to do at home now, for the poor are crying for food in dear, cleanly, warm, fruitful Scotland herself, in spite of a' the Hamiltons and a' the Wallaces and a' the Maxwells and a' the Hope Johnstones and a' the Dundases and a' the Edinbro' Reviewers and a' the Birkbecks. In spite of all these the poor of Scotland are now *helping themselves*, or about to do it, for want of the means of purchasing food.

I went out of my way to see the Church at GREAT LYDDIARD, which, in the parliamentary return, is called *Lyddiard Tregoose*. In my old map it is called *Tregoose*; that is to say, *tress grosse*, or, *very big*. Here is a good old mansion-house and large walled-in garden and park, belonging, they told me, to Lord Bolingbroke. I went quite down to the house, close to which stands the large and fine church. It appears to *have been* a noble place; the land is some of the finest in the whole country; the trees show that the land is excellent; but, all, except the Church, is in a state of irrepair and apparent neglect, if not abandonment. The parish is large, the *living is a rich one*, it is a *Rectory*; but, though the incumbent has the great and small tithes, he, in his return, tells the Parliament, that the parsonage-house is *worn out and incapable of repair!* And, observe, that Parliament lets him *continue to sack the produce of the tithes and the glebe*, while they know the parsonage-house to be crumbling down, and while he has the impudence to tell them, that he does not reside in it, *though the laws say that he shall!* And, while this is suffered to be, a *poor man* may be transported for being in pursuit of a hare! What coals, how hot, how red, is this flagitious system preparing for the backs of its supporters.

In coming from Wotton-Basset to Highworth, I left Swindon a few miles away to my left, and came by the village of

don a few miles away to my left, and came by the village of Blunsdon. All along here I saw great quantities of hops in the hedges, and very fine hops, and I saw, at a village called Stratton, I think it was, the first *campanula* that I ever saw in my life. The main stalk was more than *four feet high*, and there were four stalks, none of which were less than three feet high. All through the country, poor as well as rich, very neat in their gardens, and very careful to raise a great variety of flowers. At Blunsdon I saw a clump, or, rather, a sort of orchard, of as fine walnut trees as I ever beheld, and loaded with walnuts. Indeed I have seen great crops of walnuts all the way from London. From Blunsdon to this place is but a short distance, and I got here about two or three o'clock. This is a *cheese country*; some corn, but, generally speaking, it is a country of *dairies*. The sheep here are of the large kind; a sort of Leicester sheep, and the cattle chiefly for milking. The ground is a stiff loam at top, and a yellowish stone under. The houses are almost all built of stone. It is a tolerably rich, but, by no means, a gay and pretty country. *Highworth* has a situation corresponding with its name. On every side you go up-hill to it, and from it you see to a great distance all round, and into many counties.

I saw, at Coleshill, the *most complete farm-yard that I ever saw*, and that I believe there is in all England, many and complete as English farm-yards are. This was the contrivance of Mr. Palmer, Lord Folkestone's bailiff and steward. The master gives all the credit of plantation and farm to the servant; but the servant ascribes a good deal of it to the master. Be-

tween them, at any rate, here are some most admirable objects in rural affairs. And here, too, there is *no misery amongst those who do the work*; those who, without whom there could have been no Locust-plantations and no farm-yard. Here all are comfortable; gaunt hunger here stares no man in the face. That same disposition, which sent Lord Folkestone to visit John Knight in the dungeons at Reading, keeps pinching hunger away from Coleshill. It is a very pretty spot all taken together. It is chiefly grazing land; and, though the making of cheese and bacon is, I dare say, the most profitable part of the farming here, Lord Folkestone fats oxen, and has a stall for it, which ought to be *shown to foreigners*, instead of the spinning jennies. A *fat ox* is a *finer thing than a cheese*, however good. There is a *dairy* here too, and beautifully kept. When this stall is full of oxen, and they all fat, how it would make a *French* farmer stare! It would make even a Yankee think, that "*Old England*" was a respectable "*mother*," after all. If I had to show this village off to a Yankee. I would *blindfold* him all the way to, and

off to a Yankee, I would *blindfold* him all the way to, and after I got him out of the village, lest he should see the scarecrows of paupers on the road.

For a week or ten days before I came to Highworth, I had, owing to the uncertainty as to where I should be, no newspapers sent me from London; so that really, I began to feel, that I was in the "*dark ages*." Arrived here, however, the *light* came bursting in upon me, flash after flash, from the Wen, from Dublin, and from Modern Athens. I had, too, for several days, nobody to enjoy the light with. I had no *sharers* in the "*anteeluctual*" treat, and this sort of enjoyment, unlike that of some other sorts, is augmented by being divided. Oh! how happy we were, and how proud we were, to find (from the "*instructor*"), that we had a king, that we were the subjects of a sovereign, who had graciously sent *twenty-five pounds* to Sir Richard Birnie's Poor Box, there to swell the amount of the munificence of *fined delinquents!* Aye, and this, too, while (as the "*instructor*" told us) this same sovereign had just bestowed, unasked for, an annuity of 500*l.* a year on Mrs. Fox, who had already a *banging pension*, paid out of the taxes, raised in part, and in the greatest part, upon a people who are half-starved and half-naked. And our admiration at the poor-box affair was not at all lessened by the reflection, that *more money than sufficient to pay all the poor-rates of Wiltshire and Berkshire* will, this very year, have been expended on new palaces, on pullings down and alterations of palaces before existing, and on ornaments and decorations in and about *Hyde Park*, where a bridge is building, which I am told, must cost *a hundred thousand pounds*, though all the water, that has to pass under it, *would go through a sugar-hogshead*; and DOES, a little while before it comes to this bridge, go through an arch which I believe to be smaller than a sugar hogshead! Besides, there was *a bridge here before*, and a very good one too.

Now, will Jerry Curteis, who complains so bitterly about the poor-rates, and who talks of the poor working people as if their poverty were the worst of crimes; will Jerry say any thing about this *bridge*, or about the enormous expenses at *Hyde Park Corner* and in *St. James's Park*? Jerry *knows*, or he ought to know, that this bridge alone will cost *more money than half the poor-rates of the county of Sussex!* Jerry knows, or he ought to know, that this bridge must be paid for out of *the taxes*. He must know, or else he must be what I dare not suppose him, that it is the *taxes that make the paupers*; and yet I am afraid, that Jerry will not open his lips on the subject of this bridge. What they are going at, at *Hyde Park Corner*, nobody that I talk with seems to know. The "*great Captain of the Age*," as that nasty palaverer, Brougham called him, lives close to this spot. where also the



Brougham called him, lives close to this spot, where also the "English ladies' " naked Achilles stands, having, on the base of it, the word WELLINGTON in great staring letters while all the other letters are *very, very small*; so that tax-eaters and fund gamblers from the country, when they go to crouch before this image, think it is the image of the *Great Captain himself!* The reader will recollect, that, after the battle of Waterloo, when we beat Napoleon with nearly a million of foreign bayonets in our pay, pay that came out of that *borrowed money*, for which we have *now* to wince and howl: the reader will recollect that, at that "glorious" time, when the insolent wretches of tax-eaters were ready to trample us under foot; that, at that time, when the Yankees were defeated on the *Serpentine River*, and before they had thrashed Blue and Buff so unmercifully on the ocean and on the lakes; that, at that time of exultation with the corrupt, and of mourning with the virtuous, the Collective, in the hey-day, in the delirium, of its joy, *resolved to expend three millions of money on triumphal arches, or columns, or monuments of some sort or other, to commemorate the glories of the war!* Soon after this, however *low prices came*, and they drove triumphal arches out of the heads of the Ministers, until "*prosperity, unparalleled prosperity*" came! This set them to work upon *palaces and streets*; and, I am told, that the *triumphal-arch project* is now going on at *Hyde Park Corner!* Good God! If this should be true, how *apt will every thing be!* Just about the time that the arch, or arches, will be completed; just about the time that the scaffolding will be knocked away, down will come the *whole* of the horrid boroughmongering system, for the upholding of which the vile tax-eating crew called for the war! All these palaces and other expensive projects were *hatched* two years ago; they were *hatched* in the days of "*prosperity*"; the plans and contracts were made, I dare say, *two or three years ago!* However, they will be completed much about in the *nick of time!* They will help to exhibit the system in its true light.

THE "best possible public instructor" tells us, that Canning *is going to Paris.* For *what*, I wonder? His brother, Huskisson, was there last year; and he *did nothing.* It is supposed, that the "revered and ruptured Ogden" orator is going to try the force of his *oratory*, in order to induce France and her allies to let *Portugal alone.* He would do better to *arm some ships of war!* Oh! no: never will that be done again; or, at least, *there* never will again *be war* for three months as long as this borough and paper system shall last! This system has *run itself out.* It has lasted a good while, and has done tremendous mischief to the people of England; but, it is *over*; it is *done for*; it will live for a while, but it will go about *dragging its wings and half shutting its eyes.* like a cock that

drooping its wings and half shutting its eyes, like a cock that has got the pip: it will NEVER CROW AGAIN; and for that I most humbly and fervently thank God! It has crowed over us long enough: it has pecked us and spurred us and slapped us about quite long enough. The nasty, insolent creatures, that it has sheltered under its wings, have triumphed long enough: they are now going to the the work-house and thither let them go.

*(To be continued)*