

this remarkable increase were huddled in towns, leaving the country districts almost as sparsely populated as they were in the days when Frank and Briton were hacking and hewing at each other in the Peninsula. In his *National Progress* (p. 5) MULHALL arrives at a like conclusion for the period 1841—1894, during which, he says, 'urban population moved four times as fast as rural.' According to the *Statesman's Year Book* the pace was even more rapid between 1881 and 1891—the rural population of England and Wales showing an increase of only 3.4 per cent. in that period as against 15.3 per cent. among the dwellers in towns. At the census of 1891 the rural population was only 28.3 per cent. and the urban as high as 71.7 per cent., of the inhabitants of England and Wales. And no country on the surface of our planet has so vast a proportion of its population resident in towns.

The loadstone that attracts population to towns is also at work, though with less striking results, in France, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and in practically every Continental country in Europe. For brevity's sake we will merely summarise the main facts in point. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the face of Europe was estimated to be dotted over with a population of 175,000,000. In 1870 it had risen to 300,000,000. At present it stands at about 370,000,000. This is, in all reason, a rapid increase. But the increase in the number of cities of over 100,000 inhabitants shows it a clean pair of heels. In 1821 there were in Europe only 21 such cities, counting among them an aggregate of 4,500,000 souls. In 1850 the number had risen to 75; in 1870 to 90, with a total population of about 20,000,000; and in 1896 to 121, which sheltered as many as 37,000,000 living inhabitants. In 1801 France had only three cities of over 100,000 population. England and Germany had only two each. But time and industrialism altered all that, and in 1896 England had 30 such cities, Germany 28, France 10. Dr. JOHNSON'S views of city life seem to have a long, strong grip also upon the mind of young America. According to MULHALL, the ratio of urban to total population in the United States in 1800 was only 6.4 per cent. Sixty years later it had climbed as high as 13.5 per cent. In 1880 (according to the *Statesman's Year Book*) it had reached 22.57 per cent.; and at the census of 1890, twenty-nine people in every hundred in the United States were living in 286 towns of over 8000 inhabitants. In his valuable statistical work, *The Seven Colonies of Australasia, 1899-1900*, Mr. COGHLAN says that the growth of the chief cities of Australasia 'has no parallel among the cities of the old world. Even in America,' he adds, 'the rise of the great cities has been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the rural population, but in these colonies, perhaps for the first time in history, was presented the spectacle of magnificent cities growing with marvellous rapidity, and embracing within their limits one third of the population of the States of which they are the seat of government. The abnormal aggregation of the population in their capital cities is a most unfortunate element in the progress in the colonies, and one which until recently seemed to become every year more marked.' Melbourne and Adelaide are the worst sinners in this respect. Sydney is also conspicuous. Wellington—New Zealand's capital—is a happy exception. And our four largest cities—Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin—taken together contain only 25.54 per cent. of the whole population of the Colony.'

This rush of population to cities has, especially in Great Britain, seriously disturbed the equilibrium of things, and in the not distant future promises to provide the Governments of various countries with some of the knottiest problems that have ever exercised a statesman's brains. We will here briefly refer to three only of the difficulties created by this menacing movement of population. (1) The first is the question of degeneration. Some years ago a prominent London surgeon expressed the opinion that the London-bred unit tends to die out after the third generation. Dr. ANDREW WILSON neither accepts nor denies this opinion. But he maintains that the conditions of ordinary town life produce deterioration. (2) The neglect or partial abandonment of agriculture raises the great food question. It is a mere accident that the pressure of this aching difficulty is felt most in Great Britain. A vast percentage of

the nation's food-supply comes from Russia, India, and the United States. And in possible—though, it is hoped, not even remotely probable—circumstances, a war with France or Russia might result in Great Britain being starved into prompt and hopeless surrender. We sorely need to have as much attention and talent devoted to agriculture as to the weaving and dyeing of cheap cotton prints. And our legislators would do well to paste in their hats the saying of RICHARD JEFFERIES: 'All ends in the same: iron mines, coal mines, factories, furnaces, the counter, the desk. No one can live on iron or coal or cotton—the object is really sacks of wheat.' (3) Yet another possible menace lurks in the vast masses that are crowded together in our great cities. It is the danger that lies in the sudden changes to which the course of invention or of legislation has time and again subjected industrial populations and forced their patience and endurance to a strain which they may not be always able to endure. It is no longer as in the days when DICK WHITTINGTON set his face towards London. The HODGE and HANS of to-day, lurching along citywards with slung bundles, may be preparing sleepless nights and anxious days for the BROUGHAMS and the BISMARCKS of the twentieth century.

While sundry quack-heads have been prescribing remedies for the crying evil of rural depopulation, local cures have been in operation here and there with varying measures of success. The Victorian village settlement scheme of a few years ago was mottled over with many a failure. A singularly well-managed agricultural school in Minnesota is credited with having settled 95 out of every 100 of its pupils on the land. Some societies of dames in Holland are said to have wrought wonders in the matter of removing the poor from the cities and rooting them on poultry and dairy farms. But the most luminously successful effort at enticing the surplus population of the cities back into the green and open country stands to the credit of Denmark. It is the joint result of private enterprise and State aid applied to waste land reclaimed for the purpose. The scheme is described in a pamphlet published some five months ago by the Howard Association—*Back to the Land: Denmark's Example*. The little kingdom has an evil-tempered climate and a sullen sky. But its rulers have taken the lead in agricultural reform, with the happy result that, although it counts no very rich people among its population, Denmark has in a short period become—according to MULHALL'S figures for 1896—the third country in Europe, and the fifth in the world, for average wealth. Our legislators might, with benefit to the Colony, turn the key in the front door of the Parliament Buildings for a session, and spend the talking-period among the green, flat farms and the trim-kept villages of Denmark.

Notes.

The *Bruce Herald* (Milton) has the following paragraph on one of the thousand little blisters that irritate the epidermis of the journalist nowadays: 'Country journalism is filled with life's little ironies. Here is one of them. For some time we have given the local Athenæum free copies of the *Bruce Herald*, and the other day a well-to-do but frugal-minded settler, who knows this, came in and coolly stopped his paper, "because," said he, "I can read it for nothing at the Milton Athenæum."'

Some Canterbury journalists have their brains on the rack in a vain endeavor to solve the following riddle: 'What should be done with a bottle of whisky found on a man against whom the Kaiapoi Bench had made a prohibition order? This was a question raised by the police at the local court a few days ago. The Bench, had no advice, however, to offer beyond the remark that if the police gave it back to him within twelve months they would be liable to a penalty for supplying him with drink. It is presumed the man's property will be retained till his prohibition has expired and he is ready to make a fresh start, by which time the whisky should be mellow.'

The Gisborne School Committee intend to 'teach the young idea how to shoot'—out of air guns. A dozen of these deadly weapons are to be purchased for the use of the pupils attending the local school. One shot out of an air gun at the end of the week for 'never absent never late' cards does not, however, seem a great