



## THE RIOTS.

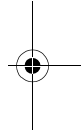
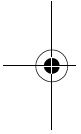
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There is no known manuscript.

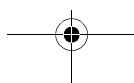
On 28 August 1842, De Quincey wrote to *Blackwood's*, anxious that his article on the Riots had not been sent on time. (It had been delivered on 22 August.) The letter suggests that he was worried his publishers might not like the content. (NLS MS 4060 ff. 256/7.)

During August 1842 there were widespread disturbances in the industrial regions of Britain in response to increased unemployment, destitution and poverty. These disturbances included strikes against wage reductions, lock-outs, troops firing on workers, and the so-called 'Plug Riots' in which workers sabotaged industrial plants. On 1 September *The Times* also began its report on the unrest by referring to 'Anti-Corn Law-League Riots'. This was a typical strategy of those who wished to discredit the League.



AT last the storm has broken; the Corn-League traitors *have* done their worst; and the executive power will now show them the impotence of that 'worst' towards any one the very least of those objects which it proclaims. If it had become inevitable that sooner or later such a conflict must be weathered, if it was past all deprecation that such an experiment must be fought through – then we rejoice that the explosion has happened at this particular time: at a time when Parliament is not sitting, from one chamber of which issues for ever a voice of encouragement to sedition – that voice, having now no *privilege* to protect its accursed counsels, is seasonably gagged: at a time when the country is disengaged from foreign wars; but above all, at a time when the *universal* revival of prosperous auguries has stripped the insurrection of any specious alliance which else it might have assumed with real distress, has alienated from the insurgents a dangerous sympathy, and has forced them to become odious in the eyes of good citizens, by tempting them into tyranny the foulest over their fellow-labourers, and into mutinous ingratitude towards Providence, in the midst of a harvest the most splendid on record.<sup>1</sup>

The points are striking, in this vast insurrection, which demand earnest notice; for some of them are already misrepresented in the London papers,

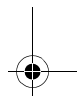
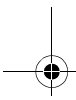
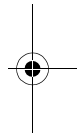
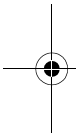




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many are likely to be forgotten, and all are connected with a case of life and death for the welfare of this mighty empire. Is it really come to this, that every order among us – first, midst, and last – are to live under the uplifted rod of colliers and weavers; to be threatened in perpetuity with the ‘five points of the charter;’ and, if standing conspiracies go for any thing, to hold every atom of our freedom – of our civil rights – and of our property, on the sufferance of one sole class, and that the very lowest (except paupers) and the most desperately ignorant amongst us? We know the claims of our country: for our own parts, we carry these claims almost to an extravagant height. But rather than submit to an indignity and a risk like that which for years back has been offered to the majesty of these ancient nations, the atrocious menace from a knot of delegates begrimed with soot and tarnish – that they, even they, will put an end to our whole polity and civil existence, by placing us all (not their own class, but every class amongst us) under some vile scribbler’s pamphlet entitled ‘a charter’ and ‘five points,’ as a supreme law for Great Britain, – who would not rather choose to migrate into a land of forests, having yet but few blessings of civilization diffused over its surface?

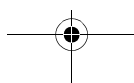
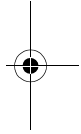
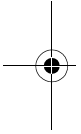
We write up to the latest moment allowed by the press, and, with such light as the public journals furnish, we will now rapidly review the main features and characteristics of this vast *confluent*<sup>2</sup> tumult – the most formidable, by its example and its tendencies, of any that has ever existed in any region of the earth. We say this advisedly: the distinctions are several which divide this insurrection from any other on record. In England, up to this time, no riots have ever occurred having any, the smallest, connexion with disorganizing plans; in these riots, though often disowned by local mobs, many times over has been hoisted the banner of the people, calling themselves *Chartists*;<sup>3</sup> and we need not to tell any man of reasonable understanding, that this thing calling itself the Charter, would to-morrow, if it were conceded, establish a Parliament of paupers. One of the five points<sup>4</sup> enacts universal suffrage – a second abolishes all property qualification of the simplest kind for Parliamentary candidates – a third, by enacting daily wages for the members, would remove the last shadow of a repulsion such as now exists to the needy, or even destitute, men of clever speechifying talents, for entering, by a vast majority, into the composition of our legislative body. What follows? That within three weeks, were it merely to earn their wages, the new house of legislators would have abolished all funded property, under the showy pretence of remitting to the people that annual thirty millions of taxes requisite for meeting the interest. Their second step would be, what already they parade as an ‘equitable distribution’ of property; and at this point they would first begin to learn the fatal reaction of their first measure. At this moment, we see men notorious for wealth, and so far within the reach of better counsels, as is argued by the fact that they are brothers to members of the present parliament, actually hounding on the people to substitute, for a course of momentary violence which must soon recoil upon themselves, a cool, deter-





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mined combination for obtaining the five points – which being obtained, we have explained what would be inevitably their first act. And if, by any lucky accident, intestine feuds amongst members of the new parliament should intercept, at the very first opening, this capital measure of destruction, then – because by another of the five points, each parliament is to reach its natural death within the twelve months – of course, the mob electors would return no man to the second parliament but such as would enter into solemn securities for passing their *sine-qua-non*<sup>5</sup> measures. Besides which, a sixth point would soon be added to this ‘Quinquarticular’<sup>6</sup> code, viz. – that, in respect to all restive members who should presume, after a certain settled warning, to disobey the orders of their constituents, a power should be held in reserve for suspending their wages; being an acknowledged mercenary servant, self-proclaimed to be such by the badge of wages, no member, under such a system, could for a moment resist what would then have become so reasonable a condition of service. A mob-flunky<sup>7</sup> he would have become, and the duties of a mob-flunky he must discharge, or else be committed to a treadmill – though it were Mr Cobden, Mr Hawes, or Mr Marshall himself.<sup>8</sup> Such being the machinery for coercing the House into obedience, and having adverted to its first measure, we now point to the second, viz. the ‘equitable adjustment.’<sup>9</sup> Often, and significantly, has this been mentioned, in the way of hope and consolation, by the Chartists. What is meant, under any mystification of words we need not say, is – one universal partition, amongst the nineteen millions in the island, of the existing property, be its nature what it may, and under whatsoever tenure. Here first the legislators would learn the meaning of *a reaction*. They would be headed back in hideous confusion by their own previous act. Those who had been put down in their lists as good for two hundred thousand pounds, would produce their documents as shareholders in societies past all counting, or in obligations upon others holding such property, or in deposits with bankers. The call would travel back upon the banks, and from the banks upon the funds. In the funds, or else in the unfunded debt, [that is, in exchequer bills, which, for a known convenience, are a favourite investment with bankers,] would be found the vast overbalance of all debts owing by banks. But the public debt, funded or unfunded, resting on the very same security, had already by the terms of the case ceased to exist. And we may add this fact, wholly overlooked by the Chartists, that in every highly civilized country an enormous proportion of what is called (and *rightly* called, under the reign of justice) the national property, has its existence in men’s good faith, intentions, average prospect of life, and current means of keeping pace with past contracts. Such a man is reputed, nay, he reputes himself, worth fifty thousand pounds. He is so in effect; and the proof of it is seen in the issue at his death, fifteen years hence, when he will leave effectually, and not nominally, the power over fifty thousand to his representatives. But, when you come to plunder him, he will not be found good for five of the fifty. Twenty thousand he held on the security of a mortgage; but the very estate on which this mort-



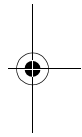
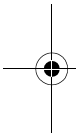
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gage is secured, has been already partitioned and carried to account. Many thousands will be ultimately traced to the funds; and the attempt to evade that form of bankruptcy by fancied collateral securities on insurance offices, turnpike trusts, or other endless depositories of capital, will be like the vain effort of Frenchmen to escape across the frontiers; now they turned down a bridle-road to the right, and now down a village-lane or a mountain sheep-track to the left; but, alas! all was mockery. The bridle-road – the lane – the sheep-track – all led back eventually to the main royal-road terminating in a fortified city; and at those gates all further hope was extinguished. A larger proportion by much of British property, than of other European property, is of that kind which depends upon a word – upon a breath – upon an aerial ‘understanding.’ As a subject for plunder, many a *millionaire* would collapse into nothing at all. And yet it would be no true argument to say – ‘Well, then, if they are such windy bladders as you describe them, the sooner they are probed the better; for thus there is one delusion less.’ Not so; whilst the law reigns, there is no delusion. The delusion first arises when the empire of Parliamentary confiscation arises. Allow the time, allow the reciprocities of good faith, allow the regular accumulation of the public funds, allow the fulfilment of all contracts, (which can only be fulfilled through the *currency* of their several periods, and would perish violently by a summary demand) – those things allowed, there is no delusion. But if a spoliator attempts to convert such delicate and susceptible property into gold and silver, then in every case it will prove delusive in excess; ‘not enriching him,’ the spoliator, ‘and making us,’ the owners, ‘poor indeed.’ Look at the English funds; can there be a better security at this moment? Is there any known estate in land, houses, or what you please, upon which you have an equally good assurance, that you will be paid up to the last farthing of your claim, at a day and within hours that are assignable? Yet we all know, that there is no real capital corresponding to this enormous annual interest. In that sense, it is a delusion – a huge inflated tympany,<sup>10</sup> which would collapse into nothing when once punctured. But what then? Is it a delusion that thirty millions of pounds sterling are annually enjoyed by individuals and societies, or made over to others in equitable discharge of contracts? What could any proprietor do with an estate in houses or lands that he cannot do with an estate in the funds? The annual interest has never failed for a day since the public debt began; and, if he wishes to use his estate as a capital, he needs only a very short notice – no advertisements – no far-sighted arrangements – no costly deeds of conveyance or public auctions – summarily to convert his nominal into a real capital. This great basis, underdrawn below the vast edifice of mutual faith between private parties – as, in one sense, itself a delusion, (because dependent only upon taxes conventionally pledged, and pledged only by Parliamentary faith,) so also, in a sense more virtually true, is the great arch of support to incalculable interchanges of good faith, upon which reposes a better half of the public property. The eight or nine hundred millions of the national debt are far



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below the superstructure of annual debt undertaken and discharged – partly through indirect agency by banking, &c., but partly by the direct aid of that ideal capital; ideal, but performing the functions of capital the most real. The parent interest considered as a capital, and all the derivative interests, become delusions, and the emptiest of delusions, from the moment when the robber handles them; they are the happiest of human devices for promoting an indefinite prosperity, so long as good faith and the steady domination of a known rule are allowed to move on undisturbed and unfettered. How merely dust and ashes are all estates reposing on elaborate interchangeable engagements of good faith, from the instant when they are breathed upon by the foul breath of pillagers, may be judged of by this – that even the *real* estates of a nation, the most real and absolute that can be imagined, the fee-simple<sup>11</sup> of the select parts amongst the national lands, have never fetched a reasonable price when brought into the market by the hands of spoliators. Look at the cases of church property, glebe lands, or tithes, as offered for sale in England, Scotland, France, and recently in Spain and in Portugal. The movement was partly prompted in all these cases by the secret pressure of a growing public necessity; and yet in all, happening to fall in with a spirit of rabid spoliation in the sellers and buyers, the measure proved one of dreadful disappointment to the original promoters and speculators. Here the spoliators were baffled by their own act in overloading the market; against which Spain has vainly endeavoured to take precautions by throwing the sales into successive instalments. But the result has always been – that whilst, in the next generation, it was found that the final purchaser had drawn an excessive prize, the original and summary vendor fared as the owner of a wheat-field in the month of May, who gives it up to the discretion of a cavalry regiment. Containing twenty acres, the field might have yielded sixty quarters of grain – that is, a year's support for every one of sixty men; but grazed so prematurely by the horses, it will barely yield one day's feed. Such is the collapse of property the most absolutely real – property heaven-insured against depreciation, when used for conversion into far less real property – gold, for instance, or silver – by the agitated and trembling robber. His own panic, the panic which he has spread over property in general, reaches himself by a retributive reflux. And if property in this extreme of solidity touches so abject a point of public depression, we may readily imagine how much frailer than frailty must be that tremulous species of property in the other extreme, which depends upon credit, on which abuts finally (by however long a circuit) upon any public incorporations which themselves, in the last resort, abut upon the public funds. Mere credit wavers and oscillates, like a candle out of doors on a windy night, with the breath of a rumour; and as to the public securities – mediate in banks, &c., or immediate in the funds – all of them depend absolutely, and without a chance of retrieval, upon that fiat of a parliament which first created them, and which has all along sustained them.



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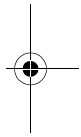
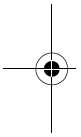
Why do we go into this discussion at such a moment of hurry? Because, by less than advertising the true meaning, and the dreadful consequences of the 'five points' – by less than an exposure of the robber Parliament, which beyond all doubt and all delay the 'five points' promise us, it would be impossible to expose the real difference in presumption, in malice, and in evil tendency, by which the present riots radiating from Lancashire, stand distinguished from all former riots at home, and from all foreign riots, (except those of the two French Revolutions.) A *Jacquerie*,<sup>12</sup> it may be said, goes the same length in principle: this sort of insurrection has repeatedly existed on the continent; more than once as to the *thing* in France; in Germany, on several occasions during the middle ages; and perhaps for the last time in the Anabaptist villanies at an early stage of the 16th century.<sup>13</sup> But sometimes these popular movements have had their first origin in a bread tumult, (what in Scotland, from a local peculiarity of the food, was technically known as a *meal mob*);<sup>14</sup> often in the pressure of a local tax, (as was the case in the brief Neapolitan mutiny under Masaniello the fisherman);<sup>15</sup> often in the hatred to foreign rulers, (which popular feeling co-operated with the tax in the case last mentioned;) often in just and courageous adherence to ancient laws or privileges wrongfully and abruptly annulled, (as in the very interesting insurrection of the Commons in Castile during the first absence in Germany of the Emperor Charles V.);<sup>16</sup> but almost uniformly with the excuse of some deep provocation, in long previous oppression by an irresponsible *noblesse*, or in usurpation by the crown. At present there may have been oppressions: there may be that excuse for our rioters: we fear there is: these grievances, for instance, were recently alleged, (meeting at the Crown Inn, Bolton.) Supposing them true, afterwards will come the question – Who was the oppressor, and who is marked out for the victim? The corn-league masters are the oppressors, the nation is marked for the victim. These are grievances: *'Reduction of our wages; unjust and unreasonable abatements; forcing upon us unhealthy and disagreeable houses; charging exorbitant rents; meanly and avariciously employing apprentices to supersede the regular journeymen; curtailing wages by not paying up to the list almost unanimously agreed to; thus proving their (the masters') unprincipled meanness and trickery.'* Sticking to this memorial of wrong, proving it, and not, arrogantly beyond all known arrogance, intermeddling with fundamental politics, the working people of Lancashire would have carried along with them the sympathies of all England. 'But all have not intermeddled with politics: some have even disclaimed politics by printed bills.' We must not too much rely upon that. It is the disease, and oftentime the providential euthanasia<sup>17</sup> of such mobs congregated for riot, that they fall into anarchy; and therefore, if we receive it as a fair condition for pronouncing judgment upon them, that first of all they must be of one mind, that is a condition which never will be realized: with a sufficient motive, as, for instance, with any anxiety for the public judgment on themselves, artificially they could organize such a schism, in preparation beforehand of the plea that all had not agreed to the general counsels, whilst



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taking good care that no practical loss of strength should thus accrue to their faction. But as to these mobs – they traffic not in excuses; they regard not any pleas in justification; they are reckless of the public judgment. Their present offence, its head and front, is – that they defy and make war upon the public beyond the ring-fence of their own labouring order; their audacity (many times we have reason to repeat, an audacity absolutely without precedent) goes to this length – that they, the men without property, do not demand to be placed on the level of those who have property; do not ask for equal political rights; do not ask for one moiety of the legislating authority: no! this contents them not; they will not even be satisfied with the larger share of the law-making power. No, no: their war-cry is – ‘We that have hitherto had none, intend now to have all. We will not take a part of the public power in this vast empire; we will not take the larger part; but we, the weavers, tailors, cobblers, and cotton-spinners, insist on having the whole. And not, mark you, as any concession or indulgence, but as our right – too long kept from us by violence.’ For as to the pretence that they *allow* the men of property to vote, that is the merest fraud, that could never blind any man of reflection. The suffrages of property would be so utterly swamped and engulfed by those of the no-property men, that to struggle at all would be the mere farce of a consciously-impotent protest. Out of nineteen million heads in this island, not three hundred thousand are connected with property sufficient to ensure the conservative instincts and sympathies of properties. This is a subject which at some future opening we design to treat, upon some former experimental enquiries of our own in that direction; we doubted then how far the possession of a comfortable property would act upon the politics of an individual, whether by associating him to the interests of the aristocracy, or by associating him in feeling and habits to the wishes of the democracy. That point we settled satisfactorily, but not to our satisfaction; and the result we shall attempt to give at a future day. For the present, we content ourselves with throwing the considerate reader upon the simple relation in point of numbers between the property and the no-property classes. Were the first even a million, then the other would be eighteen millions for England and Scotland. Each class must have the same divisor\* for ascertaining the number of voters; consequently, the quotients will exhibit the very same relations. But besides the general question arising as to property so circumstanced (by quality or by amount) as to link the holders much more strongly by sympathy with the working class, than by interest with the aristocracy, there is another outstanding fact which tells powerfully against the chances of property in such a fearful struggle. Many of the master manufacturers, of really large and con-

\* Say that this were five: for in order to have the whole amount of fighting men from any given multitude, including both sexes and all ages, in order, therefore, to intercept all males from sixteen to sixty, it is usual to take four as the divisor. But in this case, when the limits are narrower by twenty-one to sixty-three, and with the exclusion of debtors, malefactors, idiots, and insane, perhaps five would be a fair divisor.





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spicuous properties, have shown themselves base enough to abjure the natural creed and principles of their own order. Some, as mere traitors to principle, in gratification of their own vanity, and as a solitary means of gaining a distinction, have professed themselves Chartists: more, perhaps, have done this as pure simpletons, accustomed to view every thing printed in a book as somehow imaginary and never meant to be realized. But there are cases before us more flagrant than this. There are men both in and out of the House, who, under the notion of a 'capital row,' or a 'famous lark,' would cry, 'Go it!' to any possible insurrection; as amongst the Bucaniers,<sup>18</sup> from mere monotony and *taedium vitae*, during their long inter-spaces of dull inaction, some were always found ready to propose a plot for firing the powder magazine – never alleging any other reason than that thus 'they would ride to h–ll on such a glorious blaze.'<sup>19</sup> These, it may be hoped, are few: but the numbers of needy people, originally well-educated and well-connected, who have suffered, in the want of suitable employment, a total dissolution of principles not less than has been produced by decay of wages amongst the working orders, are now very great. These people, as a body, are every where to be purchased; they are on sale for ever – they and their abilities for speaking or for writing. But, beside these, conspicuously in Parliament do we not behold members of large property who intrench themselves in Parliamentary privilege as a vile mode to escape the penalties of sedition – sometimes even of treason? And to what other class can we refer that gentleman,<sup>20</sup> brother to a senator, who, in a published letter, addresses the Chartists as a fraternal co-operator, anxious for their prudence, simply because anxious for their final success? So that, upon the whole, we are far wide of the truth if we flatter ourselves, that even upon the aristocracy we are entitled to count in their whole nominal extent. Nay, as respects that last tower of strength and innermost citadel of the constitution – the House of Lords, we heard, on the authority of a venerable and emphatically Conservative peer, such a report of the horrid Radicalism which he himself heard bandied to and fro at the fireplace in the House, as fills us with awe for the approach of any great collision between the Conservative and destroying forces of this country.

So much it was necessary to say, in order to show the real value and purport of what is meant by the Lancashire rioters in threatening us with the 'five points.' Very many people have never cared to enquire into the nature of these points. Had the points been two, they might have listened to: – but five – all, of course, abstract 'rights of man' – that was too much for patience. Far less will be a considerate man's patience, when he does understand them; and when he sees that every one of the five has the sole object of 'packing'<sup>21</sup> a pauper and mob-dependent House of Commons, without opening for challenge on the part of property, and under summary orders to do the bidding (as they take the wages) of the sovereign people. This it was necessary to expose, in order to show the difference of this insurrection from all former insurrections, even when they have been anti-social, like the *Jacquerie*. Almost universally,





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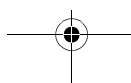
indeed, it may be said – that in other ages, where political insurrections have arisen, this irregularity has been due to the want of any natural organ in the political system for expressing the popular voice through a legitimate channel. With the rise of representative governments, all excuse ceases for appeals by direct insurrection. ‘But,’ replies the Lancashire mob, ‘the House of Commons will not receive or discuss our petitions.’ ‘No!’ we rejoin, ‘and impossible you yourselves make it that they should. You say at intervals, “Your honourable House,” and you call yourselves “petitioners;” but you describe the House as in act and deed the most infamous of confederacies, combined for purposes of oppression; swindlers, though still, by courtesy, all honourable men; and their enactments, for fifty years back, as one series of efforts to help themselves and their connexions, at any cost or sacrifice to what you denominate *the people*. Such petitions you know in your hearts were never meant or shaped to be received; and you had insured beforehand that they never should be received. You hoped in your malice that thus you could gain a double advantage; you would have another self-created grievance to plead – that your petition had not been received; and you would have discharged upon the House, or upon as many as had the curiosity to read it, all the insolence which malice could prompt.’

This other point we might add, in which the present riots stand upon a different footing from former riots. Heretofore one district, that in which the supposed grievance spontaneously moved the rising, was the only one concerned. Frame-breakers<sup>22</sup> went only through that district of machinery. The incendiary conspirators<sup>23</sup> were more sporadic; but in that same proportion less gregarious. On this sole occasion, we have seen one county menacing in mass a movement upon another county; Lancashire upon Yorkshire; Staffordshire and Cheshire upon Lancashire; and so on, until, by a resolution passed last week, *every* county, it seems, is to be visited, at least by organizing delegates.

This brings us to the three capital points in the conduct on both sides (the motions and the counter-motions) attending these riots; *1st*, The circumstances under which the movement began; *2dly*, The kind of opposition by which it was faced; *3dly*, The main overt act by which it has been supported.

As to the first, we had collected (but omit from the pressure of time) a series from all the chief trading towns of England in the week of the explosion, and in the week next before the explosion, proclaiming as festal news, with one voice from every county, the certain revival of trade – bursting forth as genially as a Swedish vernal season – and also the sure prospect of a glorious harvest. So much for the excuses urged on the ground of distress!

Secondly. To omit many other neglects, and apparently imbecile compliances with the mob, indignantly we ask, and in one voice will the whole respectability of the land – why was it allowed, that, according to notice previously given, the rioters should be suffered to move in masses from town to town? thus enabling them to assume a strength far beyond what they had,



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and to prepare excuses for timid magistrates by counterfeit dangers. *But, when boroughreeves<sup>24</sup> and chief magistrates are corn-leaguers*, what else is to be looked for? The soldiers and county magistrates seem uniformly to have behaved with fidelity to their duty; the town magistrates too often with the imbecility of panic, or (sometimes we fear) of collusion.

Thirdly. We suggest to the Chartists this one consideration: – you, the Chartists, rose (you say) for rights; rose as oppressed men; rose on an impulse of natural justice, and with a corresponding motto, implying that, wanting only justice for yourselves, you would respect the rights of all other persons. Fair words! How have you observed them? Fine promises! How were they fulfilled? Let the answer to this be the warning for the rest of your system and its delusions. You began by robbing whole districts; plundering from bakers and sellers of other provisions; levying from casual passengers money, under bodily fear, on the Queen's high-road; every one of you, as a party to the mob, is an accomplice in felonies past counting; all of you that cannot prove personal absence is a debtor, if challenged by any of your plundered victims, to the penalty of transportation – some for fifteen years, some for life; you and the corn-leaguers next proceeded to arson; from that to murder, many times attempted. But these felonies, you will say, were committed upon those whom you viewed as enemies. How, then, did you treat your friends? Fellow chartists and leaguers, fellow spinners and weavers, you assaulted – drove violently from work – ordered them instantly to plunge their families into destitution; and in the event of their returning without leave, you sent messages to them by express delegates, that you would cudgel them soundly.

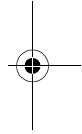
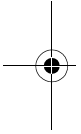
Behold the children of liberty – behold the insurgents for the reign of justice! And, if the Chartists reply, 'Oh! but we were coerced, we could not act with freedom.' Exactly so, we reply; nobody knows at present which felony, out of any particular dozen, was committed by a Chartist, and which by a Corn-Leaguer. Each will state the proportions as nine and three, nine for the other party, three for his own. But is not this the general moral of all such cases? What has now happened will always happen. Always there will be an anarchy; responsibility will cease; and that is made the very excuse, which is the last aggravation of guilt to the offending leaders.

There are other features in these fearful manifestations of anti-social power, which at another time will call for exemplary notice and inquisition, both by the press and by the government. In particular, we observe with horror the aid given and often volunteered by numerous private families. The *Times*, we see, mentions as a special case, that of Haigh Hall, a seat of Lord Balcarras, near Wigan.<sup>25</sup> In this instance we suspend our opinion, because there is a standing presumption in excuse for every lonely house, such as a nobleman's mansion is pretty sure to be, that any act of the sort is extorted by reasonable terror. A small establishment may happen to be in residence at a very great house; and even in a great establishment, such as may be looked for at Trentham, (the Duke of Sutherland's,)<sup>26</sup> which is at the other extreme of the



## THE RIOTS

insurgent district, but a small part is likely to be armed; and a still smaller fitted for a service of danger peculiarly terrific: mobs, and especially under any wild persuasion that they are exacting 'vengeance,' being notoriously under no self-restraint, and capable of savage cruelties unknown amongst men trained to honourable warfare. Generally, it ought not to be expected of those to whose custody are consigned great libraries or galleries of art, that they should risk such priceless property on a very doubtful contest, when by a small bribe they can purchase immunity from hazard. When a network of defence is once thrown over the whole district, it becomes the duty of each private mansion to co-operate, at some risk, with the public system; after that, it would be weakening the hands of the executive power to collude with the robbers by any private treaty: but until the public system of defence is brought into a state of maturity for measuring itself at all points against the insurgent power, each solitary house is remitted to its own discretion for making the best terms it can with an overwhelming superiority of force. No such excuse, however, applies to the case of large towns, who are always, by their professional police, or by a police speedily created for the occasion, presumably equal to the task of maintaining the avenues to their own streets against vagabond intruders from strange places. Even more – it might have been expected of individual houses in such towns, that they should not let down baskets of provisions from their upper windows. All did not adopt this measure. It seems, therefore, in any case to have been adopted not upon a ground of necessity. A mob of many thousands, in their hurried transit, could neither be detained by vengeance before any individual house in a long street, where many houses beside had given the same affront by a refusal; nor could such a mob, with no common officers to connect one part of its vast line with another, be at all propitiated in fact by a loaf given to the leading gang, and refused to all in their rear. The benefit, therefore, to the individual house must be merely imaginary; whilst on the other hand, the injury to the public service is great, and, by its example, unlimited. For the case stands precisely thus: – Against the passive resistance of an insurgent body, confederated on the principle of not working, there would naturally be no remedy whatever open to the government, were it not that mere necessity of food for themselves and food for their families, surely and swiftly brings round a remedy, thus closing a period of idleness which is else sure, of itself, without inflammatory politics, to prove the mother of infinite mischief. How concisely this remedy acts, and in how brief a number of days it gathers strength, may be seen by the following simple calculation: – Every forty thousand turn-outs will require a thousand pounds a-day to feed them, at sixpence a-day, and their families, as stationary, and able to use more economy, at least the same sum. Here at once arises a demand of L.28,000 for each 40,000 insurgents during one fortnight. It is supposed that 200,000, or five such bodies of 40,000 each, are now self-exiled from work; that is, in other words, a money demand of one hundred and forty thousand pounds will be made on the joint-stock purse of the insur-





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rection by the end of the first fortnight (now nearly accomplished) for the *insufficient* support of the insurgents. Here lies a firm natural curb-chain<sup>27</sup> upon the riotous body; in which overwhelming restraint, let us say for ourselves, that we are far indeed from exulting when we think of the rioters as poor men pleading for natural rights, against cotton masters too often inclined to combine for severe exaction, and sometimes (we doubt not) tyrannically rapacious. If we feel at any moment inclined to exult in such a barrier existing to the progress of a riotous mob, it is when we reflect on the certainty with which an idle mob transmigrates into a cruel and sanguinary mob, fearful even to themselves, as parts bearing a separate interest from the whole; but still more, when we represent to ourselves this mob – not as contending for undoubted rights, or natural equities on the model of all Scriptural justice, (such as the rights of colliers to see their own day's produce of coal fairly weighed in their own presence) – but insolently declaring that they will abrogate the whole constitution, laws, and polity of these imperial kingdoms at one blow; will impose upon us all a new constitution, out of which are to emanate such future laws as may be suitable to such a beginning. Then indeed our hearts grow sterner in contemplating their matchless insolence and criminal folly. But in any case, it is for their own interest that a speedy close should set bounds to their career. Now the contributions of shopkeepers and private families, but much more the system of certain provision shops in the smaller towns, by which they pledge themselves to loans or credit, varying in amount through one fortnight or upwards in time, and most of all the system adopted by a number of shops in Hyde,<sup>28</sup> promising publicly (we quote their own words *literatim*) 'to assist pecuniary or otherwise,' meaning probably to assist by pecuniary means or any other, seems entitled to the gravest judicial investigation: because this aid and 'comfort,' as the ancient laws call it, tends violently to prolong the struggle by weakening its natural restraint; and because the Hyde variety of this case tends more effectually to that result, by publishing far and wide the knowledge of so encouraging a faith in the justice and the ultimate success of the rioters. Were it not for these extensive private contributions, the funds of the rioters would be limited to the sums accumulated by the benefit societies, to which multitudes among them have contributed; and where the purpose had been entirely under a private agreement, the money will have been easily diverted into any other channel by an overruling majority; though often we believe that want of work is the very *casus foederis*<sup>29</sup> contemplated by such societies. These accomplices in higher stations ought, of all concerned, to be the most severely punished, or at least next after the original instigators of the riots, if they should judicially be proved to have been the Corn-Leaguers. And in the rear of these two cold-blooded accomplices *before* the act and *in* the act, as regards scrutiny and punishment, should be ranged all those who have been arrested, or shall be denounced and convicted, as coercers of their own brethren who had wished to pursue their work in quietness.

