



EJW

ECON JOURNAL WATCH
Scholarly Comments on
Academic Economics

ECON JOURNAL WATCH 21(2)
September 2024: 464–499

Cure for Russia Hate

[LINK TO ABSTRACT](#)

Foreword

Daniel B. Klein¹

The best candidate for personification of 19th-century British liberalism might be Richard Cobden (1804–1865), as actuated in his writing, speeches, organizing, and service in Parliament for 24 years.

In July 1836, at the age of 32, Cobden published a pamphlet entitled *Russia*. The first page of text labels the work at the head of the page: “A CURE FOR THE RUSSO-PHOBIA.”

A CURE FOR THE RUSSO-PHOBIA.

CHAPTER I.

RUSSIA, TURKEY, AND ENGLAND.

([Link](#) to the original 1836 pamphlet.)

In 1950, Harvard University Press published *The Genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain: A Study of the Interaction of Policy and Opinion* by John Howes Gleason, later Professor of English History at Pomona College. The book focuses on the period in which Cobden’s pamphlet appeared, 1815–1841, when, as Gleason wrote, there developed in the United Kingdom “an antipathy toward Russia which soon became the most pronounced and enduring element in the national outlook on the world abroad.” Speaking to his reader in 1950, Gleason wrote of Russia hate as “a

1. George Mason University, Fairfax, VA 22030.

persistent British sentiment,” while noting that “in the three primary holocausts of modern times,” namely 1812–1815, World War I, and World War II, Britain’s “victory thrice depended on the military collaboration of Russia” (1950, 1).

This document presents parts of Cobden’s lengthy 1836 pamphlet—roughly a third—parts that speak to government-propagated hate toward Russia. The 1836 pamphlet enlarges on themes that Cobden had aired at length in his first pamphlet (see Cobden 1835, ch. 1). Cobden wrote in response to the inciters of Russia hate, notably the young Scottish writer David Urquhart (1805–1877), a diplomat and later Member of Parliament. Gleason (1950, 286) wrote about Urquhart: “More than any one man he was responsible for the character not of British policy but of British opinion about Russia during the growth of Russophobia to maturity.” “Urquhart urged a crusade on behalf of Poland and Turkey” (ibid., 184), while Cobden (1836) urged against going to war with Russia, writing that “the prejudices existing in the minds of the British people against that Power...are founded in delusion and misrepresentation.”

Cobden is highlighted by Gleason (1950, 277–278) as one of two voices during the 1830s “opposed to the chorus of hate,” the other being Lord Londonberry. But the voice of dissent was drowned out:

The common sense and the subsequent eminence of Cobden must not be allowed to magnify the importance of these pamphlets. At the time, they received much less attention than did the more sensational productions of the opposing school of thought. Only a few of the periodicals gave them favorable notice. (Gleason 1950, 185)

The following excerpts from Cobden’s 1836 pamphlet give a flavor of its style and argumentation:

Lord Dudley Stuart [gives] an alarming picture...of the future growth of Russian dominion. Turkey, it seems, is to be only the germ of an empire which shall extend...over Europe and Asia, and embrace every people and nation between the Bay of Bengal and the English Channel!

Austria and all Italy are to be swallowed up at a meal, Greece and the Ionian Islands serving for side-dishes. Spain and Portugal follow as a dessert...; and Louis Philippe and his empire are washed down afterwards with Bordeaux and Champagne.

They who predict the unbounded extension of Russia, forget the inevitable growth of weakness which attends the undue expansion of territorial dominion... [They are] blind to the dangers which must attend the attempt to incorporate into one cumbrous empire these remote and heterogeneous nations.

The Russians are accused by us of being...incessantly addicted to picking and stealing. But, in the meantime, has England been idle? If, during the last century Russia has plundered Sweden, Poland, Turkey, and Persia, until she has grown unwieldy with the extent of her spoils, Great Britain has, in the same period, robbed—no, that would be an unpolite phrase—'*has enlarged the bounds of his Majesty's dominions*' at the expense of France, Holland, and Spain.

We, who are staggering under the embarrassing weight of our colonies, with one foot upon the rock of Gibraltar and the other at the Cape of Good Hope—with Canada, Australia, and the peninsula of India...*we* are not exactly the nation to preach homilies to other people in favour of the national observance of the eighth commandment!

Nor, if we were to enter upon a comparison of the cases, should we find that the *means* whereby Great Britain has augmented her possessions, are a whit less reprehensible than those which have been resorted to by [Russia] for a similar purpose.

If the English writer calls down indignation upon the conquerors of the Ukraine, Finland, and the Crimea, may not Russian historians conjure up equally painful reminiscences upon the subjects of Gibraltar, the Cape, and Hindostan?

During the last hundred years, England has, for every square league of territory annexed to Russia, *by force, violence, or fraud, appropriated to herself three.*

Our history during the last century may be called the tragedy of 'British intervention in the politics of Europe;' in which princes, diplomatists, peers, and generals, have been the authors and actors—the people the victims; and the moral will be exhibited to the latest posterity in 800 millions of debt.

We are no more called upon [to deal vengeance] upon [Russia], than we are to preserve the peace and good behaviour of Mexico, or to chastise the wickedness of the Ashantees.

*Non-intervention in the political affairs of other nations...*from the moment this maxim becomes the load-star by which our government shall steer the vessel of the state—from that moment the good old ship Britannia will float triumphantly in smooth and deep water, and the rocks, shoals, and hurricanes of foreign war are escaped for ever.

[George] Washington...bequeathed, as a legacy to his fellow-citizens, the injunction, that they should never be tempted by any inducements or provocations to become parties to the States' system of Europe.

Later, during the Crimean War (1853–1856), Cobden and fellow liberal John Bright led the moral and intellectual denunciation of Britain’s involvement. The Wikipedia page on the Crimean War ([link](#)) quotes the British historian R. B. McCallum (1898–1973), of Pembroke College, Oxford, on how the critics like Cobden and Bright had been unpopular, but:

in the end they won. Cobden and Bright were true to their principles of foreign policy, which laid down the absolute minimum of intervention in European affairs and a deep moral reprobation of war... When the first enthusiasm was passed, when the dead were mourned, the sufferings revealed, and the cost counted, when in 1870 Russia was able calmly to secure the revocation of the Treaty, which disarmed her in the Black Sea, the view became general of the war was stupid and unnecessary, and effected nothing... The Crimean war remained as a classic example... of how governments may plunge into war, how strong ambassadors may mislead weak prime ministers, how the public may be worked up into a facile fury, and how the achievements of the war may crumble to nothing. The Bright-Cobden criticism of the war was remembered and to a large extent accepted. (McCallum 1951, 426)

After Cobden’s death in 1865, there appeared a two-volume set, *The Political Writings of Richard Cobden* (1886/1867), which included the 1836 pamphlet. Frederick W. Chesson, an editor of two-volume set, spoke then of the 1836 pamphlet’s continued relevance. He said, in 1867, that the pamphlet reads “with as much zest as if it were now for the first time issued from the press,” that Cobden’s arguments “sought to controvert the popular apprehension of Russian power and ambition.” Cobden, Chesson continues, had to contend with “illusions...of large classes of the community,” “an alarm...vague and unreal” and yet “a no unimportant part of the political creed of statesmen” at that time. Chesson said that the falsehoods that Cobden challenged in 1836 “have a close bearing upon more recent phases of public opinion” (Chesson 1886/1867, 1:123).

For a new analysis of Russophobia, see Glenn Diesen’s *Russophobia: Propaganda in International Politics* (2022).

Production and apparatus of the present text: The present document would not exist but for that Alberto Mingardi handed me, in June 2024 in Milan, a complete printout of Cobden’s 1836 pamphlet; my gratitude goes out to Alberto.

Reading the printout, I proceeded to highlight portions and then lift the raw text of those parts as reproduced by HathiTrust, in Volume I of *The Political Writings of Richard Cobden* (1886/1867).

In the following, I use ellipses to indicate my jumps in selecting text; square-bracketed page numbers cite the start of the page in the 1886 Volume I. Everything

in square brackets is mine except in a footnote in which I quote a bracketed comment from 1867. For the selected main text, I have retained all but one of Cobden’s footnotes (while adding a couple of my own). One of the footnotes here—the first one, in fact—provides a note that is not Cobden’s but rather Chesson’s, from 1867.

The note by Cobden coming at the very end of the present selection appears in the 1836 Edinburgh printing, but, as it feels appended, I wonder whether the pamphlet had been printed, as suggested by the imprint of the Edinburgh printing, in London and Dublin (in 1836) without that note—I’ve not discovered a London or a Dublin printing, so I don’t know. The 1867 reproduction includes that note and attributes it to the “author,” i.e., Cobden.

References

- Chesson, Frederick W.** 1886 [1867]. Note [on *Russia* by Richard Cobden]. In *The Political Writings of Richard Cobden*, 2 vols., by Richard Cobden, 1:122–123. London: Cassell.
- Cobden, Richard** [“A Manchester Manufacturer”]. 1835. *England, Ireland, and America*. London: James Ridgway and Sons. Reproduced in Cobden 1886/1867, 1:5–120.
- Cobden, Richard** [“A Manchester Manufacturer”]. 1836. *Russia* [or, *A Cure for the Russophobia*]. Edinburgh: William Tait. [Link](#) Reproduced in Cobden 1886/1867, 1:121–272.
- Cobden, Richard.** 1886 [1867]. *The Political Writings of Richard Cobden*, 2 vols. London: Cassell.
- Diesen, Glenn.** 2022. *Russophobia: Propaganda in International Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gleason, John Howes.** 1950. *The Genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain: A Study of the Interaction of Policy and Opinion*. Harvard University Press.
- McCallum, Ronald Buchanan.** 1951. From 1852 to 1895. In *Victorian Years: 1841–1895*, by Elie Halévy, with supp. by R. B. McCallum, 417–478. Ernest Benn Ltd. [Link](#)

About the Author



dklein@gmu.edu.

Dan Klein is professor of economics and JIN Chair at Mercatus Center at George Mason University, where he leads a program in Adam Smith. He has written short appreciations of David Hume’s and Adam Smith’s liberal attitudes on foreign affairs [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). He is the author of *Smithian Morals*, *Central Notions of Smithian Liberalism*, and *Knowledge and Coordination: A Liberal Interpretation*, and co-editor of *Edmund Burke and the Perennial Battle, 1789–1797*. His email address is

Cure for Russia Hate

Richard Cobden

[122] [This bracketed number refers to page 122 of Volume I of *The Political Writings of Richard Cobden* (London: Cassell, 1886).] ...

NOTE [by Frederick W. Chesson, from 1867]. This pamphlet, which was published in the year 1836, was suggested by the alarm of a Russian invasion, which prevailed in that year, and which led to an increase in our navy of five thousand men. Although the views of what is now known as the “Eastern Question,” which Mr. Cobden has embodied in the following pages, correspond with those to which he and [123] his distinguished friend, Mr. Bright, gave such forcible and eloquent expression during the war with Russia, it is scarcely too much to say, that political students generally will peruse the pamphlet with as much zest as if it were now for the first time issued from the press; and, indeed, the arguments and illustrations by which Mr. Cobden sought to controvert the popular apprehension of Russian power and ambition which then existed, have a close bearing upon more recent phases of public opinion. But at the time Mr. Cobden wrote he had to contend with traditional illusions, which not only inspired large classes of the community with an alarm as mischievous as it was vague and unreal, but formed a no unimportant part of the political creed of statesmen. ...

Mr. Cobden made a tour through Turkey and the East in the year following the publication of his brochure, but...he did not visit Russia until the year 1846, when the abolition of the corn laws enabled him at once to recruit his health, and to disseminate free trade principles in other countries, by a few months of continental travel.

[124] [Here begins Richard Cobden, 1836]

It has been somewhere remarked, that, in former times some false alarms usually preceded or accompanied a new war. ... [125] ...

Certain it is...that *one active mind*¹ has, during the last two years, materially influenced the tone of several of the newspapers of this kingdom, in reference to the affairs of Russia and Turkey, and incessantly roused public opinion, through every accessible channel of the periodical press, against the former and in favour of the latter nation; certain it is, moreover, that this individual, if not previously an agent of the Government, has latterly become so, by being appointed to a

1. [Here, the 1867 editor created a footnote as follows (my quotation marks): “[Mr. David Urquhart.]” In the original 1836 pamphlet Cobden did not name the man of whom he speaks.]

diplomatic post in our embassy at Constantinople.² How far this indefatigable spirit [David Urquhart] has been successful in his design to diffuse a feeling of terror and a spirit of hatred towards Russia in the public mind, may be ascertained by any one who will take the trouble to sound the opinions of his next neighbour upon the subject, whom, it is ten to one, he will find an alarmist about the subtlety of Pozzo di Borgo [a Corsican politician who later became a Russian diplomat], the cruelty of the Czar, and the barbarism of the Russians. [126] He most likely will find him to possess but vague feelings of apprehension, and very little exactness of knowledge upon the subject; he will not know, perhaps, precisely, whether the province of Moldavia be on the right or the left bank of the Danube, or whether the Balkan and the ancient Hæmus be an identical range of mountains; he will have but an indistinct acquaintance with the geography of Asia Minor, and probably confound the Bosphorus with the Dardanelles; but still he shall be profoundly alarmed at the encroachments of Russia in those quarters, and quite willing to go to war to prevent them. Such, we gravely assert, is the feeling, and such are the opinions of the great majority of those who take their doctrines from some of the newspapers at this moment, upon the question of Russian aggrandisement. . . .

But, before entering upon our task, we would disavow all intention of advocating the cause of Russian violence and aggression. It can only be necessary to say thus much at the outset of this pamphlet in order to prevent the reader from anticipating our design with an undue prepossession respecting our motives; for the whole spirit and purpose of the following pages will show that we are hostile to the Government of St. Petersburg, and to every principle of its foreign and domestic [127] policy. Our sympathies flow, altogether, towards those free institutions which are favourable to the peace, wealth, education, and happiness of mankind. . . . [134] . . .

Russia comprises one-half of Europe, one-third of Asia, and a portion of America; and includes within its bounds nearly sixty millions, or a sixteenth portion of the human race. Its territory stretches in length from the Black Sea to the confines of Upper Canada; and from the border of China to the Arctic Sea in width. The stupendous size of the Russian Empire has excited the wonder and alarm of timid writers, who forget “that it is an identity of language, habits, and character, and not the soil or the name of a master, which constitutes a great and powerful nation” [Cobden is quoting Conrad Malte-Brun]. Ruling over eighty different nations or tribes, the autocrat of all the Russias claims the allegiance of people of every variety of race, tongue, and religion. Were it possible to transport to one common centre of his empire the gay opera lounge of St. Petersburg, habited in the Parisian mode; the fierce Bashkir of the Ural Mountain, clad in rude

2. We state these facts from personal knowledge.

[135] armour, and armed with bow and arrows; the Crimean, with his camel, from the southern steppes; and the Esquimaux, who traverses with his dogs the frozen regions of the north—these fellow-subjects of one potentate would encounter each other with all the surprise and ignorance of individuals meeting from England, China, Peru, and New Holland; *nor would the time or expense incurred in the journey be greater in the latter than the former interview.* It must be obvious to every reflecting mind that vast deductions must be made from the written and statistical resources of a nation possessing no unison of religious or political feeling, when put in competition with other empires, identified in faith, language, and national characteristics. The popular mind has been, however, greatly misled by many writers on the Russian Empire, who have sought to impress their readers with the idea of the overwhelming size of its territory, and who have at the same time wilfully or negligently omitted to mention other facts, which, if taken in connection, serve to render that very magnitude of surface a source of weakness rather than power. We are furnished by Malte-Brun with some tables of the relative densities of the population of the European empires, which will help to illustrate our views upon this subject, and from which we give an extract:

	Inhabitants.
Russia, for each square league	181
Prussia	792
France	1063
England	1457

Now the same law applies to communities as to physics—in proportion as you condense you strengthen, and as you draw out you weaken bodies; and, according to this rule, the above table, which makes Prussia more than four times as closely peopled as Russia, would, bearing in mind the advantages of her denser population, give to the former power an equality of might with her unwieldy neighbour, which we have no doubt is [136] quite consistent with the truth; whilst the same tabular test if applied to Russia, France, and England, would assign much the greater share of power to the two latter nations; which experience has demonstrated to be the fact. Here, then, we have the means of exemplifying by a very simple appeal to figures (ever the best reasoning weapons) how the vastness of territory of the Russians is the cause of debility rather than of strength. It would be a trite illustration of a self-evident truism to adduce as a proof of our argument the practice in military tactics. What general ever dreamed of scattering his troops by way of increasing their power? Bonaparte gained his terrible battles by manœuvring great masses of men in smaller limits than any preceding commanders.

But the same geographer supplies us with a graduated scale of the relative taxation of these countries, which affords a yet more convincing proof of the disadvantageous position of Russia.

Russia, each inhabitant contributes to Government	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	£	11	8
Prussia	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	0	17	6
France	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	1	8	4
England	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	3	13	4

Now, assuming, as we may safely do, that these governments draw the utmost possible revenue from their subjects, what a disproportion here is between the wealth of the closely peopled Britain and the poverty of the scantily populated Russia! We find, too, that the gradation of wealth is in the direct proportion to the density of the inhabitants of the four countries. Here, then, we have a double source of weakness for Russia, which would operate in a duplicate ratio to her disadvantage, in case that nation were plunged into a war with either of those other states; for, whilst her armies must necessarily be mustered from greater distances at proportionate cost, and with less ability on her part to bear those charges, her rivals would possess troops more compactly positioned, and, at the same [137] time, the greater means of transporting them:—in a word, the one party would require the funds, and not possess them, whilst the other would comparatively speaking have the money and not want it. A necessary evil attends the wide-spread character of the population of Russia, in the absence of those large towns which serve as centres of intelligence and nurses of civilisation in other countries. Thus, in those vast regions, we have the cities of

St. Petersburg, with a population of	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	305,000
Moscow	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	190,000
Warsaw	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	117,000
Kasan	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	50,000
Kiew	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	40,000

whilst we find the remainder of the large places on the map of Russia to be only in size upon a par with the third-rate towns of England. That in a country of such vast extent, and comprising sixty millions of people, and where so few populous cities exist, the great mass of the inhabitants are living in poverty, ignorance, and barbarism, scarcely rising above a state of nature, must be apparent. Tribes of Cossacks and of Tartars, wandering over the low countries of Caucasia, own a formal allegiance to Russia. Other hordes, dignified by the alarmist writers on the subject of Russian greatness with the title of *nations*—such as the Circassians, the Georgians, the Mingrelians, with more than thirty other tribes, some Christian, others Mahometan, or of a mixed creed, occupying the mountainous regions of the Caucasus—are wholly or partially subdued to the dominion of the Czar. These fierce tribes...live by the chase, or the cultivation of a little millet... Against these refractory and half-subdued neighbours the Russians are compelled to keep

fortresses along the frontier.

[138] If we pass to Northern Russia, we find the Samoiedes, a people enduring nearly six months of perpetual night, and enjoying, in requital, a day of two months; with them, corn is sown, ripened, and reaped in sixty days. In the governments of Wologda, Archangel, and Olonetz (for even in this almost uninhabitable region man has established his ministerial arrangements and political divisions), the climate is of such a nature that human industry can hardly contend against the elements, and the scanty produce of his labour enables the husbandman scarcely to protract a painful and sometimes precarious existence. Trees disappear on the sterile plains—the plants are stunted—corn withers—the marshy meadows are covered with rushes and mosses—and the whole of vegetable nature proclaims the vicinity of the Pole.

Over these desolate wastes, a traveller might journey five hundred miles, and not encounter one solitary human habitation. The government or province of Orenburg is larger than the entire kingdom of Prussia, and yet contains only a population of one million souls!

There are, however, vast districts—as, for example, the whole of Little Russia, and the Ukraine—of fertile territory, equal in richness to any part of Europe; and it has been estimated that Russia contains more than 750,000 square miles of land, of a quality not inferior to the best portions of Germany, and upon which a population of two hundred millions of people might find subsistence. Here, then, is the field upon which the energies of the government and the industry of its subjects should be, for the next century, exclusively devoted; and if the best interests of Russia were understood—or if its government would attain to that actual power which ignorant writers proclaim for it in the possession of boundless wastes and impenetrable forests—she should cease the wars of the sword, and begin the battle with the wilderness, by constructing railroads, building bridges, deepening rivers; by fostering the accumulation of capital, the growth of cities, and the [139] increase of civilisation and freedom. *These are the only sources of power and wealth in an age of improvement*; and until Russia, like America, draws from her plains, mountains, and rivers those resources which can be developed only by patient labour—vain are her boasts of geographical extent. As well might the inhabitants of the United States vaunt of their unexplored possessions west of the Rocky Mountains, or England plume herself upon the desert tracts of New Holland.

If such be the true interests of Russia, it will be admitted, then, that the conquest of those extensive and almost depopulated regions now withering under the government of the Sultan would only be a wider departure from this enlightened policy. Assuming that such a conquest had taken place, it follows that the population of the Russian empire would become still more diversified in character and of a yet more heterogeneous nature; whilst it, at the same time,

would diffuse itself over a far wider surface of territory; and, if the arguments which we have offered are founded in reason, then the first effects of all this must be, that Russia would, herself, be weakened by this still greater distension of her dominion. What, then, becomes of our apprehensions about the safety of India, or the possession of the Ionian Islands—the freedom of the Mediterranean—our maritime supremacy—or the thousand other dangers with which we are threatened as the immediate consequence of the possession of Constantinople by the Russians?

If we would form a fair estimate of the probable results of that event, we ought to glance, for a moment, at the conduct of the same people under somewhat similar circumstances in another quarter. The policy pursued by Russia on the Gulf of Finland (where St. Petersburg arose, like an exhalation from the marshes of the Neva), when those districts were wrested, by its founder, from the maniac Charles XII [of Sweden, reigning 1697–1718], would, we have a right to assume, be imitated by the same nation on the shores of the Bosphorus. Let us here pause to do homage [140] to that noblest example of history, far surpassing the exploits of Alexander or Napoleon—that sublime act of devotion at the shrine of commerce and civilisation, offered by Peter the Great, who, to instruct his subjects in the science of navigation and the art of shipbuilding, voluntarily descended from a throne, where he was surrounded by the pomp and splendour of a great potentate, and became a menial workman in the dockyards of Saardam and Deptford! We vindicate not his crimes or his vices—the common attributes of the condition of society in which he lived; his cruelty was but the natural fruit of irresponsible power in savage life; and his acts of grossness and intemperance were regarded by the nation as honourable exploits: but the genius that enabled him to penetrate the thick clouds of prejudice and ignorance which enveloped his people, and to perceive, afar off, the power which civilisation and commerce confer upon nations, was the offspring of his own unaided spirit, and will ever be worthy of peculiar honour at the hands of the historian. Everybody knows under what trying disadvantages this metropolis, planted in the midst of unhealthy and barren marshes, and in a latitude that, by the ancients, was placed beyond the limits of civilisation, sprung from the hands of its founder, and stood forth the most wonderful phenomenon of the 18th century. At present, this capital [St. Petersburg], which contains upwards of 300,000 inhabitants, and is termed, from the splendour of its public buildings, a city of palaces, can boast of scientific bodies which are in correspondence with all the learned societies of Europe. The government has sent out circumnavigators, who have made discoveries in remote regions of the globe. St. Petersburg contains museums of art and literature; some of the first specimens of sculpture and painting are to be seen in its public halls; its public libraries contain twice as many volumes as those of London; and the best collection of Chinese,

Japanese, and Mongol books are to be found on their shelves. All the decencies and even elegancies of life, observable in Paris or [141] London, are found to prevail over this northern metropolis; and there is nothing in the streets (unless it be the costume of the people, necessary to meet the exigencies of the climate) to remind the eye of the traveller that he is not in one of the more western Christian capitals. ... [143] ...

Much as may with truth be alleged against the lust for aggrandisement with which Russian counsels have been actuated, yet if we examine, we shall find that it is by the love of improvement—the security given by laws to life and property—but, above all, owing to the encouragement afforded to commerce—that this empire has, more than by conquest, been brought forth from her frozen regions, to hold a first rank among the nations of Europe.

The laws for the encouragement of trade are direct and important; and their tendency is to destroy the privileges of the nobles, by raising up a middle class precisely in the same way by which our own Plantagenets countervailed the powers of the barons. Every Russian carrying on trade must be a burgher, and a registered member of a guild or company; and of these [144] guilds there are three ranks...

Besides these guilds for merchants, the porters of the large towns associate together in bodies, called *artels*, resembling, in some respects, the company of wine coopers in London, for the purpose of guaranteeing persons employing one of them from any loss or damage to his goods. Now, in a country, however far removed from a state of freedom and civilisation (*and we maintain that, in these respects, the condition of Russia is in arrear of all other Christian states*), where laws such as these exist, for encouraging industry, conferring privileges upon traders, and doing honour to the accumulation of capital—in that country prodigious strides have been already taken on the only true path to enlightenment and liberty. ... [147] ...

By far the greater proportion of the writers and speakers upon the subject of the power of Russia either do not understand, or lose sight of the all-important question, What is the true source of national greatness? The path by which alone modern empires can hope to rise to supreme power and grandeur (would that we could impress this sentiment upon the mind of every statesman in Europe!) is that of labour and improvement. They who, pointing to the chart of Russia, shudder at her expanse of impenetrable forests, her wastes of eternal snow, her howling wildernesses, frowning mountains, and solitary rivers; or they who stand aghast at her boundless extent of fertile but uncultivated steppes, her millions of serfs, and her towns the abodes of poverty and filth—know nothing of the true origin, in modern and future times, of national power and greatness. This question admits of an appropriate illustration, by putting the names of a couple of heroes of Russian aggression and violence in contrast with two of their contemporaries, the champions of improvement in England. At the very period when Potemkin

and Suwarrow were engaged in effecting their important Russian conquests in Poland and the Crimea, and whilst those monsters of carnage were filling the world with the lustre of their fame, and lighting up one-half of Europe with the conflagrations of war—two obscure [148] individuals, the one an optician and the other a barber, both equally disregarded by the chroniclers of the day, were quietly gaining victories in the realms of science, which have produced a more abundant harvest of wealth and power to their native country than has been acquired by all the wars of Russia during the last two centuries. Those illustrious commanders in the war of improvement, Watt and Arkwright, with a band of subalterns—the thousand ingenious and practical discoverers who have followed in their train—have, with their armies of artisans, conferred a power and consequence upon England, springing from successive triumphs in the physical sciences and the mechanical arts, and wholly independent of territorial increase—compared with which all that she owes to the evanescent exploits of her warrior heroes sinks into insignificance and obscurity. If we look into futurity, and speculate upon the probable career of one of these inventions, may we not with safety predict that the steam-engine—the perfecting of which belongs to our own age, and which even now is exerting an influence in the four quarters of the globe—will at no distant day produce moral and physical changes, all over the world, of a magnitude and permanency, surpassing the effects of all the wars and conquests which have convulsed mankind since the beginning of time! England owes to the peaceful exploits of Watt and Arkwright, and not to the deeds of Nelson and Wellington, her commerce, which now extends to every corner of the earth, and which casts into comparative obscurity, by the grandeur and extent of its operations, the peddling ventures of Tyre, Carthage, and Venice, confined within the limits of an inland sea.

If we were to trace, step by step, the opposite careers of aggrandisement, to which we can only thus hastily glance—of England, pursuing the march of improvement within the area of four of her counties, by exploring the recesses of her mines, by constructing canals, docks, and railroads, by her mechanical inventions, and by the patience and ingenuity of her manufacturers [149] in adapting their fabrics to meet the varying wants and tastes of every habitable latitude of the earth's surface—and of Russia, adhering to her policy of territorial conquests, by despoiling of provinces, the empires of Turkey, Persia, and Sweden, by subjugating in unwilling bondage the natives of Georgia and Circassia, and by seizing with robber hand the soil of Poland—if we were to trace these opposite careers of aggrandisement, what should we find to be the relative consequences to these two empires? England, with her steam-engine and spinning frame, has erected the standard of improvement, around which every nation of the world has already prepared to rally; she has, by the magic of her machinery, united for ever two remote hemispheres in the bonds of peace, by placing Europe and America in

absolute and inextricable dependence on each other; England's industrious classes, through the energy of their commercial enterprise, are at this moment influencing the civilisation of the whole world, by stimulating the labour, exciting the curiosity, and promoting the taste for refinement of barbarous communities, and, above all, by acquiring and teaching to surrounding nations the beneficent attachment to peace. Such are the moral effects of improvement in Britain, against which Russia can oppose comparatively little but the example of violence, to which humanity points as a beacon to warn society from evil. And if we refer to the physical effects, if—for the sake of convincing minds which do not recognise the far more potent moral influences—we descend to a comparison of mere brute forces, we find still greater superiority resulting from ingenuity and labour. The manufacturing districts alone—even the four counties of England, comprising Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cheshire, and Staffordshire—could, at any moment, by means of the wealth drawn, by the skill and industry of its population, from the natural resources of this comparative speck of territory, combat with success the whole Russian empire! Liverpool and Hull, with their navies, and Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham, with their [150] capitals, could blockade, within the waters of Cronstadt, the entire Russian marine, and annihilate the commerce of St. Petersburg. And, further, if we suppose that, during the next thirty years, Russia, adhering to her system of territorial aggrandisement, were to swallow up, successively, her neighbours, Persia and Turkey—whilst England, which we have imagined to comprise only the area of four counties, still persevered in her present career of mechanical ingenuity, the relative forces would, at the end of that time, yet be more greatly in favour of the peaceful and industrious empire. This mere speck on the ocean—without colonies, which are but the costly appendage³ of an aristocratic government—without wars, which have ever been but another aristocratic mode of plundering and oppressing commerce—would, with only a few hundred square leagues of surface, by means of the wealth which, by her arts and industry, she had accumulated, be the arbitress of the destiny of Russia, with its millions of square miles of territory. Liverpool and Hull, with their thousands of vessels, would be in a condition to dictate laws to the possessor of one-fourth part of the surface of the globe; they would then

3. Some people contend that our colonies are profitable to us because they consume our manufactures, although it is notorious that they do not buy a single commodity from us which they could procure cheaper elsewhere, whilst we take frequently articles from them of an inferior quality and at a dearer rate than we could purchase at from other countries. But what do the advocates of the present system say to the fact, that we are at this moment paying thirty per cent. more for the colonial productions consumed in our houses than is paid for similar articles, *procured from our own colonies, too*, by the people of the Continent? A workman in London, an artisan in Manchester, or a farmer of Wales, buys his Jamaica sugar and coffee thirty per cent. dearer than the native of Switzerland or America, perhaps five hundred miles distant from a port, and whose Governments never owned a colony! But, it will be said, this is necessary taxation to meet the interest of the debt. And what have we to show for the national debt but our colonies?

be enabled to blockade Russia in the Sea of Marmora, as they could now do in the Gulf of Finland—to deny her the freedom of the seas—to deprive her proud nobles of every foreign commodity and [151] luxury, and degrade them, amidst their thousands of serfs, to the barbarous state of their ancestors of the ancient Rousniacs—and to confine her Czar in his splendid prison of Constantinople!⁴ If such are the miracles of the mind, such the superiority of improvement over the efforts of brute force and violence, is not the writer of these pages justified in calling the attention of his countrymen elsewhere [America, a lengthy footnote about which is omitted here], to the progress of [152] another people, whose rapid adoption of the discoveries of the age, whose mechanical skill and unrivalled industry in all the arts of life—as exemplified in their thousands of miles of railroads, their hundreds of steamboats, their ship-building, manufacturing, patent inventions—whose system of universal instruction, and, above all, whose inveterate attachment to peace—all proclaim America, by her competition in improvements, to be destined to affect more vitally than Russia, by her aggrandisement of territory, the future interests of Great Britain?

If, then, England, by promoting the peaceful industry of her population, is pursuing a course which shall conduct her to a far higher point of moral and physical power than Russia can hope to reach by the opposite career of war and conquest, we must seek for some other motive than that of danger to ourselves, for the hostilities in which we are urged by so many writers and speakers, to engage with that northern people.

[153] The great grievance, indeed, with us, is one which, of all things born in remembrance, displays quite as much naïveté in the character of the British people as is consistent with a moderate share of self-knowledge. The Russians are accused by *us* of being an aggrandising people! From the day of Pultowa down to the time of the passage of the Balkan—say the orators, journalists, reviewers, and authors—the government of St. Petersburg has been incessantly addicted to picking and stealing. But, in the meantime, has England been idle? If, during the last century Russia has plundered Sweden, Poland, Turkey, and Persia, until she has grown unwieldy with the extent of her spoils, Great Britain has, in the same period, robbed—no, that would be an unpolite phrase—“*has enlarged the bounds of his Majesty’s dominions*” at the expense of France, Holland, and Spain. It would be false logic and just as unsound morality to allow the Muscovite to justify his derelictions of honesty by an appeal to our example; but surely we, who are staggering under the embarrassing weight of our colonies, with one foot upon the rock of Gibraltar and

4. The amount of our exports of cotton goods, of which industry Manchester is the centre, is double that of the exports of every kind from all the Russian empire; the shipping entering Liverpool annually exceeds the tonnage of St. Petersburg eightfold! ...

the other at the Cape of Good Hope—with Canada, Australia, and the peninsula of India, forming, Cerberus-like, the heads of our monstrous empire—and with the hundred minor acquisitions scattered so widely over the earth’s surface so as to present an unanswerable proof of our wholesome appetite for boundless dominion—surely *we* are not exactly the nation to preach homilies to other people in favour of the national observance of the eighth commandment!⁵ If *we* find all these possessions to be burdensome [154] rather than profitable—if, in common with all marauders, *we* discover by experience that the acquisitions of fraud or violence confer nothing but disappointment and loss—we shall not improve our case by going to war to prevent Russia pursuing the same course, which will inevitably conduct her to a similar fate, where the same retribution, which will ever accompany an infringement of the moral laws, awaits her. England and Russia, in the act of scolding each other on the reciprocal accusation of unjust aggrandisement, present an appearance so ludicrous that it forcibly recalls to our recollection the quarrel between the two worthies of the Beggars’ Opera, the termination of which scene we recommend to the imitation of the diplomatists of the two Courts. Like Lockit and Peachum, the British lion and the Russian bear, instead of tearing one another, had better hug and be friends—“Brother *bruin*, brother *bruin*, we are both in the wrong.”

Lord Dudley Stuart (whose zeal, we fear, without knowledge, upon the subject of Poland, and whose prejudice against Russia have led him to occupy so much of the public time uselessly upon the question before us), in the course of his long speech in the House of Commons (February 19th) upon introducing the subject of Russian encroachments, dwelt at considerable length upon the lust of aggrandisement by which he argued that the government of St. Petersburg was so peculiarly distinguished; and he brought forward, at considerable cost of labour, details of its successive conquests of territory during the last century. Where the human mind is swayed by any passion of however amiable a nature, or where the feelings are allowed to predominate over the reason, in investigating a subject which appeals only to the understanding, [155] it will generally happen that the

5. *Extract from Mr. T. Attwood’s speech, House of Commons, July 9, 1833.*—“The House will recollect that, for two centuries, Russia has been gradually encroaching upon the territories of all her neighbours; for the last 150 years her progress has been general on all sides—east, west, north, and south. A few years ago she attacked Sweden and seized upon Finland. Then she attacked Persia, and added some most important provinces to her empire in the south. Not content with this, she appropriated, in 1792, a great part of Poland; and it is but lately she has attacked Turkey. Thus, for years, she has gone on in her course of aggrandisement, in defiance of the laws of God and man!”—If for Sweden, Persia, and Poland, we substitute France, Spain, and Holland, and if, instead of Turkey, we put the Burmese Empire, how admirably the above description would apply to another nation, of whose unprofitable aggrandisements in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America Mr. Attwood may read a few particulars in Mr. Montgomery Martin’s “History of the British Colonies”—five volumes, octavo!

judgment is defective. We attribute to the well-known fervour of Lord Stuart's sentiments upon Russia and Poland, the circumstance that, during the fortnight which he must have employed in collecting the dates of the several treaties by which the former empire has wrested its possessions from neighbouring states, the thought never once occurred to him—a reflection which would have entered the head of almost any other man of sense, who sat down coolly to consider the subject—that, during the last hundred years, England has, for every square league of territory annexed to Russia, *by force, violence, or fraud, appropriated to herself three*. Such would have been the reflection which flashed across the mind of a statesman who sat down, *dispassionately*, to investigate the subject of Russian policy; and it must have prevented him by the consciousness of the egotism and arrogance—nay, the downright effrontery⁶ of such a course—from bringing an accusation against another people which recoils with threefold⁷ criminality upon ourselves. Nor, if we were to enter upon a comparison of the cases, should we find that the *means* whereby Great Britain has augmented her possessions, are a whit less reprehensible than those which have been resorted to by the northern [156] power for a similar purpose. If the English writer calls down indignation upon the conquerors of the Ukraine, Finland, and the Crimea, may not Russian historians conjure up equally painful reminiscences upon the subjects of Gibraltar, the Cape, and Hindostan? Every one conversant with the history of the last century will remember that England has, during almost all that period, maintained an ascendancy at sea; and colonies, which were in times past regarded as the chief source of our wealth and power, being pretty generally the fruits of every succeeding war, the nation fell into a passion for conquest, under the delusive impression that those distant dependencies were, in spite of the debt contracted in seizing them, profitable acquisitions to the mother country. Hence the British Government was always eager for hostilities the moment an excuse presented itself with one of the maritime

6. We allude to the nation—the epithet cannot be applied to his lordship.

7. We speak after due investigation and calculation, and not at random, when we allege that England has acquired three times as much territory as Russia during the last century. The Cape is computed at half a million of square miles, Canada at half as much more, India and New Holland will be found each with an area almost as large as that of the cultivable portion of Europe; not to mention other acquisitions too numerous to be described within the limits of a pamphlet!

Progressive augmentation of the Russian Empire:

	Sq. miles.	Population.
At the accession of Peter I.	1689, 2,980,000	15,000,000
At his death	1725, 3,150,000	20,000,000
At the accession of Catherine II.	1763, 3,700,000	25,000,000
At her death	1796, 3,850,000	36,000,000
At the death of Alexander	1825, 4,250,000	58,000,000

—*Malte-Brun's Geography*, vol. vi. p. 622.

continental states possessing colonies; and of the several conflicts in which we have been involved since the peace of Ryswick, at least three out of four have been consequent upon declarations of war made by England.⁸ Russia, on the contrary, has been [157] nearly surrounded by the territory of barbarous nations, one of which⁹—*by the very nature of its institutions warlike and aggressive*—was, up to the middle of the last century, prompted by a consciousness of strength, and, since then, by a haughty ignorance of its degeneracy, to court hostilities with its neighbours; and the consequence of this and other causes is, that, in the majority of cases, where Russia has been engaged in conflicts with her neighbours, she will be found to have had a war of self-defence for her justification. If such are the facts—if England has, for the sake of the spoil which would accrue to her superiority of naval strength, provoked war, with all its horrors, from weak and unwilling enemies, whilst Russia, on the contrary, with ill-defined boundaries, has been called upon to repel the attacks of fierce and lawless nations—surely, we must admit, unless pitiably blind by national vanity, that the gain (if such there be) resulting from these contentions,

8. The policy of England has been aggressive at all times; but we are far from exulting in the fact of having always dealt the first blow, as Mr. Thomas Attwood, of Birmingham, would wish us to do, when he tells us, exultingly, in the House of Commons, whilst speaking of Russia—(*See Mirror of Parliament*, 1833, p. 2874),—“We, the people of England, who have never known what fear is; who have been accustomed for seven hundred years to give a blow first, and to receive an apology afterwards; we, who have borne the British lion triumphant through every quarter of the world, and are now forced to submit to insults from this base and brutal, and this in reality weak power—a power which, from its mere physical force, contrives, like a great bully, to intimidate the moral strength of Europe!” Now, putting aside the exquisitely ludicrous charge of bullying, alleged against Russia by one who boasts, that, for seven hundred years, *we* have “struck the first blow,” and which reminds us of the scene between Sir Anthony Absolute and his “insolent, impudent, overbearing” son, Jack; we have here a specimen of that sort of sentiment which horses or buffaloes, if they could make speeches, might very properly indulge in, but which is derogatory to the rank of reasoning beings, who possess intellectual faculties in lieu of hoofs and horns.

Mr. Attwood is an advocate for war and paper money—*the curse and scourge of the working classes!* What do the Birmingham mechanics say to the following [157] picture of the effects of the last war upon the prosperity of their town? The same results would follow a like cause, should a war be entered into, to gratify their favourite representative.

Extract from Mr. Grey's (now Lord Grey) speech on the state of the nation, March 25, 1801.—See Hansard's Parliamentary History, vol. 35, p. 1064.

“I come now to speak of the internal state of the country. Two hundred and seventy millions have been added to our national debt, exclusive of imperial and other loans, and of the reduction effected by the sinking fund; and yet we are told, by the ex-ministers, that they leave the country in a flourishing situation! I ask any man whether, from diminished comforts or from positive distress, he does not feel this declaration an insult. Ask the ruined manufacturers of Yorkshire, Manchester, and Birmingham; ask the starving inhabitants of London and Westminster. In some parts of Yorkshire, formerly the most flourishing, it appears, from an authentic paper which I hold in my hand, that the poor-rates have increased from £522 to £6,000 a year; though the whole rack-rent of the parish does not exceed £5,600. *In Birmingham, I know, from undoubted authority, there are near 11,000 persons who receive parochial relief, though the whole number of the inhabitants cannot exceed 80,000—and this of a town reckoned one of the most prosperous in England.*”

9. Turkey.

is not less unholy in the former than the latter case; and that the title by which the sovereign of St. Petersburg [158] holds his conquered possessions is just as good, at least, as that by which the government of St. James's asserts the right to ours. In the case of Poland, to which we shall again have to recur by and by, there was, indeed, a better title than that of the sword, but which, amidst the clamour of fine sentiments, palmed by philanthropic authors and speakers upon the much abused public mind about Russian aggression in that quarter, has never, we believe, been mentioned by any orator, reviewer, or newspaper writer of the present day. The "Republic of Poland" (we quote the words of Malte-Brun) "had been chiefly composed of provinces wrested from Russia, or from the Great Dukes of Galitch, Vladimir, Volynski, Polotzk, and particularly Kiow by Boleslas the Victorious, Casimir the Great, Kings of Poland, and by Gedimir, Great Duke of Lithuania. Thus the nobles were the only persons interested in the defence of provinces whose inhabitants were estranged from the Poles, although they had remained under their government from the time of the conquest. All the peasants of Podolia and Volhynia were Rousniacs, or Little Russians, ignorant of the language or customs of Poland, which may partly account for the success of the Russians in their invasions of the Polish Republic. The Poles, who were persecuted by intolerant Catholic priests, who disregarded the constitutions of the Polish Diet, abandoned their lords without reluctance, and received willingly their countrymen, the Russian soldiers, who spoke the same dialect as themselves. The division of Poland was, on the part of Russia, not so much a lawless invasion as an act of reprisal on former invaders. Had this leading historical fact been explained in the Russian manifesto, which was published in 1772, so much obloquy might not have been attached to the conduct of that people."

... We shall be next [159] reminded of the great benefits which British conquests have conferred upon remote and uncivilised nations, particularly in the example of India; and we shall be called upon to show in what manner Russia has compensated for her violent seizures of independent territory, by any similar amelioration of the condition of its people. Before doing so, we shall premise that we do not offer it as a justification of the policy of Russia. If, by chance, the plunderer makes good use of his spoil, that is not a vindication of robbery; and because the serf of Poland, the savage of Georgia, and the ryot of Bengal, enjoy better laws under the sway of Russia and Great Britain, than they formerly possessed beneath their own governments—to argue that, therefore, these two powers stand morally justified in having subjugated, with fire and sword, those three less civilised states, would be to contend that America, instead of contenting herself with imparting improvements to the unenlightened communities of Europe, by the peaceful but irresistible means of her high example, is warranted in invading Naples or Spain, for the purpose of rescuing their people from the

thralldom of monarchy, or marching to Rome, and in place of the Pope, installing a President in the palace of the Vatican!¹⁰ It is, then, with no view to the justification of war and violence, but solely for the purpose of answering, by a few facts of unquestionable authenticity, those spurious appeals to our sympathies, based upon the false assumption of Russian aggrandisement, being but another term for the spread of barbarism and the extinction of freedom and civilisation, that [160] we glance at the proofs which are afforded in every direction of the vast moral, political, and commercial advantages that have been bestowed upon the countries annexed by conquest to that empire.

... We have already alluded to the emancipating influence of Russian intervention over the commerce of the Black Sea, the only channel by which the civilising intercourse with commercial nations can extend to these unenlightened regions; and we have been told, by the very highest authority,¹¹ that their trade, agriculture, and social improvement, already attest the beneficent effects of this improved policy. ... [164] ...

We shall, for the sake of brevity, restrict ourselves to the following short passage, from the highest authority that can be consulted, upon the character of Russian policy towards her latest maritime acquisition on the side of the Baltic. "Finland," says Malte-Brun, "was averse to the union with Sweden, and has lost none of its privileges by being incorporated with Russia: it is still governed by Swedish laws; schools have been established during the last twenty years, and the peasantry are in every respect as well protected as in Sweden."¹² ... [182] ...

If we refer to the speech of Lord Dudley Stuart, before alluded to (which is a compendium of all the accusations, suppositions, fears, dangers, and suspicions of which the subject is susceptible), we shall find an alarming picture given of the future growth of Russian dominion. Turkey, it seems, is to be only the germ of an empire which shall extend not merely from "Indus to the Pole," but throw forth its arms over Europe and Asia, and embrace every people and nation between the Bay of Bengal and the English Channel! Turkey once possessed, and the devouring process begins. Austria and all Italy are to be swallowed up at a meal, Greece and the Ionian Islands serving for side-dishes. Spain and Portugal follow as a dessert for this Dando of Constantinople; and Louis Philippe and his empire are washed

10. Yet there are perverse and purblind moralists, who can see proofs of God's interposition in every atrocious crime that happens, in its consequences, to carry some alloy of good; which merely proves that the great Ruler of the universe has, in *spite* of us, set His fiat against the predominancy of evil. A clergyman, we believe Dr. Buchanan, of high attainments and strict evangelical doctrines, who passed many years in India, proposed a prize essay, on his return to England, *as to the probable designs of Providence in placing the Indian empire in the hands of Great Britain*. This, from a contemporary of Warren Hastings, is little less blasphemous than the *Te Deums* sung by Catherine for the victories of Ismail and Warsaw.

11. M'Culloch—Commercial Dictionary, 7, p. 1108.

12. Vol. vi. p. 499, Malte-Brun's Geography.

down afterwards with Bordeaux and Champagne. Prussia and the smaller German States, having wisely formed themselves into a trades union of some thirty or forty millions, might be supposed by some persons to be secure from this tyrannical master. Nothing of the kind! His lordship has discovered that this is a mere trick of Russia for making them a richer prey. The German goose is only penned in this Prussian league that it may fatten and be worthier of the fate that awaits it. When Michaelmas arrives it will be served up in due state to the Russian eagle. Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, and Holland are [183] to be but as *entremets* for this national repast. And Persia, Egypt, Arabia, and India, in one large bouquet, will furnish the exotics to perfume and adorn this banquet of empires!¹³ One trifling matter, however, Lord Stuart altogether forgets to take into account: he omits to say how all the viands shall be paid for; in other words, in what way the Russian Chancellor of the Exchequer will make good his budget when called upon to clothe, feed, and pay armies to conquer a dozen powerful nations, some of them richer than the conqueror; to meet the expenses of *materiel* to furnish the commissariat, hire baggage waggons, charter transports, and to cover the thousand other outgoings, including even the frauds and impositions incidental [184] to a state of warfare. His lordship forgets this, and in doing so calls to our recollection a dream—our readers have probably experienced something of the kind—in which we found ourselves buoyed up in the air and borne along we could not tell how. It was not walking, flying, or swimming; yet on we glided through space, quite independent of

13. "Russia, as honourable members must be well aware, was not at the least pains to disguise her dissatisfaction at the present state of affairs in the Peninsula; and with a frontier so far advanced as hers now was, could any man living doubt that she would very soon adopt plain modes of making that dissatisfaction felt? He repeated that, with a frontier so far advanced, Italy was not safe from her grasp, and Russia once established there the consequences to Austria must be tremendous. Russia was surrounding—was enveloping Austria. Turkey would soon fall a prey to her lust of extended dominion. Greece would be a mere province of Russia; indeed, already Greece was subjected to her influence, and she scarcely hesitated to menace France. ... He would again say that the whole of the Prussian league was at the instigation of Russia, the former being the mere creature of the latter. When the present designs of Russia were accomplished, they would soon see how she was becoming jealous of Prussia, and a pretext would not be long wanting for the destruction of that instrument which the great northern power had used in erecting and confirming its own ascendancy. Prussia was prepared to do everything which Russia might dictate for the purpose of forwarding her designs; but she might fully anticipate this—that as soon as the plans of the Autocrat were matured, he would *in a day (!)* dismember and pull down his present allies, and after that Austria could not long resist. Then in another quarter of her great empire, let them only look at the advantages possessed by Russia. She had military stations within thirty miles of the western coast of Norway. ... That country could furnish sailors inferior to none in the world, and the whole kingdom abounded with timber of the best quality. *Russia would then become a naval power of the first order (!)* and might be joined by the Americans or the Dutch to the manifest disadvantage of England." (!)—*Times' report of Lord Dudley Stuart's Speech*, Feb. 19, 1836.

These sentiments appear to have been delivered with gravity, and listened to by the House of Commons without a smile!

all the laws of nature—hills disappearing, rivers drying up, seas changing into terra firma, trees, walls, and castles vanishing at our approach; despising all the usual impediments of sublunary travelling, caring no more for inns than if we had been a shooting star, and regardless, like Halley's comet, of a change of horses. On we went, with no luggage to look after, or hotel bills to settle, or postillions to pay, till, alas! we awoke and discovered that we were only a mortal biped, trammelled by the law of gravitation, and enslaved by the rules of political economy, privileged but to travel along coarse, dirty roads, and compelled before starting, not only to calculate the cost of the journey, but to put the money in our purse for coaches, steamboats, turnpike gates, and inns, as well as their waiters, boots, porters, and chambermaids, besides a round sum to cover extortions, if we would keep our temper. Now, Lord Stuart's case was precisely similar to ours, with the exception that he did not wake to his vision of supernatural locomotion. But to be serious. To those who resort, as a crowning bugbear, to the threats of universal sovereignty as the ultimate aim of the Russian Government, we have already in some degree replied by showing the weakness of that empire, as exemplified in its uncultivated surface, in the scattered position of its uncivilised people—their poverty, ignorance, and diversified character—and in the circumstance of its being behind Great Britain and other countries in the march of improvement and discovery.

But we can appeal to other facts, and to experience, to disprove the exaggerated views that are put forth respecting the power of Russia; and in no instance were her weakness and inability to concentrate and support an army more fully illustrated [185] than at the invasion of her territory by Bonaparte. At the battle of Borodino—which was the first great affair that took place between the French and the forces of the Czar—we find, notwithstanding the alarm of invasion had been trumpeted through Europe eighteen months previously, that the number of combatants brought, on that bloody day, to the defence of their native soil, only amounted to 120,000 men, of whom a large portion were without uniforms or arms, excepting scythes or other similar weapons. Now, to illustrate the very superior strength of a nation whose inhabitants are at once concentrated and rich, let us suppose so absurd a circumstance as that Russia, after eighteen months of open preparation and threatening, were to march an army of nearly half a million of soldiers into England; should we be found, after so ample a warning, opposing only 120,000 fighting men, and that number only half armed and clothed, in defence of our homes, our wives and daughters, in the first battle-field? London alone could furnish and equip such an army, in so great a cause, within six months! Nor did the deficiency of numbers arise from want of patriotism. On the contrary, the Russians fought with unequalled ardour and bravery;¹⁴ and the only reason that Napoleon's

14. Regiments of peasants, who till that day had never seen war, and who still had no other uniform than

troops were not on that occasion overwhelmed by ten times their force, is, that the Government had not money to pay for transporting its subjects from remote provinces to the scene of action, or funds to provide arms and support them when collected together.

It has been well observed by a very sound authority,¹⁵ that China affords the best answer to those who argue that Russia meditates hostile views towards our Indian possessions. China is separated from Russia by an imaginary boundary only; and [186] that country is universally supposed to contain a vast deposit of riches, well worthy of the spoiler's notice. Besides, it has not enjoyed the "*benefit*" of being civilised by English or other Christian conquerors—an additional reason for expecting to find a wealthy pagan community, waiting, like unwrought mines, the labours of some Russian Warren Hastings. Why, then, does not the Czar invade the Chinese empire,¹⁶ which is his next neighbour, and contains an unravaged soil, rather than contemplate, as the alarmist writers and speakers predict he does, marching three thousand miles over regions of burning deserts and ranges of snowy mountains, to Hindostan, *where he would find that [Robert] Clive and [Arthur] Wellesley [Duke of Wellington] had preceded him?* The reason for such forbearance is, at the present day, as it was when that splendid but immoral genius, Catherine [the Great], proposed to undertake this very expedition—*that there was not in Russia sufficient available wealth to transport across its own surface an army large enough to subjugate the Chinese.* How, then, will they reach India through enemies' territories, and in spite of the power and influence of England? To warrant the attempt, the Czar ought to possess, at least, the command of one hundred millions sterling. Last year, he required but one million and a quarter,¹⁷ for which he was compelled to solicit the aid of the capitalists of western Europe, and found great [187] difficulty, even after pledges of peace and protestations of good behaviour, in obtaining the necessary loan!

their grey jackets, formed with the steadiness of veterans, crossed their brows, and having uttered their national exclamation, "*Gospodee pomiloui nas!*"—God have mercy upon us!—rushed into the thickest of the battle.—*Scott's Napoleon*, chap. 77.

15. *Spectator* newspaper, No. 386.

16. Unless his Muscovite Majesty should adopt this suggestion quickly, there appears some chance that England may be before him at Pekin. We perceive that some of our writers are anxious that we should send some ships of war to compel the Chinese Government to open other ports to our vessels besides Canton, and to dictate certain other regulations for carrying on trade with us, which they are good enough to suggest to his Celestial Majesty. Could not our ships of war call in on the way, and compel the French people to transfer the trade of Marseilles to Havre, and thus save us the carriage of their wines and madders through the Straits of Gibraltar? Why should not they force the Americans to restrict the export of their cotton to New York, rather than to suffer the growth of Savannah and Mobile? Well may the Chinese proclaim us "*outside barbarians;*" for, verily, this is outside barbarous morality!

17. Double the amount might be raised without difficulty, upon sufficient security, in Manchester, in less than forty-eight hours, if the profit or other motive offered an adequate inducement.

“Russia once in possession of Constantinople, and farewell to the liberties of Europe!” is the cry of those who are “*possessed*” with the dread of Muscovite ambition; and the very repetition of this prophecy is calculated to produce believers in its truth. *How* it is that Russia is to conquer one hundred millions of people, superior to her own population in wealth, freedom, instruction, and morality, and armed with all the superiority of power which an ascendancy in those qualities ever has, and always will bestow upon civilised communities over barbarous nations, not one of those writers and speakers has condescended to explain; the ways and means are studiously avoided, or disregarded as of no consequence. Yet that Russia possesses no superhuman properties, which enable her to disregard the ordinary impediments of nature, we have already shown, in the example of her inability, when attacked, to resist the invader, owing to the want of the money, food, arms, and clothing, necessary for the transport and maintenance of large armies. With such an example of her weakness in defensive operations as we have just given, we need not be surprised that we have very abundant proofs of the feebleness of that empire when engaged in aggressive warfare. All the hostilities carried on between Russia and her barbarous neighbours, Turkey and Persia, have been full of evidences of the difficulty with which the first Power achieved her successive conquests, and the precarious tenure by which she has held them. Indeed, the last war with Turkey was, from the combined causes of deficient means of transport, defective commissariat supplies, and want of hospitals—all arising from the poverty of the Government—protracted so long and attended with so great a loss of life to the invaders, that it left no doubt, with reflecting minds, of the incompetency of Russia to sustain a war of aggression with Prussia, Austria, or any other civilised State.

[188] But Poland is the best and latest witness of the weakness and poverty of Russia. Notwithstanding that the insurrection in that country broke out at a moment when the preparations were not matured (owing to the rashness of the military youths of Warsaw), and although the natives possessed no strong places, as in Belgium, and their territory is destitute of mountain fastnesses, such as are found in Spain, Scotland, or Switzerland, yet a mere handful of insurgents baffled the whole power of the Czar for twelve months, several times defeating his ill-equipped armies with great slaughter, and at last were subdued only through the perfidy of the Prussian authorities. Surely with this experience of Russian weakness and poverty to appeal to, we need not refer to the dangers apprehended for France, Germany, and Spain, unless it be to ask whether a British Parliament, possessing so many unsatisfied claims upon its time and attention at home, from two millions of paupers in a neighbouring island, declared by authority to be without the means of subsistence; from the Dissenters of this kingdom and the Catholics of Ireland; and from the discontented taxpayers at large, whether the British legislature might

not very properly leave the care of those independent and powerful empires to their own governments, at least for the present, until the business of the united empire shall have been more satisfactorily dispatched.

We shall, however, be told that in arguing for the weakness of this empire from past experience, we lose sight of the difference between Russia in the Baltic and Russia in the Mediterranean. “The Government of St. Petersburg once transferred to Constantinople, and Russia thenceforth becomes the first maritime power in Europe,” is the universal cry of the alarmists. *How?* Oh! the oaks of Bosnia, which are the finest in the world for shipbuilding, would be then at her command! But where would the sailors be found by a power possessing no mercantile marine? Napoleon thought vainly to create a navy from these very forests; he ordered tools to [189] be forged in the country, and roads to be cut, by which the French legions might penetrate into Illyria, and the oaks of Bosnia be thus transported to the harbours of the Adriatic. He, moreover, contrived to bring the forests of Switzerland to Antwerp, by constructing the famous shoot down the side of Mount Pilatus. The timber rotted in his harbours, for how could the navies arise, whilst England commanded the trade of the ocean? Napoleon Bonaparte was a madman in all that related to commercial science; and his disastrous fate was the inevitable consequence; but they, who with his example before them, can assume the existence of the largest navy in the world, *in the possession of a people whose carrying trade is in the hands of another nation*, without the previous growth of manufactures and commerce are, in that particular, more hopelessly mad than the Corsican usurper. As well and as wisely might they assume the existence of the ripened harvest when no seed had been sown, or reckon on the growth of a city where neither builders nor inhabitants had ever existed! Until Russia becomes a great trading empire, she will not be in even the path for surpassing us in naval power. We have elsewhere shown that she cannot enlarge her commerce without thereby enriching us, even more than any other people; how then can Russia hope to become equal to ourselves upon the ocean, unless England should, for the purpose of enabling her to do so, resolve to stand still?¹⁸

But supposing that Russia were to seize the first moment of her occupancy of Turkey to begin to build ships of war, and by the aid of Greek sailors to man a fleet at Constantinople; [190] and presuming, moreover, that having obtained violent possession of Norway, she were to employ similar means for erecting a naval power

18. When the measures for conciliating the respective commercial interests of parties in the Irish Union were arranging, the opinion of practical men was taken as to the period at which the cotton manufacture of Ireland might be able to go on, in competition with that of England, without the help of protecting duties; and Mr. William Orr, of Dublin, who had introduced the manufacture into that country, was asked if he thought it likely that in ten years the Irish manufacturers would overtake the English in skill? Mr. Orr replied:—“Yes, if the English can be persuaded during that time to stand still.”

in the Baltic: let us then call the attention of our readers to the defenceless and dependent position in which her territory would be placed, owing to the peculiar geographical features of those quarters of the globe. The sole outlet for the waters of the Sea of Marmora and the Black Sea is by the canal of the Dardanelles, called the Hellespont; a passage whose navigable width scarcely exceeds two thousand yards for a length of thirty miles. To blockade the entrance of this Strait would require that a couple of ships of the line, a frigate, and a steamer, should be stationed at its mouth, and with no larger force than this might the egress of any vessel be prevented from the interior seas; and not only so, but as these four men-of-war would constitute, in the eyes of all foreign powers, and according to the law of nations, a sufficient blockade, they would deprive Constantinople and the whole Turkish empire of all foreign trade, besides shutting out from the commerce of the Mediterranean Sea, and the rest of the world, the entire coast of the Euxine, and its thousands of miles of tributary rivers. If we now transfer our attention to the northern portions of the Russian empire, we shall find that the passage of the Sound, through which all the trade of the Baltic is compelled to pass, is scarcely less narrow than that of the Hellespont; and provided Russia had gained possession of the interior of these Straits, according to the supposition of the alarmists, then half a dozen ships of war might hermetically seal the whole of northern Europe against the trade of the world. In short, Russia, with the addition of Turkey, would possess but two outlets, each more contracted than the River Thames at Tilbury Fort; and as these could be declared in a state of blockade by less than a dozen vessels of war, it is clear that nature herself has doomed Russia to be in a condition of the most abject and prostrate subjection to the will of the maritime powers. This is a point of paramount importance in estimating the future [191] growth of the country under consideration. It should never be lost sight of for a moment, in arguing upon the subject, that Russia, in possession of Turkey and all the coasts of the Black Sea, besides her present stupendous expanse of territory, would still be denied, by the hand of Nature herself, a navigation of more than three miles in width, to connect her millions of square leagues of territory with the rest of the globe—a peculiarity the more striking since it could not be found to exist in any other quarter of the earth. It is deserving of notice, that these two narrow straits, which guard the entrances to the Black Sea and the Baltic, are nearly six months' sail distant from each other; and the track by which alone they can communicate lying through the Straits of Dover and of Gibraltar, it must be apparent that, were Russia the mistress of those channels, she could not pass from the one to the other, unless she were in amicable connection with Great Britain.¹⁹

19. During the war between Russia and the Porte, in 1791, the Government of St. Petersburg, anxious to send a fleet to attack the Turkish power in the Archipelago, requested permission of the Dutch and English

There remains but one more point requiring our consideration in connection with the abstract question of Muscovite aggrandisement. They who predict the unbounded extension of Russia, forget the inevitable growth of weakness which attends the undue expansion of territorial dominion.²⁰ Not only can they foresee without difficulty the conquest of Germany, France, Spain, Persia, and India, but they are, at the same time, blind to the dangers which must attend the attempt to incorporate into one cumbrous empire these remote [192] and heterogeneous nations. In all ages and climes nature has given the boundaries for different communities; and we find that not only are the several families of the earth generally enclosed by seas or mountains to mark the limits of their respective territories, but the rivers usually flow through lands inhabited by people of one language—thus constituting a double natural line of demarcation. For example, the Alps and the Pyrenees afford the barriers beneath the opposite sides of which repose the French, Spanish, and Italian nations—within which arise the Rhone and Garonne of France, the Tagus and Guadalquiver of the Peninsula, and the Po and Adige of Italy; each of which may be almost said to water integral countries. And, seeing that these allotments of the earth's surface are sufficiently defined by the hand of nature to have drawn together in the earliest ages the scattered seed of Adam into separate and distinct families, how infallibly shall the same natural limits suffice to *preserve* those distinctions, when aided by those potent safeguards of nationality, the diversified histories, religions, languages, and laws of ancient and powerful empires! These are reflections that do not seem to have occurred to those writers who assign the sovereignty of Europe and Asia over to Russia; and, even if they had crossed their minds, such trifling impediments could hardly have discouraged them, after having surmounted so much greater obstacles. For assuredly they who can bestow upon Russia the supremacy of the seas, whilst her carrying trade is in the hands of England—or who can award her the victory over rich, united, and powerful nations, without the previous possession of money, *materiel*, or provisions for her armies—need not be daunted by such trifling natural difficulties as the Himalayas or the Alps present against the concentrations of a government over her conquests; or feel a moment's alarm about regulating with the same tariff the commerce of the Rhine, Danube, Neva, and Ganges.

We have now, we believe, noticed every argument with [193] which it has

to be allowed to refit the vessels and take in stores at one of their ports; and failing in this application, the expedition was abandoned.

20. "In large bodies the circulation of power must be less at the extremities: Nature herself has said it. The Turk cannot govern Egypt as he governs Thrace, nor has he the same dominion in the Crimea and Algiers which he has at Brusa and Smyrna. Despotism itself is obliged to truck and huckster; the Sultan gets such obedience as he can; he governs with a loose reign that he may govern at all: it is the eternal law of extension and detached empire."—Burke.

been the custom to urge us to participate in Russian and Turkish quarrels and intrigues; and we have endeavoured to show, by a candid appeal to facts, that the dangers with which we are threatened in our commerce, colonies, or national dominion, from the power of Russia, are chimerical. We have likewise shown that the prejudices existing in the minds of the British people against that Power, and which have been industriously fostered by the writers and speakers of the day, are founded in delusion and misrepresentation; that the spread of Russian Empire has invariably increased, instead of diminishing the growth of civilisation and commerce; that she owes her extension less to her own forces, which we have shown to be weak, than to the disunion or barbarism of her neighbours; and that the very nature of her geographical position must always keep her in dependence upon the goodwill of other maritime powers. Where, then, are the motives—seeing that Russia has not inflicted the slightest wrong upon *us*, or even contemplated one substantial injury to *our* people—for the warlike spirit which now pervades the current writings and speeches upon the subject of that nation? *We do not know—for we have not been able in our researches upon the subject to discover—one solitary ground upon which to found a pretence, consistent with reason, common sense, or justice, for going to war with Russia.* [194] ...

Our object has not only been to deprecate war as the greatest evil that can befall a people, but to show that we have no interest in maintaining the *status quo* of Turkey; and, consequently, that the armaments, which, in a time of peace, are maintained, at an enormous cost, for the purpose of making demonstrations in favour of that country, and against Russia, might be reduced, and their expense spared to the taxpayers of the British Empire.

We shall here be encountered with a very general prepossession in favour of our maintaining what is termed a rank amongst the states of the Continent—which means, not that we should be free from debt, or that our nation should be an example to all others for the wealth, education, and virtues of its people, but that England shall be consulted before any other countries presume to quarrel or fight; and that she shall be ready, and shall be called upon, to take a part in every contention, either as mediator, second, or principal. So prevalent and so little questioned has this egotistical spirit become, that, when an honourable member rises in Parliament, to call upon a minister of the crown to account for some political changes in Spain, Portugal, or Turkey—instead of the question encountering the laughter of the House (as such an inquiry would probably do from the homely representatives who meet to attend to their constituents' affairs at Washington), or the questioner being put down by the functionary, with something after Cain's answer, "Am I the Spaniard's keeper?"—the latter offers grave explanations and excuses, whilst the audience looks on with silent attention, as though every word of our foreign secretary were pregnant with the fate of nations bowing to his sway.

[195] If we go back through the Parliamentary debates of the last few reigns, we shall find this singular feature in our national character—the passion for meddling with the affairs of foreigners—more strikingly prominent in every succeeding session; and, at the breaking out of the French Revolution, the reader is astonished to see that the characters of the leaders of the mobs of Paris, Marseilles, and Lyons, and the conduct of the government of France, became the constant subjects of discussion in the House of Commons, almost to the exclusion of matters of domestic interest—Pitt and Burke on one side, and Fox, Grey, and Sheridan on the other, attacking and defending the champions of the Revolution, with the same ardour as if the British legislature were a responsible tribunal, erected over the whole of Christendom, and endowed with powers to decide without appeal, the destinies of all the potentates and public men of Europe.²¹ Unhappily, the same passion had impregnated the minds of the public generally (as it continues to do down to our own day), and the result was, as everybody knows, the Bourbon crusade. But England, in taking upon herself to make war with the spirit of the age, encountered the Fates; and, instead of destroying that infant [196] freedom which, however monstrous and hideous at its birth, was destined to throw off its bloody swathes, and, in spite of the enmity of the world, to dispense the first taste of liberty to Europe—*she was herself the nurse that, by her opposition, rocked the French Revolution into vigorous maturity.*

Our history during the last century may be called the tragedy of “British intervention in the politics of Europe;” in which princes, diplomatists, peers, and generals, have been the authors and actors—the people the victims; and the moral will be exhibited to the latest posterity in 800 millions of debt. . . . [210] . . .

Russia, in possession of Constantinople, say the alarmists, would possess a port open at all seasons; the materials for constructing ships; vast tracts of fertile land, capable of producing cotton, silk, wool, etc.; and she would be placed in a situation of easy access to our shores—all of which would tend to destroy the

21. That this spirit still survives in full vigour may be shown by the motion recently made in the House of Commons by Mr. T. Duncombe, for interceding with the French Government in behalf of the state prisoners at Ham. Prince Polignac and his confederates attempted, by their *coup d'état*, to deprive France of law, place the whole country in the hands of despots, and reduce it to the monkish ignorance of the middle ages, by giving again to priests and bigots the absolute power over the printing press. In this attempt they failed; but freedom conquered at the cost of hundreds of victims. *In England, or any other country but France, those ministers would have suffered death.* Yet, after five years of confinement, behold us interfering with the course of justice in an empire with whose internal concerns we are no more entitled to mix than with those of China!

Within a week of this display, a lad was transported from Macclesfield for fourteen years, *for stealing a pair of stockings.* We recommend this to our facetious Gallic neighbours as a fit opportunity for intervention: the mother should be induced to write her case to M. Odillon Barrot, or some other popular member of the Chamber of Deputies.

balance of power, and put in danger the interests of the British commerce, in particular. But New York, a port far more commodious than Constantinople, is open at all seasons; the United States possess materials without end for ship-building; their boundless territory of fertile land is adapted for the growth of cotton, silk, wool, etc.; and New York is next door to Liverpool; for—thanks to Providence!—there is no land intervening between the American continent and the shores of this United Kingdom. Yet, we have never heard that the North American continent forms any part of the balance of power! Twenty-four sovereign, free, and independent States, altogether forgotten...

[215] [George] Washington (who could remember when the national debt of England was under fifty-five millions; who saw it augmented, by the Austrian war of succession, to seventy-eight millions; and again increased, by the seven years' war, to one hundred and forty-six millions; and who lived to behold the first fruits of the French revolutionary wars, with probably a presentiment of the harvest of debt and oppression that was to follow—whose paternal eye looked abroad only with the patriotic hope of finding in the conduct of other nations example or warning for the instruction of his countrymen), seeing the chimerical objects for which England, *although an island*, plunged into the contentions of the Continent, with no other result to her suffering people but an enduring and increasing debt—bequeathed, as a legacy to his fellow-citizens, the injunction, that they should never be tempted by any inducements or provocations to become parties to the States' system of Europe. And faithfully, zealously, and happily has that testament been obeyed! Down even to our day the feeling and conviction of the people, and consequently of the Government and the authors²² of the United States, have con-

22. Washington Irving has good humouredly satirised this national propensity for foreign politics in the well-known sketch of "John Bull." "He is," says that exquisite writer, "a busy-minded personage, who thinks, not merely for himself and family, but for all the country round, and is most generously disposed to be everybody's champion. He is continually volunteering his services to settle his neighbour's affairs, and takes it in great dudgeon if they engage in any matter of consequence without asking his advice; though he seldom engages in any friendly office of the kind without finishing by getting into a squabble with all parties, and then railing bitterly at their ingratitude. He unluckily took lessons in his youth in the noble science of defence; and having accomplished himself in the use of his limbs and weapons [i.e., *standing armies and navies*] and become a perfect master at boxing and cudgel play, he has had a troublesome life of it ever since. He cannot hear of a quarrel between the most distant of his neighbours but he begins incontinently to fumble with the head of his cudgel, and consider whether interest or honour does not require that he should meddle in their broils. Indeed he has extended his relations of pride and policy so completely over the whole country [i.e., *quadripartite treaties and quintuple alliances*] that no event can take place without infringing some of his finely-spun rights and dignities. Couched in his little domain, with those filaments stretching forth in every direction, he is like some choleric, bottle-bellied old spider, who has woven his web over a whole chamber, so that a fly cannot buzz, nor a breeze blow, without startling his repose and causing him to sally forth wrathfully from his den. Though really a good-tempered, good-hearted old fellow at bottom, yet he is singularly fond of being in the midst of contention. It is one of his peculiarities, however, that he only relishes the beginning of an affray; he always goes into a fight with alacrity, but comes out of it grum-

stantly increased in [216] favour of a policy from which so much wealth, prosperity, and moral greatness have sprung. America, for fifty years at peace, with the exception of two years of defensive war, is a spectacle of the beneficent effects of that policy which may be comprised in the maxim—As little intercourse as possible betwixt the *Governments*, as much connection as possible between the *nations* of the world. And when England (*without being a republic*) shall be governed upon the same principles of regard for the interests of the people, and a like common sense view of the advantages of its position, we shall adopt a similar motto for our policy; and then we shall hear no more mention of that costly chimera, the balance of power. ... [251] ...

Our inquiry is not as to the morality or injustice of the case—that is not an affair between Russia and ourselves, but betwixt that people and the Great Ruler of all nations; and we are no more called upon by any such considerations to wrest the attribute of vengeance from the Deity, and deal it forth upon the northern aggressor, than we are to preserve the peace and good behaviour of Mexico, or to chastise the wickedness of the Ashantees. ...

[253] Our object, however, in vindicating Russia from the attacks of prejudice and ignorance, has not been to transfer the national hatred to Turkey, but to neutralise public feeling, by showing that our only wise policy—nay, the only course consistent with the instinct of self-preservation—is to hold ourselves altogether independent of and aloof from the political relations of both these remote and comparatively barbarous nations. England, with her insular territory, her consolidated and free institutions, and her civilised and artificial condition of society, ought not to be, and cannot be, dependent for safety or prosperity upon the conduct of Russia or Turkey; and she will not, provided wisdom governs her counsels, enter into any engagements so obviously to the disadvantage of her people, as to place the peace and happiness of this empire at the mercy of the violence or wickedness of two despotic rulers over savage tribes more than a thousand miles distant from our shores.

“While the Government of England takes ‘peace’ for its motto, it is idle to

bling even when victorious; and, though no one fights with more obstinacy to carry a contested point, yet, when the battle is over, and he comes to a reconciliation, he is so much taken up with the mere shaking of hands [*Lord Castlereagh at the Treaty of Vienna*] that he is apt to let his antagonists pocket all they have been grumbling about. It is not, therefore, fighting that he ought to be so much on his guard against as making friends. ... All that I wish is, that John’s present troubles may teach him more prudence in future; [*nothing of the kind—look at him now, fifteen years after this was written, playing the fool again, ten times worse than ever, in Spain*] that he may cease to distress his mind about other people’s affairs; that he may give up the fruitless attempt to promote the good of his neighbours, and the peace and happiness of the world, by dint of the cudgel: that he may remain quietly at home; gradually get his house into repair; cultivate his rich estate according to his fancy; husband his income—if he thinks proper; bring his unruly children into order—if he can.”—*Sketch Book*.

think of supporting Turkey,”²³ says one of the most influential and active *agitators* in favour of the policy of going to war with Russia. In the name of every artisan in the kingdom, to whom war would bring the tidings, once more, of suffering and despair; in the behalf of the peasantry of these islands, to whom the first cannon would sound the knell of privation and death; on the part of the capitalists, merchants, manufacturers, and traders, who can reap no other fruits from hostilities but bankruptcy and ruin; in a word, for the sake of the vital interests of these and all other classes of the community, we solemnly protest against Great Britain being plunged into war with Russia, or any other country, in defence of Turkey—a war which, whilst it would inflict disasters upon every portion of the community, could not bestow a permanent benefit upon any class of it; and one upon our success in which no part of the civilised would have cause to rejoice. [254] Having the *interests* of all orders of society to support our argument in favour of peace, we need not dread war. *These*, and not the piques of diplomatists, the whims of crowned heads, the intrigues of ambassadors, or schoolboy rhetoric upon the balance of power, will henceforth determine the foreign policy of our government. That policy will be based upon the *bonâ fide* principle (not Lord Palmerston’s principle) of *non-intervention in the political affairs of other nations*; and from the moment this maxim becomes the load-star by which our government shall steer the vessel of the state—from that moment the good old ship Britannia will float triumphantly in smooth and deep water, and the rocks, shoals, and hurricanes of foreign war are escaped for ever.

If it be objected, that this selfish policy disregards the welfare and improvement of other countries—which is, we cordially admit, the primary object of many of those who advocate a war with Russia, in defence of Turkey, and for the restoration of Poland—we answer, that, so far as the objects we have in view are concerned, we join hands with nearly every one of our opponents. Our desire is to see Poland happy, Turkey civilised, and Russia conscientious and free; it is still more our wish that these ameliorations should be bestowed by the hands of Britain upon her less instructed neighbours: so far the great majority of our opponents and ourselves are agreed; *how* to accomplish this beneficent purpose is the question whereon we differ. They would resort to the old method of trying, as Washington Irving says, “to promote the good of their neighbours, and the peace and happiness of the world, by dint of the cudgel.” Now, there is an unanswerable objection to this method: experience is against it; it has been tried for some thousands of years, and has always been found to fail. But, within our own time, a new light has appeared which has penetrated our schools and families, and illuminated our prisons and lunatic asylums, and which promises soon to pervade all the institutions and rela-

23. “England, France, Russia, and Turkey.”

tions of social life. We allude to that principle [255] which, renouncing all appeals, through brute violence, to the mere instinct of fear, addresses itself to the nobler and far more powerful qualities of our intellectual and moral nature. This principle—which, from its very nature as a standard, tends to the exaltation of our species, has abolished the use of the rod, the fetters, the lash, and the strait-waistcoat, and which, in a modified degree, has been extended even to the brute creation, by substituting gentleness for severity in the management of horses²⁴ and the treatment of dogs—this principle we would substitute for the use of cannon and musketry in attempting to improve or instruct other communities. In a word, our opponents would “promote the good of their neighbours by dint of the cudgel:” we propose to arrive at the same end by means of our own national example. *Their* method, at least, cannot be right; since it assumes that they are at all times competent to judge of what is good for others—which they are not: whilst, even if they were, it would be still equally wrong; for they have not the jurisdiction over other states which authorises them to do them even good by force of arms. If so, the United States and Switzerland might have been justified, during the prodigal reign of George IV, in making an economical crusade against England, for the purpose of “cudgelling” us out of *our* extravagance and into *their* frugality, which, no doubt, would have been doing good to a nation of debtors and spendthrifts; instead of which, those countries persevered in their peaceful example. And we have seen the result: Swiss economy has enabled its people to outvie us in cheapness, and to teach us a lesson of frugal industry on our own fortress of Gibraltar. It is thus that the virtues of nations operate both by example and precept: and such is the power and rank they confer, that vicious communities, like the depraved individual, are [256] compelled to reform, or to lose their station in the scale of society. States will all turn moralists, in the end, in self-defence.

Apply this principle to Russia, which we will suppose had conquered Turkey. Ten years at least of turbulence and bloodshed would elapse before its fierce Mahometan inhabitants submitted to their Christian invaders, which period must be one of continued exhaustion to the nation. Suppose that at the end of that time those plundered possessions became tranquillised, and the government, which had been impoverished by internal troubles, began to reflect and to look abroad for information as to the course of policy it should pursue. England, which had wisely remained at peace, pursuing its reforms and improvements, would, we have a right to assume, present a spectacle of prosperity, wealth, and power which invariably reward a period of peace. Can there be a doubt that this *example* of the advantages to be derived from labour and improvement over those accruing from bloodshed

24. See the volume on *The Horse*, published by the *Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, for the stress laid upon the superiority of mild treatment in the breaking of that animal.

and rapine, presented in the happiness of the peaceful and the misery of the warlike nation, would determine the future career of Russia in favour of industry and commerce? The mere instinct of self-love and self-preservation must so decide. Had England and all Europe been plunged in war to prevent Russia from effecting her conquest there would have been no such *example* of the fruits and blessings of peace at the close of hostilities as we have here supposed her to present.

The influence which *example* has exerted over the conduct of nations—more potent and permanent than that of the “cudgel”—might form in itself the subject of a distinct and interesting inquiry. It should not be confined to the electric effects of state convulsions, which shock simultaneously the frame of neighbouring empires. The tranquil and unostentatious educational reforms in Switzerland, the temperance societies of America, and the railroads of England, exercise a sway as certain, however gradual, over the imitativeness of the whole world as the “glorious” three days of France or the [257] triumph of the Reform Bill. But however interesting the topic, our space does not allow us to pursue it further. Yet even whilst we write a motion is making in the House of Commons for a committee to inquire into the mode in which the American Government disposes of its waste lands. A Swiss journal informed us the other day that at a recent meeting of the *Vorort* of that country, a member called for a municipal reform measure similar to the English Corporation Act; and in a Madrid journal which is now before us the writer recommends to the ministers of police a plan for numbering and lettering the watchmen of that metropolis in imitation of the new police of London. Such is *example* in a time of peace.

One word at parting between the author and the reader. This pamphlet, advocating peace, economy, and a moral ascendancy over brute violence, as well as deprecating national antipathies, has, as our excellent and public-spirited publisher will vouch, been written without the slightest view to notoriety or gain (what fame or emolument can accrue from the anonymous publication of an eightpenny work?), and we therefore run no risk of invidious misconception if, in taking leave of our readers, we do so, not with the usual bow of ceremony, but after a fashion of our own. In a word, as trade, and not authorship, is our proper calling, they will, we hope, excuse our attempting to make a bargain with them before we part. And, first, for that very small portion of our friends who will only step out of their way to do an acceptable act provided good and sufficient claims be established against them: they will compel us, then, to remind them that this petty production (which we frankly admit reveals nothing new) contains as much matter as might have been printed in a volume, and sold at above ten times its charge; and, therefore, if those aforesaid customers approve the quality of the article, indifferent as it is, our terms of sale are that they lend this pamphlet to at least six of their acquaintances for perusal. This is the amount of our demand, and as we are dealing with “good” men

we [258] shall book the debt with the certainty that it will be duly paid.

But by far the larger portion of our readers will be of that class who, in the words of Sterne, do good “they know not why and care not wherefor.” To them we say, “If in the preceding pages you discover a sincere, however feeble, attempt to preserve peace and put down a gigantic national prejudice, an honest though humble resistance to the false tenets of glory, an ardent but inadequate effort, by proving that war and violence have no unison with the true interests of mankind to emancipate our moral and intellectual nature from the domination of the mere animal propensity of combativeness; if, in a word, you see sound views of commerce, just principles of government, freedom, improvement, morality, justice, and truth, anxiously, and yet all ineffectively advocated, then, and not otherwise, recommend this trifle to your friends, place it in the hands of the nearest newspaper editors, and bring it in every way possible before the eye of the public; and do this, not for the sake of the author or the merit of his poor production, but that other and more competent writers may be encouraged to take up with equal zeal and far greater ability the same cause, which we religiously believe is the cause of the best interests of humanity.”

AUTHOR’S NOTE [by Cobden and original to the 1836 Edinburgh printing of the pamphlet ([link](#)):

The circumstance of each of the preceding chapters having been stereotyped as soon as written precludes the insertion of the following words as a note in another and more appropriate part of the pamphlet.

The predominant feeling entertained with reference to Russia, and the one which has given birth to the other passions nourished towards her, is that of fear—*fear* of the danger of an irruption of its people into western Europe, and the possibility of another destruction of civilisation at the hands of those semi-barbarous tribes similar to that of ancient Rome by their ancestors. But the Goths and Huns did not extinguish the power [259] and greatness of the Romans. The latter sunk a prey, not to the force of external foes, but to their own internal vices and corruptions. Those northern nations which invaded that empire, and whom we stigmatise as barbarians, were superior in the manly qualities of courage, fortitude, discipline, and temperance to the Roman people of their day. The Attilas and Alarics were equally superior to their contemporaries, the descendants of the Cæsars, and they did not sweep with the besom [broom] of destruction that devoted land until long after [now quoting Edward Gibbon] the “dark, unrelenting Tiberius, the furious Caligula, the stupid Claudius, the profligate and cruel Nero, the beastly Vitellius, and the timid, inhuman Domitian” had, by exterminating every ancient family of the republic, and extirpating every virtue and every talent

from the minds of the people, prepared the way for the terrible punishment inflicted upon them.

Modern Europe bears no resemblance in its moral condition to that of ancient Rome at the time we are alluding to. On the contrary, instead of a tendency towards degeneracy, there is a recuperative principle observable in the progress of reforms and improvements of the modern world which in its power of regeneration give ground for hope that the present and future ages of refinement will escape those evils which grew up alongside the wealth and luxury of ancient States, and ultimately destroyed them.

But the application of the power of chemistry to the purposes of war furnishes the best safeguard against the future triumph of savage hordes over civilised communities. Gunpowder has for ever set a barrier against the irruption of barbarians into western Europe. War without artillery and musketry is no longer possible, and these cannot be procured by such people as form the great mass of the inhabitants of Russia. Such is the power which modern inventions in warfare confer upon armies of men, that it is no exaggeration to say that fifty thousand Prussian soldiers, with their complement of field-pieces, rockets, and musketry are more than a match for all the savage warriors who, with their rude weapons, at different epochs ravaged the world from the time of Xerxes down to that of Tamarlane; whilst those countless myriads, without the aid of gunpowder, would be powerless against the smallest of the hundreds of fortified places that are now scattered over Europe. Henceforth, therefore, war is not merely an affair of men, but of men, material, and money.

For some remarks upon the possibility of another irruption of barbarians, see Gibbon's "Rome," ch. 8.

About the Author



Richard Cobden (1804–1865) was a manufacturer who became a leading figure of British liberalism, in his writing, speeches, organizing, and service in Parliament for 24 years. He led the Anti-Corn Law League and he negotiated and signed the 1860 commercial treaty between Britain and France. While Cobden is often remembered for advancing free trade and fiscal responsibility, a large part his political life was devoted to peace, arms reduction, staying out of military adventures, and refuting war propaganda.

[Go to archive of Watchpad section](#)
[Go to September 2024 issue](#)