gas; the England of 1852 was habitually employing them all, though it had still much to learn in the way of perfecting their use.

The greatest change of all, the transformation of the United Kingdom from a state mainly dependent on agriculture to an essentially manufacturing community, is also the work of the first half of the nineteenth century. We have already spoken of the enormous development of trade during the years of the great French war, but the prosperity of the landed interest had also been very great as long as that struggle lasted, and at its end the number of the inhabitants of the realm more or less directly interested in agriculture was still reckoned to exceed that engaged in manufactures. The great towns contained less than twenty per cent. of the population of England, while by 1852 they counted nearly forty per cent., and at the present day have risen to more than half of the total.* It was the gradual and silent change in proportion between the tillers of the soil and the townsmen, between 1815 and 1840, that made Free Trade inevitable. When the producers of food-stuffs had become a clear minority, it was absurd that the large majority to whom cheap corn was essential, should be taxed for their benefit. The landed aristocracy strove long to retain for agriculture its privileged position, and tried to cover the material benefits which protection brought to themselves, by patriotic talk as to the necessity for keeping England self-sufficing in her food-supply. When it became clear that population was growing too fast for the kingdom ever to be able to supply all its own needs, so that some amount of foreign aid must always be called in, the

Growth of the manufacturing and urban population—Free trade.

* In 1891 the purely rural "Sanitary Districts" of England had only 11,076,315 inhabitants out of a total population of 29,000,000. The total of the great towns in 1811 had been about 1,850,000 out of a total population of 10,000,000. In 1851 they had risen to be over 6,000,000 out of a total of 17,000,000.