

Englishman was responsible for any unnecessary misery inflicted on his poorer countrymen, philanthropists like Lord Shaftesbury led the agitation for the restriction of child-labour, the inspection of mines and factories, and the abolition of such abuses as the payment of wages in kind instead of money. Allusion has been made in an earlier chapter to these reforms, most of which were carried out between the years 1830 and 1850.

Along with them may be named several other typical developments of the nineteenth century, which show the general rise in the conception of social life. Capital punishment, which had been restricted to a comparatively few offences since Peel began his reforms, was **Other phases of social improvement.** practically abolished for all crimes save murder and treason in 1841. The last execution for forgery had taken place twelve years before, in 1829. The barbarous mutilation of the bodies of traitors was last seen at the execution of Thistlewood and his gang in 1820. The detestable practice of duelling barely survived into the forties. Drunkenness ceased to be tolerated in polite society, and a series of Acts starting in the "thirties" have slowly succeeded in making it less the typical national vice of Great Britain than it was in the early years of the century. Brutal amusements like prize-fighting have shown a gratifying tendency towards disappearance. In every case public opinion has outrun legislation, and the good effected has been as much the result of social pressure on the individual as of the punishments inflicted by the law.

A few words must be spared to give some account of two inventions of no mean importance, which started early in the reign of Victoria, and have done much to modify the daily life of England. The first was the **The penny post.** introduction of the penny post in 1840, after a long agitation led by Rowland Hill, who spent several years in convincing obstinate post-office officials that a uniform low rate for all letters delivered within the kingdom would cause gain, and not loss, to the exchequer. Down to 1840 letters were