

Some account of the late JAMES CROSS, a journeyman Weaver, of Paisley, in Scotland.

We have for some time past intended to devote a page or two to the memory of this talented and neglected individual. The following account of his merits, and of the treatment which he experienced from those who were enriching themselves by the use of improvements introduced by him in the art of weaving, is extracted from a spirited and interesting article in "On the necessity and the means of protecting

needy genius," published in the *London Journal of Arts and Sciences*, for May, 1825.

When men lose their lives while engaged in deeds of noble daring, or in the prosecution of perilous enterprises, undertaken for the advancement of science, imagination illumines their graves with a sacred halo; even although they may perish, unseen, in the lonely desert, their setting sun still leaves behind, traces of glory, which, while we mourn the departed, afford us some consolation; but when an individual, whom nature has richly endowed, becomes the sport of fortune, and ultimately sinks into his dark grave, neglected and destitute, we feel poignant and unmitigated regret, at the recollection of his career, and his fate.

That mass of suffering in Great Britain, which now presses, not upon the operatives only, who are dependant on their daily labour for the means of living, but also upon their more wealthy employers, was, at the time of the decease of Cross, unfelt, and almost unanticipated; and were we ignorant of the history of human nature, and of the influence on society, of a redundant population, our surprise, when reviewing the case now submitted to notice, would equal our regret.

Whilst we rejoice in our own comparative exemption from the misfortunes which now weigh so heavily upon our transatlantic brethren, we should be careful to trace this exemption to its true source. Let us not arrogate to ourselves a superiority in virtue, merely because we are spared the evils, which result from entailed vice in government, and from an overflowing population. The blessings which we enjoy, should call forth our gratitude without exciting our vanity. Much of our practical independence, arises from a facility in changing our pursuits, and our places of residence, which is elsewhere unknown; and which is one of the blessings consequent on the extent and fertility of our country.

We might indulge ourselves in a continued train of reflection suggested by this subject, but our readers will probably prefer the narrative to the essay, and we, therefore, proceed to the extract.

"James Cross, the unfortunate and injured sufferer, was a humble mechanic at Paisley. At various times he had effected many important improvements in the weaving machinery, used for figured fabrics, which, by his unwearied application, he at length brought to such perfection, as with other great advantages, to render unnecessary, the use of draw boys. During the progress of his labours, he was frequently encouraged by the manufacturers of Paisley, who saw and fully appreciated the value of his genius, with hopes of ample remuneration for his persevering application. But when the inventions were pronounced complete, and *more than* his little means had been expended in arriving at this perfection, his only recompense was the high *verbal* approbation of his *munificent* and *benevolent* patrons; and that, too, *after they had been entirely satisfied by actual experience of the great worth of the inventions, and were daily reaping benefit from them.* The Board of Trustees for the improvement of manufactures in Scotland, awarded poor Cross a hundred guineas, which alone is a convincing argument in his favour; but this *liberal* gift was sunk in the perfec-

ting of his invention, and even then the poor victim was involved in debt. Unable to sustain such a pressure of accumulated misery, his health, previously injured by the privations he underwent to gather the means to prosecute his work, gave way to anguish and blighted hopes; and after more than twelve months lingering in expectation of at least a partial fulfilment of the brilliant prospects which had been held out to him, he died the broken-hearted sacrifice to avarice and base ingratitude, leaving a young, helpless, and motherless family, to inherit his PENURY and his FAME.

— “What man seeing this
 “And having human feeling, does not blush
 “And hang his head, to think himself a man?”

“Mr. Cross’s numerous inventions form a grand æra in the history of the art of weaving, and will be admired by posterity when the name and the woes of the humble author will have sunk together to oblivion; but we can here only give a brief outline of them. So early as 1804, he first commenced his observations upon the defects of the machinery then used for weaving, and almost every succeeding year his fertile genius produced some valuable improvement. In 1817-18, he made the first working model of his machine for weaving harness-work without the aid of draw-boys, and submitted it to the inspection of a number of manufacturers and operative weavers, who unanimously spoke of it with the highest encomiums.

“This model being on rather a contracted scale, and necessarily imperfect, he was strongly recommended to construct one of larger and more serviceable dimensions, and was given to understand, that his advisers would cheerfully pay every expense, whether or not his attempts were successful.

“Thus encouraged, he proceeded in his labours; but from many untoward circumstances, they this time proved unsatisfactory, after incurring an expense of £18 15s. 6d. To defray this, as he had been promised, a subscription collected amongst the manufacturers produced £12 15s. 6d.—leaving him a loser of £6, besides much valuable time. Notwithstanding these losses and frequent interruptions, from his very weak state of health, by persevering industry, during every moment’s respite from disease, in 1820, he erected a larger machine. This he submitted to a committee of manufacturers and weavers, who very highly approved the principle, and *warmly* recommended a meeting, to ‘consider the propriety’ of remunerating him.

“A subscription for the purpose of enabling him to prosecute his labours yet farther, was the consequence of this meeting, and the *liberal* amount of the collection was £16 7s. 6d. from which poor Cross had to pay for wages, &c. upwards of £12. With the residue he was to “*prosecute his labours,*” and maintain his family (then six in number, and entirely dependent on him) for five months. Subsequently, being blest with a short return of comparatively good health, and yet undismayed by the pitiful encouragement he received, he finished another machine of more extended and perfect operation. This also, he laid before committees of weavers and manufacturers.

They were now so fully satisfied of his merits, that they this time gave *written testimonials* of their approbation; (one signed by eighteen, and another by fifteen individuals) and a general meeting was called to *reconsider* the propriety of rewarding him, to which the public were invited, by a circular letter *widely* distributed. At this meeting a statement* of the poor sufferer's numerous inventions was read, as also the flattering reports of the weavers and manufacturers, who had witnessed the operations of the completed machine; and the weavers were examined, who then had it in actual practice. A subscription again succeeded this parade of mock generosity, and produced the magnificent sum of £3 1s. 6d. Such was the noble fulfilment of all the enticing prospects held out to him—all the generous promises which induced him to sacrifice time and health, which might, and would otherwise have been employed advantageously for himself and family.

“In making the numerous experiments necessary to enable him to bring the invention to perfection, he expended money and contracted debts exceeding 100*l.* exclusively of the maintenance of his family during the long period that he was so engaged, and for this, the whole recompense he received from the manufacturers, amounted, as we have shown, to 31*l.* 14*s.* 6*d.*! He now became but too fully sensible how miserably he had been deluded, and oppressed by all the horrors of debts, which he saw no possibility of repaying: harassed by continual anxiety, both of body and mind, and the bitter conviction of his utter destitution, his energies gave way beneath the accumulated mass of wo, his enfeebled body became the prey of sickness, and he sank into a state of entire helplessness. Thus he lingered, the miserable victim of his own powerful genius, till March, 1824, when, at the early age of 45, he was happily released from further earthly trouble. Previously to his death, he had the satisfaction of seeing his machine generally adopted by the *liberal* manufacturers, and several gave *written testimony* of the great benefit they derived from it.† The noble donation of the Board of Trustees came to cheer his

* Extract from the report of the manufacturers, &c., being the statement alluded to:—

“Amongst the many improvements which Mr. Cross has made for the trade, may be mentioned—The Eyed Standard for Gauze Mountings; the Back Hiddles for Pressure Harnesses; the Barrel Machine and Harness; the extending Tail for double Harness, for contracting the flowers, which in many cases, saves nearly one-half the expense of flower lashing, the pressing treddles, not being required as formerly.

“These have all been proved to be of great use.”

† Extract from testimonies alluded to:—“The counterpoise, harness, and machine, has, in my estimation, a number of decided advantages, too many and important for any commendation on my part. In short, and in truth, I am so highly satisfied with the invention, that I do prefer it to all others for the same purpose, *and even to a draw-boy free of expense.*

Signed, WILLIAM CLARK.”

“I shall only add, that I am perfectly satisfied with the machine, in all its departments; that I look upon it to be a highly useful invention, and shall ever

latter days also, but it was too late to renovate his worn out frame. But for the real benevolence of one individual, his four orphans, (three girls and a boy, the last but six years old,) must have become entirely destitute, and have suffered the very extreme of want. By his humane aid, however, and the employment of the eldest girl as a servant in one of the manufactories, as far as the calls of nature go, they are perhaps as well provided for as many of their neighbours in the same class, but not one of them has yet received *any education whatever*, and unless benevolence again exert itself, there seems no possibility of their ever obtaining it."

feel grateful to Mr. Cross for his important exertion. I can now work when I please, and I am certain at all times of getting the work well executed.

Signed, JAS. FLEMING."

"I am ready to declare, without the smallest hesitation, that the machine so completely answers my purpose, that I esteem it infinitely preferable to all others, and would not exchange it for any draw-boy whatever, free of all charges.

Signed, JOHN MACPHERSON."