The Fox 261

Chapter 261: Promotion and Spy Catching

The Paris International Goods and Commodities Fair was just a month away, and it had become a significant affair for the Ministry of Truth. Both domestically and internationally, the Ministry of Truth had to extensively promote this event, turning it into the most prominent spectacle in Europe.

Internally, they needed to emphasize the benefits of the fair for people from all walks of life.

"For the farmers, we must promote the fact that the fair will bring them immense benefits. When we talk about it, remember not to use 'they' or 'you' too much. Instead, use 'we' and illustrate the past hardships and the present sweetness. For example, we can say that in the past, after a bountiful harvest, we couldn't sell all the surplus grain in the market. Every region had an abundant harvest, and the market was flooded with grains, so we couldn't get a good price for our produce. If we didn't sell, storing the surplus would cost us money. If we sold, it felt like we were at a loss.

Back in the old days, the nobles and unscrupulous merchants would conspire to depress the prices of our grain, even during bountiful harvests. We produced surplus grain, but by the time we sold it, we made less money. They would either hoard the grain, waiting for times of famine to sell at exorbitant prices, or export it abroad to make more money. We put in all that hard work to grow the grain, and they pocketed all the profits!

But now, things are different with the First Consul. He truly cares about us, the farmers! He thinks about spring sowing and summer tilling, flood control, and drought resistance. He knows how tough life is for us farmers, so he organized this International Fair. With the surplus grain, we can sell directly to foreign countries. No nobles or middlemen to skim off the profits; it's all ours.

What if foreign countries also have surplus grain? Well, my friends, do they have irrigation pumps like we do? Do they have power stations? Most importantly, do they have a First Consul like ours? They have nothing but a bunch of nobles just like ours used to be. How can they claim to have a surplus year after year? Remember that!"

Lucien was giving instructions to his subordinates at the Ministry of Truth, who were diligently taking notes with paper and pens.

"Also, we need to intensify our foreign publicity. We must make sure that the English, Dutch, Germans, Spanish, Russians, Turks, Americans—everyone in the civilized world knows about this grand event and understands that coming here is an opportunity to get rich. Find ways to make it even more appealing, like entering Ali Baba's treasure trove—no, actually, it should be more like Alexander the Great's treasure trove!"

The Ministry of Truth issued directives, and French newspapers, especially those published abroad, went all out to promote the International Fair. For instance, in London, while British newspapers were busy attacking each other, the French "London Businessman" newspaper had dedicated most of its efforts to publicize the International Fair. In recent days, the newspaper had even added two extra pages of content, with almost the entire issue revolving around the fair.

Some were direct product advertisements, such as various wines and metal products. Most of these ads did not include specific prices but enticed merchants with phrases like "excellent quality at an affordable price that exceeds expectations." Some articles offered knowledge and education,

complete with illustrations, to inform readers about various products, such as wine categories and how to choose the best wine, the differences in material for various metal products, and their pros and cons. Others introduced products from different regions of continental Europe, as well as the current trade situation.

For example, this year, there was a bountiful harvest of grains in France, and grain prices might decrease. Additionally, due to the influence of current fashion trends, woolen products might become popular in France this year.

Meanwhile, the "Scientific Truth" newspaper focused on providing data-based reporting on the upcoming fair. It emphasized that nearly all European goods and all types of merchants would converge at this event. Just considering the ease of obtaining information about various products during the trade conference would significantly reduce trade costs and allow everyone to earn more money.

News of the International Fair quickly caught the attention of various merchants. Regardless of their stance on peace or war, whether they dealt in textiles or arms, their attention was captivated by the fair. Even arms dealers were thinking about exporting some weaponry to the Europeans during this event.

However, the British Admiralty found itself in a state of panic. In the latest issue of the "London Businessman," there was a depiction of French weapons.

On this page, there were advertisements for various French weapons, including the well-known muzzle-loading rifles, various mines, various cannons, and something depicted only in a picture with no accompanying text.

"This looks like our naval mines, doesn't it?" Others couldn't quite identify what it was, but the folks at the Admiralty recognized the object instantly.

"It does look similar, but there are some differences. Our naval mines have ten trigger mechanisms, whereas this one has only eight. However, the rest is uncannily alike—same anchor chains and even identical fuse deployment. What's going on?"

Indeed, the mysterious weapon depicted without any explanation in "The London Businessman" bore a striking resemblance to the British naval mines. If you were to analyze it with color palette software, you'd undoubtedly find a match for plagiarism. The current concern, however, was:

"How did the French acquire this technology?"

The Admiralty knew that if this technology fell into French hands, it spelled trouble for the British.

The British could use these mines to blockade the Irish coast, and the French could do the same to British shores. True, the French navy didn't possess the capability to contest maritime supremacy with the British, but they had other means that could thwart the Royal Navy. For instance, French high-speed warships.

Even to this day, the British Navy had not unraveled the mystery behind the propulsion technology of French steamships, making it nearly impossible to intercept these vessels. The French could make full use of these high-speed steamships to lay mines in British waters, even close to British harbors.

Of course, the British could reciprocate and lay mines near French ports, both on the Atlantic coast and the Mediterranean, but France relied on its ports far less than Britain did. Furthermore, France had access to the ports of "allied" nations. If the British attempted to mine these ports, it would mean isolation from the rest of Europe.

So, without an efficient mine-clearing technology in place, the plan to blockade Ireland using mines would remain locked away in a cabinet. Developing efficient and reliable mine-clearing technology was a monumental task, even if Joseph Fouché devoted his full attention to it and nothing else; it wouldn't be resolved in his lifetime.

More critical than efficient mine-clearing technology for the British now was figuring out how the secrets of these naval mines had been leaked. The British knew that due to the madness of a certain individual, the existence of mines had already been disclosed. However, that individual's writings did not contain the critical technical details.

The Admiralty had been investigating who had leaked related information to that individual. According to their conjecture, the culprit was likely not a French spy because, if it were, the spy could have simply reported it to the French without playing these tricks. They were more inclined to believe it was someone among the British, who didn't want to see their business affected by a war. But now, that hypothesis seemed less credible. Who could have foreseen that on the French side, there was someone who had time-traveled and possessed the unique ability to get pregnant with just a glance?

This was like a question on a certain website: if the modern-day Chirrut were transported back to pre-Ursa, and they had a conventional weapon fight, what would be the outcome? The answer: most likely, all the personnel at Sukhoi Design Bureau would be dragged out and executed by the NKVD. Likewise, the British felt that their research institutions were now teeming with French spies.

"We have a French spy right here in our Admiralty! We must find and expose this traitor, then tie him to one of these mines for testing! Or cut him into pieces to feed the sharks!" The First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord William, nearly fainted upon hearing the news, and he vented his rage in this manner.

Lord William's anger was entirely justified, and someone had to be held responsible for this within the Admiralty. Even if they managed to unmask that treacherous spy and deal with him, this leak incident wouldn't be easily resolved. It was highly likely that he'd soon have to "courageously take responsibility" and retire with a pension.

Soon, the king also got wind of the matter and stated, "Everyone who had access to this technical information must be investigated, regardless of their identity. We will not allow any traitor to escape unpunished in Britain!"

Chapter 262: The Investigation

The mere thought of having the Admiralty investigate itself left both the king and the cabinet uneasy. After all, the Admiralty was not equipped for such matters, and given the level of infiltration within, it was about as reliable as relying on Napoleon suddenly coming down with stomach cancer.

The British believed that the Admiralty had been heavily compromised because stealing the technical data associated with these naval technologies was no small feat.

Firstly, while Joseph regarded torpedo technology as a trivial matter, something that could be drafted in a day and have a prototype within a month with no trouble, in the eyes of others during that era, it was cutting-edge. There was a substantial amount of documentation and drawings associated with this technology, and the spy needed to steal all of it. That was no easy task.

In this age, there were no spy-specific cameras or microfilm, so swiping these documents was not a matter of simply opening a file and taking them out; there were no photocopiers either. Spies either had to painstakingly transcribe the information by hand, or rely on an extraordinary memory to remember it all and recite it when they returned. Even with a photographic memory, understanding the contents would still take considerable time.

This kind of operation couldn't be done by a single person; it was undoubtedly the result of a group effort. So...

"Minister William is far too optimistic. He claims 'there's a French spy in the Admiralty,' but given the situation of this case, how could there possibly be only one spy in the Admiralty? Prime Minister, if the information you've given me is accurate, then I can assure you there's a nest of spies in there!" Assistant Commissioner Ainsley Stanton of Scotland Yard stood up and addressed Prime Minister Addington, who was sitting across from him.

Prime Minister Addington nodded, saying, "Mr. Stanton, please have a seat. You understand the gravity of this case. His Majesty the King is aware of it, and he is quite furious. The consequences will be severe. We must unearth that one or that nest of spies. In addition, we, I, and many Cabinet ministers believe that the police department is not adequately suited to handle matters involving spies and military secrets. Our nation needs a specialized agency to manage such affairs."

Stanton's eyes lit up instantly.

"This agency will be housed under the Army's banner and named the Sixth Investigation Division to maintain discretion. However, it will report directly to the House of Commons and the Prime Minister, with significant powers. It can conduct discreet investigations of Members of Parliament from both Houses and high-ranking government officials, with elevated administrative ranks, salaries, and pensions. You understand that such an organization requires someone who truly knows the trade, not those who only talk the talk but lack the expertise to walk the walk. This role should be assumed by someone with genuine experience, and not just for show. Do you understand what I mean?"

Stanton certainly understood. He knew that, for a self-made, civilian-born old detective like himself, the position of Deputy Chief of such an organization was already an extraordinary opportunity. Furthermore, it was a position of substantial power. Above him, there was only the titular chief, who did nothing but collect a paycheck. This was truly...

Of course, Stanton understood that this wasn't the most crucial part of what the Prime Minister had said. The most significant part was, "I, and many of my associates, are inclined to have you assume this position," rather than language like "our nation" or similar expressions that require "your service."

Though the scandal about the Admiralty's security breach had not made it into any newspapers—the French, naturally, wouldn't voluntarily divulge such information (in truth, they had no inkling that this was an espionage case and security breach)—and as for the British newspapers, the tabloids had

no way of obtaining this news, and the more reputable ones realized that the time was not ripe for exposure. They were all just biding their time, eyes wide open.

However, maintaining complete secrecy was nearly impossible in this case, especially in an age when the security system had not yet fully taken form. This was even more true for the influential figures of both the Tory and Whig parties. They were well aware of the situation.

Everyone recognized the gravity of the situation, but they also understood that this was a rare opportunity to strike at their political adversaries. By using certain technical means during the investigation, they could implicate certain loathsome individuals and ruin them politically.

Everyone hoped to seize this opportunity to ensnare those they disliked or were at odds with. Simultaneously, they had to remain vigilant against malicious slander and plots hatched by their cunning foes.

Prime Minister Addington seized the chance, leveraging his position as Prime Minister to create this organization. Its primary purpose was to sever the French spy network from reaching into England's national secrets. Still, it also provided a convenient way to clear out the dregs that harmed England. It was a brilliant move, luring in the rabbits while lying in wait in the tall grass.

Therefore, Assistant Commissioner Stanton understood that when the Prime Minister spoke of "outstanding performance," it meant more than just quickly catching the "spy"—that was the basic requirement, and "outstanding" was a far cry from it. To achieve an "outstanding" accomplishment, he had to implicate the people the Prime Minister needed to be connected with.

Doing such things naturally came with high risks. Those individuals were not harmless bunnies; they had their own power, and they wouldn't just sit idly by. If the Prime Minister had a stroke of bad luck in the struggle, Stanton would be in trouble as well.

But as the saying goes, "Fortune favors the bold." Taking such risks was worthwhile.

"Mr. Prime Minister, I understand. I am willing to serve you. If there is any progress, I will report to you immediately." Stanton, who had just sat down, stood up again.

"What do you need?"

"Your Excellency, I need your authorization to immediately take all the personnel of the 'Torpedo Research Group,' as well as the relevant staff, for investigation. I also need a somewhat remote location for a thorough inquiry into the individuals involved..."

Stanton's various requests were mostly granted, and he indicated to the Prime Minister that he needed to act immediately to prevent someone else from taking the lead.

"Very well. Since that's the case, I won't keep you any longer. If you have any needs, you can communicate them to my secretary, Mr. Gilbert. If there is something important and he cannot make a decision, and you deem it crucial, you can find me at any time, 24/7. Now, get to work."

"Yes, Prime Minister!" Stanton saluted Prime Minister Addington and then left the office.

In Stanton's view, this case was not all that difficult to crack. Firstly, the number of people who could access the relevant data was quite limited, which greatly narrowed down the scope of the investigation. Then, they would investigate each of them individually, examining their actions

during this period and whether they had any independent opportunities to commit the act. With meticulous work, there was no worry about failing to uncover the problem.

As for achieving the "outstanding" performance, it depended on the skill of the interrogations. Even though the targets he was going after were respectable individuals, some techniques might not be effective. Stanton believed that by using skillful language during questioning, he could coax the culprits into saying what he needed to hear. Of course, if he happened upon someone who was uncooperative and unwilling to maintain their "respectability," Stanton had methods to make them maintain it without leaving any traces of pain.

Commissioner Stanton left the Prime Minister's office, and Prime Minister's Secretary Gilbert came forward.

"Mr. Gilbert, we need to take immediate action. Can you accompany me?" Stanton said.

"Of course," Gilbert replied. "Where are we going now?"

"We need to quickly take control of all the personnel from the 'Torpedo Research Group.' We must not let others beat us to it."

As it turned out, Stanton's decision was quite timely. Just as they had taken control of all the personnel from the 'Torpedo Research Group,' secured the relevant documents, loaded them onto a carriage, and transported them to a country estate on the outskirts of London, set up by the Prime Minister for the new organization, an hour later, another group arrived at the 'Torpedo Research Group' but found it empty.

This group was the one Stanton had been concerned about, the potential competitors who might beat them to it. They were the Royal Anti-Espionage Investigative Team, directly under the King and the House of Lords.

"Unfortunately, we're a step late," the leading officer said.

"Sir, what should we do now?" one detective asked.

"You search around and see if you can find them, find out where they took the people," the commanding officer said. "The others, go immediately and control their families. We need to act fast; we cannot afford to fall behind this time!"

Chapter 263: Deterrence

Stanton initially thought that by carefully reviewing the evidence and verifying the timing of the incident, he would be able to identify the suspects. However, as he investigated, he discovered that nearly all the peripheral members of the "Torpedo Research Group" could provide alibis confirming that they had not spent extended periods alone with technical data.

As for those who couldn't establish their alibis, Stanton asked Hilbert for guidance, to which Hilbert replied, "You don't need to investigate this person, you understand."

Stanton immediately understood that this individual might have indeed passed on information to the outside, but the direction of the leak was not towards France. Thus, there was no need to investigate him.

Following the general logic, the potential mole could only be among the core research personnel. If these individuals were French spies, obtaining critical technology would be relatively

straightforward. They frequently interacted with this technical data, and they often authored the technical materials themselves. If they wanted to leak critical information, they wouldn't need to steal it; they could simply write it down when they returned home.

Stanton began to focus his scrutiny on these research personnel. He looked for any recent financial anomalies, such as receiving a sudden windfall or experiencing financial difficulties for some reason. However, this line of inquiry proved fruitless.

Meanwhile, on the other side, the Royal Counterintelligence Investigation Unit hadn't managed to uncover any reliable, useful information. Conventional methods seemed to be increasingly ineffective.

But the pressure on Stanton from the Prime Minister was mounting. With the consent of the Prime Minister's secretary, Stanton was forced to employ less conventional methods. Of course, Stanton assured the Prime Minister that these methods wouldn't leave any physical marks or evidence.

Once these methods were employed, results started to emerge. All the research personnel, from the group leader to the members, without exception, confessed to being French spies.

As for the peripheral individuals, aside from the informant in Downing Street, the others also admitted to being French spies.

Regarding the more critical task of implicating certain individuals, this was not an issue at all. If the Prime Minister required it, even if these individuals claimed they were in contact with Jesus, that could be arranged.

Of course, the only problem was that the testimonies were chaotic and contradictory. However, after some time spent organizing and aligning these statements, the issues disappeared. At least, when looking at the case files, it was compelling evidence.

On the other hand, the "Royal Counterintelligence Investigation Unit" reportedly made some progress and managed to implicate certain important figures. Stanton wasn't entirely sure about the subsequent developments, but shortly after presenting the results, he received another summons from the Prime Minister. In the Prime Minister's office, he encountered another prominent figure, His Royal Highness George Augustus Frederick, the Prince of Wales.

The Hanoverian dynasty had a longstanding tradition of father-son enmity. Almost every king and Prince of Wales (the British heir apparent) of the Hanoverian dynasty despised each other. King George I and his successor, King George II, were bitter foes. King George II and the current King George III were at odds, and King George III and the current Prince of Wales had a similarly mutual antipathy.

King George III had publicly ridiculed his son, stating that he was a fool and a libertine (at least the latter was true), and His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales had also candidly remarked, "My father is often quite mad." However, speaking the truth is often the most hurtful. Thus, the Hanoverian dynasty's cherished tradition continued without fail.

In most Eastern countries, such intense mutual animosity between the heir and the king would likely lead to a change in the heir. However, in the Hanoverian dynasty, where they placed great importance on hereditary monarchy and were constrained by Parliament, as long as the heir didn't plot against the king, the king couldn't replace the heir. Additionally, apart from the queen, the other

kings of the Hanoverian dynasty were not particularly competent, so the Hanoverian dynasty's heirs always managed to outlive their kings due to their age advantage.

Since the king had always been closely affiliated with the Tory party, it was only natural that His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales had a good relationship with the Whigs. (King George III often thought that his son's debauchery and libertinism were influenced by the Whig libertine Fox.) Now, at this juncture, the appearance of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales here strongly indicated the Prime Minister's current stance.

The Prime Minister's current political position, particularly his stance on supporting the war, had diverged somewhat from the traditional Tory party that had originally catapulted him to the position. He had aligned himself with a group of New Tories who had earned money through the textile bank, self-styling as the New Tory Party. To counter the pressure from the traditional Tories, the New Tories had built a close relationship with the Whigs. At the very least, as long as they could secure the Whigs' support, Small Pitt's attempt to launch a vote of no confidence in him in Parliament would fall short of the necessary votes.

"Eiseng, my dear friend," Prime Minister Addington warmly addressed Stanton, "allow me to introduce you to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who will be your superior at the Sixth Investigative Division."

This arrangement seemed quite reasonable, at least on the surface. As the future king, the Prince of Wales should have some knowledge of these matters. However, the Prince of Wales wasn't particularly interested in Stanton's work; he merely offered a few polite words before taking his leave. For the Prince of Wales, this position meant nothing more than an additional source of income, and everyone knew that he was in dire financial straits.

King George III couldn't remove the Prince of Wales from his position, but he had other ways to discipline his wayward son: by denying him money. The king employed various means to reduce the prince's allowances, effectively cutting off his funds. The Prince of Wales was a libertine, and if he had no money to spend, how could he maintain his extravagant lifestyle? King George III believed that he held the Prince of Wales by the purse strings. The prince would either have to submit to his father or curb his extravagant habits.

However, King George III miscalculated. Since the Prince of Wales' position was unassailable, and he was not only younger but also healthier than the king, it was widely known that one day George III's reign would come to an end, and the Prince of Wales would ascend to the throne.

Knowing that the Prince of Wales would eventually become king, many were willing to lend him money, even if the king refused to give him a single penny. So, the Prince of Wales had accumulated substantial debts but could still borrow money continually without resorting to Jewish moneylenders.

Of course, relying on loans was far from ideal. Having one's own wealth was a desirable prospect. Moreover, the New Tory Party was seeking to secure its position, and the Prince of Wales aligned himself with these New Tory figures.

As for the outcome of the case, after a secret trial by a military tribunal, most members of the "Torpedo Research Group" were taken out for target practice. Those individuals implicated in the case files provided by Stanton mostly emerged unscathed. Similarly, those implicated by the Royal

Counterintelligence Investigation Unit's findings faced no consequences. It was reported that both sides had reached some consensus on certain matters, successfully ushering in a "Deterrence Era."

While this event held significant importance, it mostly unfolded behind the scenes, leaving the majority of the British population unaware. At this time, the primary concern for most Britons remained the "Bath Exhibition" orchestrated by the French "Seven-Penny Union."

Under the onslaught of the "Seven-Penny Union's" advertising campaign, the "Bath Exhibition" had become the foremost interest of British merchants. However, it wasn't just the merchants who were intrigued by the "Bath Exhibition." For instance, Figgins' faction was keenly interested in a specific medical commodity featured in the advertisements—a steel forceps. Women, on the other hand, were captivated by various French accessories.

Even the rural landowners had their eyes on the "Bath Exhibition." They cursed the French for the information that suggested their grain prices were relatively low. At the same time, they began scrutinizing the prices of woolen fabric and contemplating whether to convert more of their farmland into pastures, possibly evicting their tenants.

After some calculations, these landowners reached a common conclusion: if the actual transaction prices at the "Bath Exhibition" were in line with the advertised estimates, then sheep farming would undoubtedly be more profitable than wheat cultivation.

Some prudent landowners decided to wait until after the "Bath Exhibition" to make their decisions, while others, eager and impatient, began evicting their tenants and placing sheep in their fields. Fortunately, now that the "respectable folks" engaged in trade knew that Britain would not initiate war in the short term, the textile industry resumed its expansion, creating a high demand for urban laborers. These evicted tenants wouldn't starve immediately, although they might end up working themselves to death beside the textile machines within a few years.

Chapter 264: A Spectacle

As one of Britain's most prominent steam engine manufacturers, the Bolton-Watt Company couldn't afford to miss out on an event as grand as the Paris Expo. So, as soon as they received news that France would host the Expo, they hurried to the French embassy, requesting to reserve an exhibition space at the event. Given their prior business dealings with France, they received special attention and secured a prominent spot within the exhibition hall, while many other merchants who applied had to settle for what was referred to as "semi-open" booths.

Having paid the exhibition deposit, Bolton sent his son, Young Bolton, along with Watt, to France. Watt was incredibly knowledgeable about various machinery, but he wasn't particularly fond of haggling in business. It wasn't because Watt was inept at business—after all, he had been in partnership with Bolton for years and conducted numerous transactions. However, he preferred investing his time in studying machines rather than negotiating deals.

Rumors suggested that the Expo would showcase many mechanical wonders never seen before, and Watt was brimming with excitement. So, it was a certainty that he had to attend. Meanwhile, Bolton, as the head of the company, had to remain at the helm. Furthermore, given Bolton's advanced age, venturing far from home was a risk – the last thing he needed was to catch a chill, develop the flu, and, with no respirators in that era, face the grim prospect of pneumonia. Bolton senior wouldn't live to see the day when respirators would be available in England.

However, sending Watt alone wasn't the solution either. Once Watt arrived in France and laid eyes on the myriad of machines on display, he'd hardly have time to haggle. So, Bolton decided to send his son, Young Bolton, with Watt to the Expo.

Accompanied by a group of assistants and carrying numerous samples and prototypes, they disembarked at Calais. They spent a night at the "Expo Participant Reception" in Calais and then took two four-wheeled carriages arranged by the reception to head toward Paris.

During their journey to Paris, Watt noticed more electric pumping engines and small workshops powered by electricity. Most of the various metal products featured in the "London Businessman" newspaper were being manufactured in these small workshops.

"What secrets do electric motors and generators hold? I'm genuinely curious to find out," Watt said to Young Bolton inside the carriage.

"Yeah, but the French are quite secretive about these things. They don't allow these items to be sold to foreign countries," Young Bolton whispered, lowering his voice. "A friend of mine told me that the Navy tried to sneak away an electric motor from here and several people died in the process."

"What happened next?" Watt inquired.

"After we managed to sneak the sample back, we tried connecting it to a battery, only to discover that it had three wires. No matter which two we connected, the motor wouldn't turn. When we attempted to disassemble it, the motor exploded, claiming several more lives. Now, all we know is that it's filled with copper wires coated in a special way, wound in some peculiar manner. As for how it moves and why, it remains a mystery. Word has it that folks from the Navy and Cambridge University are working hard to figure it out, but with little success so far."

"Oh," Watt replied and then added, "Actually, I think small steam engines aren't that bad."

As a businessman who held numerous steam engine patents, he naturally didn't favor these unorthodox electric motors. Unfortunately, his knowledge of electric motors was limited, making it challenging to find specific reasons to criticize them. However, learning that the folks at the Navy hadn't made much progress on this issue pleased Watt.

A few days later, Watt and his party arrived in Paris.

Watt's first impression of Paris was its cleanliness. In that era, European cities, in general, were quite dirty, and Paris was no exception. People in those days would sometimes toss waste, even excrement, directly onto the streets. Over time, this practice left the streets elevated above the surrounding buildings, and the smell, dust, and filth were unimaginable.

Things had changed somewhat after the revolution. Due to the scarcity of saltpeter, an essential component for gunpowder, the revolutionary government started considering human waste as a strategic resource (it could be used to produce saltpeter) and enforced compulsory collections of this resource. Discarding excrement and urine directly onto the streets became illegal, even a criminal offense during Robespierre's time.

By the time Napoleon came into power, the saltpeter problem had been mostly resolved, but the waste collection system remained, only now it was repurposed for composting. Furthermore, as part of preparing the ground for the future "Roman Empire," the Ministry of Truth had continuously

celebrated the level of civilization of the Roman Empire in various ways, attributing many sensible, nonsensical, and even unfounded inventions to the Romans.

In the end, when wireless technology was invented, a joke went around: one day, Lucien received a report stating that an archaeology team had found copper wires at a Roman excavation site. Lucien was thrilled and exclaimed, "Great Rome, they've even started using electricity!" However, when he rushed to the scene, he found that it was a misunderstanding – those things weren't copper wires. Lucien was even more delighted and proclaimed, "Great Rome, they've already started using wireless!"

The Ministry of Truth extolled various aspects of Roman civilization, one of which was Roman public hygiene. So, as part of reviving the "Roman spirit," public hygiene was elevated to a crucial level. After the discovery of pathogenic bacteria, the issue gained even more significance, and Napoleon seized the opportunity to push the so-called Paris Renovation Movement. He encouraged the people of Paris to engage in voluntary labor for half a day every week, cleaning up the accumulating waste. The First Consul himself would often join the labor, and each time, the chant of "Long live Napoleon!" would echo through the skies.

Compared to other cities, clean streets were Watt's first impression of Paris. But he soon noticed another difference between Paris and London – there were far fewer chimneys in Paris. Even in the industrial districts, the difference was apparent.

"It must be those cursed electric motors," Watt muttered. While the air in Paris had considerably less coal smoke than London, both Watt and Young Bolton now harbored the desire to eradicate the electric heresy just as the English once burned Joan of Arc.

After spending two nights in Paris, the following day, Watt took a detour to visit Paris University and ended up having a lively discussion on scientific matters with Armand Lavasie, who happened to be at Paris University. Watt actually wanted to meet another French scientist, Joseph Bonaparte, but Lavasie informed him that Joseph was currently away in the south.

"Probably related to electricity. He should return soon, and you'll surely catch him at the Expo. After all, many businesses there are related to his work," Lavasie explained.

As Watt left Lavasie, the scientist advised him, "When you visit the Expo tomorrow, take notice of the road leading to the venue. It's quite fascinating."

These words kept Watt guessing throughout the night about what made that road so "fascinating."

When the next morning arrived, and the carriage moved along that road, Watt immediately noticed what set it apart. This whitish road appeared to be a single, massive piece of stone, cut so smoothly that the carriage hardly bumped or jolted while traveling on it.

Watt signaled the coachman to halt. He got off the carriage, and without minding appearances, knelt down halfway, took a single-lens eyepiece from his coat pocket, and fixed it over his right eye. He closely examined the road.

"It must be concrete," Watt said.

Concrete wasn't anything particularly astonishing; the Romans had used natural volcanic ash concrete centuries ago. And the British had even developed "Roman cement." But given the sheer

length and width of this road, it raised a question: how much concrete had been used? It would have been a costly endeavor if they'd used "Roman cement" for such a long stretch.

"Indeed, it's concrete," William Murdoch, one of Watt's assistants who had joined him, concurred.

"With a road this wide and long, think of the amount of concrete they've used. The French must be...," Young Bolton remarked.

"Perhaps the French have discovered a more cost-effective method," Watt suggested. "Matthew, keep an eye out at the Expo. If this material is available, it should find a significant market. While our primary focus is promoting our steam engines, we won't let a good opportunity slip by. Of course, it's even better if we can acquire the technology and produce it ourselves."

Young Bolton nodded in agreement. Watt then pocketed his single-lens eyepiece and, along with Young Bolton and William Murdoch, climbed back into the carriage.

During the remaining journey, the group continued discussing the potential market for low-cost concrete.

An hour later, they reached the Expo. As they disembarked from the carriage, a colossal Roman-style structure unfolded before them.

It resembled the Roman Pantheon, with a rectangular colonnade boasting twenty-six massive columns on the façade. The interior remained partially obscured from their view at that point, but it was undoubtedly a grander version of the original Pantheon.

"Napoleon's only been in power for a short while, even if he started building it as soon as he took office, completing such a structure in such a brief period involves truly astonishing technological prowess. It's a wonder of this era," Watt remarked to Young Bolton, his mood oddly growing heavier as he spoke.

Chapter 265: The Palace of Peace

Surrounding the grand "Temple of a Thousand Gods" was a spacious square. Just like the road leading here, the ground of this square was also paved with cement, embedded with colorful pebbles, forming intricate patterns. Most of these images depicted themes from ancient Greece and Rome, such as Hercules and the Muses, the Shepherd Prince and the Three Graces, Minerva and the owl, as well as Augustus and Cleopatra.

On this square, several iron frames were erected, each covered with oiled canvas – these were likely the "semi-open" exhibition booths. The exhibition had not officially begun, but many people were already bustling about.

Watt looked around and noticed two small houses at the entrance of the square, both of them adorned with signs in French, German, Italian, Russian, and English. They all read the same: "Exhibitor Reception." The only difference was that one of the small houses was labeled "Palace of Peace," and the other was labeled "Square."

"Mr. Watt, according to the exhibition guidelines, we should register at the reception, and the staff will then lead us to our booth," William Murdoch pulled out a small notebook, flipped through it, and then addressed Watt.

"All right, let's go over there," Watt waved his cane and replied.

So, the group of them headed toward the "Palace of Peace" reception. As they reached the entrance, a waiter approached.

"Gentlemen, are you here to exhibit?" The waiter asked in a polite manner, accompanied by a smile.

"Yes, we have invitations," William Murdoch replied. In this era, French was a widely spoken language, and while William Murdoch could converse in it, his spoken French was a bit rough.

"Which country are you from, sir?" the waiter inquired.

"We're from England," William Murdoch said.

"On behalf of France, welcome, gentlemen. Please follow me," the waiter immediately switched to English and said, "Please come with us."

The group followed him into the small house. Inside, there was a long table with an official seated behind it. The waiter brought William Murdoch over and said, "These gentlemen are guests from England."

William Murdoch handed over the invitation letter to the official, who glanced at it, nodded, and then picked up a nearby stamp. He stamped the invitation and handed William Murdoch a small pouch with a smile.

"Your booth is at position number eight. Here are some instructions for exhibitors. You can go through them to get an understanding," the official said in English.

William Murdoch took the pouch and asked, "Can I go see our booth and make some preparations?"

"Pierre, who brought you here, will guide you. If you have any questions, you can ask him directly," the official replied.

"Thank you," William Murdoch said, and the group followed Pierre toward the large "Temple of a Thousand Gods" named the "Palace of Peace."

"Gentlemen, this is the main venue of the event, the 'Palace of Peace.' As you can see, it's modeled after the 'Temple of a Thousand Gods,' but it's even larger. It's called the 'Palace of Peace' because of the inscription on the main gate," Pierre pointed at the Latin inscription on the lintel but explained in English, "'Free trade is the guarantee of world peace.' Well, that's a quote from the First Consul, Mr. Napoleon Bonaparte."

"Very nice," Watt nodded. "I quite like that quote."

"Watt, my good sir," Pierre chimed in with a smile, "We're all trade-minded folks here, and who doesn't love 'free trade'?"

As they chatted, Pierre led the group into the "Palace of Peace." Just like the Temple of a Thousand Gods, the enormous hall inside had not a single column. However, this hall was even larger than the one in the Temple.

Watt was an engineer, although not a structural engineer, he was aware that supporting such a massive dome without columns was a technical marvel.

Just like the Temple of a Thousand Gods, there was a large skylight in the center of the dome, but it was even larger and equipped with glass. Thanks to this skylight and the vast floor-to-ceiling glass windows surrounding the hall, the interior was well-lit, brighter even than most houses.

Watt lifted his head to examine the dome and its support structure, calculating its weight.

In general, creating a massive dome without columns was a challenge in engineering. Architectural history had examples like the Gothic cathedrals, which utilized flying buttresses to distribute the dome's weight to nearby load-bearing walls. However, these load-bearing walls were subject to considerable pressure. Thus, such structures often featured support structures outside the main walls. But when they entered the hall earlier, they didn't see such external structures.

Of course, the dome of the Temple of a Thousand Gods didn't follow this pattern; it was cast as a single, solid piece using concrete. But this dome was significantly larger than the one in the Temple. So, how was it supported?

Seemingly sensing Watt's curiosity, Pierre explained, "Mr. Watt, you've surely noticed the vastness of this hall. Its diameter is a whopping sixty meters, much larger than the famous Temple of a Thousand Gods. Yet, like the Temple, it lacks a single column inside. That's because the entire dome employs a state-of-the-art construction technology – steel-reinforced concrete. The entire dome is constructed as a single unit, welded from high-quality steel and then coated with concrete. Both the steel and the concrete, as you move toward the center, become progressively thinner. Steel provides significantly higher strength than other materials, making the entire dome much lighter than similar structures."

Pierre's explanation confirmed Watt's suspicions – the dome was indeed supported by steel.

"Not only the dome, but the walls and the outer columns are also built using steel-reinforced concrete. This 'Palace of Peace,' though designed in a Greco-Roman style, boasts the latest modern technology at its core," Pierre proudly introduced.

"How much good steel does this require? Can we buy some and use it to make advanced steam engines?" Watt couldn't help but wonder. "But it seems that the French have a vast steel production capacity."

"Young man, where is our booth?" Even though he was "Little Bolton," he was well into his fifties, and he had more than enough years on Pierre to address him as a "young man."

"Ah, please follow me," inside the hall, spaces were partitioned with wooden boards. Those closest to the center had the most significant spaces and the best lighting, while Watt and his group's booth was slightly off-center but still highly visible.

"Here it is, Mr. Watt, Mr. Bolton," Pierre led them to the designated spot. "This space belongs to your esteemed company during the exhibition. You may arrange it as you wish, but please ensure you abide by the regulations outlined in the 'Exhibition Guidelines' document I provided earlier. Do you need any further explanation?"

"No, no need," Little Bolton shook his head. "We have a copy of the document from our embassy in your country. Besides, 'The London Tradesman' newspaper has published authoritative explanations. We are quite well-informed."

Having said this, he looked around at their surroundings and asked, "May I inquire about the companies occupying the central positions?"

"The central positions are all held by military-industrial conglomerates, such as Lorraine Steel, Citadel Cement, and the Bonaparte Armory," Pierre replied.

Chapter 266: The Toothpaste Cannon

The central exhibition halls were almost fully arranged. Although the trade show had not officially begun, there were already many people exploring the exhibitions. Some were interested in the models of the products displayed in the halls, while others focused on the exhibition's layout.

Setting up exhibition halls and arranging products was not Watt and Little Bolton's responsibility. In fact, it didn't even require their input, as William Murdoch was already directing others to prepare the exhibition spaces.

Since there was nothing for them to do at the moment, Watt turned to Little Bolton and said, "Matthew, shall we go take a look?"

Naturally, Little Bolton agreed, nodding and saying, "Certainly, Mr. Watt."

Then, he turned to Pierre and asked, "Oh, young man, I completely forgot to ask your name."

"I'm Pierre Abélard. You can call me Pierre," Pierre quickly replied.

Little Bolton nodded and said, "Very well, Pierre. Mr. Watt and I would like to explore around. Could you be our guide?"

"Mr. Bolton, that's not a problem. Serving you is my job," Pierre quickly responded.

So, guided by Pierre, the two of them headed towards the brightest area in the center.

"Mr. Watt, Mr. Bolton, there are three main exhibition halls here: Lorraine Steel, Fortress Cement, and Mr. Bonaparte's Armaments Factory. Which one would you like to visit first?"

"Well, let's start with Lorraine Steel," Little Bolton said. They had some business dealings with this company, making them more familiar with it. The others had no objections, so the group headed to the Lorraine Steel exhibit.

Lorraine Steel's exhibit was quite spacious, and the most eye-catching feature was a massive model of the framework of the Palace of Peace.

The highest point of the model reached over three meters in height, all made from steel bars. Watt examined the model closely. Since the exhibition had not officially begun, there were no staff members available to explain. So, Pierre stepped in as an impromptu guide.

"Mr. Watt, Mr. Bolton, this is a scale model of the 'Palace of Peace.' If we were to remove all the bricks, cement, and stone materials from the actual 'Palace of Peace,' what you see here is an identical framework. Just like the human body is supported by its skeleton, the 'Palace of Peace' has its own skeleton buried within the concrete, which is made of steel."

"This structure, this construction method, can be applied to other large buildings," Watt said. "Lorraine Steel is truly making a profit."

"They currently have the technology for low-cost steel production. With this technology, they can make money even while lying in bed," Little Bolton marveled.

Watt nodded and added, "It's a pity they are unwilling to share this technology, but if we were in their shoes, we wouldn't want to either. Only a fool would be willing."

As they continued their conversation, the group circled around the massive framework model of the Palace of Peace. Then, a smaller model of a bridge, also constructed using robust steel supports, came into view.

"Pierre, what bridge is this?" Watt asked.

"This is one of the proposed designs for a new bridge on the Seine River, although such a bridge doesn't exist in the world right now," Pierre answered.

"If this bridge were to be built for real, it would likely require a lot more steel, wouldn't it?" Little Bolton interjected.

"Most likely. That's why I heard that Lorraine Steel is preparing to build an even larger steel plant," Pierre replied.

"Well, Matthew, do you know what? If we were to build a bridge like this in London, your father's favorite song would be difficult to realize," Watt joked.

In addition to the framework models, Lorraine Steel's exhibition featured various metal blocks, each accompanied by brief technical descriptions. These included various cast iron products and steel with different properties. Watt and the others had seen these products in their dealings with Lorraine Steel.

Leaving the Lorraine Steel exhibition hall, Watt's group proceeded to the Fortress Cement exhibit. At the center of the Fortress Cement exhibition was a large cement block. This block had many pits and craters, and these marks had been circled with white paint, accompanied by short explanatory text.

"Twenty-four-pound cannon, one hundred meters away," Little Bolton read the text as he examined one of the smaller craters on the cement block. "It's hard to imagine that a twenty-four-pound cannon, at this range, only leaves such a small dent. Mr. Watt, is this for real?"

"This is definitely real," Watt confirmed. "Not to mention twenty-four-pound cannons; even larger ones don't pack as much punch as you might think. The wooden hulls of warships are often sufficient to withstand their fire. The main issue with these cements, when facing cannon fire, isn't about their hardness but rather whether they'll shatter. I suspect these cement blocks contain a steel framework. With that, there's not much a cannon can do. Well, their company is called Fortress, and this stuff is indeed perfect for building fortifications."

Coming out of the Lorraine Steel exhibition hall, Watt and the others moved on to the Fortress Cement exhibition. In the center of the Fortress Cement exhibition stood a large cement block, pockmarked with craters and dents. These had been outlined in white paint, and nearby were short descriptions.

"Twenty-four-pound cannon, one hundred meters away," Little Bolton read the text as he examined one of the smaller craters on the cement block. "It's hard to imagine that a twenty-four-pound cannon, at this range, only leaves such a small dent. Mr. Watt, is this for real?"

"This is definitely real," Watt confirmed. "Not to mention twenty-four-pound cannons; even larger ones don't pack as much punch as you might think. The wooden hulls of warships are often sufficient to withstand their fire. The main issue with these cements, when facing cannon fire, isn't about their hardness but rather whether they'll shatter. I suspect these cement blocks contain a steel

framework. With that, there's not much a cannon can do. Well, their company is called Fortress, and this stuff is indeed perfect for building fortifications."

At the side of the cement block, there were smaller cement blocks of various colors, each with explanatory text, though the text was small enough that Watt had to take out his single-lens eyeglass to read it.

"The product line of Fortress Cement is quite extensive," Watt commented, having read the introduction text. He then straightened up, placed the single-lens eyeglass back into his coat pocket, and turned to Little Bolton. "I believe this is something worth discussing with them. Even if we can't get the technology license, securing the agency rights would also be excellent."

However, the trade show had not officially started yet, and the temporary staff at the Fortress Cement exhibit could do little to facilitate Watt's request to meet with the company's top management. In fact, these temporary workers were not even aware of who the company's top executives were.

"Matthew, some people earn money on their knees, others, who have better products, can stand and make money. Then there are some, like Lorraine Steel and Fortress Cement, who monopolize certain industries, essentially making money while lying down," Watt couldn't help but exclaim.

"I wonder how that 'Bonaparte Armaments Factory' makes money," Little Bolton mused.

The Bonaparte Armaments Factory was quite different from the other two companies. While the quality of their products had been proven through Napoleon's wars and the practical experience of "brave people seeking freedom" worldwide, their customer service was the best. Even though the official exhibition had not yet begun, the staff there remained welcoming and willing to provide detailed explanations of these indispensable tools for "home travel" and "fire setting."

Moreover, they had some intriguing products that had not been seen elsewhere before, such as the steel rifled cannon.

In the center of their exhibit, a steel rifled cannon was displayed. Watt noticed that the labeling of this cannon was different from the previous cannons. In this era, cannons were generally labeled according to the weight of the shot they fired, but this cannon used caliber as its label. A sign next to the cannon read, "1800 Model 75mm Rifled Cannon."

This was still a front-loading, recoil mechanism cannon, not because breech-loading cannons were too difficult to make. In fact, with the advent of steelmaking, the difficulty of breech-loading cannons had been overcome. The primary reason that the Bonaparte Armaments Factory still used this design was that, like many other technologically advanced companies, they suffered from what was known as the "toothpaste squeezing syndrome." In other words, they had advanced technology but kept it locked away to maximize profits using slightly less advanced products.

The 1800 Model 75mm Rifled Cannon was a typical toothpaste-squeezing product, a compact cannon compared to bronze cannons. Despite being shorter than the regular six-pound bronze cannon, the rifled cannon had a longer barrel. Its barrel weight was slightly less than the six-pound bronze cannon, but its carriage weight was almost as heavy as that of a twelve-pound cannon.

Little Bolton asked a service staff member, "What size shot does this cannon fire?"

"This is a rifled cannon," the staff member replied. "Rifled cannon shots are not spherical but closer to cylindrical. This cannon can fire various types of ammunition for different purposes, and since the ammunition varies in length and weight due to their intended use, it's not easy to label the cannon by shot weight. That's why we use the bore diameter for labeling."

"I see that the caliber of this cannon is not very large, but the price tag is quite high, almost equivalent to the price of two six-pound bronze cannons. Is that not too expensive?" Little Bolton mentioned the price of six-pound bronze cannons, which had skyrocketed due to the copper shortage caused by the demand for electricity in Europe. Consequently, this toothpaste-squeezing cannon was indeed very expensive.

"Sir, we can price it this way because this cannon is superior to two six-pound bronze cannons. Firstly, because it uses rifling technology, our cannons have far greater accuracy than regular bronze cannons. For instance, even the best twelve-pound bronze cannon, under the control of the most skilled gunner, can accurately hit a windmill about a kilometer away. But with our cannon, a slight amount of training allows the gunners to accurately hit the window of that windmill."

"In that case, can this type of cannon be sold to England?" Watt asked.

"Why not? We haven't been at war with England, so why not?" the staff member responded, even though he personally didn't think selling weapons to England was a good idea. However, the decision on this matter had already been made by those above.

"In any case, it's just a type of outdated weapon with some new technology," someone had said when persuading Napoleon to sell steel cannons to foreigners.

Chapter 267: Guest Academician

In addition to the impressive cannon, "Monsieur Bonaparte's Arsenal" showcased various other types of weapons, many of which were improved versions of familiar old designs. The most significant advancement was the shift from iron to steel in their construction.

Beyond this, Monsieur Bonaparte's Arsenal also featured a cutting-edge technology—smokeless gunpowder. According to the brochure, this type of gunpowder, when combined with steel barrels, allowed bullets to achieve higher initial velocity, resulting in increased range. It also reduced battlefield smoke, making the shooters less conspicuous and harder to detect.

Seeing this, even Watt, who wasn't particularly radical on Irish matters, felt a deep sense of malice.

Apart from firearms, "Monsieur Bonaparte's Arsenal" produced a variety of edged weapons, such as daggers, bayonets, spring knives, and butterfly knives. Watt furrowed his brow at the sight because these items were already common in England, and some British companies had started imitating them.

The popularity of these weapons in England was more concerning to Watt and his companions than the prevalence of land mines and rifles in Ireland. After all, the victims of land mines and rifles in Ireland were mostly English civilians, and these threats were relatively distant from Watt and his group, as long as they didn't venture into Ireland themselves.

However, spring knives and butterfly knives were different; their popularity implied a deterioration in public safety. Despite the generally poor law and order in London or any English city, these knives exacerbated the problem further.

These two types of knives were exceptionally discreet. Victims would often have no time to react before thieves brandished them. Recently, many police officers had been stabbed or killed by these weapons. In response, the police had become more sensitive and prone to using violence. London's police had begun widely equipping themselves with revolvers, and there were already several incidents of innocent bystanders getting injured due to indiscriminate firing.

Compared to the dangers in Ireland, these small knives posed a more immediate threat. To Watt, these items were even more detestable than rifled guns and land mines.

But Bolton's attention was captivated by a certain French knife.

"Mr. Watt, come and have a look at this knife."

Watt walked over to see an unusual folding knife in a glass display case. Unlike typical folding knives, this one didn't have just one blade; it had multiple other tools inside, such as small scissors, a tiny screwdriver, a miniature compass, and various other ingenious little devices.

"Well, Mr. Watt, you see, this thing is quite interesting," Bolton said, pointing at the knife.

"It looks nice, but as a tool, these things are too small. They're not as practical as regular ones," Watt replied, shaking his head.

"That's true, but it could be a nice gift for the children," Bolton suggested.

Watt agreed with that perspective. He thought these little items could be bought and given to children for play, helping them develop their manual skills. He was genuinely impressed by the French's ability to incorporate so many tools into such a small knife.

They continued to walk around and explore other exhibits.

"Ah, this saber... Mr. Watt, look at this. Is this the legendary Damascus steel blade? My word, the French have actually mastered this technology. I thought these blades were lost to history!" Bolton exclaimed.

In reality, the true technique of crafting Damascus steel blades had been lost, and these beautiful patterns were achieved through folding and forging various types of steel, then etching the surface. But Bolton was unaware of this, so he checked the price and, although he found it somewhat expensive, decided to buy a couple of them as decorative pieces.

In addition to the unique knife, there was a special shovel with over a dozen practical functions, and its price was reasonable. Watt thought about importing some to sell, believing they would do quite well.

After some more exploring, they headed back to their allocated villa to rest. These small villas were specifically reserved for the merchants who had qualified to present in the "Palace of Peace." Those merchants who were only showcasing their products in the square had to stay in regular hotels.

On the second evening of their stay, a few people came to visit Watt.

"I am Joseph Bonaparte. I just rushed back from the South and heard that Mr. Watt is here, so I came to pay him a visit," this person said to Watt's assistant, William Murdoch.

"Ah, it's Professor Bonaparte," William Murdoch said, instantly showing his respect. In British propaganda, Napoleon, and Joseph for that matter, had been portrayed negatively. Later on, Fouché had been vilified even further. However, despite these negative portrayals, British scholars couldn't

help but utilize Fouché's First Law, Fouché's Second Law, and so on. So, regardless of the criticisms, during the war, there was still a degree of admiration for Joseph.

The world of science was even less affected by this political bias, and scientists, for political correctness and personal interest, were hesitant to admit the shift of scientific prominence from Britain to France. But when it came to Joseph Bonaparte, the most prominent symbol of this transition, they couldn't help but admire him. Now that Watt was here, and Joseph had come to visit in person, it was an opportunity that Watt could boast about back in England. As Watt's assistant, William Murdoch felt honored to be a part of this.

"Professor Bonaparte, please come in. I'll go and inform Mr. Watt; he's upstairs discussing matters with Mr. Bolton," William Murdoch invited Joseph in and instructed a servant to prepare tea. Holding a candlestick, he prepared to go upstairs to notify Watt.

Although it was already dark outside, it was only seven o'clock, and neither Watt nor Bolton had gone to sleep yet. Both men were upstairs in the small living room, enjoying tea and discussing their experiences from the day.

When William Murdoch informed them that Professor Bonaparte had come to visit, both men quickly got up and descended the stairs.

"Ah, Professor Bonaparte," Watt said as he approached, "Ever since I arrived in Paris, I've been eager to visit you. Unfortunately, when you traveled to the South, we were quite disappointed, thinking we had missed the opportunity. To meet you now, I consider this trip a complete success."

They exchanged pleasantries and took seats on the living room's sofa.

"Professor Bonaparte, is there something specific that brings you here?" Watt inquired.

Joseph replied, "Yes, there are a few matters. Mr. Watt, as you may know, I am currently the President of the French Academy of Sciences. Initially, we thought this position should have been filled by Mr. Lavassier, but he has been reluctant to be distracted by such administrative duties. Thus, I, perhaps somewhat unprepared, ended up taking on the role."

"However, now that I am in this position, I believe it is essential to do something for the Academy and for science itself. I have always believed that science has no boundaries; it is a shared wealth of all humankind. To advance science, it requires collaboration among the finest scientists from various nations. Mr. Watt, you are a member of the Royal Society of London, which has made immense contributions to the history of science. Additionally, you, yourself, are a great scientist who has made groundbreaking contributions to human progress. Therefore, I have come here today with the hope of inviting you to be an Associate Academician of the French Academy of Sciences."

Being invited to become an Associate Academician of the French Academy of Sciences was a significant honor. Watt was undoubtedly delighted, but he felt the need for some politeness. Moreover, Joseph's earlier praise, describing him as a "great scientist who had made groundbreaking contributions to human progress," had set the bar quite high. Considering Joseph's prominent position in the scientific community, this praise would provide Watt with bragging rights for months when he returned to England.

"President Bonaparte, I am deeply honored to receive such an invitation. Your statement about science knowing no boundaries and the need for worldwide collaboration is something I

wholeheartedly agree with. However, your kind words of praise have made me blush. I feel a bit overrated," Watt replied.

"Ah, Mr. Watt, while studying the history of human science, I once divided the history of human civilization based on how humans obtain and utilize energy. I separated it into several stages. First is the primitive stage when humans were essentially wild creatures, obtaining energy by seeking natural sources of energy. This is the same way all wild animals obtain their energy, whether by eating plants or other animals. During this stage, humans could hardly be considered civilized and were closer to wild beasts.

Watt nodded in agreement, listening carefully to Joseph's words, as they might be quite useful for boasting later.

Joseph continued, "Later, humans developed two methods to acquire energy: agriculture and animal husbandry. According to the studies of Monsieur Antoine-Laurent de Lavoisier, the source of energy for plant growth is sunlight. Whether through agriculture, animal husbandry, or even earlier forms of existence more reminiscent of wild animals, in terms of energy utilization, humans were all harnessing the energy of solar radiation. However, agriculture and animal husbandry were more efficient methods of utilizing energy. Acquiring this knowledge marked the threshold of human civilization.

"For thousands of years afterward, despite many changes, this method of obtaining energy remained relatively unchanged, with occasional use of wind and water power, but on a limited scale. It wasn't until you improved the steam engine that humanity's available energy sources expanded significantly. Mineral energy became widely used. This marked a substantial step forward for human civilization. Regardless of how it's praised, it's not an overstatement."

Joseph's theory was both innovative and incredibly beneficial for Watt. Watt believed that this theory could provide him with a year's worth of bragging rights, if not a lifetime. With a wide smile on his face, Watt said, "President Bonaparte, your praise is truly overwhelming. You just described quite an impressive historical perspective. I am deeply honored by your invitation. What can I assist you with, beyond this honor?"

Chapter 268: The Train

"Ah, indeed. There's one more matter, Mr. Watt. After this Paris exposition, I'd like to invite you to give a lecture at the University of Paris," Joseph Fouché remarked.

This, too, was a grand proposal, and Mr. Watt had no reason to decline. He replied, "The University of Paris is one of the most renowned educational institutions in the world. Speaking there would be the culmination of my lifetime dreams—of course, I say this only half-seriously. Even if time is scarce, I will make sure to squeeze some out. After all, what could be more important than this?"

Joseph was delighted. "Mr. Watt, it's settled then. Oh, by the way, Mr. Watt, now that our official business is concluded, I have some personal matters to discuss with you."

Mr. Watt perked up. He knew that while their official dealings were crucial, these personal matters might be even more substantial. In a way, Joseph Bonaparte had become an idol in the British scientific community. Countless aspiring scientists looked up to him, not just because he was one of the most brilliant minds of his time but also because he was the most financially successful scientist

of his era. Everyone knew that Joseph, as the head of the "military-industrial complex" in France, had amassed a considerable fortune.

Mr. Watt, too, was a scientist skilled at making money, but he believed that Joseph had outshone him in that aspect even more than in scientific research. Given Joseph Bonaparte's influence in the economic sphere, it was likely that he had played a significant role in the success of the "Paris Exposition." So, while official business was essential, these personal matters were probably more substantial.

Mr. Watt leaned forward, shifting his posture on the sofa. "Mr. Bonaparte, feel free to share your concerns."

"Ah, Mr. Watt, I understand that you and your partners operate a company that produces steam engines. Furthermore, your company has extensive collaborations with the Lorraine Steel Company. Well, Mr. Watt, our Lorraine Steel Company is currently facing a bottleneck in steel production."

"Mr. Watt, if you've visited the Lorraine Steel booth today, I'm sure you understand the immense demand for our steel. We hardly ever worry about sales. In fact, our steel orders are often booked months in advance, even with our factories operating at full tilt. So, why not build more steel plants to increase production capacity?" said young Boulton, who was accompanying them.

"Mr. Boulton, the problem isn't a lack of steel furnaces or mining capacity. The issue lies in our inability to transport enough ore to the steel plants," Joseph explained. "Whether it's iron ore or coal, we can't rely solely on water transport to deliver them directly to the factories. There's always some distance from the docks to the factories, and not all mines are situated near rivers. Transporting these resources from the mines to the docks involves a significant overland journey."

"Mr. Boulton, Mr. Watt, you know that the wagons used to transport ore are heavily loaded, requiring numerous draft animals and specialized tracks. The tracks aren't a problem, but the number of draft animals poses a significant challenge. Rearing a large number of draft animals also demands substantial resources and manpower, making it a costly affair."

"So, I have an idea. Your company possesses a wealth of valuable expertise in steam power and transmission. We hope to collaborate with your company to develop a steam-powered transportation technology. To be more explicit, we'd like to work with you to create a steam-powered rail transport system that could replace horse-drawn ore wagons."

"Mr. Watt, steam engines have already found extensive use in propelling ships. In principle, they can be applied to land transportation as well. Even if they are solely used for transporting ore, their value is immense. When it comes to steam power, there's no more experienced partner in the world than your company. So, we hope to join forces with you to develop such a steam-powered vehicle."

Mr. Watt had heard similar ideas before. Several years ago, someone had proposed something similar to him. However, at the time, Mr. Watt had expressed opposition to the idea without providing specific reasons, merely stating, "I don't think it's a good idea." Some believed that Mr. Watt's resistance was related to negotiations about selling his patent for the crankshaft to John Steed, as developing such a technology would not have been in his interest. Eventually, Mr. Watt's assistant, William Murdoch, invented a contraption known as planetary gears, bypassing the need for the crankshaft patent.

Since then, the idea had been buried and hadn't resurfaced until now.

Now, someone had brought up this suggestion once again. However, this time, it wasn't just some nameless figure making the proposal. Mr. Watt couldn't brush him off with a simple "I don't think it's a good idea." After some thought, he inquired, "Mr. Bonaparte, to my knowledge, the military-industrial complex has been involved in steam engines, particularly in marine steam engines. If they work on ships, they should be suitable for steam-powered trains as well, don't you think?"

"Ah, don't get me started on those folks. They use whatever materials are expensive, whether it's for warships or vessels carrying highly profitable contraband. Lately, they've run into a series of technical difficulties, and it's cost me two months' worth of expenses with no progress," Joseph complained.

Joseph wasn't exaggerating. Those folks were indeed burning money every day, and they had made almost no progress in over two months. However, Joseph wasn't as dissatisfied as he appeared because this slow progress was entirely expected. After all, they were currently working on the true form of the steam engine - the steam turbine. As a result, they had encountered a multitude of challenges, which were all part of the plan.

Even if they succeeded in their research, the steam turbine was more suitable for use in ships or power plants rather than in trains.

Of course, Joseph had also considered skipping the steam engine and even the internal combustion engine altogether and jumping directly to electric locomotives. However, there were numerous missing pieces of the puzzle in that direction, not just in terms of technology but also in science.

So, for now, the fastest approach was to collaborate with Mr. Watt, using traditional reciprocating steam engines to develop a steam-powered locomotive with a distinct steam-punk, riveted steel, and multi-carriage appearance. Joseph even envisioned that one day, if the barbarians from Austria invaded the Roman border, Napoleon would command an armored steam-powered train, with multiple carriages and turrets, to plow through their ranks.

"I see," Mr. Watt pondered and asked, "So, how would our interests be distributed in this research?"

And now it was time for the most crucial part. Joseph immediately focused his attention, negotiating with Mr. Watt regarding the distribution of interests. Mr. Watt initially hoped to use his various patents to exchange for steelmaking or cement production techniques. Still, Joseph swiftly rejected this idea - it was a grossly unequal trade, and he wasn't about to be fooled.

Though the idea was rejected, Mr. Watt remained unfazed. Being turned down was normal, and if he wasn't turned down, that would be a win. He then proposed a new suggestion, requesting exclusive agency rights for fortress cement in the UK.

The intense discussions continued throughout the night until the sun rose in the east, and they finally reached a provisional agreement. Mr. Watt and his team obtained exclusive agency rights for fortress cement in the UK and priority purchasing rights for Lorraine Steel. Additionally, for every steam locomotive produced by the military-industrial complex and sold on the market, they would pay Mr. Watt's team a patent fee of three hundred pounds.

As Joseph left the villa where Mr. Watt's team had temporarily stayed, he couldn't help but mutter, "That Mr. Watt, he's not the most lovable character. Mr. Lavasie is so much better..."

However, even though Mr. Watt was craftier than Mr. Lavasie, Joseph hadn't come out on the losing end. He had successfully concealed his true goals and acquired a crucial patent at a relatively low cost: the patent for planetary gears.

The significance of planetary gears, as perceived by its owner, Mr. Watt, and the inventor, William Murdoch, was underestimated. They primarily viewed it as a means to bypass the crankshaft patent. However, Joseph knew that this invention was the key to numerous vital variable-speed systems in future machinery.

So, even though he was annoyed that he hadn't easily taken advantage of Mr. Lavasie, the fact remained that Joseph hadn't come out on the losing end.

Chapter 269: Buying Cannons

After a night of exhausting negotiations, both Watt and Petit Boulton were weary. They were not young men anymore, and in the modern world, people of Petit Boulton's age were considered beyond the category of needing a respirator. Watt, on the other hand, was even closer to the category of "pull the plug on the respirator even if it's attached."

Of course, if they were as wealthy in modern times as they were now, there would be no need to worry about such things. After all, the rich had always been given priority, a rule followed from ancient times to the present day. Even His Imperial Majesty once said, "Such is life."

Joseph Fouché came to visit them in the evening, claiming he had just arrived here. His immediate visit after arriving displayed Joseph's respect for Watt, a pioneer in the field of science. However, Watt had a lingering suspicion. Joseph, in perfect timing, chose this moment to arrive and immediately started discussing business. Was he trying to take advantage of their weakened state, hoping to gain an upper hand?

With this thought in mind, Watt quickly pulled Petit Boulton aside, and they painstakingly reexamined all the terms they had just negotiated, until both of them had throbbing headaches. Finally, they set aside the contract.

"Mr. Watt, I believe there are no loopholes in the contract. While we may not have gained much from President Bonaparte, we certainly won't be at a loss. This should indeed be a win-win collaboration. Besides, my head is starting to spin, and I don't think there's much more to be gained from further discussion. Let's call it a night," Petit Boulton said.

"Yes, yes, I'm getting a headache too," Watt said. "Matthew, can you still sleep now?"

"How is that possible?" Petit Boulton replied. "Do you think I'm still in my thirties? Back then, no matter what time it was, as soon as my head touched the pillow, I could fall asleep instantly. But now, if I miss that window for sleep, no matter how tired I am, even if my head feels as heavy as granite, I still can't fall asleep. Well, Mr. Watt, what about you?"

"Me? I'm quite a bit older than you, so this has been my reality for a while. Well, since we can't sleep, shall we have dinner together and then go for a walk?" Watt suggested.

"Sure," Petit Boulton agreed. "The breakfasts in France are my second favorite thing about this place."

"What's your first favorite thing?" Watt asked.

"Good weather, always good weather," Petit Boulton replied.

"Your opinion is quite similar to mine, but the order of first and second would be different for me. I've been thinking whether I should fire our damned cook at home."

The two of them had a breakfast far superior to stargazing, and then they made their way to the "Palace of Peace."

The morning was sunny, and from a distance, the Palace of Peace, covered in a layer of white marble, sparkled. As they approached, they noticed there were more people around the Palace of Peace today.

"Tomorrow's the grand opening, no wonder there are so many people," Watt remarked.

"Do you want to go have a look? Maybe there are more novelties to discover," Petit Boulton suggested.

"No," Watt suddenly said. "For us, the most important things have already been seen. Moreover, our money has already been allocated. Even if we were to see more, we wouldn't have the funds to acquire them. Besides, if we see everything now, it won't be as exciting when the opening ceremony arrives. Let's go somewhere else for a walk."

"That's true. After all, our main mission for this trip is essentially complete, isn't it?" Petit Boulton said. "The good fight has been fought, the race has been run, and the tasks have been accomplished. From now on, we have some leisure time."

"Haha, Matthew, you're twisting the Bible."

"No, Mr. Watt, I'm paying homage to it."

They continued to chat and joke as they walked in another direction.

However, on the following morning, both of them felt some regret.

The opening ceremony was actually well organized, incorporating elements from modern opening ceremonies: group exercises, parades, and a lively atmosphere. For the people of that time, who had never experienced such entertainment, it was a truly joyous occasion. But for Watt and Petit Boulton, who were getting on in years, the noise was a bit too much.

However, that wasn't a major issue. The noise was part of the celebration, and they were still having fun. What bothered them more was when Lucien took the stage and delivered a speech. This fellow rambled on for what felt like ages, comparing this event to the ancient Greek festival of Dionysus one moment and discussing Roman civilization the next. He then meandered into the territory of shared prosperity, talking for over an hour, until Watt, seated in the front row, could barely keep his eyes open. Lucien finally wrapped up his long-winded speech with a simple phrase: "I wish for world peace!"

After that, a round of ceremonial cannon fire woke up those who had been lulled to sleep by Lucien, urging them to hurry up and spend money.

After the opening ceremony, Watt and Petit Boulton followed their original plan and wandered through the square outside the Palace of Peace. They explored various exotic goods they hadn't seen before. Even in the semi-open exhibition halls, they discovered plenty of new and creative items.

For instance, Watt came across something called a "typewriter" at a relatively inconspicuous small business booth, which he found to be quite impressive.

Although this device was relatively simple in design, it proved to be incredibly efficient in use. The demonstrator effortlessly typed out an entire page of text in no time, significantly faster than handwriting and with clear and neat typography.

Watt immediately inquired about the price of the device and discreetly asked about whether it had been patented. Unfortunately, he received a disappointing response – the device had already been patented.

"This thing may look simple, but it will likely sell well in the future," Watt told Petit Boulton, disappointed. "It's a pity we don't have the funds, nor the manpower to engage in this business."

As they were discussing this, they noticed a familiar face passing by.

"Ah, that person seems like someone we've seen somewhere before," Watt remarked.

"Yes, it seems so, in Fermanagh..." Petit Boulton started but stopped short.

The person who had just passed by was Lieutenant Fermanagh of the British Royal Navy. In the past, during the development of steamships in the British Navy, both Watt and Petit Boulton had interacted with him. However, at this moment, he was dressed casually and in the attire of a merchant. It was likely that he was on some sort of secret mission.

Watt and Petit Boulton knew it was best not to interfere with such matters and pretended not to have seen him.

Lieutenant Fermanagh, on the other hand, had just exited the Palace of Peace and was engaged in conversation with an Italian merchant. Moments ago, he had posed as a Mexican businessman and discussed the purchase of cannons with the "Bonaparte Arsenal" representatives while subtly gathering information about the cannons' performance.

If the Bonaparte Arsenal representatives were not exaggerating, these cannons, especially in terms of their penetrating power, even surpassed the 36-pound cannons used on battleships. Furthermore, they were incredibly lightweight. This had the British naval officer deeply concerned.

"Even the vessel we faced before, the Narwhal, equipped with these cannons, could pierce the hull of our battleships at normal combat distances. Considering the Narwhal's clear advantage in speed, it would certainly gain a tactical advantage when facing our battleships. In single-ship combat, it could even challenge first-rate battleships like the HMS Victory. This is truly alarming and completely disrupts our naval warfare strategies."

At present, the British had not been able to manufacture steamships comparable to the Narwhal. They had tried various methods, such as placing the paddlewheel at the stern or increasing length and width, but their new steamships still fell far short of the Narwhal.

"In any case, even if we can't obtain the Narwhal's technology for now, at the very least, we cannot let the French outstrip us in artillery."

Lieutenant Fermanagh expressed his desire to purchase these cannons from the French – buying one or two to study and potentially reverse-engineer would be ideal.

The French had been very receptive to his inquiries until he asked to buy two cannons. At this point, the previously friendly Frenchman's demeanor took a sudden turn.

"Sir, we don't engage in small transactions," the Frenchman said, displaying a clear disdain for a cash-strapped small merchant. It was as if he were scolding himself for wasting so much time.

"In that case, what's the minimum quantity you accept?" Lieutenant Fermanagh asked.

"No less than 12 cannons," the Frenchman replied.

Lieutenant Fermanagh calculated that this price exceeded the authorization he had received. So, he tried to negotiate further with the Frenchman, but at this point, an Italian merchant approached. This Italian hailed from the Papal States, and he seemed to be very familiar with the Frenchmen. The Frenchman immediately abandoned Lieutenant Fermanagh to curry favor with the Italian.

Soon, the Italian was ready to place an order for a full 48 cannons. The Papal States' military, despite having good equipment, had limited combat capability. These purchases were, to a large extent, protection money – similar to how major players in the modern world paid tribute to the Imperial Sovereign.

Observing the Italian easily signing the purchase contract, Lieutenant Fermanagh suddenly had an idea – the French only sold in bulk, but he could still buy one or two cannons from the Italian!

He approached the Italian, introduced himself, and explained that he only had the money to buy two cannons, but the French required a minimum order of twelve. He then suggested that they pool their resources to buy two cannons together.

"Sir," the Italian looked at him with suspicion, "I can tell you make your living at sea. Are you involved in the kind of business conducted in the Caribbean? But I don't mind. I believe neither would the Lord. However, if you want my help, you must show a bit of sincerity."

Chapter 270: Cannons and Wool

The possibility of the British secretly buying cannons was something the French had already anticipated. Even that Englishman who posed as a Mexican had been under the watchful eyes of the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Truth. However, no action had been taken against his little antics. The reasoning behind this was discussed among the leaders, and Joseph Fouché was the one to articulate it.

"International arms trade, well, though we can sign a 'end-user agreement' with the buyers, preventing them from reselling, we can't be counting the number of cannons in their armies every day. (I heard that some powerful countries regularly count planes in the countries they extort from.) And even if we did count, they could easily load these items onto their ships and then tell us that the cannons have 'sunk.' Can we really go down to the depths of the sea to ask Poseidon to help us count the cannons? So, as long as we want to make money from these things, they will inevitably end up in the hands of the British. Given that, why should we let those middlemen make a profit?"

When Joseph posed this question during their meeting, everyone nodded in agreement.

"But, won't the large-scale arming of the British with these weapons pose a threat to us?" Carnot raised an objection at this point.

"Lazare, if for every cannon the British buy from us, we can equip ourselves with two and a half to three more cannons, what does one British cannon matter?" Joseph dismissed the concern. "Moreover, this is just the profit from cannons. Considering the profit from steel, for each cannon we sell to the British, we can earn three and a half to four more cannons."

"But the money we earn won't be used to equip our own army with cannons," Carnot persisted, and Napoleon surprisingly stayed silent.

"That little scoundrel, Napoleon, is making progress. According to Lucien, he has been privately discussing this with Carnot for a while during military exercises, and now Carnot wants to ask me for money? This boy doesn't realize that the focus should now be on economic development, and the military needs to be patient," Joseph remarked.

"Lazare, you also know that the performance of these cannons is significantly different from those we use in our armed forces. Moreover, when we sell these cannons, we also pay taxes to the government, don't we? From the moment the ore is mined until the sale, when you add up all the taxes, it's almost enough for the government to purchase a fraction of our cannons at a discounted price. But, these are the self-propelled cannons with breechblocks, not the monkey-version cannons sold to foreigners. If the government is willing to allocate this money to purchase these self-propelled cannons, with every five cannons we sell, the government can buy one advanced self-propelled cannon. And our tests have shown that, especially in terms of firing speed, one of our cannons can match four or even five monkey-version cannons. Add to that our self-made ammunition, and the advantage becomes even more significant. Lazare, you also know that we sell these cannons to many countries. Many of these nations are our allies, and some are far from posing a threat to us. Not all of them are buying from the British. Even if the British, along with the Austrians, buy cannons from us, it won't be a substantial proportion compared to the cannons we sell. It won't exceed the amount of taxes the government collects from our business. So, Lazare, if you think we have too few cannons in the army, you shouldn't come to me, you should talk to Napoleon because he's the one deciding on government expenditures! You should ask him where this money is being used!"

At this point, Napoleon finally broke his silence. "How can you blame me? Our government has too many places to spend money. Rural development costs money. I'm sure you agree with that, Lazare. The better the homeland looks, the more loyal our soldiers become, and their morale is higher. Basic education costs money. Joseph, you suggested three years of compulsory education, how much does that cost? Lazare, you know about this, and you were very supportive at the time. Then... Lazare, you should also understand that we're running out of money. So, Lazare, we must export more cannons, no matter to whom. New rural development costs money. I think Lazare, you'd also agree with that. And you can see the better our homeland is, the more loyal our soldiers become, and the higher their morale. And also, basic education. This was your idea, Joseph, three years of compulsory education. How much will that cost? Lazare, you know about this, and you were very supportive at the time. And... then, Lazare, you should think about where we can find the money."

"So, Lazare, we have to export more cannons if there's no way to cut these expenses. Only by selling more can we generate extra tax revenue for the military to buy cannons."

With that, Carnot fell silent. After a while, he finally asked, "Joseph, can the extra tax revenue really be used for the military?"

"We need to ask Napoleon about that," Joseph replied.

Carnot looked at Napoleon and decided not to press him further. Instead, he asked, "What if the British try to replicate our cannons?"

"Our cannons have only one true advantage, which is the low-cost steelmaking process. If the British want to make cannons with crucible steel, their cannons will be much more expensive than what they buy from us. So, the quantity of their cannons will be limited. Why should we be worried then?"

Because of these considerations, neither the Ministry of Public Security nor the Ministry of Truth paid much attention to the British who were running around at the Paris Expo.

The bustling Paris Expo lasted for a full two weeks. During this time, merchants from various countries signed a multitude of contracts. According to statistics from the Ministry of Truth, just in this single trade fair, the quantity of orders for woolen textiles, especially by the British and other European nations, surpassed the total for the entire previous year. It even exceeded the current supply capacity of the British.

As these merchants returned to England, clutching their contracts, they hurriedly contemplated getting loans from banks to expand production. They aimed to buy as much wool as possible, and those who acted quickly reaped the benefits.

As a consequence, the price of wool in the British market skyrocketed within a week, increasing by a third in such a short time. Wool became a precious commodity.

In light of this, some landowners, who were initially hesitating, didn't wait for their wheat to ripen and rushed to reclaim land from their tenants. They then let their sheep, including characters like Happy Sheep, Lazy Sheep, Beautiful Sheep, Slow Sheep, and Warm Sheep, graze in the fields.

But what about grains? It was simple: go to the international market and buy them. Did you not know that France was on the brink of a bountiful harvest? The price of grain in France was much cheaper than in England. Directly selling grain in France was the solution.

You see, French land was so much more suitable for growing grains compared to the mossy lands of England. Growing grains there was simply not profitable. What? You're concerned about food security? There's an international market, you know! Do you understand? Not only France but also Russia, Prussia, and the United States are part of it. Could they all collectively impose an embargo on England? If such a situation were to occur, it would undoubtedly be due to something outrageous that England had done itself.

In any case, in England, large numbers of farmers were driven into the cities. While the rapid expansion of the textile industry created more "job opportunities," the increase in "job opportunities" still couldn't keep up with the rapid rise in unemployment. As a result, the security situation in British cities deteriorated even further.

To make matters worse, at this time, a group of unscrupulous British merchants smuggled in a large quantity of various "self-defense items" from France. Everything from butterfly knives to switchblades, and even daggers, were available. Among them were high-end, sophisticated Damascus knives for the wealthy, but the majority were shoddy but undeniably deadly weapons. Their prices were affordable.

Some sellers of these weapons, consciously or unconsciously, propagated, "Working in a factory is a death sentence. Your best way out is to go to the New World. To go to the New World, you need

the money for a boat ticket, living expenses along the way, and—most importantly—courage and a good knife."

Though this kind of promotion brought about significant dangers, and some merchants selling these knives were even robbed by impoverished individuals wielding their very products, some sellers still continued to offer their knives. People preferred having a weapon to secure their livelihood rather than selling a loaf of bread.

"Having only bread without a weapon, you're sure to lose your bread. But having only a weapon without bread, you'll most likely earn yourself some bread."

Amidst this situation, London practically turned into a city of crime, with thefts and unsuccessful robberies occurring all around.

Faced with this situation, the "England News League" and the "England Freedom News League," who had always been at odds with each other, unexpectedly united. They quickly reached a consensus and jointly condemned the lawless behavior of these thugs, demanding that the government take immediate action to suppress them.

The "Times Review" of the "England News League" published an editorial titled "Is There Still Justice, Is There Still Law?" strongly condemning the atrocities committed by the hooligans.

Meanwhile, "Voice of Free England" from the "England Freedom News League" featured an exclusive interview with the London Municipal Authority, titled "We Must Return Peace to London's Citizens."