As more people left the countryside in response to the changing demand for labor, empty lands increased the opportunity for the expansion of commercial agriculture. Parallel rural-urban economic changes thus integrated local, regional, and national markets. Cities demanded labor and new food sources that stimulated cultivation. Commercial agriculture in turn responded with increased efficiency in production while consuming manufactured goods such as industrially produced farm tools, machines, or spare parts. Thus, an urban-rural link developed that eventually tied all the regions of Great Britain together into a common national market system.

Also, the combined development of industry and modern agriculture sustained a new demographic reality that reversed the ancient and medieval rural-urban ratios. As mentioned numerous times, traditional societies typically placed nine farmers in the countryside to feed one person in a city. Now Great Britain had begun a rural-urban shift that first placed 50 percent of its population in cities by 1850. After this date, Great Britain’s cities would continue to grow and hold the vast majority of its people by the twentieth century. In addition, as people left the countryside, farms continued to increase food production and integrate with urban demand. Thus, the more efficient agriculture became, the more people could leave the countryside, migrate to cities to find work, as well as be fed by Britain’s modern methods of cultivation.

Meanwhile, Great Britain’s cities sprang up in regions empty of people, but rich in fuel. As the first industry Loom, Artist William Hogarth shows the interior of a weaving workroom located in Spitalfields, center of London’s thriving silk industry. A drawing series Industry and Idleness, Hogarth shows us Goodchild applying his skills as a deft weaver, then Idle, asleep having drunk a copious amount of The Trustees of the British Museum.

In textiles, entrepreneurs sought innovations to replace cottage labor as the demand for their products grew with the success of British commercial capitalism. One invention, the “flying shuttle,” developed by James Kay in 1733, allowed one weaver to pull thread through the loom single-handedly to produce cloth that previously required the work of two people. This increased efficiency created a new demand for more thread that in turn inspired James Hargreaves’s “spinning jenny” in 1760. The spinning jenny replaced the spinning wheel and increased the production of thread. Hargreaves’s simple hand tool later led Richard Arkwright in 1769 to develop the “water-frame” as a water-powered spinning frame.