

THE RADICAL PROGRAMME.

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THE
RADICAL PROGRAMME

WITH A PREFACE

BY

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PREFACE.

THE Reform Acts of 1885 have set the seal on the great change which the Reform Act of 1832 inaugurated.

The government of the people by the people, imperfectly recognised as the principle of the first attempt to improve the Parliamentary Representation, has been at last effectively secured by the two measures which together constitute the great achievement of Mr. Gladstone's second administration.

At last the majority of the nation will be represented by a majority of the House of Commons, and ideas and wants and claims which have been hitherto ignored in legislation will find a voice in Parliament, and will compel the attention of statesmen.

Radicalism, which has been the creed of the most

numerous section of the Liberal party outside the House of Commons, will henceforth be a powerful factor inside the walls of the popular Chamber.

The stage of agitation has passed, and the time for action has come.

There is need, therefore, for the attempt which is made in the following pages to compile a definite and practical Programme for the Radical Party.

It is a mistake to suppose that the objects of the advanced Liberals are simply destructive, for although the ground has to be cleared in many places, the new necessities of the time can only be fully met by constructive legislation.

New conceptions of public duty, new developments of social enterprise, new estimates of the natural obligations of the members of the community to one another, have come into view, and demand consideration.

On this account, and without pledging myself to all the proposals contained in the following articles, I welcome their appearance, and commend them to the careful and impartial judgment of my fellow-Radicals.

J. CHAMBERLAIN.

July, 1885.

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THE RADICAL PROGRAMME.

I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE smoke of battle having cleared off, and the clash of arms subsided, it is possible to ascertain the precise position of the forces recently engaged, and to compute the chief results of the conflict. Which side can claim the preponderating advantage? Are the fruits of victory evenly divided, or has one of the combatants secured a present triumph only at the cost of future defeat? Such are the questions which now rise naturally to the lips of the anxious spectators of the fray, and which, it may be frankly confessed, seem at first to admit of more than one answer. Neither party, it is clear, can vaunt a monopoly of nominal gains. Neither can boast an immunity from losses. Neither emerges from the

The revolution of 1884.
Gains and losses.

fight quite scathless. Let an enumeration of the facts show to which camp the balance of fortune inclines.

The claim
of the
Tories.

There are certain points that cannot be in dispute, and for the purpose of estimating the character and probable consequences of the struggle little more is wanted than to specify these. The Tories profess to survey the retrospect not without complacency. Some places of apparent strength have passed into their hands. There are, as they may allege, principles which they have asserted and pretensions which they have resisted. Their leaders declared, six months ago, that within certain limits they would hold their ground. They may now congratulate themselves on having held it. Thus they can point to the unmistakable fact that they secured the production of the Redistribution Bill before the Franchise Bill was passed; not, indeed, before it was safe, but two or three days before it was actually added to the statute-book. This, if not a great is yet a definite achievement, and it may freely be put down to the credit of the Conservative cause. Again, although the Franchise Bill has become law precisely in the same shape in which it was originally introduced, the Tories gained a voice in the settlement

of the provisions of the Seats Bill—a measure that constitutes as integral a portion of parliamentary reform as the extension of the franchise. Consequently; they may argue, they have precluded the Liberals from vaunting hereafter that it is their hands alone which have placed the coping-stone upon the edifice of popular Government. Finally, it is open to the Conservatives to insist that by the judicious action of their leaders they have ended or postponed the agitation against the House of Lords.

This summary of the successes of the late Opposition would be acknowledged by Conservatives themselves to be accurate. Let us now look at the other side of the account, and see what reason the Liberals have for satisfaction. The first entry which meets one here records the one broad, simple fact that, upon the passing of the Franchise Act the Liberals obtained the necessary leverage for securing the settlement of the Redistribution question. But that is not all. The lines on which the question of Redistribution have been finally arranged are infinitely more in accordance with Liberal principles than if the Downing Street conferences had never been held, while the measure produced is far in

The Liberal account.

advance of anything which the boldest of Liberal Governments could have dared to propose, in the face of the pronounced hostility of the Tories. When, therefore, we look at the ends rather than the means, we find that the advantages of the so-called compromise are, as far as can be judged, placed exclusively in the Liberal scale. If it could be contended that the policy of the Tories has modified in a Tory sense the Redistribution Bill of the Government, as it was known to the world from the draft scheme published in October, 1884, the result would be different. It is the details and the general tendency of the measure which has now received the royal assent, as compared with the measure that one may suppose Mr. Gladstone was originally prepared to introduce, which form the real test of the situation. The Act indeed is not a final one, but it brings finality into no remote prospect, and its anomalies stand out in such sharp contrast to what may be called its principles that they challenge or ensure removal at no distant date.

The case
examined.

Let us, however, take the two Acts as they are. If we do this, and if we examine them by the light which an ordinary knowledge of English popular feeling in town and country throws upon them, we

shall perceive that they portend nothing less than a revolution, though a silent and peaceful one.

The Parliament of 1880 was elected by three millions of electors, of whom it was estimated one-third were of the working classes. The next House of Commons will be elected by five millions of men, of whom three-fifths belong to the labouring population.

The next noticeable feature is the magnitude of the change effected by the Seats Act. The Reform Act of 1832 distributed one hundred and forty-three seats. The Act of 1867 dealt only with forty-seven seats. The Act of 1885 distributed one hundred and sixty seats. The increased representation conferred on the large towns of the United Kingdom warrants us in anticipating a large increase in the number of Liberals sent by these constituencies to Parliament. London, which has now a total of twenty-two members, and which returns eight Tories, will have fifty-nine members, of whom statistics would seem to show that not more than a fourth, or, in other words fifteen members, are likely to be Tories. If we include in our estimate seven of the largest provincial towns (Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Edinbro',

Net result
of Fran-
chise Act.

Changes
under the
Seats Act.

Prospecti-
gain to
Radicalism

and Sheffield) it may be reckoned that whereas forty-one members, among whom are thirteen Tories, are now returned by eight of the largest constituencies in England, a hundred and two members, of whom not more than thirty are likely to be Tories, will be returned by these same towns in the future. No pretensions to infallibility are advanced for this calculation, but impartial critics will be disposed to allow that it is not very wide of the mark. The gain to Radicalism is enormous. It is a gain not only of numbers but of proportion. It is more even than this. It points to the augmentation of Radicalism in a ratio of geometrical as well as of arithmetical progression.

The power
of the
towns.

The great towns as they now are, constitute the source and centre of English political opinion. It is from them that Liberal legislation receives its initiative; it is the steady pressure exercised by them that guarantees the political progress of the country. To enlarge the representation of these places is to magnify their authority. Leeds with five and Birmingham with seven members will not be merely twice or three times as powerful as they are now. The area over which their political force will radiate will be more than proportionately

extended, and their political example will be looked to with an attention and followed with a fidelity that cannot be explained by the mere numerical gain they will acquire in the counsels of the nation. They will, in other words, have, as it has been often said in the past that London has, a prerogative vote, and their action will regulate that of scores of smaller constituencies.

But this is not all the Radical gain. We have at last got rid of the minority vote, which was an insidious device to cripple popular strength, to throw the balance of power into the hands of the Whigs, and to create dissensions amongst the majority. The minority vote has done the only useful work of which it was capable. It rendered a high-class organisation imperative, and was in reality the parent of the caucus. But its offspring will survive it. A perfectly finished machinery to secure popular representation has become the permanent condition of effective political strength.

The second feature in the measure is the creation of single-member districts. These cannot but serve still further to accentuate the democratic influence exercised by the large provincial capitals as well as by the metropolis itself. Prominent amongst the

results which the existence of these constituencies will yield is the reduction in the cost of elections. This will induce many Radicals who would not venture a contest on a larger scale to come forward. It will seem a less perilous, as it will certainly be a less costly, enterprise to fight a ward than to fight an entire borough. The member thus returned will be in closer connection with, and will be more directly amenable to, his constituents than is the case at present. If, therefore, the large towns show themselves on the whole Radical, we may be quite certain that the individual Radicals who represent them will be of a more emphatic and exacting kind than those with whom the House of Commons has, save in rare instances, made the acquaintance.

Probable
extinction
of
Whiggism.

There is yet another aspect in which the operation of the single-member constituencies must be regarded. Granted that in some cases this system will secure all that is practicable in the way of minority representation, and that it will give us an occasional member returned in the interests of villadom or plutocracy pure and simple, in others—and this will be the rule—it will remove the possibility which has hitherto existed of arranging, even where the majority of the voters may have been of

a decidedly Radical complexion, for the return of one Moderate in conjunction with one Radical. There will be no room for those convenient understandings, those amicable parliamentary bargains, under a *régime* of single-member districts, in which ultimately a majority that in the long run is likely to be Radical, is represented. Dual and multiple constituencies have always been the chosen opportunities of the armchair politician. But the buffers on which timid Liberalism has hitherto relied against advanced Liberalism will henceforth disappear. In every case, or almost every case, the buttons will be taken off the foils, and the duel will be confined to the real principals. In boroughs and in counties, in every single-member constituency throughout the kingdom, parties will become more highly organised and the struggle will be proportionately more severe. It has been said that, as a consequence of the Redistribution Act, the House of Commons will be transformed into an assembly in which the traditional lines of demarcation between two parties in the State may be intersected by such a multitude of minor distinctions and subdivisions as to be no longer recognisable, and that parliamentary majorities will only be procurable by a fortuitous com-

bination of heterogeneous groups. There is absolutely nothing to justify this prediction. We have to think not of what might be at Westminster, but of what will be in the constituencies, where the only division recognised is that into Liberals and Conservatives, Radicals and Tories. The Athenian legislator enacted that those who remained neutral during any civil disturbance should be punished. Neutrality recommends itself as little to the British elector in these days of universal household suffrage as it did to Solon, and the visionary figment of a third party rests upon no other foundation than the purely hypothetical leaning towards neutrality with which the average Englishman is absurdly credited.

Prospects
in the
counties.

For these reasons it is safe to assume that the sequel of the Redistribution Act must be, while emphasising its influence, to intensify the Liberalism or the Radicalism of the great towns of the United Kingdom. What is the prospect in the counties? That the Conservatives may be the masters of many of the single-member constituencies into which the counties will be divided no one doubts. On the other hand, the principle on which county representation is arranged, the allocation of certain towns to

certain districts as their centres and sponsors, will be of distinct advantage to Liberalism, which is likely to gain far more than Conservatism from this qualified fusion of the urban and rural elements of the English people. Add to this that in some purely rural districts, where the condition of the agricultural labourers is worst, it will not be found impossible to run a working man's candidate, who *ex hypothesi*, will be hostile to the vested interests and privileges of landlordism, and it is plain that even in the counties the chances of the Liberal party will have greatly improved.

But, it may be replied, the counties and the rural population will remain in the long run what they now are, the strongholds of Conservatism. In villages and hamlets matters move slowly. *Quieta non movere* is the motto engraved on the heart of the rustic, who is deaf to the allurements of the agitator and proof against the incitements of the demagogue. The church and the parson, the hall and the squire, are the natural and impregnable rallying places of Conservatism. May not sentiment be as powerful as argument, and shall we not find that the instincts of the English masses, especially when they are removed beyond the perilous

Position
of the
labourer
from the
Tory view.

and disturbing temptations of towns, are Conservative above all things ?

The answer. The obvious rejoinder is that, if such has been found to be the case to the present time, it is because the agricultural labourer has not been subjected to the conditions which can alone test his allegiance to Toryism ; because no alternatives have been offered him to the grooves in which his superiors have held it to be desirable he should move. In the future he will be brought within range of those quickening and revolutionary influences which the advance of knowledge, educational and political, will supply. At the same time he will be approached more directly and perhaps more effectually than this. What are called his instincts may for some time prove superior to his interests, and the appeals made to the latter may be rejected by the former. How long will it be before the citadel of Toryism, enshrined, as we are bidden to believe, in the bosom of every tiller of the soil, yields to the solicitation of Radicalism ? Or are we to believe that his attachment to the existing *régime*—an attachment that is partly an affair of sentiment, and partly of life-long subjection to parochial authority—will withstand the succession of shocks to which it will be exposed ?

It is easy to understand that the territorialists and their champions should fervently believe in the impossibility of change. Having reduced the occupants of the soil to a condition of comparative servility, and used the parliamentary votes of the farmers for their own purposes, why, they may ask, should they not be able to do the same with the labourer?

Admitting that the labourer is at present an unknown quantity, let us attempt to look a little ahead, and to appraise somewhat definitely the situation in which he will find himself. Here we have something else than mere conjecture by which to go. Mr. Broadhurst's Bill for the compulsory enfranchisement of leaseholders is about to be supplemented by a measure which Mr. Jesse Collings has in hand for the restitution of illegal enclosures. The object of this measure is to restore all commonlands, wastes, roadsides, and other enclosures and encroachments which have been made illegally and without the sanction of Parliament since 1800, and to provide that such lands be placed in trust of the local authorities of the districts in which they are found for the benefit of the labouring classes and other inhabitants of those districts. How many

Enfranchisement
of leaseholders.
Restitution
of commons.

private properties are there in the United Kingdom whose estates would be unaffected by legislation proceeding upon these lines? Yet Sir Charles Dilke, speaking at Aylesbury, avowed his belief that this Bill will pass. It may be that so cool-headed and clear-sighted a man, expressing himself with the knowledge and responsibility which the presidency of the Local Government Board gave to him, was wrong, and that the voters in rural districts have no wish to repossess themselves of those portions of the land of which they have been despoiled—that, in other words, they will be content to have a vote and not to use it. But, assuming Sir Charles Dilke to be right, there is further legislation of a kind which would lately have been deemed revolutionary that is inevitable.

Local government prospects.

Thus, unless the agricultural labourer, in conjunction with the artisan, who, it must be remembered, is to be emancipated in almost equal proportion with him, is to swell the force of reactionary Conservatism, it is absolutely certain that, before two or three years have passed, there will come into existence a scheme of county government, securing the establishment of rural municipalities throughout the country. This will be an

innovation second only in importance to the franchise itself. The exercise of the municipal vote which it will give the labourer will be an exceedingly useful and instructive discipline for the exercise of the political vote. When county administration has once been organised on a new basis, the cry for free education will be raised. It will, always supposing that the newly-created citizens are not prepared to remain indifferent to their lot, be only one of many demands for their improvement. One may confidently anticipate that the whole aspect of the agricultural question will undergo a change, and that instead of such measures as the Agricultural Holdings Act, legislation will, under the pressure of the new force applied to it, be introduced for the purpose of bringing the land into the best use for the nation. Thus far the agricultural labourer has been regarded by the political economists as a mere machine—an instrument to be used for the creation of wealth, deposited in the hands of the few; not as a human being whose comfort, health, and home are to be considered, and who has a claim to such benefits as were conferred by the Factory Acts upon the labourers in towns. If his welfare cannot be suffi-

Free
schools.
Land re-
form.

ciently protected without the taxation of property, then property will be taxed.

Socialist
legislation.

But it is needless now to attempt to define the measures that may be necessary for these ends. It is enough to indicate their general character. They sound the death-knell of the *laissez-faire* system ; and if the agricultural labourer is not strong enough to look after himself, to take the initiative in the social reforms prompted by a rational estimate of private interest, there is an organised body of politicians in this country who will at least do thus much for him. If it be said that this is communism, the answer is that it is not. If it be said that it is legislation of a socialist tendency, the impeachment may readily be admitted. Between such legislation and communism there is all the difference in the world. Communism means the reduction of everything to a dead level, the destruction of private adventure, the paralysis of private industry, the atrophy of private effort. The socialistic measures now contemplated would preserve in their normal vigour and freshness all the individual activities of English citizenship, and would do nothing more spoliatory than tax—if and in what degree necessary—aggregations of wealth for the good of the community.

That the working men of agricultural England will be solicited by the more advanced of their political leaders to move in this direction, and not to be satisfied till these claims have been conceded, is indisputable. Equally certain is it that the prospect thus opened to them, which, so far as votes can assure its accomplishment, it will be within their power to realise, will have powerful attractions for many of their number.

Attractions
of new
policy for
electorate.

What have the landed class to offer as an alternative? Territorial Toryism has thus far had as its main principle the instinct of preservation, and, above all, the protection for property. But Toryism of this kind is not only moribund, it is actually dead. It is as much a relic of the past as the star of the Order of the Garter presented by the late Lord Hertford to Lord Beaconsfield, and recently on view as a curiosity at a jeweller's in the Haymarket. As the Redistribution Act, by its almost uniform substitution of one-member districts for plural-member constituencies, will gradually result in the extinction of the Whigs, so it will announce the doom of the old-fashioned Conservatives. The name may remain, but it will signify the Tory democracy of Lord Randolph Churchill, which is Radicalism tricking itself

What do
the Tories
offer?

out in a fantastic dress, and not the Conservatism of Sir Robert Peel or even of Lord George Bentinck.

Obligations
of property.

There are other liabilities attaching to land which, under a democratic *régime*, led by competent and resolute chiefs, the possessors of land are likely to realise in the not remote future. The new Reform Act, complete in both parts, will enable, or will compel, Parliament to give something like the same prominence to the maxim that property has its obligations as it has given almost exclusively in the past to the familiar postulate that property has its rights. Conservatives and Radicals, Lord Salisbury as well as Mr. Chamberlain, may accept with equal readiness the principle thus formulated. But how about its application?

Cost of
housing
poor to be
thrown on
owners.

When the President of the Board of Trade wrote, as he did, in the *Fortnightly Review* for November, 1883, "The expense of making towns habitable for the toilers who dwell in them must be thrown on the land which their toil makes valuable without any effort on the part of its owners," was the corollary with which he followed the principle one that Lord Salisbury is likely to accept? Again, would not Lord Salisbury stigmatise as revolutionary the other purposes to which it will be strenuously at-

tempted to turn the democratic impetus imparted by the Reform Acts to the community? Let us glance at some of these. All land, as Radicals of the type of Mr. Chamberlain, Sir Charles Dilke, and Mr. Trevelyan would allow, should be held subject to the right of the community, as represented by the local authority, to expropriate the owner for any public purpose at a fair value. This fair value, as Mr. Chamberlain has repeatedly explained, is the price which a willing seller would obtain in the open market from a private purchaser, with no allowance for prospective value or compulsory sale. The proposal is one that would be legitimately resorted to in furtherance of all schemes of sanitary or general improvement, in the creation of public works or public buildings, in the provision of artisans' dwellings in towns, and of course in the provision of labourers' dwellings in the country, with a sufficient minimum of land attached to them.

But there are other burdens than these which the land will hereafter have to bear. They may be placed under two heads. In the first place, a more equitable taxation in connection with the revision of the death duties; secondly, liability to full taxation on value in the case of vacant ground in towns.

Other obligations of landlords. More equitable taxation.

As matters are, this ground, frequently of enormous present value, and held for a prospective rise, is taxed on its value for agricultural purposes. But it is never destined for these. It is destined only for building. As such it would be bought; the price which as such it would command is the criterion of its worth, and should therefore fix the standard of its rating. Finally, the question of rating and taxation cannot be raised in the new Parliament without the necessity forcing itself upon the minds of elected and electors of making the rateable value of all land and houses a self-acting test of real value. Once this was done, the local authority would acquire the right of at any time purchasing property at its rateable value. It would of necessity be an antecedent condition that the rating of the United Kingdom must undergo a revision. The rateable value is now nearly always considerably under the rental value. Provided only it were raised uniformly, there could be no unfairness in or objection to raising it; and a full, fair value having been arrived at—all property being, in other words, docketed with its legitimate market price—there would be indicated a proper figure for purposes both of taxation and expropriation. The rating of

mansions and parks would be immediately affected by the operation of this scheme, seeing that the sum on which the owners would have to pay rates would be that for which they were willing to sell.

Upon such a legislative cycle as that described in the foregoing pages it would seem probable that we are shortly about to enter. The Reform Act of 1884-5, by creating a new electorate, will not perhaps revolutionise, but will produce many modifications in the *personnel* of Parliament. There will be alike at Westminster and in the country a fresh legislative machinery. Members of the House of Commons, being chosen for the most part by wards or districts, will be brought more closely into contact with voters, and will be compelled to have a surer and more constant touch of those whom they represent. The goal towards which the advance will probably be made at an accelerated pace, is that in the direction of which the legislation of the last quarter of a century has been tending—the intervention, in other words, of the State on behalf of the weak against the strong, in the interests of labour against capital, of want and suffering against luxury and ease. We are sometimes told that another swing of the pendulum will shortly be witnessed, and that a reaction against

Changes in
the near
future.
Accelera-
tion of
legislation.

the interference of Government in the relations of daily life between classes of the community will set in. Where are the signs of it? They are not to be found in the reception given to those public men who have spoken in the sense in which these remarks have been written, or in the welcome, to judge not only from the working men's papers, but from the daily press, to a measure like that for the restitution of illegal enclosures. Those whom Gambetta styled the *nouvelles couches sociales* may possibly assimilate themselves to their superiors, may acquire their prejudices, look at things from their point of view, mechanically subordinate themselves to their interests, and be content to remain the instruments of their effacement. But if like effects are generated by like causes, if there is any dynamic force in legislation, if the law of progress is not an imposture and the desire of self-improvement an unreality, the change of policy following the Reform Acts cannot fail to be yet more remarkable than the reduction of the numerical influence of Conservatism. This may mean a peaceful, but it will none the less mean a genuine revolution. The Conservatives may periodically return to office, but they will have place and not power. They may profit by the blunders of

their opponents, or they may strengthen themselves by outbidding them ; but unless the classes now enfranchised reveal an amount of Conservative immobility and obstruction to all change hitherto unsuspected, and unless they succeed in communicating the influence of these qualities to the remainder of the country, how is the onward movement to be arrested ?

“Thank heavens !” some one may still be found to exclaim, “we have a House of Lords.” For the moment, indeed, the agitation against the House of Lords is at an end, but on what terms is it at an end, and what does its cessation prognosticate ? So far from recognising in it any omen of hope, the Tories would be wise to see in it reason for discouragement. No one now menaces the peers with legislative disestablishment, because they have acquiesced in the national will. So long as they are prepared on future occasions to reduce themselves to a nullity whenever it is desired for them to do so, no one will care to attack them. But it is quite certain that with the House of Commons growing more democratic and more in sympathy with the people every year, the interference of the Lords—the hostile action, in other words, of a Chamber which possesses

The House
of Lords.

a permanent anti-popular majority—will not be tolerated with the same equanimity as heretofore. The country, indeed, would not allow any Government possessing its confidence to suffer such a thing, and the condition on which alike ministries and the hereditary and aristocratic branches of the legislature exist, will be that the latter abstains from asserting itself. Nor, indeed, is it to be supposed that the Lords will fail to profit by experience. Looking at what has taken place already in the immediate past, and what may be expected to take place in the not remote future, the Lords will scarcely be encouraged to snatch another barren triumph, and for the sake of an empty victory to sacrifice the reality of everything for which they have fought.

II.

MACHINERY.

EXCEPTIONS are sometimes taken to the writings and speeches of Radicals on the ground that they are wanting in the constructive element, and that while predicting the triumph of Radicalism, they do not clearly indicate the measures by, and the lines on, which victory is to be won. Such a defect, fortunately, admits of an easy remedy, and the object of the present series of papers is to state and examine in detail a comprehensive scheme of legislative action upon which the energies of Radicals may be concentrated, and which may form a rallying ground for the party. The main features of the programme will be those enumerated by Mr. Chamberlain several years ago in the *Fortnightly Review*, under the heads of "Free Church," "Free Schools," "Free Land," and "Free Labour." In the first instance it may

Constructive Radicalism. The machinery necessary to found a policy.

be well to devote a few pages to specifying the changes in our political machinery which are the essential conditions of fulfilling a Radical Programme. If they are not all to be looked for immediately, their realisation within a reasonable time is as certain as it is necessary. The rapidity with which the political transformation wrought by the Reform Acts came about is the best augury for the success of other Radical proposals. No thoughtful person has ever imagined that, with an unreformed Parliament, advanced Liberals could witness the execution of their political purposes. The modifications still to be desired are not conceived in any spirit of devotion to a theoretically perfect legislature. They are wanted not as steps in the direction of constitutional symmetry, but as practical improvements which will pave the way to practical results. Parliamentary reform has no value or meaning except as a preliminary of political action, and the reforms which Mr. Chamberlain delineated in his speech at the Bright anniversary, and afterwards in his address to the Cobden Club, are to be advocated, as they have been denounced, because they are calculated to influence the whole current of legislation for some years to come. If they were

not likely to have that effect they would be valueless.

The leverage which the Reform Acts will place in the hands of the Democratic leaders will be immense, and will make them almost immediately the controlling party in the State; but before we have a political machinery which will give effect to the wishes of the majority, other important innovations must be accomplished. Manhood suffrage, equal electoral districts, and the payment of members, are each of them in their turn indispensable. That ultimately every male adult in the United Kingdom will receive a parliamentary vote no one doubts. It is as certain as was the extension of household franchise to counties. It is not a question of purely speculative interest, such as the substitution of a republican for a monarchical form of Government, or even the disestablishment and disendowment of the State Church. Granted that this is so, many persons will feel tempted to say, let the evil day be deferred as long as possible. When Canning was told that sooner or later there must be war, he replied, "Then let it be later." But this principle of postponement does not apply in the case of contingencies which cannot in themselves be

Three indispensable conditions. Objections anticipated.

pronounced necessary evils. If it could be shown that there was something in our present social or political state which invested manhood suffrage with exceptional terrors, and which constituted a weighty reason against raising the subject now, the force of the argument in favour of delay might readily be admitted. But no one pretends that the universal diffusion of the electoral privilege or right is more dangerous to-day than it will be five, ten, or twenty years hence; and once this step is taken, we shall at least have the satisfaction of knowing that we have got to the rock. When Mr. Disraeli brought forward his Reform Bill in 1867, he protested that, short of household suffrage, there was no logical or intelligible resting-place. He was not original. He simply adopted a view which Mr. Bright had always urged. Precisely the same thing may be said of manhood suffrage. It is the goal whither events are hastening; and there is no reason to suppose that, if it be reached soon, it will portend more of danger and disturbance than if we travel in its direction by long stages and at a tardy pace. A pause must necessarily be made after the exacting struggle and the great advance of the last two sessions, but when once it is seen that the step now

taken is safe, there will be plenty of people, even amongst those who do not call themselves Radicals, who will be willing to go farther, in order to make "the bounds of freedom wider still."

Manhood suffrage, be it remembered, is a political arrangement as to the working of which we do not lack the data of practical experience. It has been in force for years among Englishmen, our fellow-subjects, in that Greater Britain which lies beyond seas. It is acclimatised not only in France, Germany, Italy, Greece, and, with certain limitations, in Austria, but in Canada and in our Australasian colonies. It has not been followed in any of our dependencies by the grievous abuses which theoretical pessimists declare are inevitable from it. On the contrary, the sentiment of order is notoriously as strong in our Canadian and Australasian dominions as in any portion of the Empire. The political condition of France may be cited as an argument against manhood suffrage, and would certainly seem *primâ facie* to discredit it; but let us look at this matter a little more closely. What is the true cause of the instability of France? It arises not from the circumstance that every male of mature years has a vote, but from the deplorable

lack of political education in individuals; not, in other words, from the multitude of electors, but from the dearth of political training. A system of personal rule, with all its attendant corruptions and enfeeblements, which dominated France for more than twenty years, is an evil preparation for popular government and the unrestricted exercise of political right. The advocates of manhood suffrage, however, must expect to be confronted with an objection which they will be told is not derived from foreign soil, but is indigenous to this country. Manhood suffrage in England, they will be assured, means the hopeless deterioration of the electorate. Once admit this charge, and a residuum worse even than that which Mr. Bright described eighteen years ago will be enfranchised. Now what are the grounds on which this apprehension rests?

In large towns there is already a near approach to manhood suffrage.

There are some large provincial towns in England where manhood suffrage may be said practically to exist already. In Birmingham, Sheffield, and other cities it is the rule for families among the working classes to live not in lodgings but in separate houses. This is not the case in London, and the influence which the change now contemplated would have in the metropolis would unquestionably be far greater than it

would exercise elsewhere. But is there any reason for saying, or believing, that either in London or in any other considerable centre of population, manhood suffrage would introduce to the constitution voters who would, on the whole, compare unfavourably with those now on the register? Who are the men that are at present excluded from the suffrage? The answer is that they are, for the most part, the younger and more intelligent members of the community—the men who have grown up under the operation of educational reforms of the last fifteen years, and who illustrate, it is natural to believe, some of their quickening power. So far from the enfranchisement of the adult males of the United Kingdom affecting the constituencies for the worse, the probability, or the certainty, is that they would introduce into them a leaven of mental and moral improvement.

What is true of manhood suffrage is true also of equal electoral districts. Whether we like or dislike the arrangement, we are rapidly approaching more closely to it. It is the principle of the Redistribution Act, and has been approximately carried out by the Commissioners in the division of towns and counties. That improvements may be made is

Equal electoral districts; the principle of the Redistribution Act.

unquestionable, but for the first time in the history of representation an effort, attended with a large degree of success, has been made to equalise the value of votes by equalising the voting areas. The Tories take credit for this result. As a matter of fact, it is the outcome of Mr. Chamberlain's speech at Birmingham on the occasion of the Bright celebration, 1883. He then said, "It is no use to increase the number of voters if you minimise the political influence which the political vote confers. It is no use to put a million in the place of 100,000 if the million has no greater powers than the 100,000 had before."

Arrangements for redistribution have followed lines suggested in these papers.

The arrangements for redistribution, including the abolition of the minority vote, have mainly followed the lines suggested in the original article on the machinery of the Radical Programme contained in the *Fortnightly Review* for August, 1883. It was then written, "the relative merits of the principle of *scrutin de liste* and of *scrutin d'arrondissement*, applied to the great English constituencies, may still be an open question. The ground on which M. Gambetta declared the former to be absolutely imperative for France was, that otherwise it was, and must remain, impossible to prevent an

importance and prominence being accorded to local interests and their representatives, which would prevent men of the highest mark and capacity from finding their way into the Legislature. But the advance which *scrutin d'arrondissement*, if adopted under a scheme of redistribution, would signalise, must be so great as to be accepted with satisfaction. An idea may be readily formed of its operation. Take the case of a town with a population of 400,000. That would be entitled to eight members. The method of *scrutin de liste* would make each one of its representatives a member not for a section of the constituency, but for the whole constituency. *Scrutin d'arrondissement* would assign a representative apiece to the eight wards into which the whole constituency would be divided. There is much to be said in favour of the latter arrangement, and its special adaptabilities to English requirements are undoubted. One general condition must steadily be borne in mind and acted upon. An equitable system of parliamentary representation is absolutely inconsistent with the minority vote, and no sound Radical can acquiesce in such a device for minimising, and it may be for nullifying altogether, the power of the majority."

Payment of
members.

It may not be generally known that the first practical proposal brought forward in the House of Commons for the payment of members proceeded from the grandfather of the present Duke of Marlborough. In 1830 the then Lord Blandford, who represented Woodstock, introduced a Reform Bill in accordance with the tenor of an abstract resolution in favour of reform which the House of Commons had previously negatived. He proposed not only to transfer the franchises from decayed or corrupt boroughs to large unrepresented towns, to confer the franchise on all payers of scot and lot, all copyholders and leaseholders, but to pay county members at the rate of £4 and borough members at the rate of £2 a day. It is stated in a late number of the *Quarterly Review* that Mr. Chamberlain has declared himself in favour of a proposal similar to that advocated by the sixth Duke of Marlborough, and one which adds to the expenditure of the country £658,000,—“an amount exceeding the whole cost of Royalty, pensions, annuities, and every charge included.” Nothing is more easy than to deal with your opponent when you are able to state his case in your own terms. As a matter of fact, Mr. Chamberlain proposes to do nothing of the sort. What-

The “Quarterly Review” on Mr. Chamberlain.

ever sum may be paid to the representatives of the people, it would be a charge not, as the *Quarterly* reviewer finds it convenient to assume, upon the Imperial exchequer, but upon the constituencies. As for the parliamentary stipend specified by the reviewer, it is needless to say that it is purely arbitrary, and that the sum is selected with a view to prejudice Mr. Chamberlain's project. It would introduce no new principle into the House of Commons. Pepys writes in his diary, under the date of March 30, 1668: "At dinner we had a great deal of good discourse about Parliament. All concluded that the bane of the Parliament hath been the leaving off the old custom of the places allowing wages to those that serve them in Parliament, by which they chose men that understood their business and would attend to it, and they could expect an account from, which now they cannot, and so the Parliament has become a company of men unable to give account for the interest of the place they serve for." The last payment of wages to members of the House of Commons took place in 1681, when Thomas King, after having given due notice to the Corporation of Harwich, obtained from the Lord Chancellor a writ *de expensis burgensium levandi*. In

The ancient custom.

his Life of Lord Chancellor Nottingham, Lord Campbell cites this case, and even declares that the writ might still be claimed without a new enactment to revive the old usage. When, therefore, Mr. Peter Taylor moved fifteen years ago for leave to introduce a bill "to restore the ancient constitutional practice of payment of members," the language in which he described his measure was strictly accurate.

The principle of payment adopted in municipal affairs.

The payment of members may be defended by many kinds of analogy. All corporations in the present day have power to pay their mayors. Abroad the custom is not confined, as the *Quarterly* reviewer assumes, to the United States. Mr. Chamberlain has borrowed, we are told, this expedient from America, where, "when it was first instituted, there was no wealthy or idle class able and willing to give up their time for nothing." The fairness and force of this sentence are on a par with its grammar; the fact, of course, is discreetly ignored that in France and in other countries where the non-existence of a wealthy and idle class cannot be pleaded, the practice of payment prevails. The objections with which this plan is generally met are familiar. It would, we are told, if adopted, entirely

revolutionise the *personnel* of the House of Commons. There would be fewer fine gentlemen, and more of those who have no pretensions to be considered fine gentlemen. The House itself would be disgraced by frequent explosions of unmannerly behaviour, and by scenes and incidents of the most discreditable kind. Moreover, it would tend towards the creation of a class of men whose absence is conventionally regarded as a boon—that of the professional politician, and of members who would be perpetually endeavouring to find an opportunity for doing some job in the interests of their constituency, which would be also their paymaster.

These arguments may be looked into a little more closely. When it is said that payment of the people's representatives would vulgarise the people's House and would deteriorate its social qualities, one is tempted to ask whether such experience as might be cited on the point justifies the apprehension. For instance, would a comparison between the social demeanour of Earl Percy and Viscount Folkestone on the one hand, and of Mr. Burt and Mr. Broadhurst on the other, in the discharge of their parliamentary duties, be to the advantage of the former? If it is asserted that the scheme would make the assembly

Parliamentary behaviour, as connected with payment of members.

less of an ornamental lounge than it now is, and would bring into it, on an increased scale, an order of representatives who would take a view of their functions very different from that taken by their superiors, the impeachment may be readily admitted, and it may be replied that this is exactly what is wanted. The men who would be sent to St. Stephens would be men whom the majority of the constituencies trusted, and who came there to do the people's work. Their presence would have the effect of liberalising and bracing the assembly. They would, in a word, be the sort of legislators from whom measures that would secure the steady assertion of the popular influence in all matters of government would be forthcoming. Again, when it is affirmed that the plan would give us more professional politicians than we now have, the remark which suggests itself is, that this is exactly what is required. Politics, as a matter of fact, are a profession already, and if lawyers, doctors, and professional men generally are paid, why not politicians? Moreover, when it was once understood that business aptitudes were required in those who addressed themselves to the business of public affairs, an effectual protest would be made against the habit of

sending to the House of Commons men who regarded politics as a pastime; who, whether they are Liberals or Conservatives, are equally *dilettanti*, and who illustrate in the Legislature the indolence and languor of polite society.

To return for a moment to the allegation that the payment of members, and the confusion of commerce and politics which it would involve, must vitiate the purity of the parliamentary atmosphere, and must degrade the standard of public life. The present House of Commons might, without injustice, be described as chiefly composed of commercial interests. The landed interest has 267 members, the trading, commercial, and manufacturing interest 165, the railway interest 113, the banking interest 25, the liquor interest 18, and so forth. It is universally recognised that the representative of each of these interests will do what he can to advance them upon every opportunity. An illustration of this may be seen in what occurred in connection with the Hull and Barnsley Railway. The project, in which a large capital had been embarked, and which was of extreme importance to many thousands of people, involved serious competition with the North-Eastern Railway. Sir Joseph Pease, the

Composition of
House of
Commons
of 1880.

very type and model of a respectable and high-principled member of the House of Commons, did not attempt to disguise the fact that he resisted the measure in the interest of the North-Eastern Railway. With these facts before him, will any one seriously pretend that paid members of Parliament would be more accessible to commercial or mercenary motives than those who are the representatives of interest first and of their constituents afterwards? We have, indeed, at the present moment what is quite as much a house of interests as a House of Commons.

Reason why
payment of
members is
resisted.

The truth is, that the foregoing reforms are denounced and opposed, not from any sincere solicitude for the dignity of Parliament or the integrity of our public life, but from an apprehension that, once effected, they would secure their object. This object is legislation in accordance with the desires and wants of the majority in the constituencies. Those who compose that majority derive no benefit from the monopolies and the privileges which have devoted champions in our existing parliamentary system. It is perceived, however, that their power in influencing the House of Commons is on the increase, and therefore the cry is raised that a certain number of politicians aim at the substitution of paid

delegates for members of an Imperial House of Commons.

There is little ground for the belief that the new electorate will of its own motion take the initiative in demanding the changes now enumerated. The English masses are nearly impervious to political ideas. This is well for those who are concerned to impede and delay popular progress, for, were it otherwise, we might have advanced at a more rapid rate, and many ancient landmarks still left to us might have disappeared. The people know vaguely what they want. It is for the people's leaders to indicate to them the precise methods and instruments by which their wishes may be realised. There was never a time when instruction was more sorely needed on all these topics. Legislation swayed by considerations of class interests has been the habit in this country because the great bulk of the people have not had the power of communicating their will to Parliament. This is the power which has now been entrusted to them, and the creation of the machinery that has been briefly sketched in the foregoing pages, and that can alone suffice to do what is wanted, must be the starting-point in the new programme of the Radical party.

The task of
leaders.

III.

MEASURES.

The commonplace
objection
that reform
is un-
English.

By a certain order of political controversialists it seems to be thought a conclusive objection to any scheme of reform which may be brought forward to say that it is un-English. That epithet is supposed to carry all before it. There is, or there ought to be, no resisting the accumulated power of the traditions of eight hundred years. Are not Englishmen, it is indignantly asked, as tenacious of the national institutions which have sprung up during this period as they are of their nationality itself? Advanced Liberals, when they sketch in outline the modifications which appear to them desirable in our existing arrangements, social and political, are solemnly assured that they are contending against a force as inexorable as destiny. To-day is the creature of yesterday, as to-morrow will, in its turn, be

the child of to-day. Governments rise and fall, parties triumph and are defeated, but the fidelity of the English people to the spirit of the Constitution remains unalterable. This is the conventional view. By the way of answer, it will be enough to say, that never yet, from the days of the first Reform Bill down to those of the Irish Land Act of 1881, was any drastic measure of reform introduced which was not accused by its opponents of violating that sacred essence—the spirit of the Constitution. But not only is the term “unconstitutional” purely arbitrary in its application—expressive of nothing more than of the temper, the prejudice, the associations of the individual using it; there is really nothing to show that the British constitution commands the inalienable respect of those in whose hearts its foundations are said to be laid.

Englishmen, one is told, though they go beyond seas and settle in remote countries, remain just as much Britons after as before their exodus, and are, therefore, *ex hypothesi*, as deeply devoted to everything that is an integral part of the Constitution. A very little examination will suffice to show that this is an entire fallacy. Englishmen may, indeed, carry their patriotism and their love of fatherland from

English-
men
abroad.

the British Isle to the Antipodes, and generally to the uttermost parts of the earth; but do these qualities imply an unalterable attachment to each particular feature of that amalgam of venerable anomalies known as the Constitution of this realm? They do nothing of the sort. Englishmen, whatever climate they adopt, may never forfeit their national character. It is an instructive circumstance that they never make any attempt to perpetuate their national institutions. With the single exception that the colonies profess their loyalty to the Throne and acknowledge the supremacy of the British Sovereign, the contrast between the political *régime* of the colonies and Great Britain is complete. The opinion of foreign countries upon ourselves and our doings has been described as an anticipation of the verdict of posterity. By a parity of reasoning the experience of vast communities of Englishmen, governing themselves at a distance of thousands of miles from the capital of the British Empire, must be admitted to be a possible forecast of the contingencies which may be actually realised at home.

Radical
legislation
in the
colonies.

There is scarcely an organic change which has found a place in the programme of advanced Liberalism that has not been accepted, and volun-

tarily introduced, by the multitudes of Englishmen who during the last century have found homes for themselves at the Antipodes and across the Atlantic. Loyalty to the Throne as an historic and sentimental force they may have transplanted, while they live under colonial governors, who are the reflection of the regal power at home, and who exist upon the condition that they do not interfere in the free government of the dependencies whose ornamental figure-heads they are. But our colonists have not transplanted the Established Church, which, we are sometimes assured, is as national as the monarchy itself, nor have they transplanted the hereditary aristocracy, which, in the language of the orthodox, is the essential buttress of monarchy.

Speaking at Birmingham in June, 1876, after his first return to Parliament, Mr. Chamberlain said of The United States and Australia. the objects aimed at by Radicalism, "There is nothing in them which has not its counterpart at the present moment in those homes of the English people across the seas, the United States of America, and the colonies of the Australian seas. When," he continued, "an Englishman seeks a more prosperous and brighter future in the lands which are destined to hand down to coming ages the glories of the Anglo-

Saxon race and the fame of British enterprise and daring, he seems naturally to leave behind him the relics of all our ancient superstition and feudalism ; and, therefore, if our opponents are right, these countries ought to be the opprobrium of our nation and the disgrace of civilisation. You know that these are lands where freedom loves to dwell, and where happiness, material prosperity, comfort, and intelligence are more equally diffused than in any other quarter of the globe. Meanwhile, England is said to be the paradise of the rich. We have to take care that it be not suffered to become the purgatory of the poor." The sentiment embodied in these words points a political and an historic moral which ought not to be missed. The colonies are loyal ; that is, they are thoroughly English. How comes it, then, that they have not reproduced those institutions which are conventionally regarded as not only ideally suitable, but absolutely indispensable, to the English character ? The reason must be that no such necessary relation between the character and the institutions exists, and the simple circumstance that British subjects living under what is practically a democracy—with manhood suffrage, without a religious establishment, without a second

Chamber composed of titular nobles—is a conclusive proof that neither of these conditions is essential to the development of qualities that are reputed pre-eminently English.

It is, therefore, desirable to look facts plainly in the face, and, stripping them of all overgrowth of traditional sentiment, to see exactly how we stand.

Attitude of
Radicals
towards the
monarchy.

First, take the case of the monarchy. The attitude of the great majority of Englishmen towards it, and certainly of all Radicals, is the same as that of the English colonists generally. There is no reformer, however advanced, into whose practical purpose it enters to overthrow the Throne, any more than it does to restore the Heptarchy. The emotion of loyalty, if it were closely analyzed, would be found to consist in equal parts of respect for a traditionary principle and for a blameless sovereign. The politician who would talk of leading an attack upon the Crown at the present time would be rightly spoken of as impetuous and rash. On the other hand, it may be said that if the monarchy were proved to be the cause of real political mischief, to minimise or to endanger the freedom of popular government, no Radical, and probably no large class of Englishmen, would exercise themselves to retain it. It would be

impossible to rally either Liberals or the English public round an institution that did not work harmoniously with the democratic forces of the country. The Crown, therefore, is likely to remain undisturbed for a period which the practical politician need not take account of. The utmost that can be said against it is that it occasionally operates in a manner favourable to the opponents of political reform, and that, as it promotes a good deal of sycophancy and snobbery, its social influence is of questionable value. Lord Sherbrooke was unable to substantiate his assertion that the Queen had formerly asked a Liberal Cabinet to introduce a Bill proclaiming her Empress of India, and that the request had been refused. But it can scarcely fail to happen that a Sovereign concerned in perpetuating and increasing the pomp and circumstance of his or her office should, from time to time, make suggestions to Ministers which it is not practicable to follow, and should indulge a tendency to control the affairs of State which is inconsistent with the free play of our popular institutions.

The stability of the Throne depends largely on its occupant.

But of these things no serious account need be taken. The welfare and duration of the Throne will always be in the hands of the occupant of the

Throne. The expense of monarchy cannot in a great and opulent country be alleged as an argument against it. "Speaking at Manchester in April, 1871, Mr. Disraeli declared that "Of all forms of government monarchy was—for," he said, "I will use the vile epithet—the most cheap." One thing, indeed, in the interests of the Throne is earnestly to be deprecated—an imperial and especially a military policy undertaken at the royal instance and wish. For instance, had England proclaimed war seven years ago against Russia, and sustained, as it is at least possible she might have done, a grave reverse, it is conceivable that a state of feeling might have been produced in this country not merely hostile, but disastrous, to the existence of the Throne. The monarchy, it may at once be said, could not hope to survive the results of a great European struggle in which our army should be unsuccessful, and which should be understood to have been entered upon at the express wish of the Court. Short of this, however, and so long as the functions of royalty are recognised as being ornamental and consultative, the Throne has nothing to fear from Radicalism. Radicals have something else to do than to break butterflies on wheels.

The Estab-
lished
Church.

The Established Church is regarded by Radicals in a very different light. The monarchical sentiment, let it be allowed, shows itself in the colonies in the attachment of the colonists to the sovereign. No one has ever yet discovered the signs of any similar affection in any of our colonial dependencies for the theory and practice of a religious establishment. The Anglican Church has its bishops at the Antipodes, as it has on the European and on the American continents; but the idea of giving them the official position which they enjoy in England has never seriously suggested itself. That is, as it always has been, a peculiarity limited to Great Britain. The explanation is obvious. That the State Church has rendered in past time much national service no one denies. The Roman Catholic Church accomplished in its day a great mission. Would any one therefore argue that it was desirable to establish this Church in any one of our colonies? With what may be called the religious case against the Establishment we are not now concerned. The only case we care to recognise against it is the social and political.

Support
given by the
Church to
Toryism.

It has often been remarked that Conservatism stands in less need of organization than Liberalism, because it possesses a rallying centre in the chief

institutions and interests of the country. Of these none has lent more effectual aid to Conservatism than the Establishment. The fundamental doctrine and uniform aim of Conservatism are the preservation of class privilege. The Church is an organization of privilege, and the alliance between parson and publican, Bible and beer, which is always talked about at the period of a general election, is something more than a phrase, and is not merely the alliterative invention of the malignant Radical. The two orders of men, parsons and publicans, stand upon the same political level. They only quarrel when one complains that he is deprived of his due share of patrons and customers by the other. Clergy and licensed victuallers have alike a large vested interest to defend. In the case of the former this interest is social as well as political. So long as there exists in England a priestly caste deriving its title and emoluments from the State, and, as a consequence enjoying precedence over all other ministers of religion, it is impossible that the latter should not be placed at a disadvantage, or that the former should not presume upon their position to a degree inconsistent with the well-being of the community, and especially of the poorer and humbler section of it.

A political
quadrila-
teral.

In the majority of parishes the landed proprietors of the district, the clergyman, the farmers, and the publicans, constitute a political quadrilateral, which is the main obstacle in the path of all social improvement. They differ amongst themselves upon many minor matters, and, it may be, live together habitually in a state of mutual distrust and disaffection. But when the period arrives for the householders of the neighbourhood to choose between a representative who is in favour of, and one who is opposed to, social reform, they make common cause and unite their efforts to return the Conservative candidate.

Unhappy
position of
Liberal
clergymen.

It may be readily admitted that there are exceptions to this rule. There are many clergymen of the Establishment who sympathize with the mass of their parishioners in preference to the squire or the publican, who do not shrink from taking the initiative in the formation of Board Schools, when local conditions prescribe the step, through a fear lest they should impair their own ascendancy in educational matters on the one hand, or incur the displeasure of the resident or non-resident territorial magnate on the other. But such conduct as this on the part of the Anglican clergy is not only unusual, it is resented by the representatives of privi-

lege, who see in them men who ought to be their natural allies. The parson who dares to traverse the decrees, or to run counter to the wishes, of his squire, speedily incurs disfavour, and becomes the victim of a species of social ostracism.

If the tie which binds the Church to the State were severed, is it not clear that the better sort of clergy would find themselves in a position far less invidious, and far better calculated to enable them to give effect to their humanitarian views? It is no secret that a few at least of the clergy themselves regret the position in which they are placed by the Legislature, and deplore the fact that their social status and obligations minimise their opportunities of moral and spiritual usefulness. Once leave the Anglican clergy free as the Nonconformist clergy are free, and the baneful effect which they exercise in a variety of political questions will disappear. The clergy of a disestablished Church might be confidently expected to help rather than to retard the cause of State education, not to think it a part of their professional duty to protest against every step taken in the direction of religious equality, or to memorialize Parliament with a view to defeat the measures giving effect to these principles.

Advantage
to the
clergy of
disestablishment.

Religious
equality not
established.

It is sometimes alleged that religious equality has been completely established in this realm. Were this so, Mr. Bradlaugh would not have been excluded for six years from the House of Commons. Moreover, though tests have been abolished, and Nonconformity is no bar to promotion and success in any department of professional life, it is in the nature of things impossible that, so long as the Establishment exists, there should be anything like complete religious liberty. What Radicals dislike and condemn on principle is the arbitrary selection by the State of a single religious community, and the investiture of its officers with exceptional dignity and emoluments. The Church of England was made by Parliament, and in the opinion of many thinking men who are not Radicals, scarcely even Liberals, the time has come when Parliament may reasonably be asked to unmake it. Because some of the State clergy are distinguished by an admirable spirit of liberality and justice, and are better than their cloth, is that an argument in favour of retaining their cloth as a State uniform? No amount of patchwork reforms, no desire, however earnest, on the part of the clergy themselves to treat their Nonconformist brethren with respect,

MEASURES.

can possibly crown the edifice of religious equality while there is a religion endowed and organized by the State.

Nor is the pecuniary question unimportant. It is impossible accurately to fix the revenues of the Established Church. They amount to between five and ten millions a year. Of this sum a large proportion would be available for purposes of national usefulness : for instance, for the endowment of education, a subject on which something will presently be said. Large as are the sums to be dealt with, the task does not present any particular difficulty. The precedent of the Irish Church would naturally be followed in some of its general aspects, and avoided in some of its special consequences. Thus it would be necessary to beware, lest after having disendowed the Church, there should be handed over to her such a sum, and upon such conditions, that it would practically be equivalent to a re-endowment. The stale cry of confiscation would of course once more be raised. If there was a living donor he might fairly claim that any property with which he had presented the Church should revert to him. But failing this, and without saying anything of the manner in which the property was for the most part derived by

The revenues of the Church. How to deal with them.

its original possessors, to whom else can it go but to the State? If all existing interests were compensated, and endowments given within a certain limit of time were to be exempted from the operation of the Act, no injustice would be done. It is certain that the Church of England will, some day or other, cease as an establishment to exist. The probability is that the events now foreshadowed will take place much more speedily than is generally supposed. In 1866 few people would have predicted that the Church of Ireland was *in articulo mortis*. The question of disestablishment in England will be no sooner actively raised than we shall have come within a measurable distance of realising it. This is one of those cases in which "the half is more than the whole." It is likely enough that disestablishment may be delayed a few years, but when it does arrive it will be with a rush.

Radicals
and the
House of
Lords.

Before the specific legislation to which Radicalism is pledged in the immediate future is surveyed, a few words may appropriately be devoted to the position and prospects of the House of Lords. The last thing which any Radical would desire, or would dream of doing, is to reform that Chamber in any way. Its defects are inseparable from its

existence. It does not indeed materially affect the course of legislation ; it may postpone the passing of important measures, but it does no more. It is a source of vexation and impatience to every earnest reformer ; it is not, and it can never be, a permanent obstacle in the way of reform. A Second Chamber, composed as the House of Lords is composed, must necessarily be Conservative. Lord Redesdale is the true type of the Parliamentary peer. That everything is for the best in this best possible of all constitutions, that there is no subject in or department of our national life which admits of reform or of alteration, except for the worse, is the fixed belief of Conservative nobles fashioned after the pattern of Lord Redesdale. When Plato is discussing whether change is possible to the gods, he remarks that as all change implies a variation of quality, and as the gods are already perfect, it must in their instance imply deterioration. Absolute immutability, he concludes, must therefore be a divine attribute. Lord Redesdale would argue about our institutions in a similar way. To touch them, or, in the cant of the time, to reform them, must be to vitiate and degrade them. One may afford to regard with equanimity these displays of

self-complacent stolidity. The House of Lords would almost, indeed, seem to exist for the special purpose of reducing Conservatism to an absurdity, and the utmost which the advanced Radical could wish is that it might place itself in serious collision with the House of Commons. Radicalism has everything to hope and nothing to fear from the issue of such a struggle. But the Lords are too wise in their generation to do anything of the sort. They protest first and they register afterwards. Sometimes, by way of asserting themselves, they throw out a measure or two of minor importance, or mar great measures by introducing vexatious conditions, as in the case of the medical relief clause in the Franchise Act. The summary way in which they treated Mr. Anderson's measure for the prevention of cruelty to animals was suggestive and characteristic. It had passed the House of Commons by an overwhelming majority; it reflected the public opinion of the country; it embodied what may be called the average morality of the day upon the subject; and it is significant that some of those newspapers which do not usually condemn the pastimes of polite society were vehement in their denunciations of pigeon-shooting as a sport. But

Small assertions of dignity and power.

the House of Lords, as if resolved to show that it was indifferent to these considerations, and that it lacked all sympathy with popular feeling, negatived the Bill by nearly a two to one majority.

The Irish Registration and the Scotch Local Government Bills received the happy dispatch at the hands of the peers because, as Lord Salisbury put it, it was high time to show the country that their lordships were not a mere court of registration. If they are not this, what are they? If they are not willing to acquiesce in these functions, what do they themselves think will be their future? Recollect, it is not the Radicals who tell the Lords that they exist in a parliamentary sense only to confirm the votes of the Commons; it is the Lords who, by loudly protesting against that view of their duties, unnecessarily bring the truth home to the public. If the hereditary legislators are well advised, they will say as little as possible about the exact position and influence to which they consider themselves entitled in the government of the United Kingdom. They will order their movements discreetly, and maintaining their reputation for ability in debate, sagacity, moderation, eloquence, learning, knowledge of diplomatic affairs, courtly conduct,

Illustrations. Small bills thrown out.

and other excellent qualities, will not expose themselves to any unnecessary attack.

Surrender
upon the
Arrears
Bill.

The place occupied by the House of Lords in the country was illustrated three years ago in the case of the Arrears Bill. There can be little doubt that when Lord Salisbury resolved to oppose it, he had, or imagined he had, reason to believe that he would be supported in so doing by a majority of the peers. It may even be that a majority of the peers did at first intend to follow Lord Salisbury. But when he convened his followers in Arlington Street, three-fourths of them did not see their way to give effect to his views. The peers, with their customary good sense, recognised that to defeat the Bill would be futile and would react mischievously upon themselves; that it would give Radicalism the cry which it just then happened to want, and that the sequel must be an agitation pregnant possibly with ruinous consequences to the Second Chamber. In plain English, Lord Salisbury's followers preferred making Lord Salisbury ridiculous to the alternative of incurring the brunt of a popular assault. Such discretion may not have been dignified, but it was the better part of valour. Lord Salisbury, indeed, denounced the measure to the last. He upbraided,

as well he might, his followers with deserting him, and the measure became law. Now, either this is a specimen of what must always occur in such episodes as these, or it is not. Upon the former hypothesis, the House of Lords is harmless ; upon the latter, it is not only harmless but useful. The popular impatience of a Second Chamber is only held in check by the knowledge that, at the worst, it can but arrest the progress of legislation. If, however, it is to be an understood thing that the House of Lords is indefinitely to delay legislation, then simple toleration of it will pass into active resentment against it. Under any circumstances, it is needless to include the abolition of the House of Lords in the Radical Programme. Supposing that it exhibits in the future the same qualities that, on the whole, it has exhibited in the past, Radicals need not trouble themselves about it. Supposing, on the other hand, it insists upon asserting itself, it will of its own accord and by its own act be reformed out of existence.

The measures to which it will be the duty of the Radical party to address itself as soon as may be, will be conveniently ranged under three heads, Education, Land, Taxation—which, comprehending

Measures of
the future.

Land and Taxation under the same category, constitute two of the three points in the Radical charter, best known as the "three F's"—free land, free church, free schools. One department of the land question, the social status and housing of the poor in town and country, will be dealt with in the next chapter. Other topics will be treated in a similar manner, and when the series is concluded the public will have in their hands something more than a mere outline sketch of Radical legislation—something more than a floating body of Radical doctrine, or a congeries of abstract propositions. It is our aim to present our readers with a sufficient amount of definite information to enable them to see not only what ought to be done, but how what is wanted must be done. Upon the present occasion it will be enough to indicate the general attitude and policy of the Radical party in various departments of legislation, subsequently to be explained in detail.

Education. The first of these to which attention shall now be directed is education. The responsibility which the State formerly assumed by the Act of 1870 has not yet been fully discharged. A great principle

was asserted fifteen years ago, and to that principle, thus far, only partial effect has been given. A step in the direction of State socialism was taken, but it was not more than a step, and a short one. The result of the education controversy that raged from 1870 to 1876 was a compromise with which the Radicals were never satisfied, and which they pledged themselves to reopen at the first opportunity. It is demonstrable, and it will be shown hereafter, that our present educational arrangements are wanting in the two essentials of economy and efficiency; there are signs that popular feeling against it is acquiring irresistible strength, nor can it be too strongly stated that in this matter the wish of those who are immediately interested, and who constitute the majority of the ratepayers, viz. the working classes, must in the long run be obeyed. It is within their power to bring the whole educational machinery of the country to a dead-lock to-morrow. They may refuse *en masse*, as the Quakers refused to pay Church rates, to pay school fees. They may be sent to prison for their refusal, and may do penance on the treadmill.

School fees.

As it is, the working classes are dissatisfied with a state of things under which parents have no alternative but to beg, borrow, or steal school fees, or to accept the stigma of pauperism, under which they are subject to inquisitorial and offensive examinations in their household affairs, that lay bare the secret of their struggles and trials before school boards and guardians. Our educational centralization cannot fail to operate as an exacting and an arbitrary despotism. It is arbitrary, because not even a penny school, much less a free school, can be opened in the largest town in England without the consent of the Education Department ; because, too, in the majority of cases, this consent depends on the wishes of the clergy, to whom the matter is referred by the school inspector appointed to inquire into the case. It is exacting, because it compels parents either to pay what it is in the nature of things impossible they can afford, or else to confess themselves suppliants for the charity of the parish. It will be universally allowed that if it had not been for the opposition of the supporters of voluntary and denominational schools, free schools would, in all probability, have been established long ere this. Is it or is it not a duty which the

State owes to the humblest of its subjects to guarantee their children a modicum of learning? If it is, then it must be a moral violation of that duty to perform it in a niggard and grudging manner, painful and intolerable to English feeling. If every school in England was thrown open to the children of the poor, the additional expenditure involved would be trifling. Some adjustment there would, of course, have to be, and the managers of the denominational schools might suffer. Hence their determined resistance to the scheme. But it must always be remembered that under no circumstances would the actual cost of education be increased. The question is, not how much is to be paid, but in what manner it is to be paid. Free schools would simplify the distribution of the cost between parents and the State; the educational rate chargeable on labourers would come, in some cases to more, in some to less, than they at present pay.

As any reforms in our educational system, if they Land tenure. are to be effectual, will involve the assumption and the discharge of fresh responsibilities by the State, so will it be with any reforms worth having in our system of land tenure. Whatever the direction in which we look, the tendency is in favour of the

enlargement of the sphere of State action and of its multiplied interference in the relations between those who live under it. It is no exaggeration to say that the most characteristic principle of modern domestic legislation is that embodied in the Factories Act—the principle, namely, that capital has acquired so predominant a power that it is not safe to leave labour to look after itself; that the economical laws of supply and demand, which are merely generalisations from experience, are not infallible in their operation; and that freedom of contract may be employed as an instrument of oppression as well as a weapon of liberty.

Agrarian
reforms.

As yet we have only advanced a short way comparatively towards the realisation of those agrarian reforms which were contemplated by Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright. Even when this programme has been completed much will remain to be done. The first steps to be taken are the abolition of settlement and entail. Next, the probate and succession duties must be altered. When these things have been accomplished, the programme of the older reformers will have been exhausted. This will be found insufficient. It may be accepted as an instalment, but as no more. Each successive year adds to the diffi-

culties, and increases the perplexities, of the case. It is well that, before relations between the owners and the occupiers of the soil, between proprietor and peasant, are fundamentally readjusted, arrears should be wiped off, but even thus we shall only have arrived at the threshold of the land question. *The object of all land reform must be the multiplication of landowners.* When entail and settlement are done away with, a real impulse will be given in that direction ; but machinery will have to be provided for ensuring the requisite changes. Before indicating the different methods in which it may be practicable to accomplish the desired end, it may not be amiss to remind those who object to the multiplication of landowners as a revolutionary step, that its tendencies are distinctly Conservative. The greater the number of those who have an interest in the soil, the deeper will be the popular attachment to it. The conflict of interests will disappear ; and our land system, instead of being, as it is now, the symbol of strife—the embodiment of the privileges of the few as opposed to the rights and aspirations of the many—will become a guarantee of class concord and harmony.

Short ways of reforming our system of land tenure

Proposals
of Mr.
George and
Mr. Wal-
lace.

have recently been proposed by Mr. George and Mr. Wallace. There is no need to criticise them minutely now. Truth and error, fallacy and fact, are combined in the treatises of the two authors. That the masses have not benefited, as it might have been hoped they would, by the extraordinary prosperity of the last half century is true enough ; but that the whole of the increase of wealth during this period has gone into the pockets of the landowners is conspicuously false. Mr. Wallace and Mr. George insist that certain remedies, not only drastic, but alarming, in their scope and magnitude, should be applied for the sake of a problematical gain. The least that might be asked is that they should show the advantages, which they declare would accrue if their scheme were adopted, to be absolutely certain. They fail to do anything of the sort. The total sum taken for rent in one form or another would be the same under the operation of the plan of Mr. George and Mr. Wallace as under the existing system. The only difference would be that the increase in the value of land would go to the new holders. Thus the evils which it is now proposed to cure would repeat themselves, and it would shortly be necessary for the State once more to interfere, and to apply

another scheme of wholesale confiscation. The proposition that, the land once nationalised, the increased wealth of the country will be distributed amongst all classes and individuals—that is to say, that the £600,000,000 by which the wealth of England has grown during the last twenty years, would, if there had been no landlords, have passed in fair proportions into the hands of the thirty-five millions inhabiting this realm, rests on the assumption that the entire increment is eaten up by rent. This assumption is altogether unfounded.

If therefore the land nationalization project, of which so much has recently been heard, is to be rejected, in what direction is the reform to be looked for? Entail and settlement swept away, what is the exact nature of the second step to be taken? First, there is the proposal to create small owners by the assistance of the State. Of this it may be remarked that, whatever the practical difficulties in the way of giving effect to it, it is not likely to be condemned as contrary to the political spirit of the time. Another suggestion for placing our land system upon an equitable basis is the application of the Irish Land Act to England. The effect of this would be to make tenants owners, and, roughly speaking, to

New direction of land reform.

multiply landlords by ten. Thirdly, there are those who are in favour of a radically different method of procedure. In some of our colonies farms are prevented from growing beyond a certain size, and landed establishments are kept within certain limits by a progressive income-tax on the number of acres held. That this method would be effectual in England no one can doubt. A fourth proposal is of a somewhat cognate character. Why not, it is said, frankly recognise the fact that freedom of bequest should be subject to the same modifications as are already in force in the case of freedom of contract. Supposing this were done, the law would in effect say to every owner of land: "Add, if you will, house to house, and field to field; buy up a county, and become the lord of a province; but understand that you do so at your own risk. You shall not indeed be debarred from bequeathing a vast estate to a single heir, but this power shall only belong to you upon conditions which the State prescribes. When your property has grown to a magnitude that exceeds what, in the opinion of the State, is compatible with the public interest should be possessed by an individual, it will peremptorily discourage you from going farther." There is one way in which

the State can execute such a resolution. It can provide for a graduated probate duty levied upon landed proprietors over a certain size.

There is another method of dealing with the question of land tenure which combines several of the advantages inherent in the foregoing. The principle of all such legislation as is now being considered is, let it be repeated once more, the right and duty of the State to fix within certain broad limits the extent, and to control the conditions, of private ownership. *What, therefore, must be done is formally to confer upon the State larger powers in these matters than she now possesses.* Such an authority might, and necessarily would, be delegated to local authorities. It would be impossible for the central Government to manage all land transactions in every part of the country. It would vest in its representatives the power of expropriating for public purposes, on payment of fair compensation, and adequate securities being taken against the possibility of extortionate demands.

The reform of our system of taxation practically comes under nearly the same head as land legislation. Speaking on this subject twelve years ago, Sir Charles Dilke said : " A certain minimum of income

The State
needs larger
powers.

Reform of
taxation.

sufficient to provide the necessities of life to a moderately numerous family should not be heavily taxed, but only the surplus beyond this. Suppose this minimum to be £50 a year for each family, supposing the workmen to be five million families (which is not much above the mark), this would give 250 millions for necessities. But their whole income is computed at 325 millions by Mr. Dudley Baxter, leaving only 75 millions of superfluities, which on this principle would be taxed; on this 30 millions of taxes are raised. The rich are 2 millions of families, which give 100 millions for necessities, but they have 500 millions, leaving 400 millions to be taxed, which bears little more than 50 millions of taxes. I repeat that the small incomes are over-taxed." No person will deny that a more equal distribution of wealth, if it could be effected without creating any revolutionary precedent, would be a gain to the whole community.

Reduction
of incomes
over a
certain
amount.

Again, no one will deny either that a general reduction of incomes, once a certain point had been reached, would not inflict any appreciable amount of suffering. Twenty years ago a man with £10,000 a year was regarded as a prodigy of wealth. Now he is considered well to do, and no more, and one

may walk through streets and squares for hours in London, each house of which represents probably a minimum income of not less than £8,000 a year. Has the happiness or comfort of life increased during these two decades in any proportion to the rate in which wealth has increased? It is notorious that it has not. Let it not be supposed that the writers of these papers contemplate the reduction by law of all incomes to a common level. The remark just made is only intended to remind persons that, even were the extremely rich to find that a readjustment of taxation tended to diminish their wealth, no great amount of hardship would be the result. Here again we may refer to the precedents of that Greater Britain which lies beyond the seas. As Free Schools, a Free Church, and Free Land have been found practicable in the colonies, so has a progressive income-tax up to ten per cent. been successfully imposed in the United States.

This will be called Socialism with a vengeance, but, as has been observed before, the path of legislative progress in England has been for years, and must continue to be, distinctly Socialistic. It is the general business of the State, not merely in the cases reviewed in the foregoing pages, but in others

Socialism
not a stigma,
but a modern
tendency,
pressing
for recognition.

like them, to convince the possessors of wealth, and the holders of property, whether in country or in town, that they cannot escape the responsibilities of trusteeship, and that, if the State is to guarantee them security of tenure, they must be ready to discharge certain definite obligations.

Lord
Salisbury
on the
housing of
the poor.

Lord Salisbury, in his attempt to pose as the pioneer of the Tory Democracy, has insisted upon the necessity of the better housing of the poor. This, he said, is the great question of the future, and one that the State cannot much longer shirk. We entirely agree with Lord Salisbury in his premiss, but we draw from it a conclusion which Lord Salisbury would reject. When a Tory peer, who is a great landlord in London and in the country, declares that the State is to blame for not attending more closely to the daily wants of those of its subjects who are at the mercy of the rich, one knows very well what he means. Lord Salisbury is, no doubt, kindly and humane towards his inferiors, but it would be too much to credit him with the intention to benefit his inferiors at the expense of himself. Let, he says in so many words, the State look to it. Exactly. And what does that mean? Simply this: that the State should undertake to

improve the property of Lord Salisbury himself and of other noble owners at its own expense. The workmen and the artisan will of course be benefited if their hovels and styces are made fit for human habitation at the initiative and at the charges of the State, but the owners, whose power of exacting rent would be proportionately increased, will be benefited quite as much. What therefore the Conservative leaders define as the supreme question of the future is the expediency of the State undertaking to raise the market value of the buildings that belong to the rich by making them more tolerable for the poor.

We, on the other hand, say that the prime cost of these improvements must fall upon the owners. This view will be illustrated and enforced in the chapter on the Housing of the Poor in Towns. One more remark shall now be made. That however extravagant and revolutionary may seem the reforms now foreshadowed, colonial experience proves that there is nothing alien in them to the national character. The era of purely political legislation is at an end for a time. The Reform Acts having passed into law, and a representative Government in counties being an accomplished fact, it is social

The Radical view of the same subject.

legislation which will afford a field for the energy and constructive skill of Radical statesmen in the future. The problem they are called upon to solve is how to make life worth living for the tens of thousands to whom it is now a prolonged misery. The chief feature in the programme—the indispensable antecedent to all that must hereafter be achieved—is the reform of our land system, and the readjustment of a scheme of taxation full of anomalies and injustice. The working classes are at last realising the true secret and source of their sufferings, and it is high time for Parliamentary Reformers to show themselves aware of the fact.

IV.

THE HOUSING OF THE POOR IN TOWNS.

THE statement made by Mr. Bright two or three years ago, "that more than 30 per cent. of all the inhabitants of Glasgow had but one room in which to live, eat, and sleep," came to most people as a painful surprise. Yet neither can the truth of the assertion be questioned nor can the fact be explained by the low wages of unskilled labour. Let us take a single instance. As the commerce of the port of London increases, the demand for dock-labourers increases also, and as the space devoted to workmen's dwellings was adapted to the requirements of perhaps half a century ago, it has become less and less adequate, until now the workman is forced to accept any accommodation he can secure, and to pay exorbitantly for even a single room. In other words, the material progress of the

Overcrowding not wholly explained by low wages.

capital forces the workman and his family to live under conditions more and more injurious to health and morals.

Competi-
tion of
workmen
for lodgings
near their
work.

Two circumstances, indeed, tend to mitigate, in some degree, the intensity of this evil—the increased facilities of transport and the advance in wages which the last half-century has brought with it. The workman of the present day can, if he chooses, live outside the city ; yet the hour or more lost in going to and coming from work constitutes a sufficient reason why he should accept the most miserable dwelling, provided it be near his work, rather than prolong the labour of the day. As a matter of fact, each and every room is eagerly competed for which is situated near the centres of employment. As is the house so is the inmate, and it is inevitable that his depressing and squalid environment should react upon the individual. How is a room in which a man and his family live and sleep to be kept sweet and clean ? Who could expect this to be done in a house often scarcely weather-proof, and the repairs of which fall generally upon the occupier ? The incoming tenant finds the room in a filthy condition. After, perhaps, a vain effort or two to improve it, it is accepted as it is, and given up in a

worse condition than when it was taken. These facts must be borne in mind, or the following description of the dwellings of the poor in London will be thought to be overdrawn, or, worse still, the reader may jump to the conclusion that the inmates of them have sunk below the reach of succour. Such an inference would do our common humanity an injustice, and would ignore the plain teachings of experience.

Let us begin with the most highly paid of ignorant workers, and take the stevedores of the docks. In the East-end a meeting of these men belonging to a particular dock had been called together to assist one of their number to bury his wife, who had recently died. The gathering was held in a room above a public-house, and on passing through the bar we noticed that five out of thirteen females who were drinking there had black eyes. By subscribing liberally to the funds we made friends with one of the number, a short, thick-set man of honest but heavy countenance, and with his wife, a tall, strong woman, who seemed far more intelligent than her "man," and with them we passed into the street. On hearing that we were curious as to the manner of lives of his mates the man invited us to accom-

A visit to
an East-end
lodging-
house.

pany him to his home. It was after twelve o'clock. While walking together we asked him what his average wages were. "We earn sometimes as much as £3 a week. I've earned more as £4," was his answer. As "average" was a word whose meaning passed his comprehension, we asked what was the least he earned. "Often we's out of work weeks together, sometimes we earn but a pound in a week." "Taking one week with another what would it amount to?" The wife answered: "Perhaps 30s. or 35s." "How many children have you?" "Well, we still have three; two's died." We now turned into a street with houses on the one side, on the other the high wall surrounding the dock. At many doors even at this hour women are standing, frequently engaged in quarrelling; not a few of them greet us as we pass and seek to detain us.

The home
of a work-
man earn-
ing from
25s. to 30s.
per week.

At one door we stop—it is wide open—and go into a narrow passage. On our right is a door through the chinks of which light is streaming and voices of a man and woman quarrelling can be heard, the man growling and swearing, the woman crying querulously and taking God to witness. "He's a bad 'un, he is!" is the remark of our con-

ductor. On one of the visitors stumbling, a light is struck and the walls, clammy with the dirt of years, and the rickety stairs come out in weird fashion. We note a disagreeable smell proceeding from dirt, from the washing of clothes, from the overcrowding of human beings. We stumble up the stairs and on the "*fust-floor*," as the stevedore proudly says, we enter his room. It is nearly square, some thirteen feet by twelve, and about nine in height. "The best in the house," remarks the wife. Opposite the door are two windows, on the left the fireplace, on the right and in front a large wooden bed; the dresser is behind us opposite to the left-hand window, another cupboard flanks the door upon the right. There is a clothes-line stretched from a nail above the window to another above the dresser, right across the middle of the space left vacant by the bed, and on this line are hanging all manner of garments—now nearly dry. Underneath the clothes is a deal table. There are but two chairs, so the husband sits on the bed; talking still of the children, the wife recounts with pride that her boy Willie, ten years old, can read. "Wake him, Jim (to the husband), and let the gentlemen hear him." While one visitor takes the sleepy-eyed boy upon his knees

and talks with the mother, the other looks about him and talks to the father. The husband is proud of his wife, and speaks of her, in a hoarse undertone, as "the cleanest, prop'rest woman I ever seed."

Furniture,
linen, rent.
Allowance
of air. A
stevedore's
hospitality.

The bed-linen is, of course, dirty, yet cleaner than is generally to be seen; the quilt is in a far worse condition. The husband being asked why, with his wages, he does not get two rooms, answers confusedly that the rent of this one is 5s. per week, and that he would not pay so much were it not so near his work; but the point of the answer is that, while he could perhaps pay for two rooms in good times, he must take only what he can pay for in bad times. "T won't do to run behind, ye see," with a grim chuckle, "credit here isn't good," and relapsing into solemnity, "wages isn't reg'lar! Never knows o' Saturday night what 'll earn by next Saturday. So the most of us arter a good week has a booze!" "Yes," says the wife, half apologetically, "they's hard 'uns, they are; few on them like my Jim, what allus gives me some'at for clothes of a good week, afore he goes out—takes me with him too, he does. Why, we've occupied this room for nigh on three years; that's a good spell, now ain't it? and that beddin' of ours we've had this eleven years, never

parted with it, not once; few on them can say as much, I warrant." All this she says while producing the supper, consisting of cheese, which she presses us to eat, with a heartiness of hospitality that would look on refusal as an insult. But it is in August, the heat in the room is rendered still more oppressive than it otherwise would be by the moisture given off by the drying clothes, and four persons have been in the small space all day; the bed of course has not been aired for months, and what with heat, moisture, and smell together, we are forced to retreat. The man insists on accompanying us a piece of the way, and hopes we'll come soon and see 'em again afore he goes a-hoppin'. "We starts hoppin' in September!" As we go along the 15 feet of passage from the bottom of the stairs to the door, we hear by the snoring that there are two rooms on our left, and that the quarrelsome man in the one has sunk asleep. It is only on coming into the clear night air that we fully realise the heat of the room we have left, and how impure its atmosphere was.

On reflection, some facts appear specially noteworthy: first, that wages which fluctuate so greatly ought to be considered as links in a chain, the

Noteworthy
inferences.

weakest of which measures the strength of the whole. This man's condition was that of one who could fairly reckon on twenty-five or thirty shillings a week, the extra ten, fifteen, or even twenty shillings he might earn, benefited him little if at all. They were uncertain, and so went chiefly in "boozing." The second fact was revealed by the proud remark of the woman that they had occupied the same room for nearly three years—that is, that they were more lucky or more provident than the majority of those in a similar condition. They, too, had never parted with their "beddin'," that is, the man had never been out of work so long that everything had gone to the pawnshop: a family and home far above the average of the class we are considering, all will allow. Here, as elsewhere the rent ought to be noted.

A house at
Euston.
Moral and
social sur-
roundings.

The next instance may be taken from the district lying round the Euston Station. We enter a small street early on a Monday morning; knots of men are standing round the public-house at the corner, all unkempt, most of them half-drunk; the whole street is loud with voices—women talking from the windows into the street, and from the street shouting to friends who lean half-dressed out of upper windows.

The language used is not to be described. The street-doors are all open, the filthy passages on view, not a window can be seen in which brown paper does not take the place of two or more broken panes of glass. We make friends with a dirty little boy who leads us into a house. In the passage two women are talking, one of them is the mother of our guide, and she asks us in a fretful tone of voice into her room. The room is on the ground floor and looks upon the street, the rent is 3s. 6d. per week. The walls and ceiling are almost as black as the passage; the window, only two panes of which have been broken and patched, seems never to have been washed; the bedstead is covered with a straw tick; there are no sheets; pillow-case, however, blankets and quilts are all dirty; as are the few pieces of furniture. The sickening smell already noticed meets us on entering. We ask after the husband. "He's a bricklayer, is Mike," answers the woman. "Go, fetch your father," she interrupts herself to cry to the child, and it being Monday he isn't at work. "His wages? When times are good he earns 30s. a week, but then for long spells in winter he has nothing to do. I'm English, I am, and once upon a time was a servant in a big 'ouse—never

thought then to come to this." The querulous high-pitched voice was here rudely interrupted by a blow upon the partition which separated the back-room from the front one in which we were sitting, and a man's voice shouted: "Stow your jaw and let a man sleep!" If the monotony of the daily labour and the absence of all amusements is not sufficient to explain the drunkenness of the working-classes, surely the overcrowding in their dwellings, when considered with the other causes, is enough to explain the existence of the vice.

Effect of
overcrowd-
ing on
character.

What sort of people can be expected to grow up in these conditions? In every case it will be found that the workman resembles his dwelling, for, as regards his room, no choice is open to him, he must take what he can get. When the man is unable to alter his surroundings, his surroundings make the man.

A visit to
Drury
Lane. .
The
outside;
water
supply, &c.

It was on a Bank Holiday that we finished a tour of two weeks in that part of London which lies around and behind Drury Lane Theatre. Again we take a dwelling above the average. In a conglomeration of houses, which seem to be separated only by narrow paved passages and courts, we enter one through-way—unguarded by any door—which evi-

dently leads to a back-yard. The yard is about ten feet long by eight wide, shut in on all sides by high walls. In the corner stands a barrel serving evidently as cistern, the water being conducted down the wall by a pipe. Scarcely have we entered before a thin pale-faced woman comes out to ask what we're after. She is followed closely by her husband in his shirt-sleeves, just as dirty, as slovenly, as anæmic as is the woman. We say, apologetically, that we have come to see if they are satisfied with the water-supply, &c. "Satisfied!" they both cry, and become voluble in reproach. The husband places a ladder against the top and asks us to inspect the barrel. The top is but half a top, and when we lift it up we lift with it not a few spider-webs; the water is thick and muddy, the sides of the barrel covered with a slimy deposit, the bottom with a layer of stones and mud seemingly a couple of inches thick. Further description in detail is impossible; suffice it to say that the air of the whole yard is at once loathsome. "I has to take care of that, I has," says the man, "for a-havin' my room so cheap, but no one can't keep it clean when it don't work even if the others (other inmates of the house, in number twenty) were partic'lar, which

they ain't—oh no, by no means when they comes home drunk." In order to get away from the smell, we ask whether we may see his room. "See it," he cries, "yes; dear I calls it at three shillings a week." Before leaving the yard we cast one look upwards; every window of the three stories has linen hung out of it to dry, linen that cannot be clean; every window is open to receive the loathsome air escaping upwards between the four high walls as up a funnel. We glance more closely at the woman; the front of her dress is open, and there are sores on her neck and breast. The baby in her arms is so unhealthy that we are relieved by the thought that it will certainly not outlive the summer.

The interior. Dirt, smells, foul air. A workman's opinion of his landlord.

The next moment we turn into the passage and enter the room: it is on the ground-floor and looks out upon the yard; for this reason it is so dark that it is some seconds before the different objects in it can be clearly distinguished. The room itself is fully 14 feet long by about 10 wide and $9\frac{1}{2}$ high. The walls are almost black with dirt, as is the ceiling. The bed stands along the wall; there are a table and dresser, as usual, and two chairs. The framework of the bed seems to have a straw tick

upon it. There is no linen, only some blankets over which is thrown a dirty quilt, a quilt which is not even grey but nearly black. And whether we touch wall or table or chair or bed, we feel the same moisture, that seems to exude from every object. The smell of the room is penetrating, the air which knows no sun is made noisome with the staleness of old filth and with the breath of human beings. With four persons living in this den it would be a mockery to advise cleanliness. We ask the man his trade. "A tin-smith," he answers. "And what might your wages be?" "Well, that I can't say; sometimes I earn 30s. a week, but work is often slack." "Reckoning it one week with another would you earn a pound a week?" "Why, yes! more nor that when I has full time." "Would you take a pound a week on a regular job?" "Ay, that I would; it would be better than this yere if so be as 'twur quite reg'lar, week in, week out." "Why don't the rich help us?" asks the woman, and the man answers with a mocking laugh, "Why don't our landlord help us by attendin' to that there yard; why don't my master help? He gets a pound for selling what he gives me three shillings for making; why——" We break in by remarking that all men

are selfish. "Selfish," snarls the man, "ay, d—'em! they'd see us rot afore they'd do the fair thing by us, they would!"

The slums of Blackfriars. Reception of an amateur district-visitor. The home of a "coster."

On leaving the house we met an idiot child at the door, and within fifty paces another. The next "cases" are taken from that network of slums which lie between Blackfriars Road and Westminster Bridge Road. We pass from a street of evil renown into one of the blind alleys common in the neighbourhood. Judging from the outside the houses are worse than any we have yet described. A drizzling rain is falling, and the narrow pavement is slippery with black mud. We enter a house; the passage is filthy with the mud of the streets, and so are the stairs. On the second flight at least the dirt is nearly dry; but it is as dangerous as the first flight to mount, inasmuch as the banisters and one or two of the steps are broken. On the second landing we pause, meeting a woman's gaze, who seems too surprised to do anything but stare. We are now district visiting, and on hearing this she quickly asks us to take a seat, but only one sound seat is forthcoming. "Ah! we needs charity, we do, what's got five little children!" From off the bed and from the corners they crowd to the mother to stare

at the strangers—all but one, a half-grown girl of about fourteen, who pays but little attention to us, so absorbed is she in putting some ribbons on a hat by the light of the window. The room is not large—twelve feet by eleven feet and some eight and a-half feet high; yet it seems large enough for the furniture it contains, viz., one large bed, one table, one sound and one rickety chair, one little deal box on which the girl is sitting. On the table stands a saucepan, three dirty plates, two tin mugs. The bed is evidently the place of rest by day as well as by night; on it there are no sheets, nothing but a straw tick covered by a blanket and a dirty quilt, over the foot of which is thrown a rug, which has evidently some time or other served as a hearth-rug. The floor is marked with dirt on a straight line from the door to the fireplace. Near the window is a broad patch of water, which has come through the crazy casement. The table, bed, and the clothes of the occupants are filthy. The clothes of the children cannot be described. The woman goes on: “The youngest blessed ’un is but two months old.” “What is your husband?” “A coster.” “And what may he earn?” “Well, some days he brings home four shillings, generally two or three, often

but one; and we as has all these to feed, and that lazy slut there what thinks o' nought but dress—put down that this minit!" she yells to the girl, "and come and thank the gentlemen for coming to help us." We ask whether there is not another room upon this landing. "Yes, there is; the back 'un is rented to two as nice girls as you'd wish to see—decent, too, they are." I'll show it you—perhaps Fanny is in, but Jane is out, I know; gone to fetch some work." Saying this, she crosses the landing, and, without stopping to knock, passes into the other room with a "Fanny, here's two gentlemen a district-visiting us, what wants to see you." "Come in," says Fanny, and as we hesitate she adds, bridling, "Well, I'm sure you needn't be afraid," and, laughing, "I'm not going to eat you." As we enter we see that "girl" simply means unmarried, for "Fanny" looks fully thirty-five years of age. She brings a chair forward for one visitor and motions the other to the bed with "Take that for comfort is my advice," and then laughs consciously. The room was nearly as dirty, nearly as badly furnished as the other, but, noticing a looking-glass of some dimensions, we admire it. "Oh," Fanny informs us, "the furniture is all mine, and I let Jane sleep with me."

“Yes,” says the young girl from the other room, “when——” “You hold your tongue,” breaks in the mother, “or I’ll warm you.” Pleading haste we beat a retreat to the landing. The coster’s wife, however, gets in front, and although we give her a shilling she does not give place, but calls Joe to say good-bye to the gentleman and receive a coin, and after Joe, Susie, &c.

The shameless extortion is too much, and, as we cannot descend, we point upward and ask, “Does any one live there?” “Oh yes,” is the reply, “a washerwoman, Mrs. Spearing, whose husband is sick with the rheumatiz. I’ll show you the way.” And up we mount the rickety stairs not more than eighteen inches wide, and without any banister at all, to the garret. Our guide knocks, which somewhat surprises us, as we have expected no thoughtfulness from her. After a brief pause the door is opened by a thin, careworn, but evidently respectable woman. She seems astonished on seeing us, but asks us in, with a “John is sleeping now.” We thanked her, and ask whether he is better, while looking into the garret; it is about fourteen feet by ten, the ceiling slopes, and from a great part of it the plaster has fallen. The height ranges from

The lodgings of a washerwoman who has an invalid husband to keep.

nine feet to about five. All one wall of the room is wet, and the water, although dried up, has marked its course along the slanting floor to the doorway. Clothes-lines are stretched across one half of the room; in the right-hand corner stands the bed, far cleaner and far better kept than could be expected under the circumstances. But the room seems bare, it is so destitute of furniture. "It's rheumatic fever; the doctor says he should be took to the hospital," whispers the woman, "but then I couldn't nurse him, and me and John don't want to part. We've held it out twenty years together"—and with an attempt to smile—"we'll hold it out the rest, please God! Me and him won't part. 'Tis the medicine costs so much; the doctor he comes for nothing; he's good, he is, and kind, and he says that he'll be well soon." We look at the bed, the thin fingers of the invalid are plucking nervously at the blanket which covers him, the air of the room seems cold and charged with moisture, and we can but echo the woman's words—"Oh yes, he'll be well soon!"

Rents
in Seven
Dials.
Night lodg-
ing-houses.

Have we seen enough, or shall we visit the Seven Dials, or go again to the East-end? In both districts you can find attics for 1s. a week; rooms to

hold twenty people, wherein men sleep for 2d. a night, huddled together on the floor or on the forms and tables, the animal heat of whose bodies keeps them warm in winter and keeps them awake in summer—awake while the night is passed in narrating obscenities or describing fights; there, too, are cellars at 6d. a week. Is it, not a fact that men and women can be found sleeping together on filthy stairs and landings, ay, that men and women walk the streets all night, praying for the morning, when they will be allowed to enter the parks and sleep at peace, under a tree in summer or on the wet seats in winter? What need is there to describe what all men know? Take simply this last house; the prostitute, Fanny, lives mainly upon the earnings of the girl Jane, who has not yet fallen, although Jane now no longer goes out to work, but fetches work home; that is, she too is getting tired of constant labour without any amusements. This girl, on certain nights, is forced to sleep in the coster's room. That is, while Huxley says 800 cubic feet are necessary for the health of an adult, and while the Poor Law enacts that 500 are needful, eight persons, three of whom are grown up, sleep in one room containing only 1,100 cubic feet of air.

Number of
cubic feet
of air
allowed
to eight
persons.

The inevitable result:
disease,
mental,
moral, and
physical.

When human beings are herded in this fashion, when in seven or eight rooms from twelve to twenty-five persons are crowded together, they can neither be healthy, morally or physically. All who know bear the same testimony, that under such conditions one girl of evil life corrupts a dozen others; one drunkard or one criminal makes many. The tendency to fall to the level of the lowest is universal and irresistible. Let it be borne in mind that nothing has here been said of the dens in the East-end, where the 6,000 men and 15,000 girls employed by the "sweaters" live a bestial life; nothing of the criminal classes; nothing of the misery of those thousands who have worked at "dangerous trades," as lithographers, paper-colourers, enamellers, artificial florists, artistic colour-makers, paper-stainers, &c., and many of whom are carried from the workshop to the hospital to be cured of poisoning by lead or arsenic, and who, aged in early life, leave the hospitals to take up again the burden of existence with shattered health. Those who think this picture over-coloured have but to read the reports of the certifying surgeons under the Factory Acts, or such accounts as that given by Dr. A. Carpenter before the Croydon Board of Guardians. He tells of "a

four-roomed cottage inhabited by two separate families, by the tenants and by prostitutes. There was not 'a single stick of furniture in the house, a door laid upon a few bricks being used as a kind of bedstead.' Nor was this the only place of the sort in Croydon by a great many."

The evil effects of overcrowding upon the poorer classes of our large towns is now generally recognised, but it is not so widely understood that it is to the interest of all in the community to do away with these evils. Self-interest enforces the dictates of humanity. For under such conditions of life the workman, even if looked upon merely as an instrument to produce wealth, is not nearly so valuable to the community as he might be. As Mr. Sidgwick puts it, "Competition does not tend to give the labourer the real wages required to make his labour most efficient." The vital statistics alone would prove this. The result of the improvements undertaken in Paris under Napoleon has been to reduce the mortality by one-half. But medical statistics show that for every person who dies in this way, six persons are ill, and the consequent loss to the community of wealth-producing power is enormous. The interests of one class cannot be separated from

Interest of
the com-
munity in
the ques-
tion.

those of another. "The advance of pathological knowledge," writes Dr. Bristowe, "proves that most, if not all, epidemic disorders spread by contagion." According to the same authority the contagion of some disorders, influenza, for instance, is remarkable for its "amazing diffusibility," while that of others, such as scarlet fever, "remain dormant for months in articles of clothing." Now it must be borne in mind that the milk, the food, the linen used in the better classes pass through the hands of those who live in courts and alleys, and whose conditions of lives, although concealed, have the most serious influence upon the lives and health of those whose circumstances appear to place them above all danger, and who may live at a great distance from the source of contagion. Dr. Aubrey Husband, in his book upon "Forensic Medicine," after showing that the poison of typhoid fever may be carried by water and by food, instances the recent outbreaks in the West-end of London, where the carriage of the poison was traced to the milk used by those attacked.

Re-housing
an insur-
ance
against
contagion
and revo-
lution.

While re-housing may be looked upon as an insurance paid by the better class against disease, it may also be regarded as an insurance paid by the rich against revolution. The Peabody Dwellings

show that it is possible to house the poor properly, and to make the improvement, in a pecuniary sense, a fairly profitable investment. Two rooms in these dwellings are let at from 3s. to 4s. 6d. per week, three rooms cost from 4s. 6d. to 7s., but it must not be forgotten that the Peabody trustees require a larger return from their investment than would the municipality. It is useless to increase wages and to lessen the hours of toil so long as the workman is compelled to live in the pest-houses we have described; nay, it is almost worse than useless, inasmuch as the extra wage and increased leisure operate as incentives to drunkenness and vice. The surplus wages would be used (this can be seen in the Peabody and Ashley Dwellings) to make two or three rooms comfortable; it is absurd to hope that they will be expended in a vain attempt to make one room habitable. It is to the interest of all in the community that the workman should become a better instrument of production, that his dwelling should not be a hotbed of disease, that his degradation and misery should not be a constant source of danger to the State. The warning of Danton must be heeded, "If you suffer the poor to grow up as animals they may chance to become wild beasts and rend you."

The proposal not an innovation in principle.

The measure is in exact accordance with English precedent; it proposes to do for the dwellings of the poor what has already been done for their workshops by the Factory Acts. Further, in many towns the scheme has already, although on a somewhat limited scale, been put into practice. It may be said that the mind of the country is made up as regards this question. Nor would it here have been treated at such length were it not necessary to show that the Act of 1875, passed at the instance of Mr. (now Sir) Richard Cross, and further amended in 1879, was not sufficient for the purpose. In truth, it could scarcely be expected that Tories would even consider an efficient measure of social reform. For the gentry have, as is well known, a fetish, viz. the rights of property, and the reverence they pay their idol is so unbounded as to exhaust all their surplus energy. The simplicity of their creed—*I shall do what I will with my own*—rather unfits them to take part in the complex workings of an advanced civilisation. To mulct the community in the interests of a class, or of individuals, seems to them right and proper; to reverse the operation is, in their eyes, to be guilty of sacrilege. The railways of England cost more than the railways of any other country, and the ex-

cessive price—about £100,000,000—went to enrich the landowners at the expense of the community.

Ex pede Herculem. Look at their action as regards the measure now under consideration. The Metropolitan Board of Works reported in 1880 that the “main objections to the Act were that the mode of procedure which it prescribes is dilatory and costly, and that the basis upon which the valuation of property is made results in such large compensations being awarded as practically to render it inexpedient to carry the provisions of the Act into effect.” To put it clearly, the present possessors of such pest-houses as have here been described demand and obtain for their property far more than it is worth, and the cost of the improvements which have been made falls upon the community at large.

The Metropolitan Board of Works reported in 1881 that “the amending Act of 1879 was not found to diminish materially the obstacles which impeded the Board’s operations.” Further, in 1881 a Select Committee was nominated by the House of Commons “to consider how the expense of, and the delay and difficulty in carrying out the Acts might be reduced.” Now, this Committee, presided over by Sir Richard Cross, came only to three conclusions,

Report of
the Metro-
politan
Board of
Works

Conclu-
sions of
Select
Committee
of 1881.

mittee, decided that in future it would be better to sell, imposing on the purchaser the obligation to erect working-class dwellings, and to maintain the buildings for that purpose for ten years from the date of the conveyance." That is, in simple words, the same men who have been forced by the evils arising out of freedom of contract to interfere and limit that freedom of contract by law, now recommend that after a few years the restrictions which they themselves have imposed shall be removed. Such a conclusion is absurd in the extreme. If it is right to interfere at all, then it is right to prevent a recurrence of the evil. The Corporation, after obtaining the freehold, should in no case sell it, but should let the sites on building leases. It may safely be asserted that this third conclusion would never have been entertained, even by Tories, had it not been needful to lessen in some way or other the cost of the re-housing.

The question of cost, then, is the all-important one. All experience demonstrates that it is impossible under our present statutory powers to acquire urban property, compulsorily, for public purposes, at prices which do not inflict a heavy fine on the community. The figures contained in Mr. Chamberlain's article

The cost is the great obstacle to improvement.

on "Labourers' and Artisans' Dwellings," published in the *Fortnightly Review* for December, 1883, are conclusive on this point.

Experience
of the Me-
tropolitan
Board of
Works.

The Metropolitan Board of Works had, up to that time, dealt with forty-two acres of land, occupied by 20,335 persons. The net loss on the improvement was estimated at £1,211,336, or about £60 per head of the population assumed to be benefited. The cost of the land acquired was about 17s. per square foot. The price of the land for erecting workmen's dwellings would have been about 3s. 4d. per square foot, while its value for commercial purposes was put at 10s. per foot.

Immense
profits of
owners of
insanitary
property.

What does this mean, except that the owners of property pronounced by authority to be unfit for human occupation have received 17s. per foot for land which, after new approaches and improvements were made, could not be valued at more than 10s. for commercial purposes or 3s. 4d. for artisans' dwellings? In other terms, the owners of these pestilent dens, whose criminal neglect necessitated State intervention, have made a profit of 7s. per foot on the market value of their property, and have received 13s. 8d. per foot more than their land was worth for the purposes for which they had been using it.

In the City of London the cost of land for the same objects has been 43s. per foot; the value for artisans' dwellings is estimated at 6s. per foot, while for commercial purposes it is put down at 34s. per foot. The owners have, therefore, received 9s. per foot more than they could have obtained in open market, and 37s. per foot more than the sites were worth for workmen's houses.

In Liverpool the Corporation gave £67,000 for a little more than four acres of land, or between £16,000 and £17,000 per acre. In Edinburgh and Glasgow operations have been in progress under local Acts. In the former city a rate of 4d. in the £, and in the latter a rate of 2d. has been necessary to meet the expenses. The schemes for Swansea, Wolverhampton, Derby, Nottingham, Newcastle-on-Tyne, all show a loss to the ratepayers, while the real offenders, the owners, have made immense profits.

In Birmingham, where extensive operations have been carried on with conspicuous benefits to the general health, and with large prospective advantages to the community, the deficiency to be borne by the rates up to the end of 1883 was estimated at £550,000, to provide which a rate of 4d. is required. In one instance the Corporation was obliged to give £6,300

Cost of re-housing in the City.

Cost in Liverpool, Edinbro', Glasgow, and other towns.

The expense in Birmingham.

for houses which three years before had been bought for less than £3,000.

A premium offered to neglect and indifference.

From these premises two conclusions come out in the strongest light: first, that the cost of proceeding under the Artisans' Dwellings Acts is an insuperable obstacle to improvement; and next that the Acts offer a premium upon neglect and indifference to sanitary precautions. The exorbitant charges do not represent the legitimate expenses of improvement, but the enormous overprice given to those whose avarice and laches have created the mischief. Mr. Chamberlain estimates that at least half, and probably three-fourths, of the deficiency now charged upon the rates has been allowed in compensation over the fair market value, which the owners would have received if they had been selling voluntarily to private purchasers, and not under compulsion to the public.

A Radical reform required.

It is perfectly clear, then, that if the country is to have a reform proportionate to the extent and urgency of the evil, the cost must be lessened; and that not by haggling with owners about prices, but by such radical changes in principle and procedure as will alter the incidence of the burden, and save the community from being plundered in the interests

of undeserving owners. Apart from the main question of the provision of wholesome habitations, the present charges inflict a hardship upon the small shopkeepers and artisans which they will not be content to bear much longer.

All parties are agreed that reform is indispensable, and cannot be postponed. But two important issues arise between parties: first, how can the expense be brought within reasonable limits? and next, by whom is the main brunt of the burden to be borne?

We will consider the second point first, as it involves the principle upon which the dispute must be settled. The issue, as stated by the late President of the Board of Trade, lies between the "rights of property and the rights of the community."

Lord Salisbury's view is that the obligation of reparation lies upon the public. He admits a qualified responsibility of ownership, but limits it to the removal of sanitary mischief arising from structural defects. Beyond this he appeals to charitable organisation, to the employers of labour, and to State intervention—the latter to take the form of loans at low rates to irresponsible bodies. But if there is to be taxation for the provision of houses for the poor,

The real issue stated.

A contest between "rights of property and rights of the community."

The Tory view. Lord Salisbury's propositions.

then, in his opinion, there is no ground "for charging it upon the occupiers of land and houses only." Incidentally we may say that we agree that it should not be charged upon occupiers; there is another class, as will be shown, much more able to bear the burden. Lord Salisbury goes on to say that "incomes of all kinds, whether they come from consols or foreign stocks, from debentures, ground-rents, or mortgages, ought equally to bear such a burden, if it is to be borne by property at all."* In brief, his proposal is that the persons who have been enriched by the possession of insanitary dwellings, and whose property will be enhanced in value by improvements, shall go practically free, and shall shift the onus on to the general shoulders of the community. A widow with a few thousands of consols is to be taxed to restore the insanitary property of great landlords. This is the Tory view of the obligations of ownership.

The Radical
proposition.

The alternative proposition which the Radical will put before the country is that "*the expatriating towns habitable for the toilers who* *pense of must be thrown on the land which their dwell in them*

val Commission on the Housing of the Work-

* "Report of Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes," p. 61.

*toil makes valuable, without any effort on the part of its owners."** *

The argument is put in a forcible way by Mr. E. D. Gray, M.P., in the memorandum which he appends to the Report of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Poor. He writes, "The evil can never be effectually abated so long as owners of land in towns are permitted to levy a tax upon the whole community by way of an increase of rent porportionate to the increased value of that land, due not to any efforts of theirs, but to the industry and consequent prosperity of the community as a whole. This in reality is a constantly increasing tribute by the whole community of the town to the individuals who own the land." †

Mr. E. D. Gray's Report on the Housing of the Poor.

In order to insure that the "unearned increment" should find its way into the pockets of the inhabitants instead of the owners, Mr. Gray advocates that local authorities should have power to acquire the fee simple of their entire district, paying a fair purchase price for the property, and with power to lease for suitable periods and on statutory

The "unearned increment."

* Mr. Chamberlain's article in the *Fortnightly Review*, December, 1883, p. 775.

† "Report of the Royal Commission," p. 67.

terms. This, he reasons, would not only eventually supersede the necessity for local taxation, but would yield a constantly increasing surplus for the benefit of the community. So far-reaching a proposal will bear much discussion, but in reality it is based upon the principle of the Artisans' Dwellings Act, which permits the taking of an area. It does not, however, meet the necessity of a special tax upon the owners of insanitary property.

How are
unsanitary
areas to be
acquired?

The next point is, how are unsanitary areas to be acquired without paying exorbitant prices for them? Mr. Chamberlain's answer is contained in a series of propositions, the chief of which we proceed to enumerate.

A rate on
owners.

The cost of a scheme for the reconstruction of an unhealthy area should be levied on all owners of property within a certain district wherein the improvement is to be made, in proportion to the value of their holdings. A contributory district should be defined, which might be the whole of the metropolis or the whole of a borough; but if the improvement were essentially local, and for the advantage of an immediate district, the cost might be thrown on the owners within that district. The Artisans' Dwellings Act, 1882, already provides that

where the demolition of property dealt with adds to the value of other property belonging to the same owner, an improvement rate may be levied on the increased value.

The local authority should be empowered to acquire lands or buildings compulsorily, at a price to be settled by an arbitrator, who shall be instructed to give in all cases "*the value which a willing seller would obtain in the open market from a private purchaser, with no allowance for prospective value or compulsory sale.*"

Local authority to purchase without allowance for prospective value or compulsory sale.

The arbitrator should have power to deduct from the ascertained value a sum in the shape of a fine for the misuse of property, or for allowing it to become a cause of disease and crime.

Fines for misuse of property.

Other essentials are that it should be made an offence, punishable by heavy penalties, to hold property unfit for human habitation; that greater independence and power should be given to sanitary and medical officers, and that their responsibility should be enlarged; that powers to destroy unhealthy buildings without compensation should be vested in local authorities, and that they should have more stringent and summary provisions for abating nuisances at the cost of proprietors.

An offence to keep property in unsanitary conditions. Larger powers for sanitary officers.

The alternatives submitted to the people.

It is between these pointed, definite, and it may be admitted, drastic proposals, based on just principles, and conceived in a generous spirit for the advantage of the community, and the weak, short-sighted, half-hearted and selfish conceptions of the Tory Prime Minister that the new democracy will have to choose.

Answers to the remonstrances of owners.

The proprietors of the pest-houses will, of course, exclaim loudly against these proposals; but their remonstrances may be answered with, "Salus populi suprema lex." Not only does this measure formulated as above make for the welfare of the community by improving the public health and by increasing the productivity of labour, it also aims at a more equitable distribution of wealth; it makes for Justice. One would wish that it were superfluous to bring forward these obvious considerations, that it were sufficient to appeal to humanity alone! The Peabody and Ashley Dwellings show what may be done towards the humanisation of the poorer classes while increasing their independence of character. In these dwellings "the rent is always paid willingly," and "there are always many applicants for each vacant room." There can be no doubt that the poor appreciate at its full value the boon of a

healthy, pleasant home. After paying one visit to these noble institutions, after noticing the mats and carpets placed before the doors, and the flowers tended in the windows, all the touching evidences of the pride the humblest inmates take in the improvement of their abode, it becomes difficult to excuse the continued apathy of the State where sympathy has proved so successful.

The State has too long made itself the champion of the rights of the individual; it must now assert the rights of the many—of all. It is apparent that in open competition the fittest obtain more than they deserve, and the less fit come too near perishing. If co-operation is not to supersede competition, the worst effects of this struggle for existence must be at once mitigated. The generation of workmen now coming to manhood will at least be able to read; no doubt they will quickly learn that their claims were long ago admitted to be right and equitable. For the privileged classes long to refuse payment of these claims is impossible; to refuse to pay by instalments is equally impolitic and unjust.

The duty of
the State.

V.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER.

Structure of the land system. Landlord, steward, and farmer. THERE is a striking simplicity in the work of reform as applied to the rural labourer, for it has to be begun from the beginning. The first step is to emancipate him from that servile condition to which ages of class legislation have reduced him, and which violates every principle of social and political freedom. On the strong but labour-bent back of the labourer is reared the antiquated structure of the English land system, a system long since discarded by every nation in Europe except England, and which has at length hopelessly broken down in our own country. At the head of the complicated arrangements connected with land tenure in England is the landlord, who figures as the chief protector of agriculture, but who as a rule, with some notable exceptions, is a mere rent-receiver. Being most

frequently only life owners of the property, it naturally follows, that rent, together with the social and political importance attached to the possession of land, are paramount considerations with the small class of territorial magnates who possess the soil of the country. Next to the landlord, rendered necessary by an artificial system, and constituting a further charge on agricultural industry, is the agent or steward, a sort of deputy landlord, who is often the real power with whom the tenant has to deal. After him comes the farmer, whose position is that of almost absolute dependence on the good-will, the interests, or necessities of those above him. With much legislation ostensibly in his favour, but with little real security for the fruits of any enterprise he may embark in, hampered and restrained by conditions and restrictions which would speedily and effectually ruin any other industry in existence, the English farmer is called upon to compete, and is beaten in the competition, with the cultivating owner in America and in continental countries.

Last of all in this intricate system, so full of The
 obsolete features and conflicting interests, comes the labourer
 agricultural labourer, the real tiller of the soil. The the tiller of
 ploughing, sowing, reaping, hedging, and all other the soil, and
 the only indispensable part of an

agricultural
community.
His social
and poli-
tical condi-
tion.

work connected with the land, are performed by him. Whatever drawbacks to agriculture might result from the abolition of the landowners, tenant farmer, steward, bailiff, gamekeeper, or any other class who live and thrive on the land, it is certain that non-production and barrenness would immediately follow the withdrawal of Hodge. Of his social and political condition it might be briefly said, that the ancient injunction preached in so many village pulpits, "that the husbandman shall be partaker of the first fruits of the soil," is to him a mere mockery, while the more modern maxim that "taxation and representation should go together" has been up to the present time, so far as he is concerned, an empty phrase. Perhaps there is no section of the community so little known to the average Englishman as that of the agricultural labourer. After a long and bitter struggle the urban working classes have won their political freedom and rights of citizenship, and they have now their future destiny in their own hands. As a consequence their success is applauded and their opinions deferred to by speakers and writers. They determine the results of elections and have measures passed in Parliament in their interests, and it needs only political educa-

tion and union to make them masters of the situation. The 'class opposition and brute force which so long deprived the working classes of their rights, being no longer successful, are conveniently ignored or openly condemned by the very political party who exercised them so long as it was possible to do so. With the agricultural labourer, however, it is altogether different.

When the working classes are spoken of, the rural labourer is as a matter of course excluded from the term. He is a cipher in rural society, and has been till now a political pariah in this free country of ours. The case is stated not by himself but for him. In Blue Books, agricultural newspapers, or at farmers' clubs, the position and standing of the labourer are described and descanted on by his masters. The descriptions of his flourishing condition evoke astonishment in the minds of those who know his actual status. Unfortunately in the battle of life, as in real war, it is woe to the vanquished, and in all communities—especially in the well-to-do sections thereof—there is a tendency to accept, without sufficient investigation, the loud and oft-repeated statements of a dominant and influential class respecting those who are condemned to silence and subjection. Any

Formerly
the labourer
a cipher in
our political
system.

attempt even to reveal to the general public the real condition of the labourer is resented by the "agricultural interest" with almost savage indignation, while to demand for him the full rights of citizenship has been as a rule regarded by the representatives of those "interests" as a species of insanity.

An object of charity as long as he was docile; of persecution when he asserted himself.

It is true he is often treated with condescending kindness, and as a deserving object of charity and benevolence, so long—and only so long—as he is docile and subservient, but any attempt at self-assertion or independence is punished and put down by the many forms of social persecution which are in the hands of his superiors. Propertyless, and with no security for house or home, he has no means of helping himself, and any attempt of others to help him—except by social or benevolent means—is felt to be, and is frequently described as, a criminal attempt to unsettle the minds of happy and contented men and to set class against class. For his wrongdoings he is judged by a rural magistracy who feel themselves set in authority over him, and who now and then award punishments so severe and unreasonable as to attract the attention of the Press and the passing condemnation of the public. It is painfully instructive to read in country newspapers of the proceedings of

that seat of justice, the "Petty Sessions," where the labourer is brought face to face with his betters. Of many of these proceedings it might be said with truth we "look for judgment but behold oppression, for righteousness but behold a cry."

In a recent trial even the "Employer's and Workman's Act" was put in force against a labourer with considerable ingenuity. The man was summoned by his employer for leaving work for one day without notice, and damages of 20s. were claimed, though it was admitted that no damage had been sustained. It was shown in evidence that the labourer was receiving 10s. per week, out of which 1s. was deducted for rent, leaving 9s. for the maintenance of a family of five. For the defence it was urged that he had asked for a shilling per week advance in his wages, and on being refused had given notice of his intention to seek a better situation, and had accordingly absented himself for that purpose. A merciful consideration of the case was asked for on account of the miserable condition of the man, his small pay, his young family, and of the admitted fact that the farmer had sustained no loss. It was all in vain, however, and the Bench, composed of a noble lord, a clergyman, two military

A case in point. The Employer's and Workman's Act.

men, and a squire, held that they had nothing to do with the man's condition or his wages, and that the master was not compelled to prove a loss. They awarded the farmer 5s. for damages, and inflicted a fine of 5s. for costs, allowing the man a fortnight in which to pay the whole amount.

The wages
of the
labourer.
Report of
the Royal
Commission
on Agri-
culture.

We are constantly reminded how much better off the labourer is now than he was years ago. We are assured that, though every branch of the agricultural industry has suffered from bad seasons during the past few years, yet the labourer has suffered least of all—that his wages have been but slightly reduced, and that altogether his condition leaves little to be desired. The “Royal Commission” on Agriculture appointed in 1879 have in their Report largely dwelt on this view of the labourer's position. When this Commission was appointed there was an effort made to place at least one agricultural labourer on it, but the attempt was successfully resisted by the then Government.

Conclusions
of the Com-
mission as
to wages.

In the Report of the Commission issued in 1882 the general conclusions arrived at with regard to the labourers are, that “the labourers were never in a better position ;” that “they have better cottages, higher wages, and less work ;” that “during the

recent depression the labourer has had the best of it ;” that there has been “considerable deterioration in quality in spite of the improved position of the labourer ;” that “there is not the same sympathy, and not the same inclination to do anything he is not obliged to do for his employer,” and that “the labourers’ union and delegates have not only succeeded in disturbing, but have destroyed, the good feeling which once existed.”

With regard to the Education Act, the Report dwells on the injurious effect it has had so far as the farmer is concerned, not only by taking the children from agricultural work, but by obliging the women to remain at home to look after the younger children, through the eldest daughter being compelled to attend school. As a consequence, a man at 11s. a week has to be employed where formerly a boy at 3s. 6d. did the work.

These favourable conclusions, however, are hardly warranted by the facts given in the evidence which they are founded. Though the sources of information are landowners, tenant farmers, factors, land surveyors, and employers of labour generally, yet a close examination of the mass of evidence given reveals a state of things of a painful character,

Conclusion
as to the
Education
Acts.

The
evidence
on one-sided
and unsatisfactory.

and which could not fail, if studied by the general public, to awaken feelings of pity and sympathy. In two or three cases only in these bulky volumes the witnesses represent the labourers themselves; and here the evidence is plain and unvarnished. It declares that the labourers are badly housed, their wages insufficient to keep a family or provide for bodily wants, to say nothing of sickness and loss of work. Perquisites are gradually being taken from the men, and no compensation given; young men of eighteen working for 6s. per week, and first-class labourers for 12s. and 14s.; families suffering severely, and their physique degenerating for want of sufficient food, and so forth. The Report, on the other hand, declares that "the cost of labour has increased one-third," that "the condition of the labourer is considerably improved;" and a curious piece of evidence with respect to the "three profits" of Lord Beaconsfield is adduced to the effect "that the labourer has had the chief profit; that is to say, has had a larger proportional share of the profit than formerly."

Personal
experience
in the
opposite
direction.

These apparently conflicting statements can be, however, easily reconciled by any one who has had a long personal experience of the labourers, and

who is enabled to look at his position from an independent, and not from a territorial point of view. It is a question of comparison. Thirty or thirty-five years ago the wages of the labourer in the middle and southern parts of England were 8s., sometimes 9s., and in many cases 7s. per week. At the present time in the same districts the wages vary from 10s. to 15s. per week. It is, therefore, quite true that wages have increased "one-third and more." In those days, however, many articles of diet were cheaper. Butter was 6d. and 7d. per pound; cheese and bacon, eggs and poultry, were lower in price; milk, and especially skim-milk, was plentiful at a merely nominal cost. Now, when railways have opened up distant markets these articles, as articles of diet, are almost unknown to the labourer. The extent to which the children of the rural poor are deprived of milk is one of the most serious considerations in connection with their health and growth. In former days the plentiful supply of milk and skim-milk largely compensated, as far as children were concerned, for many other privations. At the present time in thousands of our rural parishes infants are weaned and brought up on bread and water and sugar, and milk is known

only as a luxury used in small quantities and at rare intervals. The conflicting accounts as to the wages of the agricultural labourer are calculated to somewhat bewilder the general reader, who has no personal experience of the lives of the rural poor. The modes of payment vary in different parts of the country. Some have perquisites differing in value, others have no perquisites at all.

The ordinary scale of wages.

There is the stockman, teamster, the dairyman, and the ordinary labourer, all varying in the scale of wages. Farmers near large towns and in the neighbourhood of mines, pits, quarries, or factories have to pay higher wages. Taking, however, the midland and southern parts of the country, in the agricultural districts unaffected by the exceptional circumstances named, the labourers' regular wages will be found to range from 10s. to 15s. a week.

Perquisites and extra earnings in harvest time.

Besides this there are often, but not always, perquisites of various kinds. It is to be regretted that the men are not paid the whole of their wages in money, as the value of these "perquisites" is invariably over-estimated. Great stress is also laid on the increased wages and extra earnings at harvest time. Here again is the same variation in custom and remuneration. In some parts the

farmer pays 10s. and 11s. per acre for cutting and carrying corn, he finding machines and tools. By hard work the labourer can here earn about 5s. or 6s. per day. In other parts his weekly wages are increased during harvest, these rates varying from 18s. per week to 30s., with beer or cider. In certain districts 15s. per week is given, with meat, drink, and lodging. To win this extra pay, however, it must not be forgotten that a corresponding amount of work is given; indeed, during the five or six weeks of harvest the working hours of the labourer are long and his toil excessive, and he is obliged to have more food and nourishment. As a rule these extra sums are disposed of before they are earned. To use the words of a labourer, "They are spoken for long ago. The shoemaker, the tailor, and the rent has to be paid."

On a careful calculation of these extras and per-
 quisites, in whatever form they may be given, it Value of
extras and
perquisites. will be found that they average about 2s., or at the outside 2s. 6d. per week for the whole year. Therefore it might be taken as a very liberal estimate that the wages, all told, of an agricultural labourer in regular work, in the districts named, range from 12s. 6d. to 17s. per week. This is under the most

favourable circumstances, and supposing that a man has perquisites and has no sickness or loss of work. There are unfortunately thousands of poor fellows who, from advanced age, broken health, want of regular employment, and other causes, do not realise anything like these sums.

Earnings of
children.

An addition to the family income is frequently secured by the labour of children when old enough to work. A strong healthy lad, however, though he may earn from 5s. to 7s. per week wages, yet needs the larger share of the amount for his own food and clothes.

Privations
of labour-
ers. Daily
diet.

It would be difficult for any one to adequately describe the privations of the labourer, or state clearly how he lives. One item in his expenditure is never-failing—that for bread. The bread-bill of a labourer with a family ranges almost invariably from 5s. to 7s. 6d. per week. Bread and potatoes and raw onions, with a little lard, and bacon as often as he can get it, with a small quantity of tea, may be said to be the daily food of the household, fresh meat of any kind being a rare luxury. The possession of a piece of land as an allotment, in many parts difficult to get, makes all the difference in many cases between semi-starvation and a barely

sufficient diet. We have seen mothers comforting themselves, in their sorrow for the death of a child, in the fact that "there would be one less mouth to feed." In a small and miserable cottage, a few months ago, was a labourer whose wages were 10s. per week, sitting at his supper of bread and potatoes after his hard day's work. The man, with tears in his eyes, spoke of his child, then lying dead from "abscess in the back," privation being, no doubt, the truer cause. In another there is a sick child, feeble and querulous from disease, sitting on a hard chair, and with comfortless surroundings, the mother trying in vain to tempt his appetite with the only luxuries at her command—bread with a little lard, and a cup of weak, milkless tea.

The hard lot of our peasantry is, as a rule, accepted by them patiently and in silence, and their sufferings are but little known outside their circle. The life of the labourer may be said to be one long grind of human toil, unrelieved by holidays or recreation, happy if he escapes sickness and loss of work. With no pleasure in the present, and the horizon of his future bounded only by the work-house and the grave, he works on to the end, to escape "the parish," which he dreads. Strength,

The patience of labourers.

however, fails at last, and he then has to rely on a scanty "out-door relief," or he goes into the "House." In due time he is reported dead, and so ends a long life of toil, in which he has added who shall say how much to that stock of national wealth, so small a portion of which has fallen to his share.

Gradual
desertion of
the land.

One result, and a natural one, of the condition of the labourer, is the extent to which he is leaving the land. The decrease in our rural population is a serious feature in our social life, and full of grave consequences to the prosperity of the country. The one idea of the young agricultural labourer is to get away from the land. His love for the soil is not diminished, but he is driven from it by the whip of poverty and privation. The following extract from a letter of a respectable man, who after twenty years' experience as a labourer has recently obtained a more lucrative employment, well describes the situation:—

"I know many families where the whole of the children have left the land, and not many of them have gone back. Our father used to say to us boys, 'Don't you keep on the land any longer than you are forced to; you see how we have to live;' and we have all taken his advice. We have had to live day after day with nothing but onion and bread, and not enough of that, and my poor mother has fainted many a time from want of enough to eat. I have had ten children, and six of them at home not earning a

penny and the wife ill in bed, depending on kindness of neighbours. I now earn double twelve shillings a week, but I know labourers who don't average more than eight or nine through the winter. The landlords and farmers have their meetings, which are published in the papers, and we read them and smile to ourselves."

The recent census shows that the rate of increase of population in England and Wales during the decade was fourteen and one-third per cent., being a higher rate than in any other ten years since 1841. In the purely agricultural districts, however, not only no increase, but a general decrease in the population has taken place. In many parts this decrease is of an alarming extent, amounting in many parishes to ten and twelve and a-half per cent. of the whole population. Referring to this state of things, a clergyman in a midland rural parish writes: "I fear nothing will lessen this evil. The land of England will gradually go out of cultivation, &c., our villages will become impoverished and empty, till the country is all urban, and the population effeminate and demoralized. Then may follow a great war, and disaster will ensue." Many of the labourers emigrate, but the great majority go into the large towns. Wages are lowered or kept low by the steady influx of men into towns, factories, mines, and workshops. This migration is the direct

Decrease of
population
in rural
districts.
The conse-
quence of
the influx
into towns.

outcome of a vicious land system. The poverty, pauperism, overcrowding, and many other social evils which result from it, are outside the scope of this paper, but invite the most serious consideration. The question naturally follows: How is it that, with this depopulation going on, the rural labourers are not more scarce and their wages higher? The answer is that fewer are employed on the land. In all parts farms are seen badly cultivated, in a foul condition, or out of cultivation altogether. Numerous individual cases could be cited, where, a few years ago, ten or twelve winter hands were constantly kept, now three or four are made to suffice. To this cause more than to want of sunshine should be attributed the deficient production of the soil in recent years. The land throughout is labour-starved, and with the fullest allowance for the use of machinery it would be no exaggeration to say that at least twice the number of labourers could be profitably employed under a proper land system, to the great benefit of the cultivator and to the nation generally.

Radical
proposals
for the im-
provement
of the
labourer's
condition.

It is a relief to turn from this picture to consider for a moment what, from a Radical point of view, are the measures to be adopted for the permanent

improvement of the condition of the labourer. The report of the Royal Commission of 1882 contains no recommendations on the subject worth noticing. That of 1869, while honestly and fully revealing the condition of the rural poor, is halting and timid in its suggestions for reform. It declares that ten hours a day is as much as ought to be required of a boy under twelve; that the same child should not be employed on two successive Sundays, and that it should be forbidden by law to take a child to work on foot beyond a distance of two miles. With regard to the labourer and his earnings, the conclusion seems to be pretty much that things must work out their own remedy. "It is to the employer that the public must look for that more correct appreciation of his own interests which will lead him to place the labourer in a better position, so far as it can be done by better wages." There seems to be in the Report no sign of any adequate conception of the gravity of the position, or of the sweeping reforms necessary to put it right. It is a waste of time, from a Radical point of view, to discuss the relative advantages of 8s. and 15s. per week. So long as the increase leaves the labourer inside the starvation circle all sums are unsatisfactory. The

object to be aimed at is for the tiller of the soil, in return for his labour, to get from the land by some means enough to enable him to be well fed, well housed, well clad, properly educated, and to have a fair share of the advantages of modern civilisation.

The first step, the franchise, now at last obtained.

First in order among measures of reform comes the possession of the franchise, without which the labourer cannot be regarded as a free man. After a long struggle this right has been secured by the "Representation of the People Act" of last year, and the agricultural labourer will exercise his newly-acquired power for the first time at the coming general election. The full value of the labourer's vote will not, however, be felt until reform is carried still further in this direction. Pending the adoption of a final measure based on manhood suffrage, it is absolutely necessary that the franchise should at once be simplified by sweeping away all non-residential and property qualifications, retaining one general and uniform household and lodger franchise. But the franchise, after all, must be regarded as the machinery rather than the work; as a means to an end and not the end itself; and it is well to consider what are the reforms in the imme-

diate future which the newly enfranchised electors are likely to demand.

One of the earliest measures for the relief of the rural poor should be to secure free education for their children. The remarks of one of the Commissioners in the Report of 1868 are applicable at the present day: "The agricultural labourer's wages are never up to the mark that can allow of his sacrificing the wages of his child to higher considerations." At that time children of all ages were in general employment on the land. "In many villages," to quote the Report, "they have gone to work as early as six, but eight is the usual age." At ten they were found constantly employed throughout the year on the farm. Complaints are now almost universal as to the injury farmers have suffered by the withdrawal of child labour through the operation of the Education Act. It is stated also that the labourers themselves have suffered severely through being deprived of the earnings of their children, but it is doubtful if this is the case, seeing that men and lads are now employed on work which children were formerly compelled to do. As a class the labourers are anxious for the education of their children, and are sensible of the domestic

The next
remedy,
free
schools.

advantages of having wife and children at home instead of in the fields.

Hardship
of exaction
of fees.

The real hardship, and one which calls for speedy removal, lies in their being liable for the payment of school fees out of their scanty wages. Unfortunately this liability is enforced with vigour, and often with harshness, in the rural parishes, and doubtless adds to the distress and privation of the labourers and their families. It is true that a parent cannot be summoned for the non-payment of school fees, nor can arrears of fees be recovered at County Court or by any other proceedings, but inasmuch as sending a child to school without the fees is not deemed to be school attendance within the meaning of the Act, the parent may be, and is, prosecuted and fined technically for not sending his child to school (although the child might be in regular attendance), but indirectly for neglecting to pay the fees. A study of the report of the proceedings at Petty Sessions in the agricultural districts will show how often parents are thus indirectly punished for non-payment of school fees, which their circumstances make it almost impossible that they can pay. The following case among many illustrates the hardship involved in the compulsory payment of these

fees. A warrant for distraint was issued against a rural labourer for the payment of a fine of 5s. for not sending his children to school. The man had not, however, goods in his house of sufficient value to make distraint lawful, and he was consequently summoned before the magistrates. It was shown in evidence that he was earning but 11s. per week, and had a wife and seven children to keep. One of the magistrates with indignant astonishment asked the man's wife why she had no money to pay her children's school fees, and had no furniture on her hearth. The woman's reply seemed conclusive, "I have six children to keep, and another sucking babe, and I have no money to send the children to school." The eloquence was, however, of no avail; fine and costs were enforced, and a month allowed for payment. With just a shilling a head per week, after deducting rent, to provide for the whole family, the domestic economist will be puzzled, in spite of the judgment of the rural justices, how any surplus for school fees could be provided. One thing is certain in this case, that a month of still smaller supply of bodily wants, of more than even the usual privation and discomforts both of parents and children, would have to be endured

Warrant
for dis-
traint.

in order that the "fine and costs" may be forthcoming.

The improvement of dwellings.

One of the most important and pressing questions connected with the agricultural labourers is that of the improvement of their dwellings. The description of these hovels, called homes, of the agricultural poor, given in the Report of the Royal Commission, 1867, though painfully familiar to those who have lived among the labourers, is calculated to rouse serious attention, if not indignation, in the minds of the thoughtful readers who dwell on it for the first time. Nothing can be stronger than the language used by the Commissioners in reference to these dwellings in the various parishes visited. They are described as "detestable," "deplorable," as "a disgrace to a Christian community." To use the words of one of the commissioners (Rev. J. Fraser, the present Bishop of Manchester), "It is impossible to exaggerate the ill effects of this state of things in every aspect, physical, social, economical, moral and intellectual." With regard to the difficulties in the way of modesty and decency, the Commissioners remark, "With beds lying as thickly as they can be packed, father, mother, young men, lads grown and growing-up girls all together; where every opera-

tion of the toilet and of nature, dressing, undressing, births and deaths, is performed, each within sight and hearing of all, &c., &c. It is a hideous picture, and the picture is drawn from life."

Even when the cottage accommodation is spoken of more favourably, the same report adds: "It will generally be found that if adequate in quality they are generally inadequate in quantity, and that some rich landowner, 'lord of all he surveys,' and having exercised his lordship by evicting so much of his population as were an eyesore or were likely to become a burden to him, still employing their labour, but holding himself irresponsible for their domicile, has built a number of ornamental roomy cottages which he fills with his own immediate dependants." The difficulties in the way of reform are ascribed to causes which exist—some of them in greater force—at the present time. They are ascribed to the "pecuniary position of small proprietors and of embarrassed landlords," to "owners living at a distance, poor or utterly careless," and in open parishes "often to speculative builders." One Commissioner writes: "One of the principal causes of the bad state of the cottages is absenteeism, in which I include not merely non-residence of the owner in

Cottage
accommo-
dation.

the county in which his estate is situated, but that which is equally bad, namely, non-attention to the outlying portion of that estate."

Improvements which have been made more apparent than real.

At the present time in most of the open villages and districts things remain in pretty much the same state as before. On many large estates and close villages real improvements have taken place, though in some of these the improvements, in their effects on the labourer, have been more apparent than real. In some cases many old cottages have been pulled down, often to avoid the expense of repairs, and replaced by a few good ones, leaving the accommodation deficient as regards quantity. In others good and substantial dwellings have been erected, but the rent is beyond the means of the labourer. The result is that men have been driven into the nearest town or open village, at a considerable distance from their work, to seek some cheap and miserable dwelling suitable to their means.

Deceptive appearance of the exterior of cottages: illustrations.

The casual visitor to a rural village is deceived by the outside appearance of the cottages, the bright flowers in the windows, the ivy-covered walls, and the picturesque look generally. He does not realise the true character of these hovels when considered in connection with the requirements of human dwell-

ings. Take, for example, a southern village at the present time, remarkable for its beauty and that of its surroundings, and which leaves pleasurable impressions on the passers-by. The whole spell is destroyed on entering and examining the accommodation, and by finding that it violates every requirement of comfort, health, and decency. Take two of the cottages—and by no means the worst—as a fair sample of the whole. There is one room downstairs 12 ft. by 15 ft. by actual measurement ; over this the same space, minus the opening for the stairs which springs from the lower room, is divided into two rooms. In this dwelling a large family has been brought up. It is now occupied by a worn-out old woman who is finishing her days alone on 2s. 6d. per week and an allowance of bread as out-door relief. In the other cottages there are two so-called rooms on the ground-floor, one 12 ft. by 10 ft. 6 ins., the other 7 ft. 6 ins. by 9 ft. 3 ins., both 6 ft. 6 ins. high. Over these are two bedrooms occupying the same space. Here live a man and his wife with five children under ten years of age. In such dwellings as these, small as they are, lodgers are frequently taken, in order to add a trifle to the income. It says much for our agricultural poor that morality

and decency are preserved under conditions like these; and it is pleasant, though also painful, to notice the efforts made in this direction by divisions and semi-divisions made in these boxes called bedrooms, by means of curtains and rough boarding.

Local government
necessary.

In dealing with this state of things there are difficulties no doubt, but not of an insuperable character. To begin with the open villages and places subject to the operations of the speculator and to "the law of supply and demand." The first want is that of a representative local government in counties, into whose hands the necessary powers may be given to be rigidly enforced in the interests of the poor and not in that of the property owners. At present those principally concerned, the labouring classes, are practically without any share in the management of local affairs, and until the necessary machinery is supplied in the form of rural municipalities on the representative principle, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to carry out effectively the necessary reforms in agricultural districts. This power of local self-government is, in the interests of the rural labourers, second only in importance to the Parliamentary franchise.

The extension of the Artisans' Dwellings Acts

(1878 to 1882) and of Mr. Torrens' Acts to the rural districts, with such additional clauses and modifications as may be necessary, would place in the hands of these local authorities remedial powers with regard to water supply, removal of nuisances, cleansing, repairing, &c., together with the improvement, or removal altogether, of cottages reported by an efficient officer as dangerous to health or unfit for human habitation. Land should be acquired where necessary by the authorities by compulsory purchase at a fair market value ; that is to say, at the price it would realise in the open market if the owner were a willing seller.

This land should be let for building cottages on plans and conditions approved by the local authorities, one essential condition being that half an acre of land at least should be attached to each dwelling. Any scheme of this sort should be compulsory, and the duty of seeing that it was faithfully carried out should be placed in the hands of the Local Government Board, and any expenses connected with it should be provided by a rate levied on the owners of property in the district.

Powers for purchase of land for cottages.

These difficulties, however, with regard to open villages would largely disappear if the cottage ac-

Cottages of estates.

now forced to go there against their will and convenience. There remains the consideration of rent. A good cottage with conveniences suitable for a family would cost, say, £200, and to pay $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. the rent should be about 2s. 9d. per week, a sum quite beyond the power of the labourer to pay. In every parish, however, in which he can do so, the labourer is eager to rent an allotment of ground. For this he is willing to pay 3d. to 6d. per log; that is, after the rate of £2 to £4 per acre. He is often, at the present time, compelled to pay much more, in some localities as much as 1s. per log or £8 per acre. In all cases, therefore, the landowner should be required to attach not less than half an acre of land to a cottage. This would be a small requirement and a just one, so far as the owner is concerned, and would solve the difficulty of rent. The labourer, instead of having to walk a mile and often more to his little allotment, would have it at his door. He would be enabled to pay 3s. per week or more for his cottage and garden, and be far better off, and feel himself to be so, than when he had paid 1s. to 2s. for the hovel in which he previously dwelt.

It should be an imperative condition with regard to these cottages that they should be on a yearly

Terms of
tenancy.

tenancy, subject to the usual notice to quit. Without this protection the labourer would continue subject to evictions and treatment according to the caprice of farmer and landowner, to which, as a weekly tenant, he is now liable, and which deprive him of all sense of security in his home, and the threat of which is not unfrequently used to check any symptoms of independence or self-assertion.

The reforms indicated would benefit farmers.

The reform here advocated would tend ultimately to the benefit of the farmer, and to confer an additional value on the estate by securing a number of efficient labourers well housed and on the spot. It is interesting to note that there is nothing new in principle in this proposal, but that it is only a revival of the provisions of several old Acts of Parliament under which landholders were compelled to attach portions of land to rural dwellings. An Act passed in the time of Elizabeth, at one time enforced, but now repealed, required that no person should "build any cottage or habitation or dwelling for persons engaged in husbandry," unless the owner "do assign or lay to the same cottage four acres of ground at the least." It is true that provisions were made that no more cottages than were actually necessary should be built, but at the same time over-

crowding was guarded against by a heavy fine imposed if "any inmate or more families or households than one were found dwelling or inhabiting in any one cottage."

One indispensable condition is, however, necessary for the permanent improvement of our agricultural population. It is to give them an open career on the land, by enabling them, by some easy and effective method, to become in some form permanent holders or Occupiers of the land they till. Many land reformers declare that this will be brought about by the adoption of those reforms which are included under the term of "Free trade in Land." It will be found, however, that in a rich country like England, with the desire for land which is generally found among the wealthy classes, there will be but small chance for either farmers or labourers who are not capitalists to raise themselves out of the ranks of tenants and wage-receivers. Some special legislation will be needed to prevent monopoly and accumulation of land by a few persons, and to bring about, or rather to restore, the interest and connection between the cultivator and the soil which exist in other countries, and which in former times obtained in England. Occupying ownership and pea-

Ownership
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nent occu-
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dispensable
conditions
of improve-
ment.

sant proprietary established under certain conditions by the aid of the State, acting through local authorities, seem to be the direction in which these objects can be best secured. Besides the creation of small holdings, local authorities should have compulsory powers to purchase land where necessary at a fair market price without any addition for compulsory sale for the purpose of garden and field allotments to be let at fair rents to all labourers who might desire them, in plots up to one acre of arable and three or four acres of pasture. There is not space in the present article to touch on anything beyond the mere principle to be maintained, though it would not be difficult to prescribe effective methods by which to proceed in carrying out this principle. The school of orthodox political economy, which too often confines its narrow aims to the increase of mere wealth in the aggregate, and is unable to include in its range of vision the social and other interests of the common people, would oppose the process here indicated. But supposing it could be shown—which it cannot—that a system of wholesale cultivation was best from a mere financial point of view, there are the gravest objections to its being *universally adopted*. If it could be proved that a

company, with abundance of capital, could with profit to themselves farm, say, a whole county by means of machinery, and with the fewest number possible of penniless labourers, such a proceeding would not be permitted. The people have to be considered, and for their own welfare and that of the nation, they must be enabled to live on the land and by it. This was the difficulty which Stein had to contend with in the memorable land legislation which, while reducing, if not destroying, the importance of a territorial caste, yet turned the poverty and discontent of the peasantry into loyalty and prosperity and saved his country from revolution and social ruin. He was assailed with the theories of "freedom of contract," of "free trade in land," of "large farms and abundant capital," and from the economist's point of view had no strictly logical answer to give. He persisted in the view, however, that there was a duty to be performed towards the people, and that the peasant class should be protected and maintained as a necessary element in the permanent welfare of the State. Events have proved that his political economy was as sound as his statesmanship was wise.

In close connection with this branch of the sub-^{Cotra}
farms

yeomanry
holdings.

ject is a matter which, in the interests of the labourers, cannot be passed over. In olden times there were always in England a large class of cottage farms, innumerable small holdings, some freehold, and others held on various conditions of tenure. If not all of them sufficient to maintain a family, yet they formed a great addition to the labourer's earnings, and enabled him to treat more independently with his employer. Mr. Cowper, in a speech—quoted in the Report of the Royal Commission—on the introduction of a Bill for the promotion of labourer's allotments, says: "It appears from history that, before the land of England was brought fully into cultivation, almost all cottagers had land for tillage, and in addition had common rights over the waste lands, but since the year 1800 no fewer than 2,000 Enclosure Acts have been passed." These Enclosure Acts, framed and carried by Parliaments composed mainly of landlords, have deprived the labourers of the means of bettering themselves, which as a class they formerly possessed.

The spolia-
tion of
common

The occupation of land, rights of keeping cows and feeding pigs and poultry, and of cutting turf and fuel on commons and wastes, with other advantages, have been almost completely put an end to.

The Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture, 1867, states that "up to 1843 seven millions of acres were enclosed in England and Wales with, in the opinion of persons of great authority, very inadequate precautions to secure the rights of the smaller commoners." During a debate in the House of Lords in 1845, the Earl of Lincoln said, "This I know, that in nineteen cases out of twenty, committees of this house, sitting on Enclosure Bills, have neglected the rights of the poor;" and in the House of Commons it was stated that these Bills had been introduced and passed without discussion, and that it was impossible to say how many persons had lost their rights and interests by their action. "It is true," said the speaker, "that these Bills had been referred to committees upstairs, but every one knew how these committees were generally conducted; they were attended only by honourable members who were interested in them, being lords of manors, and the rights of the poor, though they might be talked about, had frequently been taken away by that system." In numberless cases, ancient rights belonged to the cottages and tenements, and were always enjoyed by the tenant, but when enclosures took place, the land awarded as compensation

was given to the landlords, who disposed of it as they thought fit, and the occupiers, whose claims were ignored, were from thenceforth deprived of those rights and privileges for ever.

Operation
of General
Enclosure
Act, 1845.

The General Enclosure Act of 1845 professed to make ample provision, by means of gardens and public allotments, for the labouring poor. A study of the Act shows, however, that the real power in the matter was virtually placed in the hands of the territorial class, and that the limited and complicated provisions affecting the poor, and the apparent protection afforded by the Enclosure Commissioners are, for the most part, illusory. The result has been the continuation as a rule, as far as the poor are concerned, of the process carried on by previous Enclosure Acts. Out of nearly 450,000 acres enclosed in the twenty-two years from the passing of the Act to the year 1867, we have the authority of the Royal Commission on Agriculture (1867) for stating that only 2,119 acres were assigned to the labouring poor, and no doubt subsequent enclosures show a similar result. The general outcome, therefore, of all legislation with regard to enclosures has been to take away from the peasantry, as a class, the rights and advantages which formerly belonged to them; to

deprive them of the possession and interest in the land, and to reduce them from a status of more or less independence to that of mere hirelings. Though it might be too late to interfere with these legal confiscations, yet it is right and profitable that a strict and searching inquiry should be made as to how far the provisions in the Enclosure Acts—slender as they are—which affect the peasant class, have been only partially or nominally carried out, and to what extent they have been evaded altogether.

There is, however, another branch of this subject of the last importance as affecting the rural population, and which common justice demands should be immediately and effectually dealt with. An enormous quantity of the common and waste land of England has been appropriated by landowners by simply enclosing it, without the formality even of an Enclosure Act, and in total disregard of the rights of the people. This process has been going on for ages, and is still in operation. The method of proceeding is a very simple one. A rail and post fence is placed round a piece of waste or common land by an adjoining landowner. It sometimes happens that the people of the locality, aware of their rights, will pull this fence down, and seek to be summoned before a court

Illegal enclosures;
how effected.

of justice, in order that their rights may be proved. No summons are, however, issued, the fences are replaced, and though pulled down again and again, yet they eventually remain, the weaker party in the unequal contest being obliged to succumb. In due time hedges are put up, notices that "trespassers will be prosecuted" appear, and the land is cultivated or planted, the rights of the people are extinguished, and the theft is complete. In this way thousands and tens of thousands of acres have been taken of common and waste land, hill-sides, open spaces, stile-paths, and wide stretches of grassy roadsides; and in remote districts, where public opinion does not exist or is powerless, these illegal transactions have been and are still carried on with impunity. Over and over again are the old lines illustrated which describe the crime of "stealing the goose from the common," and the safer practice of stealing the common itself. We might take two instances of many thousands of this silent spoliation. In a parish in the south of England is a large valley leading off from an extensive moorland, which has been from time immemorial in the enjoyment of the people of the locality and of the neighbouring towns. A few years ago the adjoining landlord decided to

annex it, and accordingly closed it in with fences. Meetings were held and remonstrances made, but no one was able and willing to try conclusions with the possessor of a long purse and of territorial power. A few roughs, under the name of gamekeepers, were placed on the land, who did not scruple to threaten violence, and even to use it, on the few who ventured to assert their rights. At length opposition died out, the privileges of the people became a tradition, and the valley has now, for some years, been a strict game preserve, into which no one dares to enter without permission of the so-called owner.

A second instance is that of a parish in the Midlands. Many years ago the parish was open common land, in which stood thirty cottages. The owners, for more than one hundred years, had held the cottages and cultivated pieces of land. At first two enclosures were made, and soon after the agent of the largest landowner persuaded the men to pay a very small yearly sum on each of the cottages, "simply as an acknowledgment." From year to year these "rents" were raised, and within a very short time the landlord claimed and sold the cottages, and put the money in his pocket.

With regard to such lands as these the course Proposed
restitution

of lands
illegally
obtained.

seems clear. Every acre so appropriated should be restored. The idea in such cases as these that time is the great legaliser, or that possession constitutes a legitimate claim, should be scouted. The most searching inquiry into title ought to be instituted, and all lands shown to be thus wrongfully taken should be given up. The Radical Programme must respect the rights of property, but it would not be worthy of its name if it did not include in that protection the rights of the peasantry and the rural poor, who by force, fraud, or superior cunning have been deprived of what was theirs. As to the principle of this restitution, there should not be a moment's hesitation, the real point to be settled being as to the manner and extent in which arrears of rent or compensation should be demanded from those who have enjoyed the fruits of the land so taken. The demand for this retrospective legislation is so just that it should be strongly maintained, and after the recent wholesome example of Epping Forest in this direction, success is not to be despaired of.

The safety
of the
country
bound up
with the

These reforms with regard to the land and the labourer open up a wide field of practical statesmanship, affecting in the highest degree the welfare of

the country generally. However much accumulated wealth may increase during spasmodic epochs of great commercial and manufacturing prosperity, yet the real safety of the nation, the permanence of its institutions, and the happiness and social condition of the people are bound up in an inseparable manner with the condition and cultivation of the land. The fear is that reforms in this direction may come too late, and that the race of husbandmen—the hardy peasant class who constitute such a staying element, the “backbone” of the nation—will have deteriorated or largely disappeared. It is said that the rural classes, when they have the vote, will support the Conservative party. That might be true in the ordinary contests between Liberals and Tories. But parties will not in future front each other on the old lines, but the issues of the struggle will be defined, and the objects sought for made clear. Education, newspapers, railways, the knowledge and example of America, and modern civilisation generally, are evolving forces which monopolies and privilege cannot withstand, and against which class efforts, prejudices, and angry assumptions will not avail.

VI.

RELIGIOUS EQUALITY.

The
National
Church a
doomed in-
stitution.

THE time has now long gone by since those who approach the question of the Establishment must first turn or capture the great fortresses that have been at sundry times and in divers places diligently reared in defence of a National Church by a long array of potent divines. From the noble gravity of Hooker in the sixteenth century, and the shrewd reason of Warburton and Paley in the eighteenth, down to the practical wisdom of Chalmers, the vehemence of Arnold, the eager tenacity of Stanley in our own immediate day and generation, all the resources of ecclesiastical eloquence and logic have gone to build up and to fortify a theory which may still impress the student of abstract polity, but which has a steadily and rapidly lessening relation to real affairs. Nor is it any more needful that the

assailant of the Establishment should begin with the imposing pleas of some of the most renowned of lay statesmen, from Burke to Mr. Gladstone, in favour of the solemn consecration of the commonwealth by binding it to a great ecclesiastical corporation, "exalting its mitred front in courts and parliaments," and giving to the civil magistrate the guardianship of the settled institution of religion. However gracious the ideal, it is now seen to be practically unattained and for ever unattainable.

As we trace back the course of events, the most reluctant eye sees them all tending uniformly and with growing momentum to the secularisation of the State and the emancipation of the Church. Social forces, political forces, intellectual forces, spiritual forces, all unite in one undeviating and indeflectible direction. Attachment to the Church of England as a religious society is probably deeper in the hearts and imaginations of men than it has ever been. But the march of legislation for the last half century has faithfully registered the growth of the conviction that the installation of the Episcopal Church in the seat of privilege is no condition of its moral or religious efficacy, while it is a political injustice,

Forces
tending to
disestab-
lishment.

a social mischief, and a hindrance to the full sense of equal citizenship in a united community.

Inapplica-
bility of old
arguments.

The abstract question which has exercised so many great and wise men has lost its relevancy, because circumstances have completely stripped the old arguments of their aptness and their weight. Parliament may or may not have been fit a hundred years ago to control the discipline and the doctrines of a Protestant and Episcopal Church, but the House of Commons a hundred years ago was wholly Protestant and almost wholly Episcopalian. To-day the House of Commons contains several Jews, a great many Presbyterians, a host of Nonconformists, and a host of Roman Catholics. The conditions of state supervision have undergone a revolution. A Church Discipline Act or a Public Worship Regulation Act might now be passed by the Catholic vote or the Presbyterian vote or the Nonconformist vote or even by the casting vote of Mr. Bradlaugh.

A State
Church to-
day a
mockery.

Again, a hundred years ago, and even sixty years ago, no Nonconformist could, without procuring an indemnity, hold the most insignificant office under the Crown. The Cabinet of 1880 contained a Presbyterian, a Quaker, and a Unitarian, and there are some who think that we may even live to see the

Unitarian nominating the Archbishop of Canterbury. Even in the present century, if Nelson had been a Roman Catholic he would not have been allowed to win Trafalgar; the Establishment was worth calling an Establishment in those days. But now a Roman Catholic may be Lord Chamberlain or Governor-General of India. So complete a transformation in the structure and system of Parliament and Administration has reduced the theory of a State Church to a gross farce, an unseemly mockery, and a truly repulsive scandal, which would have filled the great champions of its cause, like Hooker and like Burke, with whom it was an honest and a solemn cause, with utter horror and dismay.

To match the change in the character of Parliament there has taken place a remarkable change in the ideas of Parliament with respect to Church property. Even after the great reform of 1832 the Conservative part of the legislature were strong enough to resist a theoretical assertion of the right of the State to appropriate the surplus revenues of the Irish Church. But after the next reform of the House of Commons, the Minister of the day was able to carry a measure that not only disestablished the Church of Ireland, but boldly applied the bulk

Change in
ideas re-
specting
Church
property.

of its revenues, after the satisfaction of existing interests, to secular purposes.

Establish-
ment of
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missioners
in England.

In a different spirit, but probably, as we may one day see, with even more momentous consequences, a fundamental change was made in respect of the property of the Church of England by the establishment of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. What Parliament did by this vast innovation was to set aside the old and fundamental principle that each ecclesiastical corporation, whether aggregate or sole, possesses its own property separate, distinct, and inalienable, and in place of that to assume that the Church at large is one corporation with common property, which is applicable to general purposes, to be defined as Parliament may think fit. The different and independent ecclesiastical estates were put into the melting-pot and transformed into a common fund, and the common fund was handed over to a board, which deals with the distribution of this fund, and indirectly, as a consequence of the power of the purse, with a vast number of other ecclesiastical matters, practically at their own discretion. It is not any too much to say that "during the thirty years chronicled in the reports of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners they have slowly grown, from mere

builders and restorers of episcopal residences, to be the absolute rulers and managers of all the secular concerns of the Church of England." The results of this sweeping change may have been as useful as we please, but those churchmen and lawyers were not wrong who complained at the time that it was a surrender of the fundamental principle of the inviolability of Church property, and the concession to an external body of unlimited control over the whole destination of that property.

Another order of facts is equally germane. The universal preponderance of the privileged sect has shifted and swung round. The precise figures of the various bodies are not to be obtained, but data are not wanting for arriving at a conclusion that is near enough to the mark to satisfy a candid politician. We may content ourselves with the following:—In 1801 the Wesleyans had 825 chapels or places of worship; the Independents had 914; the Baptists had 652. According to a parliamentary return that was issued in 1883, the five divisions of Baptists had 2,243 certified places of worship; the Independents 2,603; and the nine divisions of Methodists had 13,305. The gross total, therefore, of the places of worship of these three great bodies

Enormous
growth of
independent
sects

in 1882 was over 18,000. The total of churches and chapels in which marriages were solemnised according to the rites of the Established Church was 14,500, or only a thousand more than the Methodists alone. In fine, the whole of the non-established bodies, now including Jews, Catholics, Quakers, and the rest, number 21,300 of these buildings against the 14,500 of the Established Church, or very nearly half as many again. When we have made whatever adjustments may be reasonable for the greater accommodation in one group of buildings, not omitting, however, the set-off in the fuller attendance in the other group, we may well ask what, in the name of common sense, is to be made of the talk about a national Church in the face of figures like these?

The Establishment in Wales; its injustice and failure.

The case of Establishment in Wales will not bear stating. "On one subject, in particular," said Mr. Gladstone, not long since, "the treatment of Wales was almost barbarous. That was in regard to the mode in which the patronage of the Welsh Church Establishment was administered. English ideas and views were allowed completely to override the views and instincts of the whole people. The services of the Church were administered, for the most part, in a foreign tongue. The bishops, in most instances,

could not speak in Welsh even the words of the Confirmation service." The result of this system has been just what might have been expected. What the Establishment failed to accomplish, voluntary effort was driven to do. We have it on the authority of a Welsh dignitary that the Church "has lost five-sixths of the Welsh-speaking people, and her strength survives among the English-speaking upper and middle classes. In 1715 she was confronted by 35 Nonconformist chapels; in 1879 by more than 3,000. Then the Welsh literature came almost entirely from the clergy; now it comes almost exclusively from Nonconformists. Again, although the landlords of Wales are mainly Churchmen, at least two-thirds of the political power of Wales is Nonconformist."

The only question is whether the proportion of members of the Establishment is one in five, or in seven, or in nine. The best opinion is the last, that in Wales the national Church counts among its adherents one in nine of the nation. Lord Richard Grosvenor is not exactly an agitated reformer, yet even he is compelled to admit that the disestablishment of the Church in Wales "must come in the near future." "It could only be dealt with thoroughly and honestly

Disproportion in number of its adherents to Nonconformists; legislation not far off.

by a Liberal Government," and, indeed, a Liberal whip could hardly say less. "It must and could only be dealt with by them in a truly broad spirit, but at the same time he could not hold out any hopes that the question could be dealt with during the present, or the next Parliament. There was a great deal of legislation to be done, and a great many errors to clear off, and this question required great preparation, and must be thoroughly looked into." "Must go into it, you know," as would have said the famous Mr. Brooke in *Middlemarch*, "Must look it up—disestablishment capital thing up to a certain point—capital thing in the next century but one, say." Disestablishment in Wales has been pretty "thoroughly looked into" already, and it may come in a nearer future than Lord Richard Grosvenor supposes.

Church and
State in
Scotland.

Scotland, unlike Wales, has at least an Establishment that in standards of doctrine, in church discipline, in forms of worship, and in language, is not alien from the opinions and habits of the majority of the population. The ties that bind it to the State are few and lighter than in England. The General Assembly has legislative powers of which Convocation has not the merest shadow. Livings are not

saleable property. The rights of the patron are strictly limited. The Scotch Establishment does not seat representatives in the House of Lords. The amount of the endowment provided by the State is both relatively and absolutely small, probably not amounting to £400,000 a year. If the scale, however, is less ample, and the connection less close and pervading in the Church of Scotland than in the Church of England, the position of the former is even less defensible as entitled to exceptional favour and countenance in the national polity. The Free Church and the United Presbyterians are each of them only a degree less numerous than the Church of Scotland, and they are not inferior to it in the union of wealth, activity, and public consideration. If the total annual revenues of the Scotch Establishment are something under £700,000, those of the Free Church are not far short of £600,000, while the United Presbyterians may be set down at something less than £400,000. It is evident to any politician that a very slight puff of wind will suffice to overthrow an arrangement that has so little to say for itself as the Church of Scotland. The Scotch members who pawkily put themselves down in Dod as "not opposed to eventual disestablishment," know

that any accident might precipitate the eventual into the actual.

religious
quality.

The figures quoted above as to the relative numbers of the Episcopal and the other denominations in England, have more than a merely numerical significance. They measure also the growth of the claim for religious equality, and of the principle of religious equality in men's minds. Whatever may be the exact proportion of members of the Church of England relatively to the united members, say, of the Wesleyan, Baptist, and Independent Churches, and whether the former have or have ^{to} a preponderance which even at the very best ^y ^l not be more than trifling, the dissenting commun^{er}ties are at all events important enough to make an irresistible protest against the concession of political and social supremacy to their old rival. It is not merely that the reduction of the parliamentary franchise has made, and will make, an immense increase in their direct political power. That is true, and it is a very important fact, but it is not all.

The principle of religious equality, when once raised by circumstances, is especially fitted to find its way into the plain, straightforward, and unso-

phisticated minds of the people who now by universal admission are the depositories of supreme political power in this country. Religious equality is a watchword that strikes a responsive chord, not only in the workmen who go to chapel, but in those who go to church, or who go nowhere. It fits in with the whole bent and range of their homely political notions. Englishmen are free as the day from venomous antipathy either to classes or institutions. Even their contempt for the House of Lords is good-natured, so long as the Lords confine themselves to escapades that amuse them without doing over much hurt to other people. To the Church of England, as a religious community, they have no antipathy at all. The Establishment is another matter. They know its political history. They know that from its highest officers down to its obscurest subaltern, this great army of political clergy has never lost a single great opportunity of taking the side of tyranny against freedom, of privilege against equality, of stagnation against improvement; that they were to a man in supporting the king and the Parliament in the attempt to suppress the liberty of the American colonies; almost to a man they hated and resisted the Reform Bill; they

Narrow-mindedness of the Establishment.

have hated and resisted every proposal to extend religious freedom and civil equality; they looked coldly on while other men fought the battle which drove slavery from our possessions; they did not lend a finger to mitigate the inhumanity and atrocity of the criminal code; they spoke no word on the side of the common people in the great battle for cheap bread. It is no wonder that the active and leading minds among the workmen look with suspicion and disfavour on an institution that has so unhappy a record.

*Growth of
the principle
of religious
equality.*

Some evidence of the growth of the principle of religious equality was furnished in the division taken during the session of 1884 on the question that the peers spiritual should cease to sit in the Upper House. The confident vigour of the attack, the half-heartedness of the defence, the silent undercurrents of feeling on both sides in the House, made it what may be called one of the most sincere exhibitions of the Parliament of 1880—85. The composition of the minority, including as it did many Churchmen and several of the most timorous of the Whigs, in favour of the proposed reform, had a significance that could not be mistaken. Most of the Ministers deliberately absented themselves, not

excepting those among them who are likely to have most influence in the future of their party.

Then the scandals of the traffic in livings excite ^{Traffic in livings.} more attention, and create profounder disgust, in proportion as the constituencies become more popular. It is quite true that the bishops deplore this extraordinary market as warmly and as honestly as anybody else. But a Committee of the House of Lords, presided over by the shrewd and practical Bishop of Peterborough, inquired into the exercise of patronage ten years ago, and in spite of the abuses that they discovered, they reported in favour of the maintenance of the system which leads to them. A Bill was laid before Parliament in 1884 for transferring the bulk of private patronage on certain terms to the governors of Queen Anne's Bounty—to be, in fact, administered by the Crown. But the measure was introduced by Nonconformists, and was opposed by the party of privilege. So difficult is it to introduce reforms into a State Church with parliamentary consent, so impossible to introduce them without it.

There is only an indirect connection between the progress of the forces that move for disestablishment ^{Disestablishment and religious thought.} and the movement of thought within the religious thought.

world. Although it is not direct, yet the connection exists, and in considering the circumstances that are every day forcing disestablishment on the minds of practical men, the active tendencies of religious thought in two opposite quarters occupy a prominent place. It is not for us here to expatiate on the mixed successes and reverses of a liberalised theology within our own generation. The public has been assured on high authority that of the eleven thousand English clergy who one-and-twenty years ago set their hands to a declaration in favour of certain crude notions on the subject of inspiration, there are probably not fifty who would now do it again; that the non-Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, which thirty years ago excluded a candidate from a theological chair, is now maintained by no one of any name or fame; that the composite character of the Pentateuch, on which Colenso found it so hard to get a hearing, is now in principle taken for certain; that the modification in expositions of sacred dogma has been so extensive that no treatise would now be written with the phraseology current forty years ago. "No greater impression," said Dean Stanley, as the sum of his stocktaking of the work of a generation, "will

have been left upon this age than by those who have followed in the broad track opened by the great philosophic divines of the seventeenth century" ("Addresses delivered in America," 13—14). On the other hand, theologians of the rival school could point just as triumphantly to the vast expansion in power and popularity of the doctrines and rites of sacerdotalism. *Non nostrum tantas componere lites*. Both disputants have plenty to show for their own view. Both are right in their contention of fact. The latitudinarian and the ritualist, the broad churchman and the high, the rationaliser and the Romaniser, have each achieved signal victories in the practice of churches, in the language of pulpits, and in the opinion of conscientious men. But they have done something besides. They have strained formularies until they have broken asunder, they have turned ecclesiastical unity into an organised hypocrisy; the shrine of peace and charity has echoed as it never did before with the shrill slogans of incensed litigants, and new cracks and fissures of unprecedented meaning are beginning to gape alike in the principle and the working of Establishment.

It is not necessary, and we have no taste for the ^{Scandals of the Church.} *business, to enumerate the scandals that have dis-*

tracted the Church and afflicted the public conscience since the passing of the Public Worship Regulation Act. Gibbon has described in an odious page how Julian the Apostate was accustomed to invite to his palace the leaders of the hostile Christian sects, that he might regale himself with the agreeable spectacle of their furious encounters. In our own time on more than one occasion some members of the judicial committee of the privy council may have bethought themselves of that edifying precedent. But scandals of this sort are hardly the worst. We have not forgotten and cannot forget the vision of a pious and a sagacious prelate in the most solemn moment of his life actively conniving at a Machiavellian evasion of the law of the land on the desperate chance of saving the peace of the Church. The suits, the contumacies, the imprisonments are fresh in the memories of all men. Pages stained with such records as these must surely make all good men wish that they should close the chapter of the political institution that has caused them to be written. The appointment of the Royal Commission in 1881 to inquire into the working of the ecclesiastical courts produced a lull in the raging storm. As soon as there has been time fully to master the

Report, the truce will come to an end, the Church Union and the Church Association will once more marshal their hosts in battle array, and the whole fabric and foundation of the Establishment will reel under the shock of battle within its gates.

The very Report is a fresh provocation. Let us glance at one or two instances. The Report gives to the Bishop an absolute veto on proceedings against a clergyman for offences in doctrine or ritual. Without the Bishop's permission the courts will be closed entirely to a layman, and he will have no right of appeal from the absolute decision, however great the wrong which he may conceive himself to have sustained. We do not argue this matter. We are only showing that the Royal Commission brings not peace but a sword. For on this very point so good a churchman as Lord Coleridge, himself a member of the Commission, dissents emphatically from his colleagues, and declares himself to be clearly of opinion that "the active interference of the Bishops to prevent the law of the land being enforced against those who have deliberately broken it is indefensible, as I must confess, it seems to me to be fast becoming intolerable in practice."

The Report
of the Royal
Commission
of 1881.

Again, the Report transforms the courts of first

Transformation of

courts of
first in-
stance into
ecclesiasti-
cal tri-
bunals.

instance—that is to say, the diocesan and provincial courts—into purely ecclesiastical tribunals. They are no longer to be presided over by a lay judge, but by the Bishops, and instead of Lord Penzance we are to have one of the Archbishops. How little, this is likely to commend itself either to the evangelical or to the Erastian party of the Church, may be foreseen in the criticisms made, not by Lord Coleridge this time, but by Lord Penzance, upon the recommendation of his brother Commissioners. “An ecclesiastic,” says Lord Penzance, “is not by his training and acquirements well qualified for the administration of strict law. It is, I think, to be apprehended that a Bishop would not be careful to follow decided cases, with which, perhaps he would be little familiar; that he would be apt to import into his enunciation of the law considerations of policy and the elasticity of discretion, while in controversial matters of doctrine there would be a startling divergence of decision in the different dioceses, which, by rendering the law uncertain, would bring it into discredit and impair its efficacy.”

Limitation
of trial for
ecclesiasti-
cal offences
to ecclesi-
astical

Let us quote one more recommendation from the Report, and then we will leave it. No amount of straining could enable the Commissioners to keep a

clerical defendant from falling into the hands of a lay and secular tribunal at last. He might escape the law as administered by a sympathising bishop, but that would not prevent his persecutors from the right of appeal, and the constitution of the court of appeal has always been found the sharpest pinch of the whole position. According to the Report, the final court of appeal in ecclesiastical causes is to be a permanent body of lay judges. Of course this is a fatal blow to the contention of the High Church party that ecclesiastical offences should be tried by strictly ecclesiastical tribunals. The sacerdotalist is to have the conformity of his teaching tried by a layman after all, and to see the mysteries of the faith as coldly and as boldly handled as if they were items in a charter-party or a policy of insurance or a deed of partnership or any other sublumary matter. But the Commissioners have done what they could for him by insisting that every judge appointed to the court of appeal shall previously make a solemn declaration that he is a member of the Church of England as by law established. The objections to any such limitation are obvious, and even from the point of view of the partisans of Establishment, they are overwhelming.

It imposes a special disqualification on Nonconformist, Catholic, Jewish, or agnostic occupants of the judicial bench ; it might exclude the most competent judges from settling most important legal points ; it leads logically to the intolerable absurdity of reserving every dispute about a Catholic or Nonconformist trust to a Catholic or Nonconformist judge ; and finally, it explodes the whole contention that the Church is identical with the nation, and brings it down from all pretensions as a national institution to the level of a special community and a private sect.

Obligations
imposed
thereby.

So much for the last desperate attempt to invent new bottles that shall hold the old wine, and to reconcile perfect spiritual freedom in the Church with temporal supervision by the State. If the established clergy insist on being freed from special secular restraints, they will have to abandon special secular privileges. If they are bent on spiritual independence, they must take with it the full consequences of temporal emancipation. So long as the nation secures great privileges to those who hold a particular set of religious opinions, for so long it possesses a right to see that these conditions are honestly and carefully observed. So long, we may

add, as Englishmen are Englishmen, this is a right which they are not at all likely to pretermitt. Neither of the two great ecclesiastical factions needs to look to Parliament for new legislative weapons wherewith to strike a deadlier blow at its antagonist. Parliament is hardly more likely to pass another Church Discipline Act or Public Worship Regulation Act, than it is to repeat the votes of 1818 and 1825 of a million and a-half of the national money for the purpose of building Episcopalian churches. The legislature is busier than it ever was, it is more resolutely averse than it ever was to meddling with ecclesiastical problems, and those problems themselves are more difficult and intractable than they have been since the era of the Civil Wars. If those churchmen—to use part of Chatham's description of this great composite system—who hold by the Calvinistic Articles, are too much in earnest to tolerate those who hold by the Popish Liturgy; if the foundations of compromise on which the whole fabric of establishment was reared no longer exist, then there is only one thing for it. The privileges must be withdrawn in order that the restraints may be removed, and the more rapid the growth among religious men and women of moral scruple, intellec-

tual sincerity, and spiritual earnestness, whether in Calvinist, in Anglo-Catholic, or in Armenian, the more intolerable will be found the mechanical yoke of our gross and leaden Erastianism.

Examples
set by the
United
States and
our de-
pendencies.

In this, as in so many other parts of the social and political field, England is, half unconsciously but very powerfully, influenced by the working out of her own problem by her kinsfolk in new worlds. The example of the children is not despised by the parent, and those who began by building on the precedents of the old country, are now repaying the precious gift by new and fruitful precedents of their own. Religious equality in the United States, whatever else it brings, at all events brings peace. Now that slavery has gone, and in spite of the disturbances of Ultramontaniam, as a rule politics are kept clear of religion. "Much as we have heard of the two candidates for the Presidency"—so wrote a keen and a competent observer six or seven years ago—"we could not at this moment tell to what Church either of them belongs. Where no Church is privileged, there can be no cause for jealousy. The Churches dwell side by side, without disturbing the State with any quarrel; they are alike loyal to the Government; they unite in supporting a system

of popular education which generally includes a certain element of unsectarian religion ; they combine for social and philanthropic objects ; they testify, by their common celebration of national thanksgivings and fasts their unity at all events as portions of the same Christian nation. So far as we know, controversy between them is very rare ; there is more of it within the several churches between their own more orthodox and more liberal members. In none does it rage more violently than in the Episcopal Church, though, under religious equality, irreconcilable disagreement on religious questions leads to secession, not to mutual lawsuits and imprisonments.”* The same moral is drawn and the same example set by the experiences of free churches among our nearer kinsmen in Australia and in the Dominion.

The reader does not need to be informed that neither disestablishment nor any other known process could absolutely and unconditionally withdraw the affairs of the Church from liability to interference and control by the law of the land and the secular courts appointed to administer that law. A free church can no more than a free citizen escape the

Liability of
the Church
to State in-
terference.

* Mr. Goldwin Smith.

obligation to keep contracts and respect the civil rights of others. When a minister of the sect of Particular Baptists was dismissed by his congregation and violently excluded from his chapel by them, he indicted them for rioting, and they sought an injunction to restrain him from acting as their minister; and the court decided for the minister, on the ground that the trust-deeds of the chapel did not give the congregation the right of dismissal. The voluntary nature of religious association could not oust the civil jurisdiction. When a fund was left for the benefit of the "poor and holy preachers for the time being of Christ's Holy Gospel," and when a dispute arose among those who claimed a share in the fund, the court might have been called upon to examine and to define what is, and what is not, Christ's Holy Gospel, and what constitutes the preaching thereof. There was a rough but prudent intervention by the State in the affairs of a free church when Parliament passed the Dissenters' Chapels Act (7 & 8 Vict.), providing that usage for a period of five-and-twenty years should be conclusive evidence of the doctrine and worship proper to be observed in a meeting-house, in spite of orthodox contention that such usage had

drifted away from the original purpose of the founders. Trusts for religious purposes may require, as unreservedly as any other, to be interpreted and enforced by the judges of the land, and in that interpretation the judges may have to define what is, and what is not, the doctrine legally imposed by the constitution of a free church on those who claim to belong to it. The title to property may depend upon adherence to the doctrine of the Thirty-Nine Articles or the Apostles' Creed, and in case of dispute arising at any time among the members of a disestablished church, the courts might be called upon to examine and declare the meaning of either of those famous instruments. The disputes concerning Father O'Keefe and the Callan Schools in 1873, raised the whole questions of the relations between a free church and the civil power, both as judiciary and executive. In the case where the curé of Montreal refused burial to Guibord because when alive he had been excommunicated, the courts laid it down that even in the case of a private and voluntary religious society, resting only on a basis of consent, they, the court, were bound, when due complaint was made that a member of the society has been injured in any matter of a mixed spiritual and temporal cha-

racter, to inquire into the laws and rules of the tribunal or authority which has inflicted the alleged injury, and to ascertain whether the act complained of was in accordance with the laws and rules and discipline of the Roman Catholic Church. It is easy to see how this interpretative power in the courts limits that boundless freedom and unmeasured independence which is the dream alike of the purest spiritual enthusiasm and the grossest ecclesiastical arrogance.

Difference
in the rela-
tions be-
tween civil
courts and
free
Churches
on the one
hand and a
parlia-
mentary
Church on
the other.

Although, however, relations must in certain contingencies arise between the civil courts and the most voluntary religious associations, those relations will not be what they are in respect of a parliamentary church. Various points of difference have been pointed out by writers on the subject. 1. For instance, the minister of a free church comes into court as a complainant, suing for damages on a breach of contract, or asking the court to forbid the breach, while the minister of an established church figures as a law-breaker and an offender. 2. In the case of a free church, proceedings can only arise from a conflict with the authoritative tribunal of the church, whatever that may be; in an established church, the promoter may be a person practically indifferent

to the ecclesiastical authorities, and acting contrary to their wishes. Hence, "in the disputes of independent churches, the courts have at any rate in evidence the action of such church and the decisions of its tribunals on matters of discipline or doctrine, while they have no such evidence to guide or influence them in the ecclesiastical causes of the Established Church."* 3. If the decision of a court discloses an unsuspected flaw in the doctrinal or disciplinary position of a free church, such a church may easily set to work to amend either its creed or its ordinances. An established church, on the other hand, is bound to accept such definitions and interpretations as the civil courts think it their duty to impose. The decision of the court can only be modified by act of parliament, and the high court of parliament is just as secular, as unspiritual, as little fitted to regulate the mysteries of faith and belief as any other high court.

It would, as we began by saying, be waste of time ^{Unworth,} to go into all the abstract arguments that have been ^{current} used in favour of the establishment of the episcopalian body in England. Nor do some current ^{views.} con-

* "A Summary of the Ecclesiastical Courts Commission's Report," by Spencer L. Holland, p. 304.

siderations, professing to be urged from a practical point of view, deserve more attention. When a writer tells us that Voluntaryism cannot help "gravitating towards wealth and numbers,"* we can only say that such a proposition is partly unintelligible, and, so far as it is intelligible, is wholly untrue. Why wealth and numbers? Are wealth and numbers the same thing? We should have supposed them to be opposite to one another. In any case, is it not a merit that a religious system should gravitate to numbers, and is it not the glory both of the Nonconformist Churches here, and of the Catholic Churches in this country and in Ireland, that they have ministered to numbers apart from wealth? Is it a voluntary or a State Church that does most for the spiritual needs of the peasantry of Connaught and the Irish in Liverpool?

Spiritual provision for remote parishes under disestablishment.

One of the strongest arguments in the minds of some of the best of men is that if you destroy the Establishment you will leave scores of remote country parishes without spiritual provision. But can anybody really suppose that a nation which spends

* "Disestablishment;" by George Harwood, M.A., p. 331; a well-meaning writer, who wholly misses the point of argument after argument, with an honest gravity of which we do not know many similar examples.

tens or hundreds of thousands of pounds a year on all manner of missionary societies, will be unable to spare out of such a purse the very moderate sum necessary to provide ministers for these remote flocks? Nobody can doubt that this is what would be done the very day after the Disendowment Act had received the assent of the Crown. The rate at which the formation of Anglican endowments is going on at the present day is prodigious. No less than £300,000 were spent in new church endowments in the single year 1873. In the diocese of Manchester since the year 1840 we are told that nearly two millions of money have been contributed to church repairs and building. In the diocese of Ripon the contribution in the same time was upwards of a million pounds.

In the diocese of Liverpool we have it on the Bishop's own authority that only five-and-twenty churches are supported by public endowments, while all the rest, amounting to no less than seven-eighths of the entire number, are wholly and absolutely supported by fees, pew-rents, offertories, and the other resources of a purely voluntary system. In a period of fourteen years ending in 1876 voluntary religious effort contributed upwards of five hundred

Success of
voluntary
efforts.

thousand pounds towards the erection and enlargement of churches and schools in the diocese of Durham. Between 1858 and 1875 nearly five millions were voluntarily contributed to the building of churches in newly erected ecclesiastical districts. When compulsory church rates were abolished, we were warned that the fabrics in country places would go to wreck and ruin. Nothing of the kind has happened, and the repairs of parish churches are as abundantly provided for by voluntary aid as they ever were by legal exaction. Twenty years ago the Bishop of London's Fund was opened, for the purpose of building and repairing churches and schools, and otherwise furthering the parochial work of the metropolis. In that time it has amounted to no less than three-quarters of a million sterling, entirely the fruit of voluntary effort and free subscription. Who can suppose that the zeal which has done so much to fill up the void in the capital would be less successfully appealed to in order to prevent spiritual destitution in the rural districts?

The presence of official clergymen results in the diminution of the sense of

One or two short remarks may be made on the favourite plea for the Establishment, that it secures the presence of a gentleman in every parish. For one thing, the fact of there being in the parish a

person officially charged with the duty of taking an interest in the humbler people is apt to make the lay gentry far less inclined than they would otherwise be to share that duty. It would have the air, or they often feel that it would, of interfering with the rector's province; and we may be quite sure that, if the layman should happen to be a dissenter or a rationalist, half the rectors in England would resent any such active participation as impertinence. In so far as this is true, the advantage of having one man in every parish officially charged with the performance and supervision of good works, is more than counterbalanced by the check which it may put upon the active and personal friendliness of the laymen of the parish, and what is still more serious, by the diminution of their sense of social responsibility in the concerns of their neighbours.

Secondly, the very fact of the clergyman being an official, like the constable or the tax-collector, actually impairs his influence. Everybody knows that in country places where the element of dissent happens to thrive and to be strong, the minister of the chapel occupies a very different position, and a much more powerful and popular position, than that of the rector or the vicar. This brings us to a third

social responsibility among lay gentry.

Official position impairs the clergyman's influence.

remark, namely, that the civilising agency happens as a matter of fact not to civilise. Our best authority for this is to be got from the country clergy themselves, who will tell you frankly enough, perhaps even in language of excessive censure and needless despondency, the dismal tale of the barbarism of the rural poor. Heaven forbid that we should say that this is wholly the fault of the clergy. So long as the housing and the pay of the labourers remain what they are, they will come up to no exalted standard of social being. This much, however, must be said, that excepting the Bishop of Manchester and some other men of exceptional character, too few of the clergy have ever shown much readiness to do anything to help the labourer to get better houses or better wages. Too many of them have been for driving the rural reformer out of the parish, and ducking the village Hampden in the village horsepond. "In the rural controversy between capital and labour," said Mr. Gladstone in words that are not over-coloured, even if they are not studiously under-coloured, "the parochial clergy have not always been able to abstain from partisanship, and where they have been partisans, it has not commonly been on the side of

labour. Notwithstanding their general and exemplary devotion to parochial duty, this has tended to stimulate a feeling in favour of the disestablishment of the Church. Of this sentiment I cannot measure the breadth or depth ; but it may be found to form a real ingredient in the general question." Undoubtedly it may, and it will.

We see the consequences. Dr. Jessop, whose remarkable papers on the condition of our English Arcady have attracted so much attention, tells us of the "blatant tirades of the Arcadian against the Church," how unmeasured the language, how "furious the cruelty of hate with which he seems to hurl himself body and soul against the parsons." Whatever the secret may be, the fact is certain that the only writing in England that imitates, in the intensity of its bitter passion, the invective of the Irish nationalist press against the landlords, is to be found in the references in the organ of the agricultural labourers to the clergy of the Established Church.

A word must be said on another plea for establishment as establishment, namely that it is a security for an expansive, liberal, and tolerant way of thinking on the most important of subjects. One very

Hostility of the agricultural labourer to the Established clergy.

Freedom no excuse for illiberality.

plain answer to this argument is, that when the Episcopalian sect becomes a private church, there is no reason why the teachers of this broad and liberal theology should not be just as free to find a congregation sympathising with their views as they are now. Are our people so fanatical and narrow that they cannot be trusted to encourage liberality and moderation of view when they have the opportunity? The point and essence of State control is that it is lay control. Parliamentary control is only valued from this point of view, because it represents the common sense of the average lay mind, but why should the average lay mind be less tolerant, less open, less enlightened, or less sensible in a dis-established than in an established church?

Liberality
will be
forthcom-
ing equally
in volun-
tary and
State
Churches.

As a matter of fact and plain observation, for every conspicuous theological liberal within the establishment, we will undertake to name a conspicuous theological liberal among the ministers of dissent. It is public opinion that protects men of this stamp, and public opinion is more powerful, not less powerful, in voluntary churches than in stereotyped state churches. Finally, do not let us forget how many broad churchmen have, in order to remain where they are, and in order to justify this panegyric

on the establishment on the ground of its mild tolerance, to strain their consciences and sophisticate their understandings by signing articles and formularies which they either do not believe at all, or else only believe by the help of unnatural interpretations which it is outside of our present province to describe as they deserve. Let all men be free to move in these spiritual things as they will. But let us be honest. And if we are honest, whether Dissenters, or Catholics, or Anglicans, or Rationalists, can we help seeing that these evasions, these non-natural interpretations, these queer intellectual tricks, are a debasement of all that honest men most value, and a source of inevitable demoralisation alike to those who dupe and those who are duped?

II.

Some seven years ago the outlines of a scheme of Scheme for disestablishment. disestablishment and disendowment were drawn up, with a view of giving to the discussion a more precise and practical shape. The suggestions were framed with great care and after deliberations that extended over three years. Men of recognised eminence in various schools of thought and various

walks of life took a part in the work. Politicians and divines, learned lawyers and hard-headed men of affairs, orthodox and heterodox, gave time and thought to the project. The result could of course be no more than a rough draft, provisionally and tentatively shaped, but as the only attempt of the kind, the sketch that was given to the public in 1877 is of real importance and well deserves attention.

Why it
missed fire;
but the
work not
thrown
away.

At the time it may be said to have missed fire, for the intelligible reason that the Eastern Question at this very moment burst out in full conflagration. The English public threw itself into the controversies arising out of the war between Russia and Turkey with a passionate interest that was natural enough under circumstances so dangerous, but it effectually displaced all other subjects of less immediate urgency. Still the work that had been done remained. The pains that had been taken with the scheme were not thrown away. Whenever the topics of disestablishment and disendowment are discussed in a practical manner, and *apart from the mere speculative generalities of the question, the disputants will, if they are wise, have these suggestions in their minds.* It will be enough for our purpose here to reproduce

some of their principal features.* Nobody would pretend that they overcome all difficulties, or dream that they are in every detail minutely practicable. To some they will appear too lenient to privilege, too scrupulous towards vested abuses, too tender of doubtful rights. However that may be, the least that can be said for them is that they point where the difficulties lie, and direct us to the quarters where the problem will demand most resolution and most skill.

The legislative process of disestablishment, whenever Parliament shall be called upon to take up the task, offers few difficulties. It is not disestablishment but disendowment that will perplex opinion, will open vast gulfs of controversy, and will try statesmanship by an almost unexampled ordeal. It is computed that the settled revenues of the ordained servants of the Establishment are not much, if anything, below six millions sterling per annum. If disendowment were to be conducted on the same rules of equity and liberality as were adopted in the case of the Irish Church, Mr. Gladstone has made out (*May 16, 1873*) that “between life incomes,

Disendowment, not disestablishment, the real difficulty.

* They were presented, by the way, to the readers of the *Fortnightly Review* in a paper by Dr. Crosskey, of Birmingham, in the number for June, 1877.

private endowments, and the value of fabrics and advowsons, something like £90,000,000 sterling would have to be given in the process of disestablishment to the ministers, members, and patrons of the Church of England." That would indeed be a sovereign triumph of injustice, and a political catastrophe of unmeasured magnitude.

A precedent for disestablishment in the case of the Irish Church.

Disestablishment, as we have said, may pretty safely be left to follow the precedent of the year 1869. The measure of 1869 enacted that, on and after the first day of January, 1871, the union created by Act of Parliament between the Churches of England and Ireland should be dissolved, and that "the said Church of Ireland should cease to be established by law." Every ecclesiastical corporation, whether sole or aggregate, was dissolved. The jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts was made to cease, and the ecclesiastical law of Ireland was repealed. Irish bishops were removed from the House of Lords, and no new appointments to offices in the Church were to be made after the passing of the Act. So simple were the provisions required for the mere transformation of a State Church into a free church.

The disposal of the property of this great corp-

ration involved problems of very different dimensions. They were solved in the manner following. Three commissioners were appointed, and in them all the property of the Church of whatever kind was vested. A Church Body, to be incorporated by royal charter, was authorised, and was recognised. To this Church Body the commissioners were directed to pay half a million of money in compensation for private endowments. To it also were transferred churches, parsonages, and glebes. Disestablished ecclesiastics, from archbishop to curate, were to receive their former incomes, not only so long as they lived, but on the condition that they continued to discharge such duties as they had been accustomed to discharge, or such duties as might be substituted for them, with their own consent, and that of the new representative body. These annuities were subject to commutation, but a peculiarity of the Act was that it made commutation a transaction, not between the compounding clergyman and the State, represented by the Commissioners, but between him and the Church Body. An inducement, moreover, was held out to general commutation, on a large scale, in the shape of a bonus of 12 per cent. on the commutation money, if three-fourths of the whole

The solution of the problems involved in 1869.

number in any diocese commuted. Into the abuses and scandals that were the exceedingly unspiritual fruit of these provisions we need not enter. They furnished a savoury mess for the cynic of the period.

Provisions
to be
avoided;
the Church
of England
must be re-
garded as
consisting
of many
corpora-
tions.

It is enough here to say that the chief precedent in the Irish Act to be most avoided in an English Act was the re-creation and re-endowment of that Church which was supposed to have been dissolved into its original and constituent atoms. Hence one of the cardinal pleas in the outline of 1877 turned upon the fact that, whatever the Church of England may be ecclesiastically, it is not one great corporation, holding property and exercising authority as such, but consists of a number of corporations. This is of vital importance, in spite of the blow that, as we have seen, was dealt to it by a sidewind in the statutes appointing the ecclesiastical commissioners. The Bishop of Manchester described the state of the case with as perfect precision as if he had been a lawyer instead of an ecclesiastic. "*Materially and legally speaking,*" he said, "there is no such thing as the Church of England. There is an aggregation of corporations sole which have certain churches vested in them, but no body of the Church of England is in pos-

session of the land. I as a bishop of England am a corporation sole, and I get a certain income which is secured to me by law. Every rector or vicar is in the same way a corporation sole, and each has his income secured; but the Church, as an aggregation of these corporations sole, has no property."

Starting from these recognised principles, the authors of the scheme that we are now describing laid it down that, though an Episcopal Church may afterwards be organised on a different basis, when disestablishment is determined on, there will be no body having a legal existence capable of either claiming or receiving compensation. Only the bishops, clergy, and other individuals having, by virtue of their office, a special beneficiary interest in the Establishment, together with the owners of advowsons and next presentations, will be entitled to compensation on its abolition. While, of course, no legal impediments would prevent Episcopalians from organising themselves, and managing their own affairs with the same freedom as is given to all other religious communities, no facilities would be granted that would result in the revival of a privileged ecclesiastical body. Compensation would be given to individuals. All the holders of ecclesias-

No corporate body must be recognised as entitled to compensation.

tical office in the Establishment would be released from obligation to the State to discharge their present duties, and they would be dealt with in the same way as other public officials whose services are no longer required by the State. In fixing the compensation to be paid to individuals, regard might equitably be had to the fact that their further services would, as far as the State is concerned, be no longer required. They will have been deprived of offices held by a secure tenure, and will be entitled to compensation for such deprivation. But they will be free to contract any obligations in connection with an Episcopal or any other Church organised by voluntary arrangements. The scheme briefly mentioned some of the principles that might regulate compensation, but into these we need not enter.

Commutation a possible expedient for regulating the compensation of individuals.

Commutation was recognised as an expedient to which resort might be had with advantage both to the State and the parties, and no doubt the thought was not absent from counsellors, who may be taken to have united to their other qualities a touch of the wisdom of the serpent, that this was a feature that might conciliate some hostile prepossessions. The commutation, as they suggested, might be effected

by the payment of either a capital sum, or of an annuity for life. The objection naturally occurs that the general commutation of the clerical annuities would require funds far in excess of those at first derivable from the ecclesiastical property available for the purpose. This difficulty was met by suggesting an issue of bonds for the payment of the annuities due to individuals, and legalisation of the sale or transfer of such bonds. This would place the annuitants in an advantageous position, and relieve the State from any financial embarrassment. It need not be said that the clergy would be at liberty to hand over to any church they might select the amounts which they might receive from commutation; but it would, in that case, be in the nature of a private transaction, and involve no responsibility on the part of the State.

Ought private patrons to receive compensation? Compensation of private patrons.
 No doubt private patronage is a sacred trust, and in its original purpose and destination not a piece of property. But the legislature has sanctioned the sale of advowsons in more than one enactment. For instance, since 1863, more than a quarter of a million of money has been paid by the purchasers of small livings sold under the Augmentation Act. It

would be impossible now to deny compensation for the deprivation of what was acquired with full parliamentary sanction. The Act of 1874 giving to congregations in Scotland the right of choosing ministers, compensated the patrons by a sum not exceeding a year's stipend in amount, to be raised in the shape of four annual sums to be deducted from the minister's stipend.

The disposal of endowments.

We now come to the great question of the fabrics and endowments. What disposal might the legislature be expected to make of the great mass of property now devoted to ecclesiastical uses? The authors of the scheme at once recognised a fundamental difference in the character of this property, and they drew a sharp dividing line of treatment to correspond to this difference in the nature of the objects dealt with. Strictly speaking, there is no doubt but that ancient and modern buildings, as well as all endowments, now appropriated to the use of the National Church must be regarded as national property, at the disposal of the State. "The property of the Church," said Lord Palmerston in 1856, "is the property of the State." It is not merely that the Legislature may pass laws affecting it, as it may pass what laws it pleases affecting the pri-

vate property of individuals. The position is much more than that, and quite different from that. Church property is not the property of private individuals at all, nor of groups of private individuals, though they may have life interests. It is the property of the nation as a whole, and the State is perfectly within its rights, if the Legislature shall think fit, in diverting every shilling of Church property to secular uses, from the lands with which Edward the Confessor, endowed the Abbey of St. Peter's at Westminster, down to the last sovereign subscribed to build a church in a destitute district. The church that was built yesterday by the pious munificence of a man still alive, is in law as much a piece of national property as St. Paul's Cathedral or the Tower, and Parliament is not bound to pay any respect whatever to the wishes or intentions of the founder, whose voluntary generosity has placed his hopes and his design at the mercy of the State.

But though there is no difference in principle, in logic, or in legality, between ancient fabrics and endowments and modern, it would seriously jar upon right feeling to treat them in an identical manner. We have not before us the precise terms of the Baird Trust, but supposing that the half million

Treatment
of ancient
and modern
endow-
ments and
fabrics.

given by Mr. Baird was given directly to the Church of Scotland, there would be an invincible reluctance to using that fund for roads, bridges, and other secular objects—in this generation, at any rate. It was necessary, then, to fix a date that should divide ancient from modern. The year selected was 1818, the date of the first Church Building Act. Churches anterior to 1818 were to be deemed ancient, and dealt with in one way; those subsequent to 1818 were called modern, and were dealt with in another way.

Ancient
churches.

It was proposed that ancient churches should be vested in a parochial board, to be elected by the rate-payers. This board should have power to deal with them for the general benefit of the parishioners, in such ways as it may determine. In many cases the parish churches would be let at a nominal or other rent to Episcopalians; in some, if not in many, it would be used by one sect at one hour, and by another at another hour. It is possible that under certain circumstances the board would sell the fabric out and out to the Episcopalian or other religious body. It is, also, conceivable that it might be used for secular purposes of a public kind, as meeting-houses are, and churches have been before now; and some people have cried out that this would be a

shocking desecration. We need only say that such desecration could not take place without the consent of the parishioners, and if they should be willing to consent, then this shocking part of desecration would have taken place in their minds and consciences, and the real part of the mischief at which establishmentarians profess alarm would already have been wrought.

In reference to churches erected after 1818, which ^{Modern churches.} have been built at the sole expense of any person who may be living at the date of disestablishment, the suggestion was that they should, on his application, be vested in him, or in such persons as he may appoint. Churches (other than parochial churches which have been rebuilt) erected after 1818, by means of voluntary subscriptions exclusively, were to become the property of the existing congregations, and be held in trust for their use. If, within a given time, such churches be not accepted on behalf of the congregations, they should vest in the parochial board, and be dealt with as ancient churches. Churches built after 1818, which have been erected partly by subscriptions and partly from parliamentary grants and other public sources, were in like manner to be offered to the congregations; but

the amount so derived from public sources was to be a charge upon the building, to be paid, or redeemed, in accordance with regulations made by commissioners under the Disestablishment Act.

Cathedrals
and abbeys.

There was less perplexity in considering the destiny of those sublime monuments which are the pride and glory of the land, which command the awe and move the admiration of churchmen, nonconformist, and rationalist all alike, which delight the eye, solemnise the spirit, and nourish all those associations that bind us in the indissoluble bonds of perpetual citizenship to great men and our fathers that begat us. The cathedrals, abbeys, and other monumental buildings of like magnitude and history, could only pass under the control of the nation, and be held, maintained, and administered for such uses as Parliament might from time to time determine, and under direct and special responsibility to the national government, as distinguished from any lesser authority, whether parochial or sectarian.* Dean Stanley

* The Cathedral Statutes Bill which passed the House of Lords last session but dropped in the Commons, was an illustration of the efforts of the churchmen to denationalise these fabrics. It proposed to give to a special Committee of the Privy Council power to settle draft statutes for any cathedral. The Committee was to consist first of the two Archbishops and the Bishop of London, the Presi-

imputed to the authors of the scheme an intention to sever all connection between these mighty fanes and the offices of religion. "The Abbey," he said, "might in that case continue as a venerable monument, like the round towers of Ireland, or the mounds in the American wilderness, but it would cease to be filled with that glow of historical and religious life which through its long history has distinguished it from a mere Walhalla or museum." The irony was misplaced. So long as the glow of religious life burns in the breast of the English nation, there is no reason why Parliament should dissociate the great pile from the offices which first sanctified it, though there might well be more of that variety and comprehension in the daily use of such fabrics, of which Stanley himself in his administration at Westminster amiably tried to set the first faint example.

dent of the Council, and the Lord Chancellor for the time being ; then of four other members to be appointed by the Crown, and the quorum of five must include at least two bishops. It was further expressly provided that all the lay members shall be "members of the Church of England." But the cathedrals are national property. On what ground are national representatives to be excluded from a voice in their guardianship, unless they belong to the Episcopalian body ? If any change is immediately required, let the care of the cathedrals be given to the First Commissioner of Works, on the principle already acted upon in Scotland.

Definition
of congrega-
tions.

The doubtful point in the above proposals is obvious. It lies in the transfer of the modern fabrics to the existing congregations. What is the congregation? If you define it as all the habitual communicants, for instance, it will be too narrow. And other definitions seem equally to make it too wide. In the Scottish Church Patronage Act, the electors consist of communicants and adherents. The sharper and more numerous subdivisions in the Anglican fold might demand something more definite. Without labouring the matter, the authors of the scheme trusted to the assurance of the lawyers that the difficulty of giving a legal description of a congregation is not insuperable, any more than is that of determining the modes in which property may be held on its behalf. In fact, there are precedents both in our own statute book, and in the law of various American States.*

Interests of
the congrega-
tion para-
mount.

Supposing, however, that these technical difficulties were overcome, a deeper class of objections

* In the "Practical Suggestions" we are referred to the following:—(1) The Statutes (63 to 69) of the disestablished Church in Ireland; (2) The Statute Law of various American States (see Tyler's *American Ecclesiastical Law*, 1866, vol. i., p. 60; (3) The Act for abolishing Patronage in the Church of Scotland, 1876; (4) The Compulsory Church-Rate Abolition Act, 1868 (Sec. 19).

remained behind. "Your proposal," it might be contended, "recognises only the existence and the interests of congregations. You ignore the Church. You forget the union and association which are of the essence of the Church. You divide the seamless vesture into an indefinite number of incongruous and fortuitous shreds." To this the Liberationists retort in sober language: "Who are most concerned in the matter—the persons who have been accustomed to worship in the churches, and have had the benefits of the endowments hitherto, or a vague, intangible body designated 'the Church?' In the Act of Disestablishment it will be the duty of the State, not to legislate in the interest of the Church of England, or of any Church, but to make compensations and concessions in the way which will best prevent the infliction of injustice and loss where they will be palpably and directly felt. It would do this by giving liberty of choice and action to the congregations of Episcopalians, for whose uses the churches and the endowments exist. On the other hand, the greatest possible disservice might be done to them by handing over the property created for their use to an institution to which they might not wish to belong, or to some of

the regulations of which they might strongly object."

Union of congregations with, and transference of property to, voluntary Episcopal Church would be possible.

"Our method," the Liberationists went on to argue, "would not prevent the congregations from uniting themselves with an Episcopal Church, constituted by voluntary arrangement, and even transferring to a representative Church body the property placed at their disposal by Parliament. Such transactions, however, should be transactions between the congregations and the Church, and not between the Church and Parliament. The Legislature has no right to assume that all Episcopalians will, throughout all time, constitute but one Church; neither ought it, either by bribes or by legal compulsion, continue to bind the Church of England together as it now does by the still more cohesive forces of an Establishment. It will be seen that these suggestions, while they would leave a considerable amount of Church property in the hands of Episcopalians, recognise the right of congregations, and of the inhabitants of particular localities, to determine for themselves their future ecclesiastical relationships."

Minor details.

Not much need be said of the minor details of the scheme. There is the question, for instance, of the

parsonages and the glebes. The authors had the good sense to perceive and admit that any proposal to eject the inmates of all the parsonages in the country—with whatever compensation—would be regarded as an intolerably harsh proceeding. The hardship and the odium would, as the projectors suggested, be avoided, and time be afforded for making changes without personal inconvenience, by allowing the existing incumbents to occupy their parsonages so long as they continue to be ministers of the churches in which they now officiate; of course, on payment of rent. Whether an incumbent should continue as minister of the church in which he was officiating at the time of disestablishment would depend on the arrangements made by the congregation, either acting as such, or in connection with any religious organisation with which it might determine to connect itself.

The weak point of the project will not escape those in whom all other views of disestablishment are overpowered by their dread and suspicion of a great ecclesiastical corporation, endowed with vast revenues, animated by a rigorous spirit of discipline, and uncontrolled by the moderating hand of neutral authority. The project assumes that the disestab-

Centralisation may modify the benefits of disestablishment.

lished church will divide itself into an indefinite number of groups. We must, however, remember that the Church will still be episcopal and not congregational, and that episcopacy, especially where it has such deep traditional roots and so ancient an organisation as in England, is essentially a system of centralisation.

The probable issue.

On the other hand, we are more likely than not, even under the episcopal system, to have at least two of these great associations. The High Churchman and the Low Churchman will not receive their liberty for nothing. It is even possible that their struggles may ultimately lead to the best solution of the difficulties of disendowment. The case of the Clergy Reserves in Canada was on a small scale, but it is interesting. By the Canada Act of 1791, one-seventh of the ungranted lands of the Colony was set apart for the support of the Protestant clergy. In 1840 it was decreed that the lands should be sold, and the proceeds applied to the endowment of the clergy of different denominations. The clergy of the national Churches of England and Scotland received what was thought by other denominations more than their share. Then there arose up a political party of a Radical persuasion, who were

called Clear-Grits, and the Clear-Grits declared for the secularisation of the Clergy Reserves as the best and shortest way out of the confusion. The cry caught the growing sentiment of the time, it carried all before it, and the Reserves were at length duly and legally secularised.

Meanwhile, the movement of opinion will continue. Nobody can believe that the people of this country will look composedly on while the air is being seven times heated by ecclesiastical litigation, by suits and cross-suits, by angry prosecutions and angrier retaliations. Attempts will again be made on both sides to invoke the interference of parliament. But in such case parliament will be as slow to meddle as it has been before now. In the reign of Elizabeth the House of Commons put out of the Prayer Book certain matter which the Bishops would fain have had in. The Archbishop of Canterbury sent for a stout Puritan member, and asked him how this had come to pass. “‘Surely, sir,’ said I, ‘because we were so occupied in other matters that we had no time to examine them, how they agreed with the word of God!’ ‘What!’ said he, ‘surely you mistake the matter: you will refer yourselves solely to us therein!’ ‘No! by the faith I bear to God,’

Spiritual
freedom
the only
remedy.

said I, ' we will pass nothing before we understand what it is ; for that were but to make you popes ; make you popes who list,' said I, ' for we will make you none.' And sure, Mr. Speaker, the speech seemed to me to be a pope-like speech, and I fear lest our bishops do attribute this of the Pope's canons unto themselves, *Papa non potest errare.*" If the Legislature cannot, will not, and ought not itself to settle the disputes of the church, and if it cannot, will not, and ought not to leave one section of the church to settle them for itself at the expense of another, so long as it is a church by law established, then it is clear that the third course is the only one left, namely to expose the distracted community to the pacifying and fortifying influence of complete spiritual freedom.

VII.

FREE SCHOOLS.

For some years there has been a manifest reluctance to renew the education controversy. The struggle of 1870-76 was lacerating and exhausting, and repose was welcome on almost any terms. But the result was a compromise, which left in our school system elements of partiality, injustice, and inefficiency. The final honours of the contest remained with the Tory party; but it was a truce and not a peace which was concluded, and the Liberal party expressly reserved its rights to reopen the question when a favourable opportunity should offer. The last representative gathering of Liberals at which the subject was considered was held at Devonshire House in 1876, when the Marquis of Hartington consented to move a resolution on the report stage of Lord Sandon's Bill, condemning in strong terms

Position of
the educa-
tion con-
troversy.

the reactionary principles of that measure. The resolution was rejected in the House by a strictly party majority, but the speeches that were made marked the determination of the Liberals to bring up again, when occasion should serve, the whole question of education by means of schools under private management.

Results of
Education
Acts.

Fifteen years have gone by since Mr. Forster's Act was passed ; much laborious work has been done ; a large field has been planted ; a vast array of figures have accumulated, representing, without doubt, a great advance and supplying a *prima-facie* answer to any attempt to disturb the basis on which the system rests. But although the statistics in the Blue Book stand for much, and especially prove how criminally neglectful the nation had previously been, it is not improper to ask whether they are not showy in a great degree, and whether they do not conceal a large amount of friction, extravagance, and waste of power, which might easily be removed or reduced. Granting that the results are in a great measure tangible, are they not obtained at a disproportionate cost ? Is the system economical in the true sense, that the best product is obtained with the least necessary outlay and effort ? If it can be

shown that it fails in the two essentials of economy and efficiency, the nation will not refuse to look the question fairly in the face, or will not be satisfied short of obtaining a thorough rather than an ostentatious system of education.

There is another reason why the existing arrangements will soon have to be reconsidered. Those who bear the brunt and burden of the compulsory school law are threatened with a fresh turn of the screw. The school boards are at a dead-lock about fees, and some of them are asking for summary powers to enforce payment of them. At the same time the chiefs of the Education Department are advising a more stringent application of compulsion. The law will break down under this strain. There are signs of a growing antagonism against the system amongst the poor, and compulsory education is in danger of being regarded by them as a tyranny.

In this paper it is proposed to show why many of the people think that the existing system is unjust and unequal in the incidence of cost, that it is opposed to true economy and efficiency, and that its social and moral tendency is harmful.

I. The experience of the last twelve years has brought into the light, though not for the first time,

Grounds
for recon-
sideration.

Imperfec-
tions of
existing
system.

Patience of
the people.

the patience, moderation, and forbearance of the English democracy. The law of 1870 was new to the people, ~~was~~ drastic and onerous. There can be no doubt of the real hardships the labouring classes have suffered under it. Its operation at once diminished their bread fund and called upon them for a new tax. They have been pinched both by hard times, by increased expenses, and by loss of wages. The burden fell upon them at an unfortunate time, when the prosperity of the country began first to stagnate, and then to recede.

Persecution
not the aim
of the
movement
of 1869.

It is doubtful whether the agitation begun by the National Education League in 1869 would have been received with so much enthusiasm by the working classes if it could have been foreseen where it would lead to. The authors of that movement, in advocating compulsory education, were charged with creating a new crime; but they never contemplated that it was to be a penal offence for a man to send his child to school without fees which possibly he had not got, and that he was to be liable to prosecution for no other reason than that he was penniless. It was foreseen that considerable inconvenience, and perhaps suffering, might be caused in the first instance by withdrawing the children from

work ; but it was not intended that, beyond this sacrifice of wages, the parent should be taxed, over and above other classes, to provide for a service which the State imposed upon them for the general advantage of the community. It was not imagined that, as a condition of education, parents would have to accept the stigma of pauperism, to submit to inquisitorial and offensive examinations into their household affairs, to expose their struggles and trials before school boards and guardians, to be hunted by attendance officers, relieving officers, and bailiffs, to have their homes broken up and to be themselves condemned to the treadmill, not for refusing to send their children to school, but because they had no money to send with them. It was not supposed that artificial distinctions would be created amongst the people, under which they would be divided into as many ranks as there are castes in a Hindoo village ; that they would be required to pay at different rates for the same education, and that some of them would be forced to pay for the instruction of their own children and to contribute to the free schooling of their neighbours' children, belonging to the same class, living in the same street, and working in the same factory.

The practical grievance.

There can be no question about the practical grievance which exists. Parents in vast numbers have been punished for their poverty, and in thousands upon thousands of cases they have been called upon to make sacrifices where the alternative has been between bread on Sunday and school fees on Monday. Mr. Chamberlain might well say that he marvelled at the patience with which Englishmen have borne an infliction which burdens the poor "not in proportion to their means, but in proportion to their wants."

That, for the sake of education, they have shown forbearance and magnanimity no one denies. It may have been a good thing for them, since self-denial is never thrown away, that they have had the opportunity of giving another proof of their self-control, their regard for law, and their capability of making sacrifices for a good cause. But the question is not the less pressing whether the time has not come when the "superior" classes should try to emulate their generosity and spirit, and to remove the weight of a gross inequality and injustice.

Power of the people.

The patience of the people is the more surprising when their power is taken into account, and the temptation they lie under to use it for their own

benefit. As Mr. Lowe said, they are "our masters." They constitute the vast majority of the ratepayers. They can have school boards where they please, and can elect almost whom they like upon them. They are handicapped to a certain extent by the intricacies of the cumulative vote, but a little drilling and organisation could get over that difficulty. As the first step in a free-school agitation, they might return everywhere majorities pledged to abolish school fees.

It may be answered that this would not help them in the present state of the law, which requires the payment, and even the prepayment, of fees, and under which no fee can be fixed and no free school opened without the consent of the Education Department. This is true, and it is no small part of the hardship. A penny school cannot be opened even in such places as London, Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham without going to Whitehall for permission. As a matter of fact, the law is administered not in the interests of education, parents, children, or ratepayers, but in those of denominational schools. There is no disguise about the simplicity and partiality of the usual procedure. A school board determines on a penny fee, subject to

Centralisa-
tion and
partiality
of system.

the consent of "My Lords." They refer the matter to her Majesty's inspector for schools of the district. The inspector confers with the clergy, and sometimes with the minority of the board, and reports to the Department. In 90 per cent. of cases the recommendation is against a low fee, on the ground that some denominational school would be subjected to a disagreeable rivalry. For years the London School Board, and those of many large towns, have been in conflict with the inspectors and the Department as to the policy of opening penny schools. It is of no consequence what interests or what sufferings and trials call for the abolition of high fees. Children may be half fed and clothed, parents may be struggling on the borderland of pauperism, only anxious to live and die free of the parish; the schools may be half empty, and their educational results miserable in the extreme; but all these considerations are made subservient to the supposed welfare and continued existence of some inefficient denominational school, frequently conducted in unsuitable, and sometimes in unwholesome, buildings. In pursuance of this departmental policy, free schools have been abolished and pay schools substituted for them. Such towns as Leeds, Leicester, and Norwich have

been refused penny schools where the ratepayers and the school board have asked for them.

But, obviously, the continued exercise of this centralised power is by sufferance of the people. They could, by a constitutional and perfectly legitimate agitation, bring the whole educational administration to a sudden halt. They might—in some cases they do—refuse to pay fees, and let the law take its course, as Dissenters refused to pay Church-rates. They would be justified and supported by public opinion in their opposition to a law which ignores the representative principle for the protection of sectional interests. Such an agitation would abruptly dispose of the pretensions and interference of “My Lords, and boards, and honourable gentlemen.” Compulsion could not be enforced and fees could not be collected in the face of an organised active, or even passive, resistance by the parents, who constitute the mass of the ratepayers. The universal provision of free schools is a question absolutely for their decision, at their own time and on their own terms.

That their interests are identical with such a provision is also clear. The usual answer to the argument for the abolition of fees is that the country

Centralisation exists on sufferance of the people.

Interests of parents.

cannot afford it; that we have been going ahead very fast, and that whereas we were spending under two millions ten years ago, we are now spending nearly six millions. In any case it is not a serious financial problem. The fees amount to something over a million and a-half, and are equal to a general poor-rate of threepence, or an income-tax of a little over a penny. But the cost would not be sensibly increased by making the schools free. There might be some additional expense in respect of the new scholars who would be brought in, but it would be trifling. We are already supposed to make provision for the instruction of all the children of the nation. We have erected the buildings and provided the staff. The doors of every school in England might be thrown open to-morrow free of toll without adding to the present outlay. It is a question of adjustment.

Special tax
on parents.

At present those who use the schools, consisting generally of householders assessed at £20 and under, pay, during the years of their children's school-life, in addition to the school-rate and the usual taxes, a scholar's capitation tax in the shape of fees. It varies in amount in different places, and according to the number in family and other circumstances.

In Birmingham, taking the figures of two years ago, it is equal, for an average family occupying a twenty-pound house, to a rate of about one shilling and fourpence, in Manchester and Sheffield to over two shillings, in Bradford to half-a-crown, in many places to five shillings.

Now if the opposition to free schools is to be put on the ground of increased local rates, as it generally is, there can be no objection to arguing it from the point of view of the smaller ratepayers. Under any financial scheme that might be devised to replace the school fees, they would not pay as much as they do now. Whether the cost were transferred to the imperial exchequer or to the local rate, the rich would pay more, the poor less. In fact, the former would have to share the burden which the poor now sustain alone. The supporters of denominational schools might cease to subscribe, but would have to contribute in most instances a larger sum in rates or taxes. In Birmingham the parents now pay the school-rate of eightpence, and the fees, which are equal to a rate of one shilling and fourpence, or even to double that rate in the case of the smaller householders. But if every denominational school in the town were closed at once, if the whole

The question from the view of the smaller ratepayers.

education of the borough were put under the School Board, if the school fees were abolished, and if the extra cost were thrown entirely on the local funds, the charge would not amount to a rate of two shillings. Dr. John Watts estimates that a rate of fourpence or fivepence would free all the schools in Manchester; but if the calculation were quadrupled, it would still be in the interests of the Manchester artisans to pay the rate rather than the present high fees. What is to prevent the smaller ratepayers from taking this view of the matter? The power is in their hands. As ratepayers, they are in the proportion of four to one. With few exceptions they have an urgent personal interest in abolishing the fees. Some of the "genteel poor," who prefer academies, seminaries, and dame schools to board schools, might go over to the other side, and old bachelors and childless persons might get up a celibate agitation against the change, but that would not be very formidable. Under all the conditions the only wonder is that the people are so quiescent.

The principle of free schools already acknowledged in legislation.

The principle of free education, that a duty imposed by the State for the common good should be provided for out of a common fund, is admitted by the arrangement which already throws three-fourths

of the burden on the community at large. All that is in dispute is the justice and expediency of the extra tax on parents. The onus of showing that this irritating tax is justifiable lies on those who insist on keeping it. To make good their position, they would have to establish that the working classes do not otherwise contribute a fair proportion to the cost of State education, or that they derive some special advantages from it above their contributions as ordinary taxpayers and ratepayers. Beyond that, it is necessary to draw a line above which it is proper that a man should pay fees for his own children and contribute towards the fees of others who belong to the same class.

Without entering upon the vexed question of the incidence of taxation, it may be asserted that it The incidence of taxation. would be impossible to put the first proposition in such a light as to secure its general acceptance. It would not be easy to convince an intelligent workman, who frequents our free libraries, that he is quite fairly treated in this matter. Some forty millions of the revenue are still raised by indirect taxation, which bears with unequal incidence against the poor. While the wealthy are taxed out of a surplus of riches, the poor are taxed out of the necessities of

life. As a rule, any deduction from their narrow earnings encroaches on necessary food, clothing, and shelter. They are taxed to protect property which does not belong to them. They are taxed to provide military establishments which were formerly a charge upon the land, and were transferred to the general taxation by a Parliament of land-owners.

Endow-
ments taken
from the
poor.

Nor is it to be forgotten that there still exist enormous endowments which were left for the education of the poor, the accumulated wealth of which has been for centuries appropriated for higher education. There are few school districts in which there are not some charities of this kind which have been diverted from their original channels. In Bedford, for example, the education endowments are worth £15,000 a year, nine-elevenths of which go to the higher schools, while poor parents are sent to the parish for their fees. We do not argue for the appropriation of these funds for primary education, but we say it is a confession of great meanness that they should be enjoyed by the sons of gentlemen, clergymen, merchants, and professional men, and that the poor, to whom they were given, should be obliged to sue for fees to the school board or the

guardians, and be put upon strict proof of their qualification of poverty.

Then what are the special advantages which the poor derive from public education? If they are asked about it they will generally admit that the benefits can hardly be over-stated; but their conviction rests largely upon intuition and hope rather than upon experience. The advantages to them are prospective, and call for present sacrifice. But it is not upon any grounds of special class benefits that education is forced upon them; they derive no gain in which the whole nation does not participate, and where all are educated up to a certain standard they get no advantage over each other. The increased protection afforded to person and property affects them least of all. Their poverty and their general regard for law are their best protection. They participate in the general improvement in the social condition of an instructed population, but their share is not of a character to justify the imposition of a special tax. If we look back over the period during which increased popular intelligence and partial education have been making themselves felt in the industry, commerce, and productive power of the country, it is obvious that there has

Compul-
sory educa-
tion not en-
forced for
special ad-
vantage of
poor.

been a general improvement in the social condition of the people ; but there is high authority for saying that the rewards of labour have been small in comparison with the growth of riches through the application of labour.

Arbitrary
and unequal
manner in
which fees
are levied.

But the injustice and hardship of the system are felt most in the arbitrary, unequal, uncertain, and tyrannical manner in which the school fees are levied. The fees in the board schools for each scholar in average attendance amount in Birmingham to 6s. 5d. per annum, in Hull to 9s. 7d., in Liverpool to 13s. 1d., in London to 8s. 4d., in Manchester to 14s. 10d., in Sheffield to 12s. 8d. As a rule the fees in the denominational schools are considerably higher. There are about 7,000 free scholars in Birmingham, and the numbers in other towns vary, according to the policy of different boards. This is unjust both to ratepayers and parents. It may be said that it is a matter for local adjustment between rates and fees, and that it is no ground of complaint that a workman in one town has to pay double the fee which is exacted elsewhere. But there is no such isolation of interests as this argument assumes. On the contrary, there is a close interdependence between all the school districts of

the country. The amount of the school rate is determined by the scale of fees and the Government grant. The grant varies according to many conditions, but all experience proves that, other things being equal, the best attendance will produce the highest results, and consequently the largest grant. Therefore it has only to be shown that a low scale of fees secures a more regular attendance to establish a general connection. For instance, the average fee in Birmingham is lower by nearly 3s. than the average for England, while the average grant is about 1s. 3d. higher than the general average. Consequently, if the better result in Birmingham is due to a more regular attendance, depending on easier admission, the whole nation is paying extra for the low fees and the large number of free orders in the Birmingham board schools.

This, however, by no means explains the extent to which the inequality comes home. There are necessarily a certain number of free scholars, while the fees of others vary according to circumstances. There are very few districts in which the school fees are uniform. The proportion of free scholars is at present comparatively small, but is always on the increase. About 15 per cent. pay 1d. per week;

A graduated poverty scale. Scrutinized into affairs of families.

38 per cent. pay 2d.; 27 per cent. 3d.; and so on in a decreasing ratio up to 9d. So that in all school districts there are parents who are paying their own fees and contributing to the fees of their neighbours who are in the same rank of life, but from whom they are divided by artificial lines created by the regulations of the school boards. Artisans and labourers are classified according to a graduated poverty scale. A man earning 3s. per head of his family has a free order, but a man earning 3s. 1d. per head has to pay fees. In one place the exemption scale is 3s., in another 2s., in others 4s. or 5s. The school boards adopt one scale and the guardians another. The principle upon which the law proceeds, that the fees shall be adjusted to the means of the parents, cannot be carried out with any degree of impartiality and fairness. It is also mischievous in itself. It is the inquisitorial principle of the income-tax, with the highly objectionable difference that the poor are required to expose not their wealth but their poverty. And, since fees can only be remitted or paid for limited periods, this scrutiny into family affairs is periodical.

Parents put
on proof of
poverty.

The law presupposes the ability of the parent to pay, and to escape compliance he is put upon proof

of his inability. Under the most favourable conditions the practice is degrading and humiliating. It works, however, with much less friction in some places than others, so that virtually there is a different law for different school districts. Again, the custom varies according to the colour and constitution of the school boards as determined at each election, so that scholars who are free under one board may be ordered to pay under the next.

In London, Manchester, Birmingham, Hull, Portsmouth, and other towns, the power of remission is freely exercised, sometimes to the extent that the parents of one-half of the children in board schools are contributing to the fees of the other half. Other school boards, amongst them some of the most important in the country, wholly refuse to remit fees in their own schools, under section 17 of the Act of 1870, and send all the children to the guardians to have their fees paid, under section 10 of Lord Sandon's Act. It has been decided that it is optional with school boards to remit fees, while payment by the guardians is compulsory. In the city of Liverpool, with its swarming population of necessitous poor, the power of remission is never made use of by the school board, all persons who cannot pay the

Different
law for
different
districts.

How the
power of
remission
is exer-
cised.

fees having to apply to the guardians. The practice is defended on the ground that it contributes to regularity of attendance, though why it should do so is not clear. But many school boards throw these payments on the guardians in order to keep down the school rate, that they may stand in a better position with the ratepayers. Others refuse to remit on account of an alleged injustice to denominational schools.

County
court pro-
cedure.

Some boards have used the power of remission sparingly, and allowed large arrears of fees to accumulate, which have had to be periodically cancelled or proceeded for in the County Court. In the latter case their recovery has hitherto depended upon the view which each particular judge might take of the law. The majority of the judges in the metropolitan courts, as well as some able lawyers in the provinces, have decided that arrears cannot be recovered. This view of the law has been confirmed by the recent decision of the High Court in the case of the London School Board *v. Wright*, but as it is understood that the judgment is to be appealed against the law cannot yet be regarded as settled.

Many
schools are
practically
free on

So great is the difficulty of securing prepayment of fees and of getting in arrears that many board

schools become practically free on this account. In account of the difficulty in collecting fees. fact, the recent judgment of the High Court will leave it in the option of the parents to say whether the schools shall be free or not in all districts where prepayment is not strictly enforced. They will be encouraged in their opposition to fees by some members of the boards. Complaints have been made at the London Board that the members of one division seemed determined to bring in a system of free schools through a liberal use of the power of remission and of cancelling arrears. In Wales, where the farmers bitterly complain of the injustice of paying both rates and fees, remissions are sometimes made where the parents are assessed at £50, and even £150 per annum.

The regulations of the guardians as to paying fees Regulations of poor law guardians. Pauperization of poor without relief. are quite as irregular. In some towns, such as Sal-
ford, encouragement and facility are offered to the applicants, and the orders are on a liberal scale. But the reverse is more frequently the rule. The highest duty which the poor law guardian recognises is to save expenditure and keep down the rates. In the majority of unions every kind of incivility and obstruction are used to discourage applications for fees. In some unions the guardians resolutely refuse

to comply with the statute, and when the poor have run the gauntlet of the relieving officers, their applications are often refused. After seven years' painful experience of Lord Sandon's Act, in which the road to pauperism has been opened to thousands of respectable families, the solution of the difficulty as to the school fees of the poor, in any way short of their total abolition, seems to be as far off and as impracticable as ever.

Scales of
fees in
different
places.
Capricious
examples.

The scales of fees adopted by different school boards, under the guidance of the Education Department, afford a fine example of the capricious exercise of authority. In some localities the amount of the fee depends upon the situation of the school, especially upon contiguity to a denominational school ; so that parents of the same class, in the same town, often pay at different rates for precisely the same education. In another district the charge is fixed according to the standard the scholars are in, which is a tax upon intelligence ; and in another it depends upon age ; in another upon the number in family ; in another upon the assessment of the parent ; in another upon the condition of prepayment, or otherwise. Sometimes the parents are divided into classes, *those in receipt of wages being distinguished from*

traders on their own account. Under this plan a prosperous mechanic may pay half the sum which is taken from a struggling greengrocer. In many districts the parents and fees are classified as follows:—tradesmen, 6d.; artisans, 4d.; labourers, 2d. In one town pointsmen and engine-fitters are charged 2d., and skilled artisans 4d. Sometimes there is a sliding scale adapted to wages, a father who earns 18s. per week paying 4d., and one earning less 2d. In parts of Wales a poundage system is in operation, under which deductions for school fees are made from wages, irrespective of the fact whether the workmen have any children.

It is impossible to defend such a chaotic system as this on grounds of common justice or equality. That an attempt is made to adjust the demand to the means of the parents is not questioned, but the manifold circumstances of millions of households make the difficulty insuperable. Take the case of the smaller tradesman. No class in the community is much worse off than the little shopkeepers, who have to pay high shop-rents and rates. The day labourer is often in more comfortable circumstances. Under the best systems which can be devised, short of free schools, injustice is inevitable. At a meeting

A chaotic
system.
Its in-
justice and
inequality.

of the Birmingham School Board Mr. Dixon said, "There was in Birmingham an unquestionable injustice. Some schools were penny schools and others threepenny schools, and it could not for a moment be said that there were not children in the higher schools who should have the benefit of the penny fee, and *vice versa*." The general testimony of members of school boards is that the most vicious and undeserving get the advantage of the existing law, to the exclusion of numbers who are equally necessitous but more self-respecting and independent. In the Forest of Dean, where extensive remissions are inevitable, strong protest has been made against the grievous partiality of remitting fees in favour of the improvident and idle and withholding assistance from respectable poor parents. It is sometimes urged against free schools that the industrious and thrifty would have to pay for the education of the idle and worthless. That is precisely what happens now. It is generally acknowledged that the dissipated and thriftless readily secure assistance from guardians by facing out the degrading treatment which applicants are subject to, but which poor people not lost to self-respect cannot be persuaded to encounter. At the Worcester School Board it was stated that the

steady and industrious were paying for the education of the improvident. At Keighley it was admitted that the parents of the children whose fees were remitted were the least deserving part of the community.

Not the least part of the grievance is that the respectable poor are so dependent upon circumstances over which they have but small control that they are constantly liable to fall into the ranks of the indigent. So narrow is the margin which separates them from want that a parent who can pay school fees one week may be quite unable to do so the next. They live in vast numbers on the borderland of subjection and dependence. A hard winter, a poor harvest, loss of work, a strike, a lock-out, an accident, illness in the family, death of father or mother, makes all the difference in their ability to provide daily bread for their households. How small a thing turns the scale is illustrated by the fact that the teachers at Wolverhampton attributed a decrease of £8 in the monthly fees to the parents being locked out from work during the Whitsuntide holiday week. We may be sure that while the law requires fees to be paid most parents will make sacrifices to find them, but there are not many families which can

Struggles of
the respect-
able poor.

feel permanently secure that the time may not come when their ability may cease, and they may be obliged to suffer the misery and degradation of applying for remission or payment. In either case it will be felt as a humiliation, and their children will become marked children in the schools.

Distinc-
tions be-
tween re-
mission and
payment.

Some nice distinctions are sometimes drawn between remission by school boards and payment by guardians. In practice, no doubt, remission is made pleasanter for the applicant, but the principle is the same. It must be remembered, too, that the power of remission is limited, that there are only a certain number of vacant places in the board schools, and that when they are filled up other candidates must be driven to the tender mercies of the relieving officer, by virtue of one of the most oppressive and degrading Acts that ever received parliamentary sanction.

Exaction of
fees the
cause of
absence
and irregu-
larity.

II. If the final decision of the country is to be that the tax on parents shall be perpetuated, it ought to be made independent of attendance. At present the amount of the fees paid is determined by the number of attendances. It naturally follows that their exaction is the greatest cause of absence and irregularity, and is responsible for most of the

inefficiency and waste in our school system. It is the cause, too, of a great wrong towards the children. In the conflict between public duty and parental duty the child often slips between two stools, and his school-days go by while the contention as to who shall pay his fees is going on.

But it is not only that the school-time of the children is wasted. A great part of the elaborate machinery which is now directed by school boards and guardians, teachers and public officers of various grades, is occupied, not in giving instruction, but in getting the children into school. On the one hand the law orders the attendance of the children, and makes rigorous provision for effecting that object; on the other it offers a premium to non-attendance. It supplies to the parents an urgent, direct, and daily temptation to evade and resist its provisions at every point. Legislative absurdity could not go farther than this. It is surprising that a practical people, who have seen the development of free trade, and watched the gigantic strides which commerce made when it was relieved from its shackles, should persist for a day in an experiment which is contrary to common sense, and condemned by its results. The superintendent of the Chicago schools, in his

Waste of
public
time.

report for 1882, says, "The old standard question of how attendance may be improved and tardiness prevented may well give place for a while to that of how our schools may be made such that 'children will be glad to attend and parents find it for their interest to send them.'" This is exactly the question for England: how to remove the causes of conflict between the people and the schools; how to replace opposition and antagonism by co-operation and sympathy; how to engage the interests and goodwill of parents and children on the side of the schoolmaster; how to secure that the ample provision we have made for education should be fully employed; how to get the best return for our large expenditure.

Waste of
public
money.

True economy suggests that we should not drive the children from the schools, but entice them in. There are now a million and a-half vacant places in our schools every day, representing an unproductive sum of fifteen millions sterling for schoolhouses alone. But besides school-buildings we supply machinery, staff, and teaching powers which would be nearly equal to the education of all the children who are absent. Look at the enormous waste of force which lies here, the greater part of which, it

can be shown conclusively, is caused by the exaction of fees.

The law, as laid down in the case of *Richardson v. Saunders*, is that fees must not only be paid, but prepaid, and that the children may be excluded if they do not take their fees. Since this decision the practice of excluding children has increased enormously. The Education Department encourages the regulation requiring prepayment and refusing admission.⁶ The *School Board Chronicle*, which is a high authority on this subject, says that thousands of children in the country are every morning turned away from school for the lack of the fees in advance. When they are sent home for their fees they generally remain away, frequently they play truant, and truancy leads in time to the industrial school. At Willenhall seventy children were turned away on one morning, after the guardians had exercised their power of payment to the full extent which their regulations authorised. In another town the children of many families were shut out of school for the whole winter because their parents could not pay the fees. In one instance eight children in one family were sent home, although a letter was sent to the teacher explaining that there was no money in

Law as to
payment in
advance.
Consequent
exclusion
of children.
Examples.

the house. At Wellingborough thirty-four children were sent back from one school. At Newcastle-under-Lyne a hundred boys were sent back in a week. At Walsall there were three hundred applications for remission on a single Monday morning. This process goes on all over the country all the year round. The parents have not got the fee on Monday morning when it is wanted. Commonly it is all they can do to scrape the rent together, often with the aid of a pawnbroker. If the children are sent back on Monday they generally stay away all the week. Meanwhile those who are at school are marking time, and waiting for the absentees. What is the use of elaborating new codes and administering stimulants to teachers when this drag is left on the wheel?

The operation of compulsion.

Having sent the children away, or tempted the parents to keep them at home, the process of gathering them in begins. This varies in different towns, but it is always complicated and troublesome. First the parents have to be hunted out, then notices are sent to them; then, usually after some evasion on their part, there are applications to the board for remission, or to the guardians for payment, or sometimes to both. There are visits from attendance

officers and relieving officers, followed by investigation into circumstances, hearing of appeals, notices to parents and teachers that fees will be paid or remitted, or the reverse; then there are accounts to be kept, the fees to be collected, and finally audited. Or there may be a prosecution for breach of bye-laws, and a small portion of the fine and expenses may be recovered, the remainder being charged against the rates. In the last alternative there is imprisonment. But very often the law is made a laughing-stock, for many magistrates will not convict where the children have been excluded for not taking their fees. This is regarded as a victory over the staff of boards, teachers, officers, policemen, paid and unpaid functionaries, and the education law becomes the object not only of odium but of derision.

The waste of precious hours in all these proceedings is a painful and obvious feature. It is a rule of school boards and of many unions that the father must himself apply for the payment or remission of the fees. For this purpose he is obliged to leave his work, and perhaps loses a larger sum than that in dispute. In the conflict of administration between school boards and guardians the poor parents are harried and worried between the two

Friction;
waste of
power.
Harrying
of parents

authorities till they are at their wits' ends. The anomalies created by the overlapping of the poor-law and education systems have induced many school boards to petition for the re-enactment of the 25th clause, not because they approved of its principle, but because it was less intolerable in practice than the present law. The relief of conscience, if conscience has been relieved by transferring payments out of the rates to denominational schools from one local authority to another, has been purchased at the sacrifice of the convenience and welfare of the poor. After all their trouble they very often fail to get the relief they apply for. In one large town where applications are investigated by the school board and passed on to the guardians, it is said that not more than 40 per cent. of the cases recommended apply, and of the latter not more than 10 per cent. get relief. Instances could be brought forward of hundreds of parents tramping many miles to work-houses from remote parts of unions, and after waiting many hours being sent away empty handed, or offered the alternative of "the house."

Admission
without
prepay-
ment.
Wright's
case.

There are many school boards which admit children without prepayment. The London board has adopted a regulation that no child shall be turned

away for non-payment of fees; and many provincial boards have rescinded their resolutions requiring prepayment. How these regulations may be affected by the judgment in Wright's case remains to be seen. If that decision should be upheld by the Court of Appeal, either prepayment must be insisted upon or no fees can be recovered.* But suppose the judgment should be reversed, and the right of recovery should be authoritatively declared, what would be the substantial gain? The world of trouble involved in keeping the numberless petty accounts and in collecting the arrears would more than outweigh the small pecuniary result which might be obtained.

One of the most wasteful features of the system is that this unthankful and unproductive labour is thrown upon the masters, who ought to be doing other work, and who have been trained as teachers, and not as accountants and debt-collectors. In any case, whether fees are abolished or not, the teachers

Waste of
teachers'
time, and
distractio
from legiti
mate work

* Since this was written we learn that the London School Board has been advised not to appeal in Wright's case. The matter has become of little importance, as far as London is concerned, since the Board has passed a resolution in favour of the entire abolition of fees. The step was inevitable, and the agitation must now go on.

ought to be relieved of this tiresome duty, and allowed to keep their minds free for higher work. Instead, they are held responsible for fees, or their salaries are partly dependent upon what they can collect. As a consequence, besides the distraction from their legitimate work, they are brought into conflict with parents and children, and instead of dealing with receptive minds they are met by sullenness and resistance.

Effect of
contentions
on scholars.
Petty per-
secution

The effect of these contentions on the progress of the scholars must be harmful. If they are ever so much interested in their studies, continued irregularity will make them careless, and the more intelligent they are, the quicker they will be to understand the struggle which is going on between their homes and the schools. They will suffer from the taunts of their comrades, and will become an isolated class. They are often subject to slights in the schools. Sometimes there are separate entrances for those whose fees are paid or remitted. At one school board it was proposed that the children whose fees were in arrear should be excluded from the school-treat; in another place they were not allowed to receive prizes; in another they were locked in after school-hours as a punishment for not taking their

fees. In some schools they are publicly reminded, as their names are called out, that their fees are in arrear. There is no reason to suspect the general impartiality and fairmindedness of the teachers, but it is not in human nature that they should take equal pains with scholars who are constantly harassing them, and whose irregularity prevents their own advancement and helps to keep the school at a low standard.

It is not easy to set down exactly the pecuniary loss which is caused by the exaction of fees, but it is evident that it must amount to a formidable item. The pecuniary loss of the fee system. Dr. John Watts estimates "that 25 per cent. of the Government grant to primary schools is thrown away by the necessity of extracting fees, and that 25 per cent. of the fees paid by the parents is also thrown away." If this estimate is reliable, and it seems to be a moderate one, and if the proportion holds good throughout the country, it accounts for an annual loss of a million sterling. The Rev. W. Wood, formerly chairman of the Leicester School Board, states that it costs 10s. to get in every shilling of arrears. A visitor in that town was occupied all day in collecting 4d. To collect the fees of 9,000 children it takes the entire services of seven teachers all the

year round. In addition, the school board employs seven visitors, five of whom might be dispensed with if the schools were free.

Experience
of other
nations.
The United
States.

Fees have been abolished in other countries for two reasons : because they were not worth the trouble of collection, and because they operated against attendance. In the United States they get a much better attendance without compulsion than we do with all our irritating compulsory machinery. It is true that it is the fashion amongst the opponents of free schools to discredit the results in the United States. A clergyman stated at a meeting of the London School Board that the average attendance in the eight principal cities of America was only 58 per cent. Such a conclusion can only be explained by assuming that the speaker had been imposed upon or had been loose in his inquiries. On examining four reports for 1882-3 it appears that the average attendance in New York was 90 per cent., in Philadelphia 89 per cent., in Chicago 93 per cent., and in Baltimore 82 per cent. There is no doubt that the attendance in Boston, Cincinnati, and St. Louis is quite as good. But in quoting American figures some allowance must be made for dissimilar conditions, and also for the fact that we are not

always sure that the calculations of attendances are made up in the same way as our own. But one solid fact about American experience remains, which cannot be explained away by any manipulation of figures, and which any candid man may satisfy himself about; that is, that the attendance has largely increased since fees were abolished.

Fortunately, however, we need not go from home Our own experience. to learn a lesson which common observation and daily experience enforce in our own work. The simple lowering of the fees results in an increase of income derivable from the fees themselves. This was the case in Bradford and in Birmingham. In Liverpool also it has been demonstrated that the proportion of attendance is directly affected by the rate of the fee. Teachers also know that the reduction of the fee increases the Government grant. They often ask poor scholars to come without fees in order to help make up the grant. Some of the London teachers pay a certain proportion of fees to add to their own incomes. In eight schools at Rochdale it was found that teachers were paying 2s. and 3s. per week to keep the children at school. At Dalton the fees in the higher standards were raised with the result that a class of thirty-five in

the Fifth Standard was reduced to fifteen, incurring a prospective loss of grant amounting to £20. In another parish it was estimated that a threepenny rate was lost by absence from school.

Effect of
remission in
London
and Bir-
mingham.

The percentage of attendance in Southwark, Lambeth, and other parts of London is in favour of the scholars whose fees are remitted. The same result has been observed in Birmingham. Dividing the scholars of the Birmingham board schools into three classes:—1, those who pay regularly and without trouble; 2, those who pay irregularly and give trouble; 3, those whose fees are remitted or paid, the percentage of attendance in each class is as follows: Class 1. Boys, 88 per cent.; girls, 78 per cent.; infants, 87 per cent. Class 2. Boys, 74 per cent.; girls, 60 per cent.; infants, 63 per cent. Class 3. Boys, 86 per cent.; girls, 75 per cent.; infants, 85 per cent. The advantage in favour of those whose fees are remitted, and who belong to the poorest class in the community, over those who pay irregularly, is—boys, 12 per cent.; girls, 15 per cent.; infants, 22 per cent.

The Man-
chester Free
School.
Striking
compari-
sons.

Dr. Watts makes some very instructive comparisons in Manchester. The qualification for admission to the Manchester Free School is the total

inability of the parents to pay fees. The pupils are of an inferior grade to those in the board schools. From the report for 1882-3 it appears that the average attendance was 98 per cent., while the percentage of passes was 99·6. Out of 450 possible attendances, ten boys made all but three, fifteen boys made all but two, twenty-nine boys made all but one, and 150 boys made every possible attendance. The report says, "In the board schools of Manchester every child who makes 350 attendances in a year receives a prize. If the same standard were accepted in the Free School, no less than 278 boys, or 82·7 per cent. of the average number on the roll, would be entitled to prizes." In a paper read before the Manchester Statistical Society, Dr. Watts compared the attendance at the Free School with that of three board schools, all of them producing good results. The average attendance was in favour of the Free School by 37 per cent., 25 per cent., and 22 per cent. Of the children who had made a sufficient number of attendances to qualify them for examination, the comparison shows 43 per cent., 27 per cent., and 17 per cent in favour of the Free School. There is one very significant fact showing how attendance depends on fees. It is well

known that Monday is the worst day in the week for paying fees. The attendance at the Free School on Monday is 38 per cent., 38 per cent., and 35 per cent. better than at the three board schools selected for comparison. The attendance at the Free School also extends over a longer period. The length of attendance at the three board schools was 1·7 years, 2·50 years, and 2·9 years, while at the Free School it was 3·75 years. Dr. Watts says that he believes "the difference is entirely due to the absence of fees and the annoyances connected therewith." These figures are convincing that a great improvement in attendance would result from free admission, and the attendance would not only be larger but steadier. Strict compulsion would still be necessary for a few; but if our school system were relieved from its fetters it would take an astonishing leap forward. The teachers would throw off a disheartening burden; the regular scholars, who are now kept back by the desultory and erratic attendance of others, would have far better opportunities, and the productive power of the schools would be increased incalculably. At the same time an inestimable boon would be carried into countless homes.

III. The tone of the existing system is unhealthy. Unhealthy tone of the existing system. It supplies incentives to corruption and induces pauperism. It is eleemosynary in spirit. It is a paternal government of the most offensive description which is coddling where it is not oppressive. It is patronising towards the poor, and offers them education as a favour and privilege for which they must appeal, and not as a right. It is a charity system, and the schools are widely regarded as charity schools. The partial remission and payment of fees is demoralising, and has a tendency to corrupt both parents and children. There is no difference in principle between remission and payment. The qualification of the candidates is the same in both cases. They must come cap in hand and prove their poverty. They must expose their empty cupboards, and submit to cross-examination by sleek gentlemen about their struggles and wants. They must repeat this at short intervals, and thus accustom themselves to make appeals for public relief. Remission is generally made tolerably easy, but it is very questionable whether, in point of public policy, and quite apart from the desirability of getting the children into school, it is wise that it should be so. Dr. R. W. Dale, when he was on the Birmingham

School Board, said that he had sat on the Appeal Committee, and that the whole system was essentially pauperising. "He thought that a woman who had shrunk from appearing before a relieving officer, after she had been before the Appeal Committee would be far more likely to go to the parish on the first pinch of poverty in order to get assistance."

Struggles
of parents
to escape
application
for fees.

That the parents recognise the degradation is evident from the struggles they make to escape from it. It is frequently necessary for the teachers to write notes for them stating that they wish for free orders, but this often fails to induce them to apply. Their repugnance is in the highest degree honourable to them, and ought to be encouraged. The objection to go before the guardians is more insurmountable, and many parents prefer to suffer partial starvation. There is often a double investigation, first by the school board and then by the guardians. The earliest is preparatory. The poor are invited to familiarise themselves, by gradual steps, with the shifts and expedients of pauperism. And although the first plunge is difficult, rapid progress is soon made. Example is contagious; it is hard to see children suffer; the attendance officer is behind; and so in various ways, and by degrees, the

spirit of independence is broken, and the victims are partly drawn, and partly driven, into a situation from which they may easily drift into the permanent ranks of pauperism. The contagion passes from parents to children, and the seeds of life-long subjection and dependence are sown in many families.

Experience has also demonstrated that the making of free orders is a great temptation to fraud and misrepresentation of circumstances. This danger is the greatest in the case of school boards, the members of which have not the relieving officer's instinct, practice, and acuteness in probing the private affairs of the poor. The custom of allowing the parents to get into debt, and then of wiping off their arrears, is also demoralising. The dunning of the children, the visits of the attendance officer, the summons before the magistrate, all harden a large proportion of the people against the school system, and make them regard education not as something to be pursued and embraced, but as a nuisance and infliction to be repelled and evaded in every way.

All this want of sympathy and co-operation, which gives the teacher such an up-hill fight, would be remedied if the parents had full proprietary rights in the schools, if they were open without

Remission
of fees bac
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badge or ticket, and if they were in a larger degree under their own control and the management of their own class. Then the time would soon come when the schools would be regarded not as charitable institutions, with their absurd and mischievous distinctions between tradesmen, mechanics, and labourers, but as the people's schools, in which the whole community would join, on equal terms, in the pursuit of a great national object.

VIII.

TAXATION AND FINANCE.

MR. LOWE once described the Chancellor of the Exchequer as a mere taxing-machine, “intrusted with a certain amount of misery which it was his duty to distribute as fairly as possible.” This harmonizes with the national sentiment that taxation, at the best, is a great evil; an opinion which gave rise to the school of economists of which Mr. Joseph Hume was the founder, and who has been followed by Mr. Peter Rylands, Dr. Pankhurst, and others, all of whom are persuaded that, whatever form taxation may take, it is necessarily unprofitable, unproductive, and a mere dead weight on the population. That this view is fundamentally unsound is proved by the case of the Post Office, where the State performs a service more efficiently and economically than it could be otherwise done, to the

Unpopularity of taxation.

succour of the revenue, and without the slightest perceptible pressure on the community. Looking back, however, over the long history of extortion practised on the nation, it is easy to understand how opinion has been forced into one channel. There has not been even the alleviation of fair distribution. Some sportive fictions have helped to gild the pill—such as the alleged privilege of the people to be taxed only by their representatives; but our code of finance has had no basis in honour or conscience.

The nation
hitherto un-
represented.

The National Debt, the charges on which absorb a third of the revenue, was contracted, almost in its entirety, when the masses were wholly unrepresented in Parliament. In their case the supposed protection of denying the Lords the right to interfere with money bills was no safeguard whatever. So far as their interest, comfort, or convenience went, they might just as well have been ruled by King Log as by King Stork. Even now, on the eve of their complete enfranchisement, so deeply is our fiscal legislation rooted in the past, when a small minority made laws for their own advantage, that Parliament still clings to its old ways, and to methods of raising revenue grossly unfair to the

bulk of the taxpayers. That under such conditions the expenses of Government should be viewed with toleration is hardly to be expected.

It will be the business of the Radical party to extend the range of view on this subject; to introduce a higher ideal; to reform the methods of taxation, correct its incidence, simplify its collection, and enlarge its application. By these means a public opinion may be created, in which taxes ought to be considered as an investment for the general good, and should be cheerfully, and, in the main, easily borne.

To many this may seem a romantic notion, and all will recognise the magnitude of the undertaking, which will not be accomplished without some rough collisions with precedents and received nostrums. Nothing is more convincing of the strength of the obstacles to reform than the fact, that notwithstanding all the pains given to the subject by Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Gladstone, and Mr. Lowe, so little has really been done to make national finance harmonize with national wants. In a great measure, however, this is explained by the necessary limitations of action under a restricted franchise.

It is said, probably with truth, that England is

The Radical policy.

Magnitude of the reform required and strength of obstacles.

Amount of taxation in England.

less heavily taxed than many other countries, but the gravamen of the charge against our taxation is not so much its gross amount as the way in which it is levied and appropriated. It is also urged that the load cannot press very severely on the people or they would mutiny against it. Because taxes often lead to revolutions, and as this country is not given to revolutions, therefore it is concluded that the imposts cannot be oppressive. The long-suffering of the people, their submission to law, the absence amongst them of seditious tendencies, are all taken against them in considering the necessity for reform. But the real explanation of their patience is that they have never known what they were actually paying.

Poll taxes. Early in history our rulers had experience of the results of heavy direct taxation. It was a poll tax which caused Wat Tyler's rebellion, and it was never afterwards found possible to collect a tax of this character. Our financiers therefore resorted to the cunning device under which a bloated revenue may be raised without its pressure being directly felt. A system of indirect taxation, levied upon necessities, has great charms for a finance minister whose object is to obtain the largest return with the

least resistance. Then, if the people have nothing to do with the laws, except, as Bishop Horsley said, to obey them, and if they are carefully blindfolded and kept in ignorance, there is hardly any limit to the burden which they will sustain without flinching. It is by means of this policy that twelve hundred millions sterling for war purposes have been saddled on the nation within the last two centuries. The way in which the new system was carried into effect involved a piece of dishonesty which hardly has any parallel in history. The military expenses of the Government were originally borne by the land, and they took the form of feudal services or payments, which were in the nature of a rent charge—"a portion of the rent reserved from the beginning by the State." The Parliament of Charles II., by a deliberate act of repudiation, removed this burden from the land to the duties upon customs and excise, collected from the whole community. In this way the principle was established that industry rather than property should bear the main cost of Government. To crown this violation of justice, the taxes collected from the people were appropriated for the benefit of the small ruling class who had a direct interest in

The introduction of indirect taxation.

the spending departments of the Government. Thus necessities are taxed to provide luxuries, and toil to create wealth.

Extent to which indirect taxation was formerly carried.

By degrees, every article of general consumption, everything which had to pass a port or a custom-house, or could be valued or assessed, came to be taxed. To look over a tariff list fifty years old is a convincing proof of the stolid patience of our ancestors. In these days, by a sparing use of indulgencies, taxation may be largely evaded, but less than half a century ago no one could exist and escape his daily contribution to the revenue. Every meal was heavily taxed; everything that could be consumed, worn, or used; fire and shelter, and the light of heaven. There was a tax for learning trades, and a tax for following trades, some of which still remain. The chief reliance, however, was upon the tax on necessities, because it was the most productive, and could not be easily evaded. The extent to which the method of indirect taxation was carried may be gathered from the fact that, previous to 1820, some two thousand Acts of Parliament had been passed in restriction of free commerce.

Taxes popular with the

It would be a mistake to suppose that this system was regarded with universal disfavour. The people

were densely ignorant, and it was a well-defined policy to keep them so. They knew they suffered, but did not know why. They knew that bread was dear, but did not know the cause. But with the class which made the laws this form of raising revenue was decidedly popular. Even in our own times the Tories have not generally been opposed to increased taxation, except where it touches land. But formerly taxation was the frequent origin of wealth—not of national wealth, but of those treasures which, as Mr. Ruskin says, are “heavy with human tears.” The early mode of borrowing under which Government Stock was issued at large discounts, was a source of affluence to many, and was encouraged by Parliament as a profitable means of speculation. The gigantic wars waged from the reign of Anne to that of George IV. laid the foundation of many splendid fortunes, and meant for one small class, which was supreme in the legislature, wealth, glory, promotion, and social distinction. For the poor they have meant nothing but bitterness. Private soldiers who have distinguished themselves in action have been left in their old age to languish in work-houses. If there are still a few survivors of Waterloo, the officers will probably be found in one of the

Tories. A source of wealth to governing classes.

Houses of Parliament—the privates in the other great national “house.” The costliness of public servants, their extravagance and corruption, the provision of sinecures and perpetual pensions for the descendants of court favourites or successful generals, have all fallen in their heaviest incidence upon the mass of the people, and have been wrung from the toil of the mechanic and labourer. The National Debt has been described by some authorities as representing so much wealth, or, as Burke says, “the purchase of commerce or conquest ;” while by others it is esteemed as a providential provision for safe investment by the classes called “respectable.” For the poor it may be taken as a measure of want and misery, of short supplies and extra labour.

Limited
and privi-
leged ap-
plication of
taxes.

Another characteristic of our national finances has been the narrow groove which they have kept, and the limited range of purposes for which they have been appropriated. The gross expenditure has always been advancing, but without, until recently, any expansion of the objects for which taxes may be profitably raised. Every extension of the revenue has been more than counterbalanced by the growth of expenditure, which has been confined within the same contracted borders—the management of the

debt, experiments in the military and naval departments, and organization of the civil service. Each new war has added to the debt and the cost of military equipments, and when peace has arrived the charges have never returned to the former peace footing.

The inability of Parliament to keep down Govern-
ment expenditure is owing to the preponderating
influence possessed by the class which is interested
in lavish outlay. The State is constantly accepting
new responsibilities, which find work and pay for a
few at the cost of the rest. It is doubtful whether
our national expenditure can now be largely reduced.
We cannot repudiate our obligations. The doctrine
of repudiation is not a part of the Radical programme.
What we first want is a searching inquiry into the
cost of the great spending departments. Nothing is
more certain than that Parliament has never seriously
undertaken the reduction of expenditure. There
has been a little paring now and again; a few small
votes have sometimes been attacked with success
from the outside; but that is the most that has been
attempted. The system of party Government, which
throws upon ministries a daily fight for existence, is
in some degree responsible. The preliminary con-

Inability of
Parliament
to keep
down ex-
penditure.
The cause.

dition of retrenchment is, that instead of vague charges of extravagance and inefficiency, as a rule unsupported by evidence, we should have fuller and clearer information as to the constitution of the various departments, and the possibility of reorganisation with a view to economy.

Aversion of
people to
old system.
Aims of the
new policy.

These being the chief historical features of our financial code, a general aversion to all schemes of raising or expending revenue is a natural result. It is the inevitable consequence of a system of Government under which the taxpayers are only partially represented. But when the Government is brought into full accord with the whole nation there ought to be no reason why taxation, based on sound principles for the advantage of the entire community, should not be just as popular with the people at large as it has hitherto been with the minority who have almost exclusively benefited by it. The aim of the future will be to reverse the principle which has held sway in the past; to rectify the incidence of the levies for the relief of industry; to reform the methods of collection; to enlarge and multiply the channels of appropriation; to investigate the cost of administration in the three chief services, and to reduce their expenditure to the extreme limit con-

sistent with economy and efficiency in the business of the State.

No plea is put forward for the exemption of any class from a fair contribution to the cost of Government. Everyone who is able should subscribe something, and, as far as possible, should know what the amount is. For this reason direct taxes are preferable to indirect taxes. Besides, there can be no better check on the extravagance of Government. When the whole nation votes the taxes there would be no difficulty in collecting even a poll-tax. With an ignorant population, or under autocratic forms of Government, there are many excuses for indirect taxation, but they lose their force when the people are instructed and have a full share of representation. Then the more closely they are brought into relation with the administration, the greater will be their interest in the affairs of the State.

Nor is it intended to disparage the large reforms in the tariff laws which have been effected partly by Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Lowe, but in the main by the financial skill of Mr. Gladstone. But notwithstanding the great remissions on articles of general use, the incidence of taxation continues to be unequal and unjust. It is not controverted that the contribu-

All classes
should be
taxed.

Remissions
by Mr.
Gladstone.
Incidence
still unjust.

tions of the working classes trespass to a serious and painful extent on the simple necessities of life. The three Chancellors of the Exchequer of real note, within the last half century, agree that the customs and excise, which still make up five-sevenths of the revenue, fall heaviest upon those who have the smallest means. The figures of the late Professor Stanley Jevons, of Professor Leone Levi, and other eminent statisticians, show that those families which have the smallest incomes pay the largest proportion of taxes. Mr. Bright has said that the amount contributed by the working classes, in proportion to their means and income, exceeds the contributions of other and richer sections of society. Mr. Gladstone also has acknowledged that three-fourths of the customs and excise are raised from people so poor that the great majority are compelled to spend all their earnings on the bare necessities of existence. Again, referring to the taxes on the earnings of the people, he said, "They formed in no small degree a deduction from a scanty store, which was necessary to secure them a sufficiency, he did not say of the comforts of life, but even of the prime necessities of clothing, of shelter, and of fuel."

in two of which the Liberals have had large majorities in the Commons, importunate resolutions have been passed demanding the relief of local taxation. One of the first acts of Mr. Disraeli's last Government was to transfer several millions from the local rates to the Imperial exchequer, which was, as far as it went, a relief to the rich at the expense of the poor. This proves the enormous ascendancy which the landowners still possess in Parliament. Some readjustment of local burdens may be desirable, but there has been an unreasonable impatience on both sides of the House to have the matter settled before there is any extension of democratic power. Too much haste, however, will defeat its own ends. No readjustment of local rates will be accepted as complete which is not accompanied by a thorough inquiry into the incidence of Imperial taxation.

The case of the land is not so urgent that it cannot wait until the subject can be considered in all its bearings. When that is convenient something must be taken into account for the obligations which the land has thrown off, as well as for those which it bears. The land tax, where it still exists, is collected on a valuation made in the reign of William III. It now yields a little over a million, but

The case of
the land.

if it were based on present value, it would produce nearly twenty millions. In other words, the value of land has multiplied twenty-fold since the last assessment for the land tax. It would be interesting to know what proportion of this extra value belongs to what is called unearned increment. Clearly a revision of local rates should be attended by a revaluation. The land also escapes probate and legacy duties, and the small succession duty which it pays is calculated, not, as in the case of personal property, on the capital value, but on the life interest of the tenant. Even this trifling charge is often evaded by settlements. Care will have to be taken that any relief which may ultimately be granted to local rates shall not be a gift to the landlord, in the shape of increased value, but that it shall find its way into the pockets of the occupiers, who really bear the rates. The relief of property, to the inevitable increase of the burden on industry, is just the opposite direction which the reform of taxation should take.

A preliminary question: What is the just incidence of taxation? The cardinal point to be decided before any comprehensive or beneficial changes can be made is, What is the just incidence of taxation between rich and poor or between wealth and labour? The man-

ner of raising and of appropriating taxes, though questions of great importance, can only be determined when the first principle is agreed upon.

The maxim which will probably find acceptance is that a reasonable allowance should be made for necessities of existence, and that only the surplus of earnings and accumulations should be taxed. This is not a recent suggestion ; it was proposed by Bentham and supported by Mill, and it is really the principle upon which the reforms of Mr. Gladstone have proceeded, so far as they have gone.

An allowance for necessities not to be taxed.

After making this deduction, realised property in some cases, and incomes in others, should be taxed according to a graduated scale. Neither is this a new proposal. In Mr. Pitt's time there was a tax of ten per cent. on incomes of £200 and upwards, while diminishing rates were attached to smaller incomes down to £60. A graduated income tax has long been advocated, both in England and on the Continent. In some parts of the United States it has been successfully adopted, and has been recently introduced into Germany by Prince Bismarck. The maxim put forward by Mr. Mill is that in taxation there should be equality of sacrifice. It is very difficult to carry out such a theory with absolute

A graduated income tax.

perfection, but the leaning towards generosity of construction ought to be in favour of the poor, instead of, as it has hitherto been, in favour of the rich. How can the practice of taxing small incomes, dependent on health, skill, and industry, in the same proportion as large incomes proceeding from realised wealth, be defended? It is admitted that the greatest number of persons who pay income tax pay on the smallest incomes. Under a mixed system like ours, partly direct and partly indirect, the most oppressive weight falls on the large and struggling intermediate class, who, besides their proportion of indirect taxation, have to pay the direct tax on income. A special tax on realised property is opposed on the ground of its alleged injustice; yet the middle classes are required to pay a tax on their savings, even before they become productive. It is argued that a graduated income tax would hold out motives for dissipating instead of saving. The sentiment may pass for what it is worth; the practical point is, How would it work? It would be foolish to impose a tax which would destroy the incentive to exertion, but an income tax of 10 per cent. has been borne in England, and might be levied again without the result, so often prophesied

but never realised, of driving capital out of the country.

Mr. Mill was in favour of applying the principle of a graduated tax to legacies and inheritances. He also advocated a distinction between incomes depending on personal skill and industry, and those derived from realised property. It was, too, a favourite project of his to tax the spontaneous increase of rent. The latter principle has been conspicuously departed from in England, while in most countries the land tax forms a large proportion of public revenue. There may be some nice points for reconciliation and decision, but a direct progressive tax on income and property is the lever to which we shall have to look for the social reforms of the future.

Having satisfied the preliminary condition that the revenue shall be fairly raised, the extent to which taxation may be carried and the objects for which it may be legitimately appropriated are open for consideration. Here we part company with the school of economists whose views are expressed in the invariable formula "reduction of the estimates," as the one universal and infallible panacea for all the evils of the State. It is possible to say this without

Mr. Mill's
views.

Objects for
which taxes
may be
legitimately
raised.

any derogation of the eminent services rendered in the past by a few members of Parliament who were the sole intercessors between the people and the legislature, and who found that the only way to keep the grossly extravagant expenditure of Government in check at all was to attack it on all occasions and at every point. Mr. Bright has always held that the cost of Government was scandalously excessive. Mr. Cobden also was of opinion that our expenditure could be largely reduced without diminishing the efficiency of the services; but he recognised a great difference in classes of expenditure. For instance, he was in favour of liberal taxation for education. "We cannot afford," he said, "to have a little national education."

Economy
in the
services.

By all means let us have the most severe economy in every branch of the service; let us be careful to have a pound's worth for every pound we expend. But safeguards being taken for this, it is a mistake to conclude that the magnitude of the estimates is even *prima facie* proof that the expenditure is unremunerative. Let it be repeated with emphasis that we must have a substantial return in labour, talent, service, or materials for every farthing we spend; but as long as we secure this, taxation, on equitable

principles, for objects which the nation approves, cannot be on too liberal a scale.

Wherever the State can spend money for the public advantage better than individuals, the power of taxation may be legitimately exercised. The principle has already justified itself in the postal department, where a quarter of a million laid out in 1869 produced in the course of a few years a million and a quarter. But it is not necessary that there should be a direct pecuniary return in order to justify taxation. The education grants bring nothing directly to the exchequer, yet no one questions their general advantage. Payments for public works, for sanitary purposes, for the regulation of mines, factories, railways, and shipping, for the supply of water and the administration of justice, are equally advantageous to the community at large, and justify a general assessment. Expenditure of this class on a much larger scale than at present would yield a good return in the shape of better health, increased comfort and security of life, and national contentment. The bulk of our outlay in the past has been mischievous where it has not been mere waste. The immense war bill of the last two centuries is of this character. The taxation of the

The general principle stated.

future ought to take the character of insurance, or of investments for the general welfare.

Tendency
of modern
legislation
to enlarge
functions
of Govern-
ment.

It is not intended to discuss here the wide subject of the proper limitations of the functions of Government ; but it is evident that the tendency of modern legislation is to give Government more rather than less to do. The objections to State undertakings and interference become of diminished force when the Government is by the whole people, and when every citizen is a partner in the affairs of the State. There are many operations which have to be conducted on an extensive scale, which a Government, by reason of its resources and comprehensive powers, can undertake much more economically than individuals or private associations. It would be better for the State, either through Parliament or municipal authorities, to assume these functions more often than it does, rather than to encourage the creation of huge private interests and monopolies, which are always fighting and combating for their own hands against the community. Take as an illustration the railway companies.

Old debts
owing to
the people.
Educa-
tional En-
dowments.

For the present purpose, however, it is sufficient to point out that there are some old debts owing to the people which the Government will have to dis-

charge. The first subject is education, which becomes more urgent every day. It may be taken as a general maxim that we cannot have too much education, whether it be primary, secondary, higher, or of a technical or special character. In time the cost of the whole of it will fall on the nation and on national funds. The first step to be taken is to make our elementary schools wholly free. There is a long-standing obligation to the poor in this matter. If they could recover all the endowments which have been left to them, with arrears of interest, it is probable that there would be little taxation required for elementary schools. We shall never ascertain the total amount of funds given for this purpose, but we can form some idea of it from the charities which are left, and also from the scale of spoliation which was going on when the first investigations of the Charity Commissioners were made. In the City of London alone, if compound interest were calculated on the cost of entertainments provided out of funds bequeathed for the use of the poor, there would be a sum which, if realised, would afford sensible relief to London ratepayers. The apprenticeship charities, which were really for technical education, amounted to at least £50,000 a year, or a capital value of a

million. But for half a century, or since the repeal of the apprenticeship laws, there has been no demand on these funds. What has become of them? They ought now to represent a principal sum of at least fifteen millions. Either they have been lost or dissipated, or they have fallen into the common fund, which has been sequestrated for the education of the middle classes. But they formed but a trifling part of the endowments left for the instruction and advancement of the poor. Lord Brougham's Commission found that great numbers of these charities had been appropriated beyond the possibility of pursuit or recovery. But there are thousands which still remain, and are administered under the Endowed Schools Act for the benefit of the upper classes. It is noteworthy that this Act, which was nothing less than legal spoliation of the poor, was passed just after the extension of the franchise in 1868, and that it was immediately followed by the Education Acts, which increased the payments of the working classes for education, and drove them to the relieving officers for their school-fees. This is striking evidence both of the partial character of the Reform Act of 1868, and of the general "want of conscience" amongst the ruling classes in considering what is due to the people.

There are some politicians who are in favour of ^{The} the reclamation of these charities ; but that is hardly ^{remedy.} worth while. To make the restitution complete all the back interest would have to be recovered. There is a much simpler way of meeting the equity and necessity of the case, that is, by paying the whole amount of the school fees out of the national revenue. And quite apart from justice there could be no better investment of a million and a half. The establishment of technical and art schools, and the gradual provision of secondary education, are other channels in which the collective funds of the State may wisely be allowed to flow. Under any circumstances we are bound to face a large annual addition to our national expenditure upon education.

The reform of the land laws, with powers for the ^{Reform of} compulsory purchase of small holdings, with the ^{land laws.} assistance of the State, on fair terms to landlords, will also make demands upon the revenue. It is too frequently assumed by Liberals, in discussing the land question, that it will be sufficient to repeal the laws of primogeniture and entail, and other enactments and customs which restrict sale and transfer, afterwards leaving the land to the natural

influences of collection and dispersion, and the rules of political economy which regulate supply and demand. But no such partial amendment would have a practical result within a period which living men may venture to look forward to. The laws of political economy and natural division have been violently assailed and outraged in the case of land, and if there is to be any redress some strong remedy of an opposite character will be required. The land hunger in England, or the hunger for power, social distinction, and political influence which the possession of land has conferred, has led to its aggregation in the hands of a few, and has contributed to the fancy value which keeps it out of the reach of the poor. So eager has been the pursuit that land almost worthless has been reclaimed and enclosed at a cost exceeding its value. The poor have been deprived of their interests in the commons and waste lands. It is no palliation of these proceedings that they have been generally effected by legal process. The owners of common rights have been practically powerless, and have been compelled to look on in silence, or even to affect a cheerful acquiescence, while their privileges have been confiscated. What possible power of resistance can be

exercised by a few poor village commoners, when the lord of the manor, his solicitors and land agents, the clergyman and the largest farmers, have resolved that it is desirable to enclose the common or the waste? They have had no one to represent them in Parliament or to urge their rights before the Private Bill Committees or the Enclosure Commissioners. The Rev. Henry Homer, rector of Birdingbury, in Warwickshire, who wrote on the Enclosure of Commons more than a hundred years ago, says of the private bills, then the usual method of enclosure:—

“The whole plan of them is for the most part settled between the solicitor and two or three principal proprietors, without even letting the rest of them (the commoners) into the secret till they are called upon to sign the petition. They are, in many instances, not so much as indulged with a sight of the Bill, or the privilege of hearing it read, till it is tendered to them to be signed, and for that purpose they are taken separately. This leaves them exposed to be practised upon by agents in regard to the choice of Commissioners, who have thereby an opportunity of serving their friends, which creates expectations, and has the effect of being served again in their turn. Many times the business is hurried on and concluded without a single meeting of the parties concerned, to consult about their common interest, though perhaps the whole property of many is at stake.”

Frequently the lands have been enclosed by the lord in exercise of his manorial right or power of Enclosure of land.

improvement. The process began as far back as the statute of Merton. An author whose pamphlet is preserved in the Harleian Miscellany says: "I have known of late a dozen ploughs, within less compass than six miles about me, laid down within these seven years, and where threescore persons or upwards had their livings, now one man with his cattle hath all." The chief wrong has been done with the express sanction of Parliament, and ostensibly in the interests of labour. The process of enclosing by private Acts of Parliament began about Queen Anne's time. There are four thousand of these Acts, authorising Commissioners to parcel out the waste in allotments.

The General Enclosure Act.

But this means was too slow and too expensive for the squires, and in 1845 the General Enclosure Act was passed, under which a permanent Commission was constituted, with large powers for the enclosure of commons and wastes. A distinguished legal writer describes the effect of this Act as follows: "No impediment any longer remains to the bringing of every estate in England and Wales within a ring fence, an important advantage to every landowner whose estate is the subject of inconvenient rights, or who has small outlying plots which pre-

vent the regular cultivation of the farms." At last Parliament seems to have awakened to some sense of responsibility towards the people, and it was made a condition of future enclosures that certain reservations should be made for recreation grounds, and for garden allotments for labourers. The concession was not a very valuable one, as may be judged from the fact that out of 614,800 acres enclosed under the Act up to 1869, only 3,965 acres had been set out for both purposes. Enclosures are still frequently made without the intervention of the Commissioners, by virtue of special customs, and in exercise of that sovereign power dating back a thousand years, and supposed to reside in the lord of the manor.

It is vain to hope that the operation of the rules of political economy will restore to the people their rights in the soil. Nor is it feasible to require the restoration of the land, even where it has been taken without legal sanction. The proceedings for its recovery would be too dilatory and expensive. It would also be a very partial remedy. In the largest number of cases the wrongful possession has been sanctified by time, and prescription makes as good a title as an Act of Parliament. The more simple and direct way will be to give the people compulsory

Operation
of political
economy
no remedy.

powers of purchase, and to assist them by Government loans at small rates. In this manner some redress may be offered for an ancient and grievous wrong.

The Financial Reform Association. Abolition of customs and excise. The drink traffic.

Finally, we have to notice some of the practical reforms urged by the Financial Reform Association. About some of them, as, for instance, a strict economy in the administration of Government, there will be universal agreement; but other proposals are of a more debatable character. Such is the suggested abolition of customs and excise, and the complete substitution of direct for indirect taxation. Have those who insist upon this reform fairly faced the difficulty of the drink traffic? It is sometimes made a reproach against Parliament that so large a proportion of revenue should be derived from this source. But what would happen otherwise? Either we must have the compulsory abolition of all alcoholic liquors, or we must allow free trade in drink. The first is impossible, and the last would be ruinous. The very success of our experiments in remitting duties on other articles of consumption makes it impossible to abolish, or even greatly to lower, the duties in this case. Nothing is more striking than the rapid recovery of the revenue after every re-

duction of taxation on articles in general use. It is sometimes asserted that if drink were free the people would drink less, but what evidence is offered to justify so hazardous an experiment? All our experience goes to prove the contrary. The reduction of the tea duty caused a large increase in the consumption of tea; the same observation applies to coffee and to light wines. It is appalling to think what might be the consequences of permitting the free importation and manufacture of alcoholic liquors.

It is frequently urged as a strong objection to indirect taxes that they cost so much to collect. Mr. Wilson, in his able review of the National Budget, writes: "The cost of the Customs department, however, must tend to appear large, measured by the income it collects, so long as that income diminishes. It takes the same army of watchers, collectors, and superintendents to prevent the revenue being defrauded when the taxes are small as when they are large. No port can be left unwatched, and the fact that so many ports do not yield enough in duties to pay the cost of the staff in charge is an argument used by many for the total abolition of import duties. But it is difficult to subscribe to that

Cost of
collecting
indirect
taxes.

doctrine.”* But is it not worth consideration, whether by some reorganization the services of these officers might not in many cases be utilised in other branches of Government duty, such as the supervision department of the Board of Trade? Already their duties are not confined to mere revenue purposes. They act as quarantine officers, as registrars of shipping, as wreck officers, and superintendents of mercantile marine. The legislation of the future, that for instance relating to shipping, will undoubtedly call for other services on the coasts, for which the present staff may be made partially available. However this may be, it is impossible in the present state of public opinion wholly to remit the drink duties. If they are ever abolished it will be by gradual steps, warranted by the spread of education and the improved habits of society.

The food
taxes.

Without wholly abolishing indirect taxation, there are ways in which its pressure may be lightened, both with addition to the comfort of the people and the expansion of trade. The food taxes still amount to four millions annually. Such are the duties on tea, coffee, chicory, plums, currants, and other articles of consumption. It can only be a

* The “National Budget,” p. 113.

short time before the country will insist that these charges shall be repealed. The distinction which is now made between the taxation of the luxuries of the rich and of the poor is indefensible. Take the case of tobacco. Mr. Wilson says, "The poor man's ounce of tobacco, for which he pays threepence, would cost less than a penny were there no duty upon it. He, therefore, pays a tax of, say 400 per cent. on the amount he consumes, while the rich man who buys cigars pays a tax of but from 15 to 50 per cent." The tax on light wines is about 25 per cent., while spirits pay 200 per cent., and beer, and common teas used by the poor, 100 per cent. These are anomalies which ought to be corrected.

There are other vexatious and restrictive taxes which press heavily upon industry ; such as licences for various trades, the tax on patents for inventions, and the stamp duties on the transfer of small properties. The house duty needs to be thoroughly revised. It is now evaded at both ends of the scale. Many houses which let for £20 escape assessment altogether ; but the most scandalous evasions are those of large establishments, which are assessed at imaginary rents, having no relation to cost, value, or the rate of expenditure incurred for them. The taxation

Vexatious
taxes. The
house duty.

of ground-rents and of vacant land held for a rise in price are also matters deserving attention. It is, however, not so much our intention to examine details as to state principles.

Recapitulation.

Briefly recapitulated, the points to be insisted upon are these :—To secure the highest degree of economy and efficiency in the public service ; to readjust the incidence of taxation, throwing upon property the duty which it acknowledges but evades ; to improve and simplify the method of levying and collecting taxes ; and finally, to make a liberal appropriation of State funds on sound principles for the social advancement of the people. Under any circumstances it is certain that the gross expenditure of the country will increase rather than diminish.

Reduction
in cost of
services.
Army and
navy.
General
conclusion.

There are doubtless certain economies which may be effected in the services, but to expect too much from this source will probably lead to disappointment. The cost of the army may be reduced if it is made a mere defensive service. A good deal might be saved by the abolition of the Government establishments at Woolwich and elsewhere ; but savings in this direction will be more than counterbalanced by the increased pay which it will be necessary at no distant date to give to our private soldiers. In

one way the nation may save on its military expenditure, and that is by putting an end to useless, offensive, and costly military expeditions into every quarter of the globe. The cost of the navy will probably increase; but there is no party of any weight in the country which denies the duty of the Government to keep this arm of the service in the highest state of preparation and efficiency. Under these conditions the difficulties of retrenchment to a degree which would be a sensible relief to taxpayers will be found to be very great. It is by readjustment as well as by retrenchment that the people must be reconciled to taxation.

IX.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND IRELAND.

Defeat of
Liberal
Cabinets in
1874 and
1885. Dis-
similarity of
conditions.

THERE is a striking dissimilarity between the circumstances attending the defeat of Mr. Gladstone's Government in 1874 and the eclipse of the Liberal administration in 1885. In the former case the Cabinet fell because the Liberal programme, as it was then propounded, had been exhausted. The nation declined to entrust it with another commission in the absence of work definitely marked out for it to execute. The Conservatives acceded to power, not so much because they were led by a man of genius like Mr. Disraeli, as because there was no practical alternative to a Conservative *régime*. To-day everything is different. The Liberals are not defeated or discredited in the constituencies. They have simply retired from office in consequence of a hostile vote, accidentally snatched in a parliamentary

Hope and
confidence
of Liberals.

division; their prospects in the country were never brighter, their scheme of political action in the future never more clear in its outline, or more copious and hopeful in its contents. It will be now generally admitted that the subjects of paramount attraction to the English democracy belong to the department of domestic policy, and that outside these limits it is difficult to kindle the genuine and permanent fervour of the people. If we ask what, within this region, is the subject of the widest interest at the present moment to all classes of the country, and what is calculated to exercise the most vivid and direct influence upon our national development, the answer must unquestionably be the reform of local government, using that expression in its widest sense, and not restricting this reform to any one of the three kingdoms.

The great work of the renovated Parliament of 1832 was the establishment of local government in towns; the great work of the Parliament of 1868 was the extension of the sphere of local government in the business of national education. The great work of the Parliament to be elected after the organic change of the constituencies in 1885, will be the crowning of the edifice of local government in some

Devotion to
domestic
legislation.

Extension
of local
government
the natural
work of re-
formed Par-
liaments.

parts of the United Kingdom, and the foundation, as well as the completion, of its structure in others.

Local government
the foundation of citizenship.

Then, and not till then, shall we be able to say that the rights of citizenship exist, and are exercised, equally in all parts of Great Britain and Ireland, that the forces inherent in the various classes of the whole community, the free and regulated operation of which is essential to a happy and self-governed people, are operative, and that the relations on which alone the inhabitants of England and Wales, Scotland, and Ireland can live happily together, are equitably settled. Before we examine the basis on which local government ought hereafter to exist, let

The present conditions
of local government.

us see what it now means. It is concerned at present, as usually understood, with the administration of the Poor Law, the Education Law, the Sanitary Acts, the provision of public baths, parks, cemeteries, lunatic asylums, free libraries, and other institutions conducive to the well-being of the ratepayers. In the large towns no serious fault can be found with the working of the system. In addition to its having accomplished the exact reforms which it was intended to effect, it has proved an educational agency of the highest value. It has elicited and nurtured qualities in the case of individuals which

Its educational results.

might otherwise have languished for lack of opportunity ; it has opened the way from parochial politics to Imperial statesmanship ; its discipline, its competition, its stimulus, have invested those who have actively taken part in it with a dignity of a solid and energising kind. The great corporations, conducted as they are with marked intelligence, have been instrumental in bestowing the utmost advantage on the population. The field of their responsibilities has been for years steadily on the increase, and at each step their functions and powers have been proportionately enlarged. Much, however, yet remains to be done. In the first place, it is only a section of the inhabitants of Great Britain itself which enjoys the benefits of local government at all. In the second place, the machinery, where it is at work, still suffers from imperfections.

To take the latter point first—it is essential to effect an economy of municipal force. This can only be done by the unification of local work. At present the Poor Law, the Education Acts, and the Municipal Acts are administered by three separate authorities. If they were placed under one body, not only would there be a great simplification, an invaluable utilising of energies now often unprofitably dissipated.

Imperfections of machinery.

Conflicting
authorities.

In rural
districts no
local go-
vernment
worthy of
name.

Reforms
required.
Partition
for adminis-
trative pur-
poses.

pated, but the governing body itself would gain appreciably in dignity and in importance. The same confusion exists in an aggravated form in urban districts, where the principal authorities are local boards, and where there are in many cases, separate rating authorities for highways, burial purposes, health, school boards, poor law, and other objects. But the most grievous defects of our present system are to be found in the rural districts, where local government properly so-called hardly exists at all, where a restricted franchise and artificial method of voting are added to the evils of complicated jurisdictions and divided responsibility, and where the paramount authority—that of the Quarter Sessions—has no representative character. Hence we are confronted at every turn by a three-fold chaos of area, rate, and authority. Such, then, so far as England is concerned, is the problem for which the new Parliament must find a solution.

We may proceed briefly to indicate the chief features in the reform to be desired. As for political purposes the whole country has now been partitioned into electoral districts, so must it be arranged for administrative purposes. Of the divisions thus created, some, like the new Irish constituencies, will

be purely rural, others purely urban, others again will partake of the characteristics of both. In each there will be a single authority based on household Household suffrage, and dealing with all subjects locally apper- suffrage the proper basis. taining to the area over which it has jurisdiction, and the limits of which must be regulated by the necessity of investing the work to be done with importance, and of justifying the expenditure of time and labour which it involves. These primary local bodies will, however, be signally incomplete County boards or councils. unless they are supplemented by county councils dealing with interests which extend beyond the boundaries of the smaller districts, and which these districts may be said to share in common with them. They will include high roads, lunatic asylums, and prisons, and the county councils charged with the responsibility of these might be composed of representatives sent to them by the local bodies whether urban or rural, or they might be directly elected by all the ratepayers in the county. In this way we should have a complete system of local government administered by men on whom, greatly to the general advantage of the community, it would be possible to devolve a considerable amount of additional work. The granting of licences, the power of acquiring

land for the purpose of providing labourers' dwellings and allotments, and under specified conditions for aiding in the establishment of peasant proprietorships, would all come legitimately within their province.

The case of the metropolis. Sir William Harcourt's measure.

It would of course be necessary to deal with the metropolis by itself. The principle of Sir William Harcourt's measure of London reform may be described as a proposal to treat the whole of the metropolitan area very much after the fashion of the large provincial towns, to create one great municipality with all the powers enjoyed by provincial corporations except the control of the police. The central corporation was to be empowered to delegate some of its functions to local bodies. It may be doubted whether such a proposal affords the best prospect of a really successful local government. It involves an immense centralisation, since practically between four and five millions of people would have to be governed directly by a single authority. An alternative plan would be to create separate councils in each of the parliamentary divisions, with all the powers of provincial councils, and to reserve for a central body, formed by delegation from the various district councils, such work as is essentially metro-

Immense centralisation involved.

politan in its nature. Thus to the local councils ^{Local councils suggested.} would be left all the local sanitary work, the provision of libraries, baths, and parks, and other similar details, while the central body would deal with the main sewage, with lunatics, police, and possibly with main roads. By the second proposal greater importance would be given to the local councils, which would thereby obtain the services of better men. The work would be decentralised, and the details would be more effectively looked after by persons conversant with the locality than if they were entrusted to a central body.

These are only instalments, and the question of ^{Division of the United Kingdom.} Local Government Reform will not be satisfactorily disposed of before it is dealt with on a scale more comprehensive than has as yet been indicated. The United Kingdom consists, if we give a separate place to the principality, of four countries, to none of which are identically the same municipal methods applicable. Let us now, therefore, look at the matter from what may be called the national point of view. The problem here is to entrust Wales, Scotland, and Ireland with the free and full administration of those of their internal affairs which do not involve any Imperial interest. As regards Scotland,

The Scotch system. that problem has been, to some extent, solved already.

Practically under a system which is not sanctioned by the constitution, but which the good sense of the Scotch members has established, Scotch legislation is arranged without the interference of English or Irish members of Parliament. There prevails, that is to say on the other side of the Tweed, a separate system of laws and administration suited to the needs and prejudices of the Scotch, and having little or nothing in common with that in force for England and Ireland. Bankruptcy, education, land laws, and many other subjects, are each of them treated on an entirely different basis. And yet, notwithstanding that the Scotch practically control their legislation, they have two grounds of dissatisfaction with the administrative conditions under which they live. They complain, first, that the supply of their wants is delayed owing to the pressure of work in the Imperial Parliament; and secondly, that the administration of the law after it is made is supervised in London by English officials. Hence the proposal, recently made and largely supported, for the establishment of a Scotch Secretary of State. The sole motive of this suggestion is the hope that if effect be given to it, greater attention will be

Proposal to establish a Scotch Secretary of State.

secured for Scotch legislation, and greater independence of English control be attained. What has been said of Scotland holds equally true in the case of Wales. The case of Wales. The peculiarities of the Welsh people, and the difference between the circumstances under which they and the English exist, give them a clear claim to exceptional domestic legislation. To some extent this claim has been conceded. The Welsh Intermediate Education Bill is without an exact parallel in English or Scotch legislation. It belongs, however, to that class of measures necessarily placed on one side when the pressure on the Imperial Legislature of other public business makes itself felt. In all probability, Wales, which is just as much entitled to such treatment as Scotland, would gladly accept any proposal designed to secure the same measure of autonomy for itself as Scotland already enjoys.

Before dealing, as we presently shall at some length, with the case of Ireland, it seems well to say a few words on another object of the first importance, which can be accomplished only in connection with some such extension of the principles of local government as we are now considering. The existing strain on parliamentary government. Recent experience has made it perfectly clear that

parliamentary government is being exposed to a strain for which it may prove unequal. The overwhelming work thrown upon the Imperial Legislature is too much for its machinery. The enormous complexity of modern legislation, to say nothing of difficulties caused by obstruction and party politics, indefinitely postpone many measures of reform, no matter how imperatively they may be called for. The imperial evil is not less than the domestic.

Neglect of
Colonial
and Indian
topics.

What, for instance, can be more deplorable than the systematic neglect at Westminster of Colonial and Indian topics of the highest moment. It is obvious that no mere extension of local government upon the ordinary and restricted lines will relieve the parliamentary congestion which has long since become a national calamity. Nor can it be too strongly insisted on that the supervision and control now exercised by the central authority in London involves, not only delay and difficulty in the transaction of Imperial business, but an amount of irritation and friction which is altogether superfluous.

Irritation
and friction

In the great towns, indeed, the municipal councils are so powerful that in the long run they accomplish what they want and get their way, breaking through the fetters of redtapism and surmounting

the petty barriers of official pedantry. The smaller local authorities are less fortunate, and are bound down by the traditions and routine of an exasperating officialism. Such an arrangement can do no good, though it undoubtedly does much evil. The constant collision between the local and the central authorities means a waste of force that might under other circumstances be usefully and happily expended. Nor is it less to be regretted that those who find themselves perpetually interfered with should sustain a perceptible loss of authority and respect. It is scarcely to be expected that, under conditions which are always precarious, and which are frequently humiliating, the best men should consent to serve the State. Another result, equally unfortunate and equally unavoidable, is that local administration is stamped with the impression of a mechanical uniformity, and runs in grooves fatal to healthy experiment and honest progress.

Palpable as are the evils arising from undue interference by the central authority with local government in England, we find them intensified when we come to deal with the question of local government in Scotland, and still more so in the case of Ireland. There the interference is not merely that of a supe-

Collision between local and central authorities.

Evils intensified in Scotland and Ireland.

The Irish people excluded from management of their affairs. Power and influence of "the Castle."

rior or of an official, it is moreover the interference of an alien authority. We have an additional factor of irritation in the prejudice of race and nationality. A control which in any case would be borne with some impatience becomes odious and intolerable when it is the badge of a foreign supremacy. It is difficult for Englishmen to realise how little influence the people in Ireland have in the management of even the smallest of their local affairs, and how constantly the alien race looms before their eyes as the omnipresent controlling power. "The Castle," as it is called, is in Ireland synonymous with the Government. Its influence is felt, and constantly felt, in every department of administration, local and central; and it is little wonder that the Irish people should regard the Castle as the embodiment of foreign supremacy. The rulers of the Castle are to them foreign either in race, or in sympathy, or in both. The Lord-Lieutenant is rarely an Irishman; and if Irish in race, he is sure to be selected from a class having no political idea or sympathy in common with the great bulk of the people whom he is to rule. The same observation applies to the Chief Secretary, and to the Under-Secretary and Assistant Under-Secretaries. These are the rulers of Ireland

and, as Irishmen keep constantly reminding us, these rulers owe their position, not to the favour or confidence of the Irish people, but to the favour and confidence of one or other of the English parties.

The sanction which the Castle seeks, or is believed to seek, is to Irishmen that of a foreign race. The sanction which almost every branch of administration in Ireland seeks is that of the Castle. The Irish Local Government Board controls the Boards of Poor Law Guardians, and in some respects it also controls all the corporations and town commissioners throughout Ireland. The members of the Local Government Board are appointed by the Castle, and the Chief Secretary, one of the principal governors at the Castle, is their president. The entire control of the fiscal affairs of each Irish county is vested in the Grand Jury, a body consisting of twenty-three gentlemen selected by the High Sheriff, who has himself been nominated by the Viceroy, or, as the Irish people would say, by the "Castle." The Grand Jury, a body of which it has been truly said that, "instead of being selected for business capacity, it is a barometer for the measurement of social claims," meets twice a year for one or two days at a

Constitution of
imperial
government
in Ireland.

The disposal of patronage.

Irish prison system.

Education.

Constabulary.

Magistrates.

time, votes taxes to the amount of about a million and a quarter sterling, and exercises out of public rates a patronage representing over one hundred thousand pounds per annum. The mode in which this patronage is distributed is not calculated to lessen the belief of the Irish people that the entire system of county government in Ireland is under the control of an alien race. The Irish prisons system is managed by a board consisting of three members, all appointed by the Castle. The boards who have control of lunatic asylums in Ireland are nominated by the Castle; the resident and visiting medical officers, and the inspectors attached to these asylums, are appointed by the Castle. The entire system of primary education in Ireland is confided to a central board in Dublin, every member of which is nominated by the Castle. The board in Dublin which presides over the system of intermediate education for all Ireland is selected by the Castle. The metropolitan police in Dublin are managed by a commissioner who is appointed by the Castle; the entire system of rural police, known in Ireland as the Constabulary force, and numbering about 13,000 men, is under the control of a commissioner who is appointed by the Castle. All the stipendiary magis-

trates throughout Ireland are appointed by the Castle. The unpaid magistrates are usually appointed on the recommendation of the Lord-Lieutenant of the county, who is himself appointed by the Castle. The magistrates, paid and unpaid, throughout Ireland in any case of difficulty send up queries to the Castle, so as to be advised by the Attorney or Solicitor-General, both of whom have offices in the Castle; and prosecutions, instead of being undertaken by the magistrates or by private individuals, as in England, are instituted invariably in the name of the Irish Attorney-General, and under his direction.

The Irish Board of Works, a department possessing powers far more extensive than those vested in its English counterpart, is practically irresponsible to Irish public opinion. It is under the direct control of the Treasury in London, and is managed as a branch of the Treasury. Its mouthpiece in Parliament is the Financial Secretary of the Treasury, usually a gentleman who has never in his life set foot in Ireland, and of whom it would generally be true to say that he never had occasion to consider any problem of Irish administration until he found himself nominated to the official post which vested

The Irish Board of Works managed in London.

Extent of
its powers.

in him the control of perhaps the most important administrative department in Ireland. For it is to be remembered that the sphere of the Irish Board of Works is not, as in England, confined to the maintenance of public buildings. Its functions are of the most varied and far-reaching character. In addition to duties such as are entrusted in England to the Board of Works, the Irish Board undertakes the construction of royal harbours and the maintenance of inland navigation and water-ways, as for example that of the Shannon Navigation and of the Ulster Canal; it supervises the maintenance and tariffs even of private navigation works, such as the Royal Canal and the Newry Navigation. It has the entire control of advances of public money in connection with loans for land improvement, loans for arterial drainage, loans for sanitary works, loans to railway companies, loans for the erection of glebe houses, loans for the erection of artisans' houses, and advances for the erection of teachers' residences, reformatory and industrial schools, and of residences in connection with local dispensaries.

The Fishery
Board.

The Fishery Board of Ireland consists of four members—three paid officials and one honorary member—all appointed by the Castle. To this

tribunal is intrusted the important duty of selecting the situations in which fishery piers are to be erected ; and when the board appointed by and responsible to the Castle has decided upon sites for the piers, the Board of Works, appointed by and responsible to the Treasury in London, undertakes the entire control of their construction. The more critically the system of Irish administration is examined throughout all its branches, the more clearly will it be seen that it is an incarnation of the principle of government laid down with indiscreet candour by Bishop Horsley early in this century, when he declared that for his part he could not see what the mass of the people of any country had to do with the laws except to obey them.

If the object of Government were to paralyse local effort, to annihilate local responsibility, and daily to give emphasis to the fact that the whole country is under the domination of an alien race, no system could be devised more likely to secure its object than that now in force in Ireland. We hold that the continuance of such a system is unjust to Ireland, useless to England, and dangerous to both. To England it is worse than useless, for while it has succeeded in irritating Ireland almost beyond

The whole system a badge of supremacy, unjust, useless, and dangerous.

endurance, it has resulted in preventing the Imperial Parliament from giving its attention to many useful reforms which England stands in need of. Englishmen will not long consent to neglect their own affairs merely in order that they may meddle in other people's business.

The problem stated.

It has been well said that a problem well stated is half solved. The problem in relation to the government of the empire which now confronts statesmen is this—How can the work of legislation and administration in the United Kingdom be so adjusted as to secure the integrity of that kingdom, while giving to each of its component parts the best means of providing for its own public wants and developing its own resources? Such an adjustment must involve division and sub-division of labour. The Imperial Parliament cannot satisfactorily attend to its legitimate work as the great legislative body of the empire without delegating to some other authorities the task of dealing with all matters which possess a local character. But when we come to consider the nature of those matters which should be included under the term *local*, it will be found that they again are capable of division into two classes, viz. those which affect only a small area, such as a county, and which

The solution proposed.

may most properly be termed local ; and those which, while affecting several counties, do not concern more than one of the four countries—England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales—comprising the United Kingdom, and which matters might more properly be called domestic than local. A National Council in Edinburgh or Dublin would be unable to undertake all the petty details of administration for every Scotch shire or every Irish county ; but, on the other hand, County Boards would not be bodies of sufficient weight or authority to deal with matters affecting the entire of Scotland or of Ireland, nor from its essentially local character could a County Board deal even with any matter affecting an area wider than that over the administration of which it would preside.

To make the legislative and administrative machinery of government for the United Kingdom workable it will be necessary to establish both County Boards and National Councils. Both bodies should of course be elective. On the County Board there might be representatives of owners and representatives of occupiers, and the proportion in which owners and occupiers respectively should be represented might follow the proportion in which local

County
Boards.

taxation falls upon each of the two classes. To County Boards so elected should be assigned all the fiscal duties and the powers now entrusted to Grand Juries in Ireland, and also all those vested in the several Boards of Poor Law Guardians within the county, and all work connected with licensing for the sale of intoxicating liquors. To the County Boards should also belong the right of managing either by themselves or by their nominees all lunatic asylums within the county. Powers analogous to those vested in the School Boards in England ought also to be conferred upon the County Board. In short, the County Board should, within the limits of its jurisdiction, undertake the entire administration of all public affairs for which the county and it alone is taxed.

National
Councils for
Scotland,
Ireland,
and Wales.

But in administering the affairs of any county it would soon be seen that there are many matters in which the co-operation of other counties might be required, and for the accomplishment of which it would be necessary to impose taxes over an area wider than that of a single county, or even to assess a national rate. This necessity proves that in addition to the County Boards bodies of national authority and jurisdiction must be called into existence.

Of these bodies, which for the sake of convenience we have called National Councils, one might sit in Edinburgh, one in Dublin, and, if the people of Wales desire it, one should be established in Wales. The National Council might either be chosen directly by the ratepayers of the kingdom, or it might consist of members elected by the County Boards, or rather by the representatives of owners and occupiers respectively on these boards. Thus assuming that each County Board were to send to the National Council three members, and that on the County Board the owners' representatives were to the occupiers' representatives in the proportion of one to two, the former would return one member to the National Council while the occupiers' representatives would return two members.

To the National Council so constituted might be entrusted all the control of local administration which is necessary: the audit of accounts, the distribution of the respective shares to which the several counties might be entitled out of Imperial grants, and the contributions which such counties might be required to make towards expenditure of national importance. The work which is now performed by the Home Office, the Local Government

Work of
National
Councils.

Board, and the Education Department for Scotland and Wales, and by the Irish Local Government Board, the Irish Education Boards, the Irish Board of Works, the Fishery Board, and similar bodies in Ireland, might with advantage be transferred to a National Council responsible to the people of the country.

Private bill
legislation
should be
transferred
to National
Councils.

Both for the sake of relieving the Imperial Parliament from an undue pressure of work, and for the sake of redressing a grievance of which Irishmen and Scotchmen justly complain, the business of private bill legislation for these countries should be transferred to Edinburgh and to Dublin. The annoyance caused to Scotchmen by the present system of dealing with private bill legislation is keen enough, but the circumstances of Ireland render that system exceptionally oppressive and irritating to Irishmen. For years past Irish politicians, even of the mildest type, have been emphatic in condemning an arrangement which entails upon both promoters and opponents of Irish private bills an expense which they regard as prohibitive. Ireland is a very poor country, England a very rich one. The scale of fees for parliamentary procedure is no doubt suitable to England, or it would long since have been altered.

Manchester and Liverpool may be satisfied to spend huge sums in promoting or opposing projects in themselves of enormous magnitude. But the fact that large sums are spent by Englishmen in promoting or resisting large projects is no reason why Irishmen should be content with a system which compels them to spend large sums in promoting or resisting small projects. The Corporation of Dublin complained in 1871 that "there has been expended in the nine years ending in August, 1869, £36,400 out of the Borough Fund and out of the rates collected in the City of Dublin, in promoting and opposing bills in Parliament." The small town of Sligo, in the west of Ireland, spent in a parliamentary contest respecting a private bill for local improvements in the town, £14,000; and in the same year the township of Kingstown, a suburb of Dublin, spent in a similar contest £6,000. These sums may seem to us small, but they do not seem small to Irishmen, whose incomes are to ours as hundreds are to thousands; and however widely politicians in Ireland may differ on other points, they are unanimous in insisting that Irish private bill legislation should be dealt with in Ireland and not at Westminster.

Expense of
private bill
legislation
as now
conducted.

Results
anticipated.

The establishment of a National Council, elected by the Irish people and endowed with national authority, would enable the Imperial Parliament to delegate to a body of sufficient weight, capacity, and power, duties which Parliament now endeavours to perform, but the performance of which necessitates the neglect of other and more important matters upon which the attention of the great legislative assembly of the Empire should be concentrated. By the creation of County Boards and National Councils we should secure in the United Kingdom a rational division of the duties and labours of government. The Imperial Parliament, the National Councils, and the County Boards would together form, so to speak, a hierarchy of legislative and administrative authority, all based upon the only true principle of government, free election by the governed. For all parts of the United Kingdom the establishment of such a system of government would be advantageous. For Ireland it would mean the beginning of a new life; it would substitute a government founded upon trust of the people in the place of one founded upon distrust and coercion.

The task of
governing
Ireland
under the

It would be as great a boon to the governors as to the governed. We, of course, dismiss as absurd

the suggestion that the evils of the present system of government in Ireland flow from any desire on the part of the Castle rulers to oppress or to annoy the people whose affairs they administer. No reasonable and unprejudiced man can doubt that the honest wish of those rulers is to devise and carry out the best measures for promoting the well-being of the Irish people. But the task is a hopeless one. A nation of serfs may for a time be ruled by a mild despotism, but so soon as a nation has begun to think for itself no system of government can succeed which does not take into account and follow the wishes of the people. The plain fact is, that the Castle in Ireland is in a state of hopeless isolation. There is no channel of trustworthy communication between the people and the Government. Where is the Castle to seek for information as to the wishes and wants of the Irish people on any one question of the many which constantly have to be dealt with? Is the opinion of the country to be gathered from the Grand Jury of twenty-three gentlemen selected by the sheriff, assembled for one day, or at most two days, each half year, and then dissolved into space? Is the opinion of a district to be learned from the inspector of police, who is

present system a hopeless one.

The Government is isolated.

Relation of
the unpaid
magistrates
to the
people.

probably not on speaking terms with any local man of a lower social grade than that of a J.P., who speaks of the police force as "the service," regards the people as fit objects to be kept down by the semi-military force under his command, and would be shocked at the suggestion that he is the servant and not the master of those people? Is it to the unpaid magistrates that the Castle is to apply for trustworthy information as to the wants and wishes of the Irish people? Unfortunately, it happens that of these magistrates the majority are opposed to the people, differing from them in interests, in religion, and in politics. Of a total of over four thousand magistrates, the majority are landlords or landlords' agents, and about four-fifths of them are Protestants; while the majority of the people are tenants or connected with the tenant interest, and of the population the Catholics form a proportion about as large as that which the Protestants muster on the list of magistrates.

The stipen-
diary ma-
gistrates.

Nor can the stipendiary magistrates be relied upon by the Castle as a very sensitive index of Irish public opinion. A couple of years ago there were in Ireland about ninety stipendiary magistrates, of whom thirty-five were military men, twenty-two were ex-Consta-

bulary officers, two were ex-Constabulary clerks, and of the remainder nineteen held only temporary appointments terminable at the will of the Viceroy. Since that time we believe that the Castle has made earnest efforts to improve the *personnel* of the stipendiary magistracy; but the reform of such a body must necessarily be slow, and it may well be doubted whether reports of the stipendiary magistrates of Ireland are likely yet to be a faithful reflex of popular opinion in that country. But the Castle must rely upon the sources of information which we have indicated. The bishops and priests stand aloof from it, popular members of Parliament will not approach it; there is a wall of adamant between the Irish Government and the Irish governed.

A system which places the entire administration of a country in the hands of a central Government, and which divorces an entire people from sympathy with or influence upon that Government, must result in misunderstanding on one side, followed by misrepresentation and unmeasured vilification on the other. The rulers of the Castle—blindly striving to do their best for the country, which they do not, and which under the circumstances they cannot be expected to understand—complain, not unjustly, that the Irish

Evils of
centralisa-
tion.

people are unreasonable; the Irish people retort that the rulers at the Castle are tyrannical and corrupt. Under such a condition of things an intelligent and an economical administration of the country is impossible. Reforms most urgently needed are not even attempted, abuses the most glaring pass unchallenged. The public money now spent in Ireland, if intelligently and honestly applied, would probably abundantly suffice for her public wants. But it is in a great measure misapplied, and it will continue to be misapplied until the system of government shall have been so amended as to place in the hands of a national body elected by and responsible to the Irish people the application and distribution of the funds now contributed by the Imperial exchequer to Ireland.

Want of
technical
education.
The ob-
struction.

Take a couple of examples. The Irish people complain, and justly complain, that the manufacturing industries of Ireland are fast fading away, owing to the absence of any technical system of education there. The Irish Government retort by saying that, if the Irish want technical education, the localities in Ireland must contribute funds for the purpose; to which the Irish answer is, that the localities will not contribute anything so long as

they are to have no local control over the educational system. This will to Liberal politicians seem a very reasonable answer, but the Irish Government will not give up its control over the system of primary education in Ireland, and accordingly the Central Government Board of National Education continues unaltered, and the Irish people have to do without technical education. This is a sample of how the present system of government in Ireland results in hindering useful expenditure.

The legal establishment in Ireland affords a good illustration of how that system results in preventing a useful saving of money. The Irish Government, on examining the estimates, finds that there is in Ireland a superfluity of judges, and that their salaries are paid on a scale so large as to be quite out of legitimate proportion to the earnings of barristers at the Irish bar. They further find that around the judicial establishment in Ireland there has grown up an official establishment so numerous and so costly as to represent a criminal waste of public money. Of its costliness some notion may be formed from the fact, that while in England the suitors' fees pay all the official expenses of the legal establishment except the judges' salaries, and leave

The legal
establish-
ment ;
waste in.

an annual surplus of £15,000, the Irish legal establishment, also exclusive of judges' salaries, costs the country nearly £80,000 a year over and above the suitors' fees. The Irish Government, having ascertained these facts, introduces into Parliament, as it clearly ought to do, a Bill to curtail this costly establishment. Thereupon the Irish popular members assail the Bill as an attempt to deprive Ireland of some money which she now receives from the Imperial exchequer, and by their opposition they succeed in shelving a reform which would save as much money as would probably establish and maintain a complete system of technical education in Ireland.

The interest
of all
parties to
settle the
question on
broad lines.

Each side can prevent, neither can carry, reforms in themselves plainly useful. A certain amount of money is each year contributed by the Imperial exchequer for purely Irish purposes. Surely it is for the interest of all parties in the State that the money so contributed should be employed to the best advantage. It is no gain to England to divert money from useful objects in order that it may be squandered on useless objects. Who are so likely to know the most profitable way of spending the money as the people for whom it is to be spent? Even

if the Irish people should not employ the money for themselves more wisely than we employ it for them, at least they would have to blame not us but themselves for its maladministration, and for the evils arising therefrom. Irritation in Ireland against England will never die until the Irish people are fixed with responsibility; and they will never be fixed with responsibility until they have the power of electing the bodies who shall have the administration of the funds raised and contributed for Irish domestic and local purposes.

Every argument points to the necessity for not only establishing elective County Boards for administering the local affairs of the county, but also for creating a National Council, to exercise such control as must be exercised by some central body over the County Boards, and to deal with domestic matters of importance too great, or affecting areas too wide, to enable them to come properly within the scope of any County Board. This proposal is most important in regard to the solution of the Irish question. What is the root of Irish discontent? Everyone recognises the existence of the great grievances which distinguished the government of Ireland at the commencement of the cen-

*The root of
Irish dis-
affection.*

ture. But many of them have been removed. The tithes have been abolished, Catholic emancipation has been granted, religious disabilities have been removed, the Irish Church has been disestablished, and lastly and most important, the Land Laws have been reformed. In addition, there has been a large use of Imperial funds and Imperial credit. Yet still the Irish people are discontented ; and probably there is more deep-rooted dissatisfaction with the English connection at the present time than at any previous period in the history of the Union !

Reforms
granted too
late. Irish
legislation
should have
domestic
and not a
foreign
origin.

The fact is that these necessary and important reforms have each in turn been granted too late. They appear to be, and indeed have been, the result rather of compulsion than of a sense of justice. They have been proposed and carried out by a foreign Government without consultation with the representatives of the Irish people, and under these circumstances they have been accepted grudgingly and without gratitude as instalments, and not as a complete satisfaction of all demands. What is needed is that the Irish legislation should be domestic in its origin, and not foreign ; that it should be initiated by Irish representatives and adapted by them to the genius and requirements of the people,

and that it should recognise the deep-rooted sentiment which in every nationality supports the claim for purely domestic control of purely domestic affairs.

It is expedient, then, to recognise and satisfy, as far as may be done without danger to the integrity of the Empire, the natural desire of the Irish people to legislate for themselves on matters of purely Irish concern. An incidental advantage would be that the constant claims which are now made upon the English exchequer would be avoided; Irishmen would be called upon to pay for what they wanted, and to guarantee on Irish credit the loans which they may think it desirable to raise in order to carry out their experiments. An Irish Council dealing, as has been suggested, with education, public works, and similar subjects, would give scope for the ambition of Irish politicians, and would divert their attention from the irritating strife with England. If they made mistakes the responsibility would not be charged to the English Government; the quarrel would be between Irishmen, and not between two nationalities. The British Parliament and the British Administration would be relieved of the thankless task of imposing benefits which are hate-

Advantages
to ex-
chequer of
local go-
vernment.

ful to those for whose advantage they are devised—hateful more because of their origin than from any inherent defects.

Powers of
National
Councils.

The proposed National Councils would have powers of rating strictly defined and limited for the purposes for which they are formed. They would receive and administer such proportions of the Imperial grants for education and other purposes as are due to them in reference to their population and contributions. If they in any way exceeded their functions they would be liable to be brought to book on application to the High Court in their respective countries. The debates in these bodies, dealing as they would with matters of the greatest practical interest, would occupy the attention of the press and of the people. There would be neither room nor inclination for the minute heed which is now paid to strictly local discussions in the House of Commons. Parliament would be relieved of its too great burdens, and national life would have free scope. The political education of the people would be carried out, and the whole of its domestic business would receive the care and attention which it merits from representatives who would always be in direct communication and sympathy with the con-

stituencies. It is likely that if such a concession as this were promptly made there would be a cessation of further agitation. A separate parliament would add little to the practical advantages already obtained. The chief causes of irritation would be removed, and, even if the demand for the restoration of Grattan's Parliament were still occasionally heard, its supporters would not be the most numerous section of the people, nor would they be able to enlist any very enthusiastic following. Grattan's Parliament, with its separate House of Lords, would be a white elephant, and all, except the extreme separatist faction, would be more desirous to profit by the opportunity afforded to them of practical work than to engage in a further and probably barren agitation.

A separate
parliament
considered.

The effect of such a scheme as this would not be limited to the bestowal of an immense national boon upon Ireland. It would signify for Great Britain the redemption from an Imperial reproach, and a substantial addition to our sources of Imperial strength. We live in an epoch when our relations with our dependencies and our whole scheme of Imperial administration is undergoing close scrutiny. Upon what terms is the mother country to

The probable effect
of the
scheme
proposed.

be associated with her colonies? How far are the latter to be represented in the Government of the former? In what proportions are the burdens of empire to be divided between the two? Such are the questions now being asked in many quarters, and in the process, it may be said, of receiving a reply. Yet, during the lapse of centuries, no decisive step has been taken towards the arrangement of a *modus vivendi* between that kingdom of which London is the capital, and that other kingdom of which the capital—Dublin—is distant from the metropolis of the Empire less than a day's journey. Austria and Hungary have long since settled their serious difficulties. England, however, persists in misunderstanding and, it must be said, misgoverning Ireland. Surely it is no slight blot upon the escutcheon of that country which is the mother of Empires as she is the mother of free Parliaments—the chosen home of liberty, the parent of all institutions resting upon a foundation of freedom—that she should as yet have failed to endow an island, an integral part of herself, and separated from her only by a few leagues of ocean, with a constitution that commands the loyalty and affection of its inhabitants. This, it may be said, is

a sentimental consideration, but is there not a political consideration involved in it of the most serious character and of the most far-reaching magnitude? Let it be always remembered that an alienated Ireland means a weakened England, and even a weakened Empire. It might be an exaggeration to say that the Irish Government rests upon bayonets. It is no exaggeration, but the literal truth, that it involves the employment of 30,000 soldiers and a vast constabulary force, organised after the military model, and costing per head for every inhabitant 5s. 6d., in comparison with 2s. 5d. per head expended on the police force of England, and 1s. 9d. on that of Scotland. In other words, we lock up whole regiments in Ireland which would otherwise be available for the defence of the dominions of the British Crown in the remotest quarters of the world. We expose ourselves to the discredit of inability or unwillingness to concede to the sister island terms of administration with which she may be reasonably content; and in doing so we court the reproach of impotence to manage our own affairs at home. Not merely in Continental countries, but in India and in the colonies, is the perennial existence of the Irish difficulty cited as a dishonour

to English statesmanship. Many experiments have been made. Nothing upon a scale at all adequate to the circumstances has been done. Is English statesmanship to acquiesce in this continuous failure to deal with what, if it has an Imperial aspect, is primarily a domestic question? and is an Ireland estranged from England to be accepted as the unavoidable and unremovable cause of the weakening, in the manner already described, of the British Empire? To those who are not prepared to answer these inquiries in the affirmative, and who hold that even the most inveterate of Irish difficulties are obstacles which it would be shameful to the united statesmanship of England and Ireland to confess its helplessness to overcome, the scheme indicated in the foregoing pages must at least seem worthy of consideration.

