



exposed the selfishness of the zemindar, if he had not insisted upon carrying a thorough comprehensive scheme of local taxation, if he had abandoned his project for giving elementary education to the masses, we should have heard much less of the evil effects of Personal Government."

"Will Heaven take pity upon the zemindars of Bengal, and send down some scourge to sweep them off the face of the earth? Otherwise no safety for them from the wrath of Sir George Campbell. The necessity of Heaven's interposition will be perceived not only from what has already been published, but also from the subjoined resolution, which the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal has recorded on the so-called illegal levy of market dues and mooring rents by the zemindars of Bengal.

RESOLUTION.

JUDICIAL DEPARTMENT.

Police, Calcutta, the 27th June 1873.

Read again—Circular No. 1 of the 6th June 1873 to the address of all Commissioners of Divisions.

Read also—The Commissioners' replies thereto, the whole having reference to the levy by the zemindars and others of cesses, which were prohibited by Regulation XXVII. of 1893.

Resolution—'In consequence of reports submitted to Government, the Lieutenant-Governor was led to believe that the practice of levying duties in hafts, and tolls or mooring dues on rivers, and other duties, was very widely prevalent, notwithstanding the prohibition of such practices contained in the law, and in spite of the compensation granted under the above Regulation. The Commissioners of Divisions were therefore requested after communication with the Collectors to furnish a full report (1) as regards the degree and manner in which tolls and duties are levied, and their character and effect, and (2) the form which legislation should take, if necessary, to put a stop to such practices.

The replies of the Commissioners have now been received and considered by the Lieutenant-Governor.

These papers abundantly show that in spite of stringent legal prohibition and of the compensation given to zemindars, market, boat, and other dues levied by zemindars flourish universally in Bengal, &c.

Notwithstanding his vehement denunciations of the zemindars and assertion of rights regarding market dues and mooring rents, and other proprietary rights in the above resolution, His Honor has pretty nearly left the things as they were.

No wonder that the zemindars would cry for relief from heaven. They would, as we have said above, prefer a scourge, which would at once put an end to their existence, to the moral torture, which their appointed ruler and guardian is inflicting upon them. It may be a sport to the high personage, but it is death to them." *The Hindoo Patriot, August 4, 1873, p. 363.*

"Any change after Sir George Campbell will be hailed as a relief." *Ibid., December 8, 1873.*

We leave it to our readers to judge whether Sir George Campbell did anything wrong by recording the above resolution, and thereby deserved the tirades we have quoted above.

We request our readers to see the date of the following lines:—"With all his ability, vigor of mind, determination of character, and courage, he (Sir George Campbell) broke down because he was ignorant of the province and people." *The Hindoo Patriot, February 5, 1877, p. 63.*

Next we proceed to place before our readers the following passage from Mr. J. Hector's *Land and Railways in India*, which will show the way in which the *Hindoo Patriot* conceals the real state of things:—"A statement of a somewhat audacious character regarding the effect of the Permanent Settlement on the revenues of the country occurs in the *Hindoo Patriot* of the 25th January last (1875). The *Hindoo Patriot* is, I am informed, the organ of the zemindar party. This is what it says:—

'The Permanent Settlement has enriched the treasury with revenue from other sources (than from the land direct). The



following comparative statement shews what we mean :—

Province.	Receipts.	Charges.	Surplus.
Oudh.	£ 1,553,309	605,185	948,124
Central Provinces. „	1,039,326	749,728	289,598
British Burmah. „	1,218,102	655,560	562,542
Bengal.	„ 16,740,427	5,664,569	11,075,858
N. W. Provinces. „	5,769,706	2,447,065	3,322,641
Punjab.	„ 3,634,067	2,340,934	1,294,133
Madras.	„ 8,092,427	5,827,104	2,265,323
Bombay & Scinde. „	9,061,851	7,245,250	1,816,601

It will be seen from the above, that Bengal is the best paying province.

The impression conveyed, and intended to be conveyed, by this statement, is, that it is the Permanent Settlement, which has enabled Bengal to pay so much more to the general revenues than the other provinces; but if we analyze the sum of 16 millions paid by Bengal, we shall see that the Permanent Settlement has done no such thing. The sum is composed of the following items:—

Land	£ 3,950,000	(gross).
Excise	755,000	„
Customs	1,078,000	„
Salt	2,572,000	„
Opium	6,898,000	„
Stamps	795,000	„

Total ... £ 16,048,000

The remaining £700,000 is made up of miscellaneous receipts, such as, forest, marine, &c.

The largest item is the £ 6,898,000 yielded by opium, and this includes what is received from the North Western Provinces, whose contribution, for some unexplained reason, is credited to Bengal in the revenue accounts. But what, in all the world, has the Permanent Settlement done for opium? Opium, we know, is a Government monopoly, and Government advances the money necessary for its production. The salt revenue cannot be said to



owe anything to the settlement, and small as the receipts from customs are, they include the duty paid on imports taken by the North Western Provinces and Panjab. The statement that the Permanent Settlement has enriched the treasury with revenue from other sources is therefore opposed to the facts."

To guard us from being misunderstood, we distinctly state that we do not hereby mean, that Government should raise the land revenue of Bengal to eight or nine crores of rupees. We have quoted it only to expose the misrepresentations of the *Hindoo Patriot*.

The Central Provinces.

"Sir Richard Temple's settlement of the Central Provinces has turned out a blunder; instead of prosperity, it has brought forth misery and mischief; the country is impoverished; the peasantry are flocking out of it, and here is the last year's Administration Report giving new proofs to those who still doubted, that Sir Richard's boon has proved a curse." *The Friend of India*, November 11, 1876.

"The cultivators of these two districts (Chanda and Nimar) owe it to the *Indian Economist* alone, that they are now partially protected from the oppressions of the new zemindar class created by the settlement throughout the whole of the Central Provinces. It is extraordinary to ourselves, that the Government does not see the justice and necessity of instantly making a similar modification of these miserable settlements throughout all the other districts of the Provinces. The last report by Mr. Morris confirms to the letter all the *Economist's* warnings about this famous settlement; and instead of undoing the wrong, while the knowledge that it is a wrong is fresh in the minds of all classes in the Province, we prefer to close this chapter of our rule as an unpleasant one, and to leave the next and succeeding generations for all times to reap the results of what we have in our folly sown. The entire settlement ought to be revised everywhere at all costs, and its evils undone, though every Malgoozar in the Province went into rebellion. What are these hundred thousand men to



as compared with the millions of the people and their descendants for all time? We have done a great and cruel wrong in the provinces." *The Statesman*, November 4, 1874.

"The last Central Provinces Report 1874-75 shows clearly that the Government is bound at all costs to revise our late land settlements of those Provinces, before the rights so universally conferred upon the Malgoozars thereby at the cost of the cultivators obtain a prescriptive title. The settlement is hardly yet ten years old, and for the last seven years we have at intervals called attention to the fatal errors of which it is an expression. Insane as are the rates at which the land has been leased until the close of the century, it would be unwise perhaps to leave those rates as they stand; although as a result the Provinces promise to be a heavy burden upon the Imperial Treasury for the next thirty years owing to the land having been settled at rates that occasion a deficit of nearly £1,000,000 sterling a year in the annual provincial balance sheet. That part of the mischief is perhaps irremediable. It was done with eyes wide open under the assurance of Sir Richard Temple, that if we would only give the land away for nothing, the people would grow so wealthy, that we should with ease obtain through the Custom House and Excise twice the revenue we abandoned in the land. The next step was to stereotype the poverty of the cultivators in a mass for all time by converting the village Patels or Malgoozars into actual proprietors of the soil; thus reducing the whole body of ryots mediately or immediately into tenants-at-will under them. The third astonishing error was the including an enormous area of the waste land around every village in the Malgoozar's proprietary right; and the last was the offering the remainder of the waste lands, a vast area, in fee simple to any one who liked to apply for them *with a State pledge never to impose either tax or rental upon them*. We do verily believe, that the world has never seen an era of unwisdom in fiscal subjects at all approaching the 14 years' financial rule of India beginning with that weak man Sir Bartle Frere, and winding up with Sir Richard Temple's finance ministership. Our exposure of the



waste land policy of the Government led to the withdrawal of the whole Code on the subject three or four years ago." *Ibid.*, November 25, 1876.

The Ryotwar System.

John Sullivan, Esq. in his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons appointed in 1832, said:—"I consider the ryotwar settlement to be the best.

The ryotwar was the old system under the Native Governments, upon which we have improved.

The ryotwar system provides for a participation by Government in the waste lands as they are brought under cultivation.

Its effect is to increase the produce and increase capital; and with capital, trade naturally grows and consumption increases.

The ryotwar system has always been found more productive in revenue than the other systems." *Answers to Questions 12, 13, 49, 61, and 103. Minutes of Evidence, Revenue, Commons.*

"In the best regulated ryotwar districts, the efficiency of the village Police is as remarkable as the want of all organized corruption, and the consequent morality and character of the people." *A. D. Campbell, Esq. Ibid. 2423, Ibid.*

A writer in the *Calcutta Review*, Vol. XVII. says:—"The revision of the assessment of the Madras Provinces is a measure, which has been advocated through a long series of years by the ablest and best members of the Madras Government...We have shewn that every Collector from the time of Colonel Reid to the present day has suggested measures (for reducing the land-tax) which we advocate, and that Governor after Governor, Munro, Lushington, and Elphinstone, have supported them. The Home Government is surely prepared to deal impartially with its provinces, and we have, therefore, full confidence that brighter days are at hand.

To us we own, that the state of the district (of Salem) appears to afford clear proof of the decided failure of the zemindari system in Madras though tried under the greatest advantages:



The previous survey assessment and careful registry of rights have prevented many of the consequences, which followed upon this great and well-intended measure in Bengal and N. W. Provinces, and ought, if anything could have done so, to have secured the success of the system; but still it has failed. We cannot attribute the failure to over-assessment, for under a ryotwar system, many of the estates have exhibited a marked, steady, and most satisfactory recovery from the state into which the Mutahdars had brought them. Its failure was owing, generally, to the avarice and oppression of the Mutahdars, to the want of irrigation, and to their grasping demands upon the people.

To illustrate this point, let us examine the history of some of the Mutahs. It will be remembered, that they were handed over to the Mutahdars at a fixed assessment, generally 10 to 16 per cent. below the collections made under the ryotwar system; but they reverted to Government in a ruined condition. Their gradual recovery under ryotwar management, though no relaxation of demand was conceded, is, we think, a triumphant proof of the effects of limited field assessment and tenure direct from Government.

There is, most certainly, nothing in the character of the Mutahdars generally calculated to exert a beneficial effect on the people. With some few exceptions, what Francis Horner describes as that odious character, which an increase of wealth without an increase of knowledge is sure to generate, is typical of these factious landlords.

The effect of the system on the Police of the district has been most unfavourable. We believe that it is not more strongly ingrained in the minds of Englishmen, that the legislative power and the executive should be distinct than it is in that of the Hindoo, that the person to whom he pays rent is the person from whom he is to expect protection, and to secure this protection he must obey his zemindar's orders. By the zemindari system this enormous prestige is transferred from the Government to the zemindar, or from a responsible servant of the Government to an irresponsible private individual, from a man whom



Government can remove to one upon whose character alone, it depends whether he shall assist in putting down robberies, or whether he shall organize them."

Sir Thomas Munro says:—"As there is everywhere plenty of good land lying uncultivated, which any person may occupy on paying the Sircar rent, it is evident that no ryot will hold land of another, and pay an addition of five or six per cent. upon the Sircar rent, when he may get land of the same kind without paying any such increase." Quoted in the *Principles and Policy of British India*, p. 43.

THE PEASANT PROPRIETORS.

The Productiveness of Small Farms.

"Anywhere in the neighbourhood of Zurich, in looking to the right or to the left, one is struck with the extraordinary industry of the inhabitants. In the industry they shew in the cultivation of the land, I may safely say they are unrivalled. When I used to open my casement between four and five in the morning to look out upon the lake and the distant Alps, I saw the labourer in the fields, and when I returned from an evening walk long after sunset, as late perhaps as half-past eight, there was the labourer mowing his grass or tying up his vines. But there are other and better evidences of the industry of the Zurichers than merely seeing them late and early at work. It is impossible to look at a field, a garden, a hedge, scarcely even a tree, a flower or a vegetable, without perceiving proofs of the extreme care and industry, that are bestowed upon the cultivation of the soil. If, for example, a path leads through or by the side of a field of grain, the corn is not, as in England, permitted to hang over the path exposed to be pulled or trodden down by every passer-by; it is everywhere bounded by a fence; stakes are placed at intervals of about a yard, and about two and four feet from the ground boughs of trees are passed longitudinally along. If you look into a field toward evening, where there are large beds of cauliflower or cabbage, you will find that every single plant has been watered. In the gardens, which around



Zurich are extremely large, the most punctilious care is evinced in every production that grows.

The vegetables are planted with seemingly mathematical accuracy; not a single weed is to be seen, nor a single stone. Plants are not earthed up as with us, but are placed in small hollows, into each of which a little manure is put, and each plant is watered daily. Where seeds are sown, the earth directly above is broken into the finest powder; every shrub, every flower is tied to a stake; and where there is a wall fruit, a trellice is erected against the wall to which the boughs are fastened, and there is not a single twig, that has not its appropriate resting place." *Inglist's Switzerland and South of France*, vol. I., p. p. 22-23.

In another place he says, when speaking of the Engadine (with respect to which he had previously stated that the whole of the land belongs to the peasantry). "I did not sufficiently enlarge upon the industry of the inhabitants, but it deserves a panegyric. There is not a foot of waste land in the Engadine, the lowest part of which is not much lower than the top of Snowdon. Wherever grass will grow, there it is; wherever a rock will bear a blade, verdure is seen upon it; wherever rye will succeed, there it is cultivated. Barley and oats have also their appropriate spots; and wherever it is possible to ripen a little patch of wheat, the cultivation of it is attempted." *Ibid.*, p. p. 145-46.

Mr. Laing confirms these statements, and applies the description to Switzerland generally. "The spots of land" he says "show the same daily care in the fencing, digging, weeding, and watering. The owners have a kind of Robinson Crusoe industry about their houses and little properties; they are perpetually building, repairing, altering, or improving something about their tenements." *Notes of a Traveller*, p. p. 354-55.

"In Germany, Mr. Howitt, after mentioning that the land 'is for the most part in the hands of the people,' and 'parcelled out amongst the multitude,' describes the peasantry as labouring 'early and late, because they feel that they are labouring for



themselves.' 'There is not an hour of the year,' he adds, 'in which they do not find increasing occupation. In the depth of winter, when the weather permits them by any means to get out of doors, they are always finding something to do. They carry out their manure to the lands while the frost is in them. If there is not frost, they are busy clearing ditches and felling old fruit trees, or such as do not bear well. Such of them as are too poor to lay in a sufficient stock of wood, find plenty of work in ascending into the mountainous woods and bringing thence fuel. It would astonish the English common people to see the intense labour with which the Germans earn their firewood. In the depth of frost and snow, go into any of their hills and woods, and there you find them hacking up stumps, cutting off branches, and gathering, by all means, which the official wood-police will allow, boughs, stakes, and pieces of wood, which they convey home with the most incredible toil and patience.' *Howitt's Rural and Domestic Life of Germany*, p. 44.

As Mr. Inglis had declared the industry of the small proprietors of Zurich to be 'unrivalled', so Howitt calls the small proprietors of Germany, 'the most industrious peasantry in the world,' the truth being, as Mr. Mill aptly observes, in commenting on this work of Mr. Howitt's that 'whoever is acquainted with only one region in which there are peasant proprietors, invariably thinks the peasantry of that particular region the most industrious in the world.' Enough surely has now been said to prove that there is no vice with which small farmers are less justly chargeable than with idleness, and it cannot be necessary to produce other witnesses in their favour from the Channel Islands, the Tyrol, or from the Saxon colonies of Transylvania.

It appears then that the disabilities represented as inseparable from the condition of small farmers have no real existence, and that there is really nothing to prevent persons of that class from practising the most approved methods of cultivation. They are not necessarily poor, but on the contrary, as their rate of profit is higher, are likely to be relatively richer than large farmers; they can lay out more money on their land in proportion to its



extent; they can use more manure; they can buy for themselves all ordinary agricultural implements; and, by combination among themselves, can obtain the use of the most costly machines or effect the most expensive improvements; the idea of their being prevented by want of space from varying their crops, is merely fanciful; and although they may be able to carry the division of labour as far as might be desirable, their disadvantages in that and all other respects is much more than counter-balanced by the superiority of their industry. No fields can be more carefully tilled than theirs; nowhere is the ground more frequently turned up, more thoroughly drained, or kept freer from weeds. The small farmer may be ignorant, may work with bad tools, and may not distribute his labour in the most economical manner; but with all his stupidity and awkwardness he nevertheless contrives to make his land yield more than a large occupier with all his skill could obtain from it. This has already been shown to be the case, and it is, indeed, so well known to all who have taken the trouble to inquire into the matter, that if the question at issue between large and small farms were to be determined by their respective amounts of gross produce, a verdict would infalliably be given in favour of the latter.

That is the best system of agriculture, not which provides for one class at the expense of another, but which insures the largest amount of happiness to all. The cultivators of the earth are not as they are too often represented, little better than machines, whose business it is to raise food for the rest of mankind, and whose consumption of part of what they themselves produce, is to be regretted as a national loss, a deduction from the sum of national wealth, and is, consequently, to be restricted as much as possible. Their office is not, no matter by means of what self-privation, to provide the largest possible surplus produce for other classes. They are themselves, not less than artisans and manufacturers, constituent parts of the community, and it is essential to national welfare, that they equally with the others, should be maintained in plenty and comfort." *W. T. Thornton's Plea for Peasant Proprietors.*



The Social Effects of Peasant Proprietorship.

“The small landowner can more easily bear the expenses of cultivation, of procuring proper implements and manure, of drainage and irrigation, and he can keep more livestock. A small leaseholder can lay out more money on his land in proportion to its extent than a large occupier; but a small proprietor can spend more than either. He has, besides, a very much stronger motives for effecting improvements. ‘A small proprietor’ says Adam Smith ‘who knows every part of his little territory, who views it with all the affection, which property, especially small property, naturally inspires, and who, upon that account, takes pleasure not only in cultivating, but in adorning it, is generally of all improvers the most industrious, the most intelligent, and the most successful.’ Young exclaims: ‘Give a man the secure possession of a bleak rock, and he will turn it into a garden,’ there is ‘no way so sure of carrying tillage to a mountain top as by permitting the neighbouring villagers to acquire it in property. The magic of property turns sand to gold.’

‘The peculiar feature’ says Mr. Laing, ‘in the condition of the Swiss population—the great charm of Switzerland, next to its natural scenery, is the air of well-being, the neatness, the sense of property imprinted on the people, their holdings, and their plots of land. The spirit of the proprietor is not to be mistaken in all that one sees’. In the whole of the Engadine, the land belongs to the peasantry, and ‘in no country in Europe,’ says Mr. Inglis, ‘will be found so few poor as in the Engadine.’ ‘The happiest community,’ says Mr. Hill, ‘which it has ever been my lot to fall in with, is to be found in this little island of Guernsey.’ ‘No matter,’ says Sir George Head, ‘to what point the traveller may chose to bend his way, comfort everywhere prevails.’

The people of Guern are as well clad as lodged. The working dress of the men, who wear a short blue frock over their other cloths, is not indeed very becoming, but it is never ragged; and on Sundays they don a suit of broad cloth, while their wives and daughters, of course, make at least an equal display of the outward symbols of respectability.



What makes the evident affluence of these islanders a still more gratifying spectacle, is its utmost diffusion. Beggars are utterly unknown, and their absence cannot be wholly accounted for by the interdiction enacted against them; for in England, where their profession is equally illegal, not a day passes without your meeting several, whereas in the Channel Islands not one is ever seen.

It is especially deserving of notice, that the prosperity of Guernsey is not only great, but has long been steadily advancing; in other words, that the progress of population has been less rapid than the progress of wealth." *W. T. Thornton's Plan for Peasant Proprietors.*

The Moral Effects of Peasant Proprietorship.

"Honesty, sobriety, and loyalty, duly combined with independence of spirit, are pre-eminent in peasant proprietors. Honesty, in the most common, if not the most exalted, acceptation of the term, signifies little more than respect for the rights of property, and none are so likely to pay such respect as those who have property of their own which they wish to see respected. A peasant proprietor may be said to feel as well as to understand his moral obligations. His anxiety to preserve his own rights from invasion informs him that his neighbours are similarly solicitous, and he knows that unless he abstains from molesting them, he cannot reckon upon their forbearance. He teaches his children the same wholesome lessons. Provided he holds his land by a secure tenure, incessant diligence commonly rewards him with the competence he deserves, and busy as he is, he could, no doubt, if so disposed, steal a minute now and then to take off a dram; but he values money too highly to squander it on intemperance either in meat or drink. His fault is rather to be too sparing in his diet. He has a blazing hearth (speaking of cold countries) and a neat parlour of his own, and sitting there with his family about him, has no wish for a change of scene or company.

Deriving their support from their own resources, they can



indulge in the pride of self-dependence, and scorn the idea of owning their subsistence to charity. Neither desiring the favour, nor fearing the enmity of their richer neighbours, they can accost them without servility. Not that the possession of property in giving them independence, renders them insubordinate: while it permits them to respect themselves, it teaches them also to respect the laws.

A mere day-labourer, half-employed, and wretched-paid, who is compelled to apply to the neighbouring landowners for a livelihood, and obtains from them only a miserable subsistence, not unnaturally regards his employers as oppressors, takes every opportunity of showing his spite against them by wanton aggressions, and is ever ready to listen to the harangues of seditious demagogues. But a peasant proprietor has no such cause for envy or animosity against the owners of larger estates, but is rather disposed to join with them in repelling any attack on their common rights; he is deeply interested in the preservation of tranquility, and proportionably fearful of civil convulsions, in which he might lose his all. He molests no one, who does not molest him; and as for politics, provided neither his privileges nor his prejudices be attacked, he cheerfully leaves them to those who have more taste and capacity for their discussion. Throughout western Europe, from the Polar to the Mediterranean seas, wherever there are peasant proprietors, there likewise is an orderly and loyal rural population. In the Channel Islands, Norway, Belgium, Switzerland, and Germany, there are no rick-burners, no breakers of thrashing machines, no riots among the country people, and no secret disaffection. The peasantry are thriving and content, and sincerely attached to the laws under which they enjoy so much happiness. Even France presents no exception to the truth of this remark. Popular outbreaks are certainly of frequent occurrence there, but they do not take place in the rural districts. Among the incidental advantages possessed by small proprietors, should be mentioned one enjoyed by them in common with small tenant-farmers and allotment holders, *viz*, the facilities which their social situation affords for the moral and



technical training of their children. The latter instead of being suffered to run wild, or instead of being locked up to keep them out of harm's way, are almost constantly under the eyes of their parents. They follow their father to his work and think it as good as play to perform the light tasks he assigns them. Gardening and the care of poultry and animals, favourite companions with all children, afford them at once exercise and amusement, and afford also uses for offal and their refuse, which would otherwise have been thrown away; and these pursuits are not the less cheerfully followed because they are perceived to be profitable, to lighten the common toils, and to increase the common stores. The girls, besides, help their mother indoors, and in the same pleasant and unconscious manner are initiated into the mysteries of house-keeping, and taught the important secret how to make home happy. Such constant co-operation of all the members of a family tightens the bonds of affection and promotes domestic harmony, and more directly favours the adoption of early habits of industry and frugality; and imparts early instruction in those particular kinds of information, which are most likely to be practically useful in after-life." *W. T. Thornton's Plea for Peasant Proprietors.*

Extract from the Etudes, vol. II, p. 169.

"Whilst ancient Europe was divided among small free agricultural nations, their prosperity was increasing with wonderful rapidity; cultivation extended from the plains even to the summits of the mountains, all the means of increasing the fertility of the land were successively discovered, all the productions of the soil which could satisfy the taste of man were, by turn, called into existence; that Campagna of Rome now so desert, made wholesome by the breath of man, was covered with so close a population, that five acres were supposed to be amply sufficient for the support of a family; in spite of frequent wars this population increased continually; as a hive of bees gives out a swarm every year, so it was necessary for every city after the development of one generation to send out a colony; and this colony



recommencing social progress after the same principles with peasant proprietors and expecting every thing from agriculture, rapidly advanced towards the same prosperity. It was then that the human race spread itself over the face of the earth, and that in reciprocal independence, in the bosom of abundance and of virtue, those nations grew up, whose fate it was, at a later period, to become the sport of politics and of war.

That rural happiness, the picture of which history presents to us in the glorious times of Italy and Greece, is not unknown in our age. Wherever are found peasant proprietors, are also found that ease, that security, that independence, that confidence in the future, which assure at the same time happiness and virtue. The peasant who does, with his children, all the work on his little inheritance, who neither pays rent to any one above him, nor wages to any one below him, who regulates his production by his consumption, who eats his own corn, drinks his own wine, is clothed with his own flax and wool, cares little about knowing the price of the market; for he has little to sell, and little to buy, and is never ruined by the revolutions of commerce. Far from fearing for the future, it is embellished by his hopes; for he puts out to profit for his children, or for ages to come, every instant which is not required by the labour of the year. Only a few moments stolen from otherwise lost time are required to put into the ground the nut, which in a hundred years will become a large tree; to hollow out the aqueduct which will drain his field for ever; to form the conduit which will bring him a spring of water; to ameliorate, by constant attention, all the kinds of animals and vegetables by which he is surrounded. This little patrimony is a true saving bank always ready to receive his little profits, and usually to employ all his leisure moments. The everlasting power of nature makes them fruitful, and returns them to him a hundred fold. The peasant has a strong feeling of the happiness attached to the condition of proprietor. Thus he is always eager to purchase land at any price. He pays for it more than it is worth; more than it will return perhaps; but what a reason he has to esteem at a high price the advantage of



thenceforward always employing his labour advantageously, without being obliged to offer it cheap; to find always his bread when he wants it, without being obliged to buy it dear.

It is Switzerland particularly that must be gone over: that must be studied to judge of the happiness of peasant proprietors. Switzerland must be known to be convinced that agriculture practised by those, who gather the fruits of it, suffices to procure great comfort to a very numerous population; great independence of character, the fruit of an independent situation; great exchange of what is consumed, the consequence of the well-being of all the inhabitants even in a country where the climate is rude, the soil moderately fertile, and where late frosts and uncertain seasons often destroy the hopes of the labourer. Whether we pass through the cheerful Emmenthal, or bury ourselves in the most distant valleys of the canton of Berne, we cannot see without admiration, without being affected, those wooden houses of the least peasant, so vast, so well closed, so well constructed, so covered with carvings. In the interior every detached chamber of the numerous family opens into large corridors; each room has only one bed; and it is abundantly provided with curtains and with coverings of the whitest linen; furniture, carefully kept, surrounds it; the closets are full of linen; the dairy is large, well ventilated and exquisitely neat; under the same roof are found provisions of corn, of salt meat, of cheese and of wood; in the stables are seen the most beautiful cattle in Europe and the best attended to; the garden is planted with flowers; the men as well as the women are warmly and properly clad—the last preserve with pride their ancient costume, and bear in their countenances the marks of vigour and of health; they are striking from that beauty of feature which becomes the character of a race, when for many generations it has suffered neither from vice nor from want. Let other nations boast of their opulence; Switzerland may always with pride place its peasantry in opposition to it.

The peasant proprietor is, of all cultivators, the one who obtains most from the soil, for it is he who thinks most of the



future as well as being the most enlightened by experience, it is he who also makes the greatest profit of human labour, because dividing his occupations among all the members of the family, he reserves some for every day of the year, so that there is no waste time for any one; of all cultivators he is the happiest; and at the same time in a given space, land, without being exhausted, never produces so much food, or employs so many inhabitants as when they are proprietors, lastly of all cultivators the peasant proprietor is the one, who gives most encouragement to commerce and industry, for he is the richest. Shall we conclude from this that all proprietors should also be labourers? No: we take society as it is, with poor and rich, and we believe this variety of its conditions most advantageous to its development." Quoted in *Sismondi's Political Economy and Philosophy of Government*, p. p. 193-95.

The Condition of the French Peasantry before the Revolution of 1785-88.

"The fiscal and feudal oppression under which the peasantry groaned would be sufficient of itself to account for their depression. Among other grievous taxes were those on land and on the profits of farming, to which they alone were subject, the clergy and gentry being exempt. These taxes, besides being very onerous were not even of fixed amount. The rates were altered from year to year at the discretion of the intendants and their deputies, who, in assessing districts or parishes, professed to be guided by the appearance of the crops, and in assessing individuals by the stock upon their farms. It was the interest, therefore, of every farmer to appear to have as little stock as possible, and consequently to employ as little as possible in its cultivation, and none in its improvement. The game laws were still more outrageous than those respecting the collection of revenue. There were numerous edicts, which prohibited weeding and hoeing, lest the young partridges should be disturbed; steeping seed, lest it should injure their health; manuring it with night-soil, lest their favour should be spoilt by their feeding on the corn so treated;



mowing hay before a certain time, or removing stubble, lest the birds should be deprived of shelter. Add to this, the forced labour imposed by Government, and the fines and services arbitrarily exacted by lords of manors, and it need not again be asked why the French peasantry, even such of them as cultivated their own lands, were, in every sense of the term, miserable farmers. The only wonder is that their industry could survive amongst circumstances of such discouragement. The misery to which the peasantry had been reduced, had had the usual effect of increasing their numbers. 'The swarms of people were incredible.' The inheritor of a scrap of ground had scarcely any alternative but to attempt to subsist upon its produce. To sell it would in general have been to deprive himself of his only means of livelihood; for he could not hope to obtain employment as a hired labourer." *W. T. Thornton's Plea for Peasant Proprietors*, p. 114.

"In many provinces of France, before the Revolution, a vicious system of taxation on the land, and still more the absence of redress against the arbitrary exactions which were made under colour of the taxes, rendered it the interest of every cultivator to appear poor, and therefore to cultivate badly. The only insecurity which is altogether paralyzing to the active energies of producers, is that arising from the Government, or from persons invested with its authority. Against all other depredators there is a hope of defending oneself. Greece and the Greek colonies in the ancient world, Flanders and Italy in the middle ages, by no means enjoyed what any one with modern ideas would call security; person and property were exposed to a thousand dangers. But they were free countries, they were neither arbitrarily oppressed, nor systematically plundered by their Governments. Against other enemies the individual energy which their institutions called forth, enabled them to make successful resistance: their labour, therefore, was eminently productive, and their riches while they remained free, were constantly on the increase. The Roman despotism putting an end to wars and internal conflicts through ^{knowledge} says Mr. Ingis, who had intimate know-



from much of the former insecurity, but because it left them under the grinding yoke of its own rapacity, they became enervated and impoverished until they were an easy prey to barbarous but free invaders. They would neither fight nor labour, because they were no longer suffered to enjoy that for which they fought and laboured." *Mill's Political Economy*, Vol. I, p. 138.

"'Sire'" wrote Fénelon to Louis XIV. "your people whom you ought to love as your children, and who have hitherto been so devotedly attached to you, are dying of hunger. The cultivation of the fields is almost abandoned; the towns and the country are depopulated; all trades languish and no longer support the workmen." Such was France a century before the Revolution. With the Revolution, however, came a change; the law of primogeniture was abolished, and the large estates were broken up. The effect was magical. In little more than half a century after this period, France had doubled her population, and quadrupled her agricultural produce." *The Westminster Review*, Vol. XXXVIII, p. 252.

The Condition of the French Peasantry after the Revolution

"Peasant proprietorship did not obtain a fair trial in France, until the worst abuses of tyranny and feudalism were swept away at the Revolution, and its history since that period is consequently deserving of special attention. That the condition of the French peasantry, whether proprietors or field-labourers, if not yet perfectly satisfactory, has been steadily improving for many years past, is evident from the testimony of all who have themselves examined it. The opposite opinion is maintained by those only who have made their researches in books, instead of amongst the people. M. Clement consulted the opinion of the aged cultivators and workmen of different places, all of whom, without a single exception, agreed that the classes of the population who have only their wages, and are consequently the most exposed to indigence, are much better fed, lodged, and clothed, than at the commencement of the century. 'With a tolerably good empire, renewed the subject great part of population



of the continent on foot, and whose evidence is the more valuable, because having no favourite theory to support, and being little more than a keen and shrewd observer, his impressions were always perfectly unbiased, 'and distinct recollection of the lower orders of France, I am inclined to assert that, upon the whole, the French peasantry are the happiest of any country in Europe.' (*Switzerland and South of France*, Vol. II., p. 269) While passing through Languedoc, Inglis particularly remarked the 'very enviable position of the labouring class. A day-labourer received two francs. The people appeared to be well off, and paupers were rare. He did not see one *miserable* between Carcassonne and Toulouse. The peasantry are observed to be most prosperous in those parts of France in which the largest proportion of them are proprietors.'

Mr. Henry Bulwer remarks that by far the greatest number of the indigent is to be found in the northern departments, where land is less divided than elsewhere, and cultivated with larger capitals. (*Monarchy of the Middle Class*, Vol. II., p. 107.)

Mr. Birkbeck noting that on the road from St. Pierre to Moulins, 'the lower classes appeared less comfortable,' found on enquiry that 'few of the peasantry thereabouts were proprietors.' *Birkbeck's Tour in France*, p. 30.

Mr. Le Quesne, who, when asking the causes of the smiling productiveness of Anjou and Touraine, received for answer that the land was divided into small parcels, noticed that the houses of the country people there were remarkable for their neatness, and indicative of the ease and comfort of their possessors.

Mr. Birkbeck said 'I have inquired, and every body assures me that agriculture has been improving rapidly for the last twenty-five years; that the riches and comforts of the cultivators of the soil have been doubled since that period, and that vast improvement has taken place in the condition and character of the common people. On my first landing I was struck with the respectable appearance of the working class: I see the same



marks of comfort and plenty wherever I proceed. I ask for the wretched peasantry, of whom I have heard and read so much, but I am always referred to the Revolution; it seems they vanished then. The labouring class here is certainly much higher on the social scale than with us. Every opportunity of collecting information on this subject confirms my first impression, that there are very few really poor people in France. In England, a poor man and a labourer are synonymous terms; we speak familiarly of *the poor*, meaning class; not so here.' (*Tour in France*, p. p. 11-12.)

Mr. Cabbett was surprised to find that the 'labouring people or peasantry had usually cows of their own, sometimes one, sometimes two or three, besides pigs; he could not help seeing that their dress was better than that of labourers in England, and that their breakfast of cabbage soup, bread, and wine, was a thousand times better than the cold potatoes and tea' with which people of the same class in this country often prepare for a hard day's work. He saw besides 'a great many beggars, but not more of them' he acknowledges, 'in the country parts of France than he would have seen in England if travelling along the same high road,' and he adds, 'there is this important difference between the appearance of beggars in France and England: a very large portion of our beggars are neither aged nor infirm, while in France there is scarcely any object of this description, that is not old or in some way incapable of earning a living. The greater part of the English beggars beg because they cannot get employment, and the beggars of France beg because they are unfitted for employment. It is the state of society in England which creates the beggar, while in France it is his inability to render society any service.' (*Ride through France*, p. 210.) W. T. Thornton's *Plea for Peasant Proprietors*.

The Effects of Peasant Proprietorship on New England, Russia, North America, and Norway, and on the Continent Generally.

'New England in the North, and Maryland and Virginia in the South, were both colonized about the same period by people



of the same race, speaking the same language, and under a similar form of Government. In the South the land was originally parcelled out into vast estates on the English model. But the early settlers or their descendants could do nothing with the large properties without labour, and free labour was not to be had in a country where there was no land available for settlement. Hence slavery became a necessity in the South. In the North, on the other hand, where the land was taken in small sections by actual cultivators, slavery was unknown, wages were uniformly high, agricultural settlements made rapid progress, and the country became prosperous to an extraordinary degree." *The Westminster Review*, Vol. XXXVIII., p. 252.

Russia. "It was found necessary to re-distribute the land among the peasantry (of the Crown Provinces of Russia) in order that all should contribute their fair share to the public revenue. This was accordingly done, and the happiest results followed. Within seven years after the re-imposition of the land tax, and re-distribution of the land, the crown revenues had increased from thirty to forty per cent.; the cultivation of tobacco had not only increased in quantity but the quality and price compared with former times had increased seven-fold; the manufacture and sale of improved agricultural implements had increased six-fold; and the quantity imported, three-fold; while at the same time the revenue from forests, pastures, and waste land belonging to the Crown, had nearly trebled. Such was the result of the change in the tenure of land in the Crown Provinces. But at this time no change had yet taken place in the land system of the provinces of the Empire, where territorial magnates ruled supreme. Here the ancient communal system had been destroyed, and the right of possession in the soil withdrawn from the peasants, who were reduced to a condition of serfdom. Industry continued to languish, agriculture declined, and those portions of the country altogether presented a striking contrast to the Crown Provinces, where the communal system had been restored to its full vigor." *Ibid.*

"I lay no stress" says Mr. Mill "on the condition of North



America, where, as is well-known, the land, wherever free from the curse of slavery, is almost universally owned by the same man who holds the plough. A country combining the natural fertility of America with the knowledge and arts of modern Europe, is so peculiarly circumstanced, that scarcely anything, except insecurity of property or a tyrannical Government, could materially impair the prosperity of the industrial classes.

One of the countries, in which peasant proprietors are of oldest date, and most numerous in proportion to the population, is Norway. Of the social and economical condition of that country, an interesting account has been given by Mr. Laing. His testimony in favour of small landed properties both there and elsewhere is given with great decision. I will quote a few passages.

'If small proprietors are not good farmers, it is not from the same cause here, which, we are told, makes them so in Scotland—indolence and want of exertion. The extent to which irrigation is carried on in these glens and valleys shows a spirit of exertion and co-operation' (I request particular attention to this point) 'to which the latter can show nothing similar. Hay being the principal winter support of live stock, and both it and corn, as well as potatoes, liable, from the shallow soil and powerful reflection of sun-shine from the rocks, to be burnt and withered up, the greatest exertions are made to bring water from the head of each glen, along such a level as will give the command of it to each farmer at the head of his fields. This is done by leading it in wooden troughs (the half of a tree roughly scooped) from the highest perennial stream among the hills through woods, across ravines, along the rocky, often perpendicular, sides of the glens, and from this main trough giving a lateral one to each farmer in passing the head of his farm. He distributes this supply by movable troughs among his fields, and at this season waters each rig successively with scoops like those used by bleachers in watering cloth, laying his trough between every two rigs. One would not believe without seeing it, how very large an extent of land is traversed expeditiously by these artificial showers. The extent of the main troughs is very great. In one glen I walked ten miles, and found

it troughed on both sides : on one, the chain is continued down the main valley for forty miles. These may be bad farmers who do such things ; but they are not indolent, nor ignorant of the principle of working in concert, and keeping up establishments for common benefit. They are, undoubtedly, in these respects, far in advance of any community of cotters in our highland glens. They feel as proprietors, who receive the advantage of their own exertions. The excellent state of the roads and bridges is another proof that the country is inhabited by people who have a common interest to keep them under repair. There are no tolls.

On the effects of peasant proprietorship on the continent generally, the same writer expresses himself as follows :—

‘ If we listen to the large farmer, the scientific agriculturist, the English political economist, good farming must perish with large farms ; the very idea that good farming can exist, unless on large farms cultivated with great capital, they hold to be absurd. Draining, manuring, economical arrangements, cleaning the land, regular rotations, valuable stock and implements, all belong exclusively to large farms worked by large capital, and by hired labour. This reads very well ; but if we raise our eyes from their books to their fields, and coolly compare what we see in the best districts farmed in large farms, with what we see in the best districts farmed in small farms, we see, and there is no blinking the fact, better crops on the ground in Flanders, East Friesland, Holstein, in short, on the whole line of the arable land of equal quality of the continent from the Sound to Calais, than we see on the line of British islands opposite to this line, and in the same latitudes, from the Frith of Forth all round to Dover. Minute labour on small portions of arable ground gives evidently, in equal soils and climate, a superior productiveness, where these small portions belong in property, as in Flanders, Holland, Friesland, and Ditmarsch in Holstein, to the farmer. It is not pretended by our agricultural writers, that our large farmers, even in Berwickshire Roxburghshire, or the Lothians, approach to the garden-like cultivation, attention to manures, drainage, and clean state of the land, or in productiveness from a small space of soil not originally rich.



which distinguish the small farmers of Flanders, or their system. In the best farmed parish in Scotland or England, more land is wasted in the corners and borders of the fields of large farms, in the roads through them, unnecessarily wide because they are bad, and bad because they are wide in neglected corners, waste spots, useless belts and clumps of sorry trees, and such unproductive areas, that would maintain the poor of the parish, if they were all laid together and cultivated. But large capital applied to farming is of course only applied to the very best of the soils of a country. It cannot touch the small unproductive spots, which require more time and labour to fertilize them than is consistent with a quick return of capital. But although hired time and labour cannot be applied beneficially to such cultivation, the owner's own time and labour may. He is working for no higher returns at first from his land than a bare living. But in the course of generations fertility and value are produced; a better living, and even very improved processes of husbandry, are attained. Furrow draining, stall feeding all summer, liquid manures, are universal in the husbandry of the small farms of Flanders, Lombardy, Switzerland. Our most improving districts under large farms are but beginning to adopt them. Dairy husbandry even, and the manufacture of the largest cheeses by the co-operation of many small farmers, the mutual assurance of property against fire and hail storms by the co-operation of small farmers—the most scientific and expensive of all agricultural operations in modern times, the manufacture of beet-root sugar,—the supply of the European markets with flax and hemp by the husbandry of small farmers—the abundance of legumes, fruits, poultry, in the usual diet even of the lowest classes abroad, and the total want of such variety at the tables even of our middle classes, and this variety and abundance essentially connected with the husbandry of small farmers,—all these are features in the occupation of a country by small proprietor farmers, which must make the enquirer pause before he admits the dogma of our land doctors at home, that large farms worked by hired labour and great capital can alone bring out the greatest



productiveness of the soil, and furnish the greatest supply of the necessaries and conveniences of life to the inhabitants of a country.'

M. Raw in his little treatise 'On the Agriculture of the Palatinate' bears testimony not only to the industry, but to the skill and intelligence of the peasantry; their judicious employment of manures, and excellent rotation of crops; the progressive improvement of their agriculture for generations past, and the spirit of further improvement which is still active. 'The indefatigableness of the country people, who may be seen in activity all the day and all the year, and are never idle, because they make a good distribution of their labours, and find for every interval of time a suitable occupation, is as well known as their zeal is praiseworthy in turning to use every circumstance which presents itself, in seizing upon every useful novelty which offers, and even in searching out new and advantageous methods. One easily perceives that the peasant of this district has reflected much on his occupation: he can give reasons for his modes of proceeding, even if those reasons are not always tenable: he is as exact an observer of proportions as it is possible to be from memory without the aid of figures: he attends to such general signs of the times as appear to augur him either benefit or harm.' *Raw*, pp. 15-16.

But the most decisive example in opposition to the English prejudice against cultivation by peasant proprietors, is the case of Belgium. The soil is originally one of the worst in Europe. 'The provinces,' says Mr. McCulloch, 'of West and East Flanders and Hainault, form a far stretching plain, of which the luxuriant vegetation indicates an indefatigable care and labour bestowed upon its cultivation, for the natural soil consists almost wholly of barren sand, and its great fertility is entirely the result of very skillful management and judicious application of various manures.' (*Geographical Dictionary, Art. Belgium.*)

The writer observes that the Flemish agriculturists 'seem to want nothing but a space to work upon: whatever be the quality or texture of the soil, in time they will make it produce something,



The sands in the Campine can be compared to nothing but the sands on the sea-shore, which they probably were originally. It is highly interesting to follow step by step the progress of improvement. Here you see a cottage and rude cow-shed erected on a spot of the most unpromising aspect. The loose white sand blown into irregular mounds is only kept together by the roots of the heath: a small spot only is levelled and surrounded by a ditch: part of this is covered with young broom, part is planted with potatoes, and perhaps a small patch of diminutive clover may show itself: but manures, both solid and liquid, are collecting, 'and this is the nucleus from which, in a few years, a little farm will spread around... If there is no manure at hand, the only thing that can be sown on pure sand at first is broom; this grows in the most barren soils; in three years it is fit to cut, and produces some return in fagots for the bakers and brick-makers. The leaves which have fallen have somewhat enriched the soil, and the fibres of the roots have given a certain degree of compactness. It may now be ploughed and sown with buckwheat, or even with rye without manure. By the time this is reaped, some manure may have been collected, and a regular course of cropping may begin. As soon as clover and potatoes enable the farmer to keep cows and make manure, the improvement goes on rapidly; in a few years the soil undergoes a complete change: it becomes mellow and retentive of moisture, and enriched by the vegetable matter afforded by the decomposition of the roots of clover and other plants... After the land has been gradually brought into a good state, and is cultivated in a regular manner, there appears much less difference between the soils which have been originally good, and those which have been made so by labour and industry. At least the crops in both appear more likely alike at harvest than is the case in soils of different qualities in other countries. This is a great proof of the excellency of the Flemish system; for it shows that the land is in a constant state of improvement, and that the deficiency of the soil is compensated by greater attention to tillage and manuring, especially the latter.



The Flemish farmers and laborers live much more economically than the same class in England: they seldom eat meat except on Sundays and in harvest: buttermilk and potatoes with brown bread is their daily food...Accordingly they are gradually acquiring capital, and their great ambition is to have land of their own. They eagerly seize every opportunity of purchasing a small farm, and the price is so raised by competition, that land pays little more than two per cent. interest for the purchase money. Large properties gradually disappear, and are divided into small portions, which sell at a higher rate. But the wealth and industry of the population are continually increasing, being rather diffused through the masses than accumulated in individuals.'

Mr. William Thornton in his *Plea for Peasant Proprietors* speaks of the island of Guernsey in the following terms: 'Not even in England is nearly so large a quantity of produce sent to market from a tract of such limited extent. This of itself might prove that the cultivators must be far removed above poverty, for being absolute owners of all the produce raised by them, they of course sell only what they do not themselves require. But the satisfactoriness of their condition is apparent to every observer.' *Plea for Peasant Proprietors*, p. 99.

An authority, on this point, not to be disputed, is Arthur Young, the inveterate enemy of small farms, the corypheus of the modern English school of agriculturists, who yet, travelling over nearly the whole of France in 1787, 1788, and 1789, when he finds remarkable excellence of cultivation, never hesitates to ascribe it to peasant property. 'Leaving Sawve' says he 'I was much struck with a large tract of land, seemingly nothing but huge rocks; yet most of it inclosed and planted with the most industrious attention. Every man has an olive, a mulberry, an almond, or a peach tree, and vines scattered among them; so that the whole ground is covered with the oddest mixture of these plants and bulging rocks, that can be conceived. The inhabitants of this village deserve encouragement for their industry; and if I were a French minister, they should have it.



They would soon turn all the deserts around them into gardens. Such a knot of active husbandmen, who turn their rocks into scenes of fertility, because I suppose their own, would do the same by the wastes, if animated by the same omnipotent principle.' *Arthur Young's Travels in France*, Vol. I, p. 50.

Again 'Going out of Gauge, I was surprised to find by far the greatest exertion in irrigation, which I had yet seen in France; and then passed by some steep mountains highly cultivated in terraces. Much watering at St. Lawrence. The scenery very interesting to a farmer. From Gauge to the mountain of rough ground which I crossed, the ride has been the most interesting which I have taken in France; the efforts of industry the most vigorous; the animation the most lively. An activity has been here, that has swept away all difficulties before it, and has clothed the very rocks with verdure. It would be a disgrace to common sense to ask the cause; the enjoyment of property must have done it. Give a man the secure possession of a bleak rock, and he will turn it into a garden; give him a nine years' lease of a garden, and he will convert it into a desert.' *Ibid.*, p. 51.

Sismondi says:—'In the countries in which cultivation by small proprietors still continues, the population increases regularly and rapidly until it has attained its natural limits; that is to say, inheritances continue to be divided and sub-divided among several sons as long as by an increase of labour each family can extract an equal income from a smaller portion of land. A father who possessed a vast extent of natural pasture, divides it among his sons, and they turn it into fields and meadows; his sons divide it among their sons, who abolish fallows: each improvement in agricultural knowledge admits of another step in the sub-division of property. But there is no danger lest the proprietor should bring up his children to make beggars of them. He knows exactly what inheritance he has to leave them; he knows that the law will divide it equally among them; he sees the limit beyond which this division would make them descend from the rank which he has himself filled, and a just family



pride, common to the peasant and to the nobleman, makes him abstain from summoning into life children for whom he cannot properly provide. If more are born, at least they do not marry, or they agree among themselves which of several brothers shall perpetuate the family. It is not found that in the Swiss Cantons, the patrimonies of the peasants are ever so divided as to reduce them below an honourable competence, although the habit of foreign service by opening to the children a career indefinite and uncalculable, sometimes calls forth a superabundant population.

As the result of this enquiry into the direct operation and indirect influences of peasant properties, I conceive it to be established, that there is no necessary connection between this form of landed property and an imperfect state of the arts of production: that it is favourable in quite as many respects as it is unfavourable, to the most effective use of the powers of the soil; that no other existing state of agricultural economy has so beneficial an effect on the industry, the intelligence, the frugality, and prudence of the population, nor tends on the whole so much to discourage an improvident increase of their numbers; and that no other, therefore, is on the whole so favourable in the present state of their education, both to their moral and their physical welfare." *Mill's Political Economy, Art. Peasant Proprietors.*

"No manual labour maintains health, vigour of body, and cheerfulness, so well as agriculture; none, by its variety, develops so much intelligence; and when the soil is cultivated by small proprietors, none affords to those who live by the labour of their hands, so much security for the future, so little jealousy among persons in the same employment, so little seduction to vice, and so much morality." *Sismondi's Political Economy and Philosophy of Government*, p. 169.

The Condition of the Irish Peasantry.

"The actual occupiers of the soil, far from being landowners, are not even leaseholders, but are rackrented tenants-at-will. In this single phrase may be found a complete explanation of all



the evils of their condition, and all the defects of their character. They are indolent, because they have no inducement to work after they have obtained from their labour wherewithal to pay their rent, and to save themselves from starvation. Whatever additional produce they might raise, would only subject them to further exactions. They are careless of the future, because they cannot, by taking forethought, improve the gloomy prospects of the morrow; they are reduced to the verge of destitution, because they are permitted to retain no more of the fruits of their labour than will barely suffice for their subsistence; and they set at naught all other laws, divine or human, partly in obedience to the first law of nature, that of self-preservation, and partly because familiarity with misery has rendered them desperate." *W. T. Thornton's Plea for Peasant Proprietors*, p. 187.

The Land Tenure.

"A survey of the whole question of tenure leads to the conclusion, that wherever the land is of easy access and widely distributed among the inhabitants of a country, the soil is well cultivated, and the people industrious, prosperous, and contented. On the other hand, wherever the land is in the hands of a few large proprietors, cultivation is checked, and the mass of the people are idle, indigent, and improvident. All suggestions or proposals of a remedial nature must be guided by this general conclusion. To find a remedy in this case, therefore, we have but to ask, what system of tenure and mode of distribution in regard to land will best promote the national welfare?"

In the ordinary state of society two things are requisite for productive farming: (1) farms must be of moderate extent, so as to be within the means of a large body of proprietors; (2) and there must be security of tenure for the cultivator. Both these essentials are obtained under the peasant proprietary system. Security of tenure is perfect where the land belongs to the person who cultivates it; and small holdings are well cultivated because they are easily managed, and are within the means and capacity of the average standard of men who engage in husbandry.

M. De Lavelaye, an eminently impartial authority lays down 'The smaller the farm the greater the produce of the soil' as a rule which holds good all over the continent. 'We are not farming, —they (the tenants of Ireland) frankly admitted to Mr. Caird when remonstrated with for their backwardness—'we are not farming, and we know we are not farming; we are only taking out of the land what we can get from it at the least cost, as we do not know how long we may remain in possession, and have no security for what we might be disposed to invest in improved cultivation.' Who can blame them? What man in his senses would do otherwise? The tenant is ready to spend his capital in the purchase of more, improved farm-implements, steam-engines, and all the stock in trade requisite for the effective working of his farm; he is even willing to undertake the landlord's duties, to drain the stiff clay and effect other permanent improvements. But the landlord stops the way. He will neither furnish the capital himself, nor allow others to do it for him. He will neither give the money nor the security, and until he is removed, all hope of progress must be abandoned." *The Westminster Review*, Vol. XXXVIII, p. 255.

The Moderate Assessment of Land Revenue Essential to National Prosperity.

Henry Newnham, Esq. in his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons, 1832, said:—"It has been stated by Mr. Mill and by other persons, who have been examined, who were acquainted with the proceedings of the Company, that directions have been given, and that utmost anxiety been expressed on the part of the Company, that a moderate assessment of land revenue should prevail, and that in every case in which the over-assessment was found to exist, or even supposed to exist, liberal abatement should be made, and this under a conviction, that nothing tended so much to diminish the revenue to be collected for the Company as over-assessment; and that on that account, as well as from a sincere wish that the cultivating ryots should always be in comfortable position and be kindly treated in every case, a



moderate demand should be made." *Answer to Question 2767, Minutes of Evidence. Revenue. Commons, 1832.*

"An equal and moderate assessment has more effect" says Sir Thomas Munro, (*Judicial Selections*, Vol. IV., p. 79) "in preventing litigation and crimes than all our civil and criminal regulations, when the lands are accurately surveyed and registered. The numerous suits which occur where this is not the case, regarding their boundaries and possession, are prevented; and when the assessment is moderate, every man finds employment, and the thefts and robberies, which are committed in consequence of the want of it, and of other means of subsistence, almost entirely cease." Quoted in *An Inquiry into the Alleged Prowess to the Litigation of the Natives of India*, p. 46.

Sir Thomas Munro wrote in 1821:—"The task of improving our resources is one of much greater difficulty than that of maintaining the peace of the country, and this difficulty arises principally, from the assessment being, in general, too high with respect to the condition of the people; so that in many districts, in order to have a further increase, we must begin by making a present reduction of our revenue, because the extension of cultivation, from which the increase of revenue must result, cannot possibly be expected under the present assessment. The Presidencies of Bengal and Madras were acquired under circumstances, which have ever since continued to influence their revenue systems. Bengal acquired at once the dominion of rich and fertile provinces, yielding a revenue much beyond its want; it had, therefore, no occasion to enter into any minute examination of the assessment; it was satisfied with what it got from the zemindars, and let them in possession of the lands on very easy terms. Madras, on the contrary, rose amidst poverty and many struggles for existence. It was never able to pay its establishment; it acquired its territories by slow degrees, partly from the Nizam, but chiefly from Mysore; and though the assessment had already been raised too high by those Governments, its own pressing necessities did not permit to lower the demand, but forced it to enter into the most rigid scrutiny of the resources of the



revenue in order to keep it up; and there has, in consequence, always been a pressure upon the ryots, which nothing but necessity could justify. The present secure state of India will, I hope, enable us to lower the assessment gradually in all those districts in which it is too high. This may be done without materially affecting the general amount of the revenues by taking the districts in succession, two or three at a time, and letting them make up, by additional cultivation, the reductions of their assessments, before it is extended to others. We shall, by this means, ultimately increase the land rent, and in a much greater degree, the customs and every other source of revenue; and we shall render the payment of them much lighter to the inhabitants, because they will be enabled to augment the stock from which they are paid. I expect from a reduction in the assessment, that land will, in time, be everywhere regarded as hereditary private property by the ryots; that their circumstances will be so much improved, as to enable them to pay the revenue in all seasons, good or bad; and that the country will be able, when war happens, to bear a temporary additional assessment, as a war tax, and save us from a great part of the heavy expense which we have already been obliged to incur on account of loans." Quoted in the *Calcutta Review* Vol. XVII, p.p. 315-16.

The Extreme Necessity of Conferring Proprietary Rights upon the Indian Cultivators.

Mr. McCulloch writes in his *Essay on Taxation*:—"There is little or rather no prospect of any real improvement being effected in India without an entire change in the present system of holding land. The grand object should be to give the ryots or cultivators a right of property in their holdings. Rents are greater than they ought to be."

"The abstract theory" says Mr. J. Mill, "now acted upon by the Governor-General, namely, that the highest improvements in the cultivation of the land can be expected from none but the proprietors of the soil, was just in itself, and a truth of no small importance. But though proprietors alone have sufficient motives



for the highest efforts in cultivation, the Governor-General and his ministerial and directorial masters, who concurred with him, ought to have reflected that there are sorts of proprietors; and that it is not from every sort that any improvement whatsoever, or any attempt towards improvement, is to be expected. They might have reflected for how many centuries the soil of Poland has been private property, or the soil of Russia, and how little in those countries of anything like improvement has yet taken place. They might have recollected, that the nobles even of France, where knowledge was so far advanced, had, for many centuries, before the Revolution, enjoyed the property of the soil of France, and the agriculture of France still continued in the most deplorable condition. There are three sets of circumstances whose operation, where it is felt, prevents the improvement of the soil at the hands of its proprietors; first, ignorance; secondly, possessions too large; and thirdly, too much power over the immediate cultivators. The last is by far the most important circumstance, because men, with very few exceptions, as education and Government have hitherto moulded their minds, are more forcibly drawn by the love of absolute power, than by that of money, and have greater pleasure in the prostrate subjection of their tenants than the increase of their rents. When our countrymen draw theories from England, it would be good if they understood England. It is not because in England we have landed aristocracy that our agriculture has improved, but because the laws of England afford to the cultivator protection against his lord. It is the immediate cultivators who have increased so wonderfully the produce of the land in England, not only without assistance from the proprietors, but often in spite of them.

The proprietors of the land in England, even to this hour, exhibit one of the strongest proofs, which can be adduced of the ascendancy which is exercised by the love of dominion over the love of improvement and of wealth. No principle is more thoroughly established, and indeed more universally admitted than that the grant of leases, and leases of a long duration, to the immediate cultivators of the soil, are essential to all spirited



and large improvement. But the proprietors of the soil in England complain that leases render their tenantry too independent of them, and the greater proportion of the land of England is cultivated on *tenure-at-will*. If the gentlemen of England will sacrifice improvement to the petty portion of arbitrary power, which the laws of England allow them to exercise over *tenants-at-will*, what must we not expect from the *zamindars* of Hindoostan with minds nurtured to habits of oppression, when it is referred to themselves whether they shall or shall not have power over the miserable *ryots*, to whom the law is too imperfect to yield any protection.

The effect of ignorance with respect to improvement is too obvious to require illustration. But it may be remarked, that it operates with peculiar efficacy in augmenting the force of the most powerful of the causes by which the proprietors of land are made to prevent improvement. The love of dominion has always the greatest sway in the most ignorant state of the human mind.

The effect of large possessions in preventing those efforts and sacrifices on which improvement depends, deserved profound consideration of the Indian legislator. It cannot escape the feeblest powers of reflection, that the man who enjoys a vast accumulation of wealth must regard with comparative indifference small acquisitions; and that the prospect of increasing his great revenue by slowly adding the painful results of improvement cannot operate very powerfully on his mind. It is the man of small possessions, who feels most sensibly the benefit of petty accessions. It is on the immediate cultivator, wherever the benefit of his improvement is allowed to devolve in full upon himself, that the motives to improvement operate with the greatest force. That benefit, however, cannot devolve upon him in full, unless he is proprietor as well as cultivator of his fields; and hence in part the backwardness of agriculture in some of the most civilized portions of the globe. There was an opportunity in India, to which the history of the world presents no parallel. Next after the sovereign, the immediate cultivators had by far the greatest portion of



interest in the soil : for the rights of the zemindars (such as they were), a complete compensation might have easily been made ; the generous resolution was adopted of sacrificing to the improvement of the country the proprietary rights of the sovereign. The motives to improvement which property gives, and of which the power was so justly appreciated, might have been bestowed upon those upon whom they would have operated with a force incomparably greater than that with which they could operate upon any other class of men ; they might have been bestowed upon those from whom alone, in every country, the principal improvements in agriculture must be derived, the immediate cultivators of the soil : and a measure worthy to be ranked amongst the noblest that ever was taken for the improvement of any country, might have helped to compensate the people of India for the miseries of that misgovernment, which they had so long endured. But the legislators were English aristocrats, and aristocratical prejudices prevailed." *Mill's History of the British India*, Vol. III., p.p. 275-77.

"The chief point" says a distinguished statesman, "to be kept in view, and the object to the attainment of which the Government should direct its attention, is not whether a certain number of fields are assessed in proportions unequal to another but whether the land is taxed above its ascertained value, or beyond its powers of production. It matters little in comparison, whether it can be made to pay *more*, but whether, in the eyes of a forbearing landlord, it ought to pay less. In what degree the fertility of the soil may be increased by the application of more labour, more capital, and more skill, it is impossible to calculate ; for although most of the operations of husbandry, the drill plough, succession of crops, fallows, and dressing, have been known and practised in this country from a very remote era, expensive improvements in agriculture have never yet found their way to India. But putting aside these considerations, as every ryot is aware, that his field will give him greater or less returns in the proportion that he attends to the culture of it, and knows that its produce will differ every year from the one adjoining it, as it



is more or less irrigated and manured, it may be safely asserted, that no equality of assessment can ever be introduced, and it may be well questioned, whether if it were practicable, it would lead to more prosperity.

It can never be too often repeated, that the great object of our administration of the land revenues of India should be to confirm private property in the soil where we have found it, and to create it where it does not yet exist by lowering the land-tax. The business of altering the demand upon the land according to its annual fluctuations, is not the business of a Government, but should be wholly and unreservedly left to the private ryot, who, by degrees, under a lenient collector and a light land-tax, will become in every district a proprietor." Quoted in the *Calcutta Review*. Vol. XVII. p. 327.

"The political argument for a permanent settlement with peasant proprietors came with great force from Lord Lawrence. These consist of the flower of the population. From them all the native soldiers and the native officers come; and they are the men on whose conduct and loyalty and general contentment with our rule so much depends; and, therefore, in my mind, to conciliate them by a permanent settlement would be a matter of the very highest importance.' Rather than not have perpetuity of assessment, Lord Lawrence would accept it in the modified form of one based on the price of agricultural produce at distant intervals. But he stoutly defended one upon a money assessment. He showed the importance to themselves and to the stability of our rule of thus relieving the poverty of the people. Thus only would they be enabled to keep their land, which our severe tax of 60 per cent. of the net produce and our rigid rules force them now to dispose of to the money-lenders in spite of their saying 'we would sooner sell sons and daughters than part with our land.' Lord Lawrence declared, as we have so often done, that 'the contentment of the agricultural population is the main security for the maintenance of our rule in India. Nothing could happen in India if the agricultural population as a whole were on our side. On the other hand, the alienation of the land



was a reason why many of the people joined against us in the mutiny, who would otherwise have been on our side, at Allahabad and Cawnpur, and in Bundelcund and other places it was said during the mutiny, that the great feeling was against the village bankers and the Government civil courts." *The Friend of India* 1873, p. 1436.

England's Duty to India.

There are two principal causes of the most wretched condition of the Indian ryot. The first cause is the excessive land-tax, and the second the exorbitant rate of interest. We shall try to prove, that these two have caused his ruin, and will suggest means to remedy the evil. The Permanent Settlement of Lord Cornwallis is the first cause, and from it, arises the second. The former hands over the sixty-six millions of Bengal, bound hand and foot, to the tender mercies of the zemindars, and ties up the hands of Government; and the latter to that of the money-lenders. The zemindars, with the unlimited powers given them by that settlement, are exacting the utmost possible rent from the ryots; and the Government, being unable to take more from them, and, at the same time, unable to meet the increased demands of the State, is taking from the other provinces more than what is due. Our readers will be able to understand the undue proportion of land revenue from the following table:—

1871-72.	Bengal.	Bombay.
Land revenue (net)	£ 3,651,556.	£ 2,744,060.
Area in square miles	230,832.	127,332.
Population	66 millions.	13½ millions.

1871-72.	Madras.	N. W. P.	Punjab.
Land revenue (net)	£ 4,016,555.	£ 3,682,588.	£ 1,763,587.
Area in square miles	141,746.	80,901.	101,752.
Population	30 millions.	30 millions.	9½ millions.



The disproportion is great. It becomes especially marked in comparing Bengal with the North Western Provinces, which, with a population of less than one-half that of Bengal, and an area of little more than one-third, contributes more than the latter province. Bombay, with only 13½ millions of population, and an area of 127, 532 square miles, pays £2, 744, 000 to Bengal's £3, 651, 000 from a population of 66 millions and an area of 230, 832 square miles. Madras, with a population of 30 millions, covering 141, 746 square miles, pays more than Bengal". *Hector's Land and Railways in India*, p. 10.

The zemindars of Bengal pay a small revenue to the Government, and exact the utmost possible rent from the ryots as has been said before: they pay 3½ crores of rupees, and exact 60 crores from them. Thus they pocket the vast sum of 56½ crores as profit. Hence it is manifest, that they take three times more from Bengal than the Government from whole India by way of land revenue!!! It is also manifest, that, on the whole the Government is not a loser: it makes up the deficiency in Bengal by exacting from other provinces more than what is due. It ought to be stated here, that the ryotwar system prevails in all the British possessions in India, except Bengal, Oude, and Central Provinces. Thus the interests of the Indian ryot alone have been sacrificed: thus the excessive land-tax has been thrown upon his shoulders; and its result is, he being unable to meet the demands of the zemindars as well as of the Government, resorts to borrowing. The money-lenders, seizing the opportunity, make the best use of it: they charge interest from 37½ to 100 per cent per annum on money lent. The ryot cannot get money at less interest. If he is unable to pay the rent, he is sure to be soundly beaten by the zemindar or rather his underlings, and to be dragged to the civil courts to pay the arrears with the cost of the suit. As soon as the crops are gathered, the zemindar and the money-lender fall upon him, and take away the utmost possible share leaving him a very small part for keeping his body and soul together. The part of the crops generally left him is barely sufficient to maintain him for a month or two. After that, he is again forced



to have recourse to borrowing. Thus he is year by year involved in debt; thus his miseries know no bounds; thus he is far from keeping any thing in store for future. And if there be a scarcity or famine, he is sure to be its victim. The years of scarcity or of famine generally yield one-fourth of the crops, which even falls far short of meeting the exorbitant demands of the zemindars. If the Government steps in to his aid, he is saved, otherwise he is sure to die of starvation. Hence it is manifest, that the excessive land-tax is one of the main causes of his suffering or of his death; and the cause of that heavy tax is the Permanent Settlement of Lord Cornwallis. We firmly believe, that the Orissa famine of 1866 would have been attended with perhaps eleven or twelve hundred deaths instead of with so many lakhs, if that settlement were made with the cultivators direct, and that the Government would have most probably escaped an everlasting stain upon the British rule in India with the money spent in that calamity; and that for a similar reason, there would have been in the late famine of 1874 no death at all instead of the few scores, with the Government aid of a few lakhs instead of nine crores.

At present the Indian ryots are sorely vexed with the zemindars as well as with the Government, and are on the verge of rebellion. The Pabna and Deccan agrarian risings, the great disputes at present raging between the zemindars and the ryots of eastern Bengal, and the rebellious spirit of the Sonthals, are incontestible proofs of the great disaffection of the Indian ryots. Who knows where this will end? If this state of things be allowed to continue, does any one doubt, that at no distant future, there will be one of the greatest agrarian risings ever recorded in history, when we see, that the exactions of the zemindars as well as of the Government have actually driven the most timid and cold-blooded ryots of India to rebellion! Disputes not unoften ending in bloodshed and death, ruinous litigation, sacrifice of truth, and destruction of the commercial faculties of the people, are some of the sad results of the ill-considered Permanent Settlement. He who is acquainted with its results, cannot but come to the conclusion, that the English have conquered Bengal, as it were, for the sole benefit of the zemindars.



dars and for the ruin of the Bengal, and, to a certain extent, Indian, cultivators.

It is a matter of very highest importance to reduce the land-tax, as the weaver castes of India, who formerly earned their livelihood by their profession, have now been forced by Manchester to cultivate lands for keeping their body and soul together. Thus a greater demand than ever has now been made upon them, and the zemindars seizing the opportunity are making the best use of it—are increasing the rent. They do not contribute a fair share to the imperial revenue; they are, in fact, reaping all the benefits derivable from living under a strong and enlightened Government, without paying anything like a due proportion of the cost of administering justice and of preserving the country in a state of security and peace. They have, moreover, paid no part of the outlay on public works, by which their lands have been improved. To the enhanced value of those lands they have in no way assisted; they are indebted for it to the Government, which has given them security in the possession of their property, which has opened up markets at home and abroad for the sale of their produce, and which has provided new means of communication by which those markets may be reached." *Hector's Land and Railways in India*, p. 11. Thus we see, that the public works constructed at the expense of Government, and the piece-goods of Manchester have indirectly served to fill the pockets of the zemindars at the expense of the ryots.

It has also been truly asserted, that Act. X of 1859, which was intended to afford some means of protection, has been turned by the artifices of the zemindars into an additional method for squeezing the life-blood out of the ryot. The fact is, that hundreds of Acts will be of no use whatever so long as the Permanent Settlement remains untouched.

It has been said before, that the Government of India spent in the late famine of 1874 about nine crores of rupees in feeding the unfortunate millions pauperized by the exactions of the zemindars. It is a fact, the truth of which no one can deny, that at least one-third of this vast sum was squandered, and that



two-thirds only reached the people for whom it was spent. Thus strictly speaking, six crores were sufficient to prevent the dreadful consequences of the famine. The Government has, by these measures, added about forty lakhs of rupees to its annual expenditure by way of interest of that sum. And as these forty lakhs have been and will ever be annually exacted from the people for whom they were spent, so they have become additional burdens upon them. By the above lines, we do not, in the least degree, depreciate the famine measures of 1874. If we add to these forty lakhs the oppressions and exactions of the zemindars, we cannot but come to the conclusion, that the poverty and the wretchedness of the ryots will increase with the advance of years. Now we have statistically proved, perhaps, to the satisfaction of our readers, that the zemindars exact 60 crores of rupees annually from the ryots of Bengal. If we subtract $3\frac{1}{2}$ crores from this vast sum as Government demand, the remainder will be $56\frac{1}{2}$ crores. If the Permanent Settlement had been made with the ryots direct, instead of with the zemindars, these $56\frac{1}{2}$ crores would have remained in the hands of the people as a means for hooting out the famines from the shores of India, instead of in those of the zemindars, as instruments of tyranny and oppression. In the face of these facts, can any man, with a whit of sense in him, say that the Orissa famine of 1866 would have been attended with 1,200,000 deaths, and that the Bengal famine of 1874 would have cost the Government nine crores of rupees? Therefore the Government, having handed over the sixty-six millions of Bengal to the tender mercies of the zemindars, has, as a consequence thereof, tarnished for ever the British rule in India in 1866, and suffered a loss of nine crores in 1874. And it must have to feel similar consequences in future, if the Permanent Settlement—if the zemindari system—remains intact. From the year 1874 it virtually gets $3\frac{1}{2}$ crores minus forty lakhs as land revenue from Bengal. Thus it will, by eight or ten such famines, lose all, that it receives as land revenue. And it suffers so much for whom and for what purpose?—For filling the coffers of a few idle and worthless drones of society. And as if to mock the misfortunes



of the unfortunate peasantry, the Government makes up the loss by the Permanent Settlement by levying salt duty of 325 per cent, license tax, road cess, and the public works cess, from the very people, who have been pauperized by the exactions of the zemindars.

There are many thoughtful men, who think that irrigation is the panacea of all the calamities, that now befall India. But we do not fully concur with them. There is no doubt, that it will prove a great help to the increased production, and, therefore, to the enhanced value of land. But in seasons of drought, many canals would be almost dried up, and would fail to serve the purposes—to irrigate the land—for which they are being advocated. There is another circumstance, which will powerfully counteract the benefits, which will be derived from it. The enhanced value of land will stimulate the zemindars to make utmost endeavours to extort increased rents from the ryots, and thereby to deprive them of all benefits arising from it. And who will doubt, that they will succeed in their attempts? The disputes regarding the unearned increment between the zemindars and the ryots of eastern Bengal give incontestible proofs of the truth of these remarks. Thus we see, that so long as the zemindari system will be maintained intact, the irrigation will be of little benefit to the great body of the people, for whom it is being advocated. With the reduction of land-rent, the exorbitant rate of interest, which has given so much trouble to the people as well as to the Government, and which was the cause of the Deccan agrarian rising, will itself be reduced. Another salutary effect of it should not be lost sight of. The necessity of cutting khals to prevent the recurrence of famine and the cost of meeting it will be, no doubt, reduced to minimum.

All efforts of Government to lay its hands into the pockets of the people by direct taxation will be surely attended with unpopularity and oppression, so long as the zemindars will be kept in their present position. Levy an income tax upon them, and they are sure to reimburse themselves by taxing the unfortunate millions, who have been handed over to them by



the Permanent Settlement; nay they will go a step further: they will exact something more as profit. Invest them with powers to collect one pice from the people, and they are sure to exact ten pice from them. Our readers will find ample proof of these remarks on perusal of the few pages on illegal cesses.

A country under a foreign rule, such as India, ought to have land settlement direct with the cultivators, because the people have to pay very high salaries to the officers of Government, who are generally sent from the ruling country. Besides if they are also required to pay vast sums by way of land-tax to the middlemen, they are sure to be ruined. Alas! Such has been the case with the Indian cultivators.

The first and chief means of improving the most wretched condition of the ryots is to repeal the Permanent Settlement, and to take them direct under the care and protection of Government. "There is the Permanent Settlement in Bengal. The Government is pledged to it. To raise the Government demand on land, which has been permanently assessed, would be a breach of faith. To this objection, the answer must be, that a contract to be binding must be lawful. If an individual should make a contract to transfer, to another, property, which does not belong to him, such contract is null and void, because the contracting party was not competent to execute the instrument under which the property is claimed by the transferee. Similarly the Permanent Settlement Act of Lord Cornwallis is not binding on the Government of to-day, because no Government is competent to bind posterity. Government do but legislate for their own day and generation. If a Government sees fit to do so, the enactment of to-day may be repealed to-morrow, and should be repealed, if the enactment is found to be unjust and oppressive. How much greater is the right and obligation of a new generation, or a new Government, which represents it—presumably more just and enlightened than their predecessors—to correct and nullify the more ignorant and less righteous legislation of the past. It is inconceivable, that a Government, which exists and makes laws purely by the permission of the society which it represents, should claim to



legislate for generations yet unborn, whose consent it cannot obtain, inconceivable, that every act of a less intelligent and more despotic Government that is past-borne and suffered by a comparatively ignorant and servile generation—should be tolerated by their more enlightened successors, with a keener sense of their rights, and the strength to assert those rights. To suppose it is to suppose man competent to resist the inevitable law of progress, and to withstand the new adaptations, which are continually impressed on him by continually altered conditions.

Extending the general argument to the particular case of the Permanent Settlement, Lord Cornwallis's Government gave away that which was not theirs to give. The land belonged of right to the generation then living. When that generation passed away, the land became the property of the new generation, which succeeded it. Lord Cornwallis's Government, representing the collective inhabitants of the country then living, may be presumed to have imposed such taxes on real and personal property as sufficed to defray the cost of supplying their requirements. But Lord Cornwallis's Government could not foresee the larger wants and expenditure of the present day, nor the enhanced value of property, which is due to the larger expenditure, which must be provided for by more taxes. His Government could not have determined in 1793 the cost in 1870 of the army and the civil administration; and of such imperial works as canals and railways, of the last of which it had not the most remote conception. Shall the personal property, which is sunk in these developments of real property, be taxed in proportion to income, and the owners of land be exempted from paying proportionately on their improved property towards the aggregate expenditure incurred in creating and maintaining the source of their enhanced profits?

Once more, the question—'Is the Government to break faith with the landholders of Bengal?' is best answered by the question, 'Is the Government to break faith with the millions who are not landlords?' Shall the Government deal unjustly by the great body of the people, that it may be just, so to say, to a compara-



tively inconsiderable section? Shall the interests of the many be sacrificed to the interests of a few? The obligation of justice between man and man is of more authority than all laws and contracts whatsoever. It is for this that Governments exist; not for an obstinate adherence to arbitrary and unlawful engagements executed through ignorance or selfishness. The natural rights of man cannot be abrogated by legislation. The right to live and to enjoy life is of Divine origin, and therefore paramount and inalienable. The instrument under which the landlords claim an exceptional and unjust title is invalid, because it claims to strip our common humanity of a right, which no man can take away.

Of course there will be started the usual objection of the large party, who would rather maintain wrong, which they call peace, than make a sacrifice to right it. 'Think of the injury' they say to the new proprietors, who have bought land at the present market rates.' Let the injury be admitted, and there is at most a case for compensation, none for perpetuating the wrong. And sooner the wrong is set right, the smaller will be the accumulated injury to be repaired, and the amount of compensation, which may be justly claimed, not by landholders alone, but likewise, it should be noted, by the great body of non-landholders, who have been oppressed all these years by disproportionate taxation.

But from what source is the compensation to be made? If real property must be compensated out of personal property, from what source shall personal property recoup itself? For it would be too absurd to say, that personal property must again be taxed to repay itself. The difficulty suggested in this question indicates all the more strongly the necessity for an early settlement of claims, which only increase with time. The question of compensation, moreover, gives rise to the further question—Of whom may compensation be fairly claimed? By whose fault has one portion of the community been permitted to escape payment of its fair contribution to the general expenditure, and the other portion been saddled with the payment of more than its fair



share? Neither of the parties concerned—from whom alone the necessary assets can be realized—had any part in making the inequitable law, which has entailed this difficulty on the present generation; while the men who passed the law, for which they are accountable, are beyond reach. The stern moralist and humanitarian cannot approve the disposal of rights and interests without the consent of their owners by strangers against whom there is no remedy or appeal. For the consequences of their own acts, the people may be justly held to be jointly and severally responsible. But can they rightly be made to suffer for the acts of another?

The remedy is plain. A representative constitution is the only condition, which can insure the possession of equal rights and the greatest possible happiness. But the savage element of selfishness and cruelty is still too strong, and the moral sense and sympathetic feelings are still too weak to permit the hope, that might will surrender to right. There is no such mental obliquity as that which Self interposes against the perception of equal rights. There is no unwillingness like the unwillingness of the dictator to lay down his dictatorship, or admit another to a share of his authority. And many and frivolous are the excuses, and great are the powers of self-delusion and misrepresentation, with which self-constituted authority has ever sought to persuade the world, that it would not be good of individuals or communities, that they should manage their own affairs in their own way, and do with their own as may seem best in their eyes. For see you not how these self-made executors contrive to apportion the common heritage of Heaven to man in such a way as to leave but a small remainder for the millions after allotment has been made among a few hundreds or thousands who think best, that they should have absolute authority over the earth and its teeming inhabitants.

Another objection remains "If Government is to repudiate its obligations cancelling to-day the bond which it executed the day before, there must be an end of all faith in the promises of the Government, and there will be no certainty in commercial transactions, if they do not cease altogether." The form in which this



objection is put conceals more than one assumption and illegitimate conversion of terms, and it is incumbent on us to weigh well each word and its implied thought, if we would expose that dexterous shuffle of phrases by which hundreds are imposed upon for one, who is misled by direct false reasoning.

First, there is the assumption, that the repeal of a particular law, which is shown to be unjust and unwise, is the same as the constant or frequent displacement of one law by another. The implied apprehension is that, one such act will be the precursor of many, and there will be no assignable limit to the continual reversal of one enactment by another if the competency of the Government to make frequent and radical changes in laws is once admitted or allowed. The obvious answer is that the repeal of one law does not necessitate the repeal of other laws; that the history of the legislation of a country reveals the fact that radical changes in the political constitution occur at very distant periods, while the great body of legislative enactments consists only of slight and gradual modifications of old laws—the reflex action which corresponds to the slow development of the national character; that an intelligent and just Government is not likely to cancel its engagements except on the strongest grounds of justice and enlightened policy, seeing that the most ignorant and selfish of rulers are notoriously careful not to commit any such flagrant or frequent breaches of faith as would inevitably endanger the continuance of their rule; that whatever the danger or the sacrifice incurred in cancelling an engagement, the purchased experience will be useful in making Government most careful in regard to any future pledge it may give or obligation it may contract; and that, to conceive a Government as constantly or frequently committing the most serious mistakes—which can be repaired only by repeated revocations, involving enormous sacrifices of money and the public credit, and attended with grave political dangers—is to conceive a Government incompetent to rule, and deserving to be superseded by a better Government. Next, there is the transparent fallacy of regarding the public act of the people's representative—such as an equitable redistribution



of the public burdens among the whole community—in the light of a private contract which an individual executes for his personal benefit, or as the repudiation by Government of a money obligation for value received, for the discharge of which the public faith has been pledged. To permit either of two contracting parties to fulfil the terms of his contract, as he may find it his interest to do, would be an undoubted wrong to the other contracting party, and the inevitable result would be the suspension of all trade. The act of a Government, however, when it is not the act of an interested party representing interests which conflict with the interests of the nation, must be considered the act of the whole community, or of a majority consenting to the act of their representative for their collective benefit; or, more strictly, what may seem at the time in their then state of knowledge to be for their benefit. The Government, *per se*, is an abstract symbol, without any personal interest in what it enacts or annuls; and considered as one body, the nation at large, in whose behalf and with whose consent any law is made or annulled, cannot have conflicting interests. An Act, such as a redistribution of the public burdens on an equitable basis, is entitled to be held an act done in good faith, and it would be a gross perversion of terms to call it a breach of faith as though the Government were repudiating the payment of a debt. The landholder's claim to the exceptional privilege of being assessed on a portion only of the value of his property, as against the claim of the bulk of the community to be relieved of the extra taxes on personal property imposed on them to make up for the defective contribution of real property, has no resemblance to the repudiation of a public debt due to the public creditor for money advanced to the Government on the faith of public credit.

Then, it is to be noted especially, that the repeal of the Permanent Settlement Law would be a return to the straight line of impartial justice, not a deflection from that line. A departure from the strict line of duty, in itself wrong, is open to further objection, that each such deviation leads to further deviations. On the contrary, every return to the right path serves more



nearly to establish the inclination to continue in that path. The repeal of an unlawful regulation, which unjustly favours a section of the community at the expense of the nation, would be the assertion, once for all, of the right to equal justice from which it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, again to depart. The fallacy of the objection consists in not distinguishing between the tendency of a deviation from the right to repeat itself, and the closer approximation to right which is the effect of a reverse action. The lesson of history is that whereas every act of despotism unrestricted is the precursor of fresh acts of despotism, the freedom, on the other hand, of the English constitution has been secured and established by successive vindications of the right from Magna Charta up to the last Reform Bill and the disestablishment of the Irish Church.

To recapitulate. The Permanent Settlement Law is an unlawful engagement and of no effect, because the representatives of the people then living gave away to certain persons and their heirs after them for ever that which did not belong to the people of that generation to give away for ever. The law is an unjust law, because it exempts precisely that portion of the community, who have benefited most from the common field of labour, from contributing their due quota towards the public expenditure; while it levies additional taxes from the bulk of the people—owners of personal property, who have not derived from the common fund the amount of benefit, which has accrued to real property. The Permanent Settlement Act is a violation of the first principles of justice and taxation, which demand that each individual of the community shall be taxed in proportion to the value of his property, in the enjoyment of which he is secured by the collective industry of the whole community. While the profits accruing to personal and real property are taxed alike through the indirect taxes which affect their owners as consumers, and through the income tax on profits or income, property in land—the cost of maintaining which is distinct from the cost of protecting personal property—is further justly liable to a property tax proportioned to the present value of the land, as representing the



value of the accumulated labour expended in creating and maintaining it. The land-tax as distinguished from the taxation of personal property possessed alike by landholders and non-landholders, is recognized in all countries as the just contribution of a certain portion of the gross produce levied by the whole communities through their representatives, in return for the exclusive possession conferred on the individual landholder by the community to whom of right the land belonged in common; and the justification of a land-tax is equally the justification of an enhanced rental varying with the increased value of the land. The claim of new landholders, who have bought the land at the high rates consequent on the smallness and fixity of the Government demand under the Permanent Settlement, can be no other than a claim to compensation, not a claim to the perpetuation of public wrong done by an unjust law. The cancellation of an unjust law is the paramount duty of Government, which exists solely for the administration of equal justice; and a charge of breach of faith will properly lie against the wilful perpetuation of a public wrong, not against the annulment of an unlawful and unjust promise unwillingly made in an age of comparative ignorance. The question 'Shall Government be unfaithful to its engagement with the landholders?' is answered by the question, 'Should Government commit the greater breach of faith of unjustly levying taxes on the non-landholders, who constitute the bulk of the nation, in excess of the quota for which they are fairly liable?' The redistribution of the public expenditure by their own representatives in due proportion among the members of the community, is by no means analogous to the repudiation by an interested party of a bond for which a valuable consideration has been received. Change to be injurious must be a change from right to wrong, not from wrong to right, a departure from the right path, not a return to it; and an unlawful engagement which violates higher obligations, is a engagement more honoured in the breach than in the observance. The objection that the violation of one pledge is likely to lead to fresh acts of violation, and to beget a want of confidence in the Government, would be applicable to the



case of an interested party who may be tempted to swerve from the path of justice for the sake of a personal advantage; not to the impartial judgment of a disinterested umpire, vindicating the claims of justice, and affirming once for all the only equitable principle on which the public burdens should be adjusted for the future. Finally, a grave political error must be repaired, an enormous injustice must be removed at any cost; and those who are but too fearful of the effect of the violation of an unjust pledge, which should never have been given, have only to consider, that the progress of civilization and good government has always lain through the successive rectification of past errors, and a closer approximation to the ideal of justice after each departure from her stern requirements. But the Government must take the people into its confidence. Public opinion must be enlightened, and its support secured. The reasons which demand the recall of a public pledge must be set forth and clearly understood. The dumb classes, who have till now borne, without complaining so as to be heard, their hard lot of poverty and suffering—which but too many ignorantly regard as their normal and inevitable condition—must be taught their rights as well as their duties as citizens, and they must be encouraged moreover, nay invited, to represent their claims to equal justice, as against the self-assertion and unjust claims of the screaming classes—the upper ten thousand. Government would then command, in the reasonable cries for equal justice to the yet unrepresented millions, the irresistible strength and moral support which may be needful for undoing the unrighteous work of the Permanent Settlement; for surely the approving voice of the nation is more than the feeble clamours of a self-seeking class.

The unprecedented succession of year upon year of drought and famine and the yearly increasing dearness of the necessaries of life, rising at a much faster rate than wages have yet risen, is filling the country with sadness and discontent, though as yet the low mutterings of the suffering poor appear not to have reached the ears of the Council Chamber. What to them are railways and telegraphs, the great highways of commerce and



the diffusion of education, to which our Legislators proudly point as the work of their hands? They only contrast their present condition with the past, when grain was cheap, and when they used to enjoy their native sports and pastimes, all of which are fast dying out with the decay of the princes and nobles who supported them—and nothing to replace their loss! By whose fault all this suffering has been entailed on them, and what are the causes and remedies thereof, it is not *their* duty to find out. *Their* part is but to obey and suffer, and how great their sufferings are they would say if they had an organ through which to say it. And who would listen to them if they had aught to say in this matter, and they said it? For are they not accounted an ignorant people who cannot think and act for themselves, and so other people must think and act for them? And it is so good of them to do it too. Nor is it any use for the Government to say it cannot. For the people might well reply, why then have our rulers undertaken to do what they cannot do, and why are they paid for doing work which they do not do.

If you will put your hands into a man's pocket, he will want to know the reason why. Before the natives of British India can be expected to respond to a call for more money in the shape of a direct contribution, they must know what has been done with all the money you had before; and what you mean to do with the ordinary collection of the empire in the future. The balance sheet of the empire must be laid before them or their trusted representatives, not in its present English form, which they are unable to understand; but in a form and in a language and character, which shall be perfectly clear and intelligible to them. What do the people of India yet know of the financial condition of the empire, or of the crisis to which you appeal in justification of the tax? They know nothing of your receipts and expenditure—how much is received or spent, and in what way it is spent, legitimate or illegitimate. Can you justify to them the heavy cost of the Abyssinian war as a charge upon India, or the addition of fifty lakhs a year to the pension of the Mysore family? The Home charge of seven millions a



year, or the wasteful expenditure of the Public Works Department, with its high estimate and bad work which has to be pulled down and done over again? As they have not the means of learning, or the inducement to learn, what is the actual revenue of the empire, their imagination, naturally enough, supplies the absence of facts, and the imaginary total far outstrips the actual. On the other hand, as they see and hear of a part only of the whole expenditure, they naturally take the part for the whole, and they will not believe that the cost of Governing India is anything so large as it is represented to be. It is very difficult therefore for the native population to believe, and, in fact, they do not believe, that there is not a very heavy balance of profit which goes somewhere, or that there can be any necessity for exacting a direct contribution from them.

Finally, as all good is only relative, no law is good absolutely. To be a good law, it must be good in relation to the present condition and requirements of the people. Unless the law is adapted to those conditions, it is a bad law however good the law may be relatively to other conditions. How then is the particular adaptability in this instance to be predicated, and how is a full and accurate knowledge of the conditions to be acquired, unless you go to the fountain head and hear, out of their own mouths, what the people or their trusted representatives have to say for them selves? The heads of the people must be taken into consultation. Without this you do but legislate in the dark, and vainly plume yourselves upon measures which, in your conceit, you designate as calculated to effect immense good; but which the people, if you gave them the opportunity, would satisfactorily prove to you, were working for themselves and for the country incalculable harm." *The Westminster Review*, Vol. XXXVIII., p. p. 25-30.

"Where was it, we ask, ever heard except in India, of the proposals that have constantly been made in this country from the days of Lord Cornwallis, that the 19th century should legislate for the 20th, and affect the power of depriving the descendants of the present generation of *their* right to govern



themselves, and to tax the land or anything else in the way, that may seem best to them for their interests? Where the state has made ill-advised grants, or rash bargain with individuals or classes it is necessary to grant proper compensation, but to talk of laws or settlements as irrevocable, is the drivell of twaddlers only.

Men commonly speak of the Permanent Settlement of these provinces as irrevocable; but if they mean thereby anything more than that the state would have to give equitable compensation to the class or classes injured by its subversion, they ought to be put into Bedlam. 'A law' wrote the Edinburgh Reviewers some years ago is proposed to a legislative assembly, who are called upon to reject it upon the single ground, that by those who in some former period exercised the same power, a regulation was made, having for its object to preclude for ever or to the end of an unexpired period, all succeeding legislators from enacting a law to any such effect, as that now proposed. Now it appears self-evident that at every period of time, every legislature must be endowed with all the powers, which the exigency of the times may require; and any attempt to infringe on this power is inadmissible and absurd. The sovereign power at any period, can only form a blind guess at the measures, that may be necessary for any future period; but by this notion of immutable laws, the Government is transferred from those who are necessarily the best judges of what they want, to others who can know little or nothing about the matter. The thirteenth century decides for the fourteenth. The fourteenth makes laws for the fifteenth. The fifteenth hermetically seals up the sixteenth, which tyrannizes over the seventeenth, which again tells the eighteenth how it is to act under circumstances, that cannot be foreseen, and how it is to conduct itself in exigencies which no human wit can anticipate.'

'Men' says Mr. Bentham in his Book of Fallacy 'men who have a century more of experience to ground their judgments on, surrender their intellect to men who had a century less; and who unless that deficiency constitutes a claim have no claim to preference. If the prior generation were, in respect of intellectual qualifications, ever so much superior to the subsequent generation—if it understood



so much better than the subsequent generation itself the interest of that subsequent generation—could it possibly be in an equal degree anxious to promote that interest, and consequently equally attentive to those facts, with which, though in order to form a judgment it ought to have been, it is impossible that it should have been, acquainted? In a word, will its love for that subsequent generation be quite so great as that same generation's love for itself? Not even here, after a moment's reflection, will the assertion be affirmative. And yet it is their prodigious anxiety for the welfare of that posterity, that produces the propensity of these sages to tie up the hands of this same posterity for evermore, to act as guardians to its perpetual and incurable weakness, and take its conduct for ever out of its own hands.' If it be right that the conduct of the 19th century should be determined not by its own judgment, but by that of the 18th, it will be equally right, that the conduct of the 20th century should be determined not by its own judgment, but by that of the 19th. And if the same principle were still pursued, in process of time, the practice of legislation would be at an end. The conduct and fate of all men would be determined by those, who neither knew nor cared anything about the matter; and the aggregate body of the living would remain for ever in subjection to an inexorable tyranny exercised, as it were, by the aggregate body of the dead.'

The despotism of a Nero or Caligula would be more tolerable than an irrevocable law. The despot, through fear or favour, or in a lucid interval, may relent; but how is a dead Legislature to be awakened from the dust in which they repose—the jobber and the patriot, the speaker and the door-keeper, the silent voters and men of rich allusions? 'Cannings and cultivators Barrings and beggars, making irrevocable laws for men who toss their remains about with spades, and use the relics of these legislators, to give breadth to broccoli, and to aid the vernal eruption of asparagus.' An irrevocable law—a law that is to bind future generations is a self-evident absurdity. There is nothing in the Cornwallis settlement of 1792, that the legislature



of the present age is bound to respect in the least; still less is there in this recent settlement of the Central Provinces. To abrogate either, it is necessary only to grant proper compensation to the classes with whom the ill-advised settlement was made. The modifications that have been made in the Chanda and Nimar settlements should be made throughout the whole, while the memory of the wrong is still fresh in the mind of every one, and the conscience of all classes will approve what is done. Our readers would be amazed to read the Administration Reports of these Provinces in the last few years, the efforts that have been necessary to make the Malgoozar even understand the rights, that the settlement has conferred upon him; and as for regarding the settlement as irrevocable, it is the wisdom of the usual official Indian order and nothing else." *The Statesman*, November 25, 1876.

We have already said, that the first and chief means of improving the most wretched condition of the ryots is to repeal the Permanent Settlement, and to take them direct under the care and protection of the Government. To compensate the zemindars, it should set apart for ever three crores of rupees annually as pension to be distributed among them all in proportion to their present income, and appoint the worthy ones as collectors of revenue. It should also distinctly declare, that all appointments relating to the collection of land revenue shall be given to the zemindars in preference to others, provided they be found worthy. In answer to the charge, which will, no doubt, be brought forward, that the compensation is inadequate, we will say, that no Government in the world will ever be able or willing to compensate fully a very small body of landholders, (whom John Stewart Mill, the greatest authority in political economy, styles as the idle and worthless drones of society) whose annual profit most probably exceed the vast sum of fifty-six crores of rupees, to the detriment of interests of 200 millions of people; and which sum was, as it were, forced into their pockets by a settlement, which we will characterize as the grossest and most gigantic blunder ever perpetrated and maintained intact by



legislature in the whole civilized world, and in this enlightened nineteenth century. The most cogent argument in dealing with compensation to them, is, it must be remembered, that they are at present obtaining profits at the rate of from 15 to 200 per cent per annum from the money first invested by them in land, as by far the most of them purchased their estates long before. Too many of them have also purchased Government papers and other valuables solely out of the profits even after defraying the expenses of their luxury. The three crores as pension per annum to be distributed among them and fifty lakhs more from appointments will be, no doubt, five per cent. on capital first invested by them in land. But what is still more forcible, they have been allowed too long to fatten at the expense of the country as well as of the Government.

Suppose that the Government has committed a mistake, and its result is the ruin of the millions, is it consistent on its part to maintain it intact? What is the fundamental principle of the institution of Government? Is it for the luxury of the few, and for the misery of the millions? Can any man in his senses answer yes? It is most probable, nay almost certain, that the English will reign in this country for several centuries, when the comparatively weak and effeminate Mahomedans ruled it for five or six hundred years. We ask whether the Government will be able to maintain that settlement so long as they will remain here. We see, that all things created by almighty God die after a few scores of years, is it possible, that a most absurd settlement of a vain man will remain intact for ever, or for several centuries? Were the Secretaries of State for India and Viceroys and Governors General born and bred in a village of Bengal, and had seen, with their own eyes, the condition of the ryots, and been uninterested in land, they would have certainly torn it into thousand pieces long before. The Government has shewn a master-piece of non-interference in this matter; but were the zemindars in its position and the ryots in theirs, they would have repealed it seventy or seventy-five years since.