

by Grote
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STATEMENT
OF
THE QUESTION
OF
PARLIAMENTARY REFORM;
WITH
A REPLY TO THE OBJECTIONS
OF
THE EDINBURGH REVIEW, No. LXI.

Qui experiri, et se scientiis addere statuerunt, neque ipsi a receptis prorsus desciscere ausi sunt, nec fontes rerum petere. Verum se magnum quiddam consecutos putant, si aliquid ex proprio inserant et adjiciant; prudenter secum reputantes, sese in assentiendo modestiam, in adjiciendo libertatem, tueri posse. Verum dum opinionibus et moribus consultitur, mediocritates istæ laudatæ in magnum detrimentum scientiarum cedunt.

Bacon de Augm. Scient. Prefat.

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CONTENTS.

SECTION I.

	Page
GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE REFORMERS.....	5

SECTION II.

MODES OF ATTACK EMPLOYED BY THE ENEMIES OF PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.	20
1. Plan of a disinterested Ministry	21
2. Plan of a Check by Means of Public Opinion.	30
3. Plan for a Representation of Classes.....	46
4. Objections to a thorough Parliamentary Reform considered	58



THE QUESTION OF PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

THE extensive circulation of the Edinburgh Review renders it an instrument of considerable benefit or injury, according as it advocates either truth or falsehood. On political subjects, the effect of its opinions is enhanced by the influence of the great aristocratical party whose organ it has become, and from the large capital of fashion and authority which is thus superadded to its literary talent.

It is easy to account for the rooted hostility evinced by this Review to any effective Reform, when we consider how fatally such a measure would affect the interests of these auxiliary proprietors. In attempting, however, to combat their views upon this important topic, I am relieved from one *branch* of the task of a reformer, which might prove tedious in the perusal, though the documents for the purpose are unhappily copious and forcible. I need not offer any thing in proof of the character of the measures which

emanate from the legislative body, constituted as it is at present—for the Reviewers are the first to concede, and the loudest in expatiating upon, their evil tendency.

Their doctrine, which is very remarkable, is that though the system has now for a very long period continued to produce results unequivocally mischievous—its machinery is nevertheless excellent, and unsusceptible of any important amelioration. These Whig arguments are strangely at variance with those which the Tories employ against the very same proposals of Reform. For the latter admit that the Constitution is incongruous and untenable in theory, and only assert that, by the operation of some latent corrective which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, it nevertheless works well, and is in practice attended with admirable results.

In the article on Parliamentary Reform contained in the last number of this Journal, I discover but few objections to that important measure, which require a reply. For these the Reviewer refers us to his previous demonstration, which I purpose immediately to examine. He treats the cause as now laid prostrate by his victorious arm; and its partizans as mute and overpowered, though yet unconverted, heretics. On this occasion, however, he employs against it weapons rather dipped in poisonous drugs, than formidable from the sharpness of their edge. He casts upon the Reformers the obloquy of wishing to attain their ends by means of force. Though their

ends may be good (is the substance of his plea) yet they never can be pacific—because those who gain by existing abuses can never be persuaded to concur in the plans, and their opposition will inevitably occasion an appeal to force. Now I am certainly not entitled at present to assume that the plans of the Reformers are just and beneficial, which is the point hereafter to be proved. But granting for a moment, that they are so, it is most unfair to heap upon Reform the odium of those evils which may spring from the interested resistance of its enemies. If the champions of abuse employ their power in obstructing the consummation of valuable results, it is to them that every equitable spectator will impute the inconveniences of the contest. The Reviewer's doctrine condemns the human race to an absolute cessation in the career of improvement, until those who derive an illicit profit from present abuses shall of their own accord surrender these gainful privileges. To defer Reform until this period, would indeed be to copy the behaviour of the peasant, who stood waiting until the river which he was anxious to pass should be exhausted. Until public opinion attains an height and unanimity which the holder of an unjust privilege no longer dares to disregard, no person of common sense will ever hope for a voluntary sacrifice of his gains. The Reviewer indeed affects to propose the extinction of a monopoly, but requires, as an essential element in this scheme of amelioration, the perfect concurrence and good-will of the monopolist himself. Otherwise the scheme would not be pacific,

and those who should promote Reform upon other terms, would, according to his plan for peace, be guilty of aiming at bloodshed and revolution. Had we no other evidence, this single consideration would enable us to pronounce his scheme a mere nullity and delusion. I shall abstain, however, from a closer examination of the detailed plan which he has exhibited in No. 68, because I propose, in replying to the article in No. 61, to demonstrate the fallacy of its fundamental principle, the doctrine of class-representation.

Before I proceed to obviate the objections of the Reviewer, I must entreat the attention of the reader to a few general principles, which, though of unspeakable value and consequence, may yet prove somewhat tedious and uninteresting when stated in an abstract form. A concise summary of these principles is indispensably requisite before the particular applications which succeed can be distinctly comprehended; but I shall perform the task as briefly as possible. It is likewise of some importance, that an outline should be presented of the positions maintained by the Reformers, before the points which their enemies select for attack are shown to be solid and defensible. As the prejudices which obstruct an impartial discussion of this subject are also most unfortunately powerful, I am anxious to introduce these principles under the sanction of such an authority, as may serve, I hope, to neutralise the force of those associations which indirectly bear down an unpopular cause.

SECTION I.

General Principles of the Reformers.

I HAVE already prefixed to this little pamphlet a motto drawn from the pages of Lord Bacon, one of the noblest ornaments of mankind, who has left upon record a memorable protest against the general tone of erroneous thought which prevailed in his age. I select this philosopher as the chief author of the most extensive and searching Reform which the world ever beheld, and from which all other reforms may truly be affirmed to emanate. The edifice of natural science, towards which his views of guidance and amelioration were more immediately directed, has attained maturity under the hands of his followers. But what is and has been the condition of political philosophy, or of that science which professes to arrange the relations between the rulers and the governed? Let us hear the description which the Reviewer gives of all the practical applications of it upon record. "To secure the subjects " by laws against wrong from the government, is a " problem of a far more difficult sort, which few " nations have attempted to solve; and of which it " is not so much as pretended, that, since the beginning of History, more than one or two great states " have even approached the solution." (*Edin. Rev.* Dec. 1818, p. 174.)

Hence, therefore, it appears that every practical application which has yet been made of the principles of political philosophy has proved defective—signally and unquestionably defective, with the reserve of one or two, which have been, “it is pretended,” some what less unsound and exceptionable. It seems, too, that, since the beginning of history, the science has remained in a condition almost wholly stationary and unimproved. Now let us see what are those diseased symptoms which Lord Bacon points out in the sciences, as they stood in his time, and upon the existence of which he rests the necessity of his rooted and uncompromising Reform.

“ Among the symptoms (he tells us) of the bad state of the sciences, there is none more signal or unerring than the evidence of their fruits. Results are, as it were, the sponsors and sureties for the correctness of the previous principles. But, from these systems of philosophy, during so long a period of years, there has scarcely emanated a single experiment which can contribute to the relief and happiness of mankind, and which may be placed as a genuine boon to the credit of philosophy. As, therefore, religion enjoins that faith is to be proved by works; so the same rule may be properly transferred to philosophy, that systems shall be tried by their results, and that which is unproductive shall be deemed vain and unsound; and, indeed, the rather, if, instead of grapes and olives, it should produce thistles and thorns.

“ Inferences also may be drawn from the increase
 “ and progress of the sciences. Had not these
 “ doctrines been like a plant torn from its roots ; had
 “ they still adhered to the womb of nature, and de-
 “ rived nourishment from her ; the result would never
 “ have turned out as the last two thousand years
 “ have evinced : the sciences would never have
 “ remained fixed in the same spot, without any
 “ notable progress.” *Nov. Organ. Aphor. 73, 74.*

Is it possible to delineate, with greater precision, those long continued and hitherto incurable vices so justly ascribed, by the Reviewer, to every thing which has yet emanated from political philosophy ? This science presents striking evidence of that unsound constitution, which all the sciences exhibited in the time of Lord Bacon, and which led that philosopher to apply his process of decided amputation to the very bottom of their diseased parts.

The remedy of Lord Bacon consists in drawing back a perverted doctrine to the laws of human nature and experience, and restoring its connection and intimacy with this great paternal roof. His aim is to sift and verify fundamental principles, and to reconstruct the science on a better system. To apply his Reform, therefore, to political philosophy, it is necessary to inquire what experience teaches us concerning the laws of human action, since men are the subjects of the science. But the amplest observation attests that the conduct of every individual will be determined by his interest. If, therefore, we wish

to re-model political science, upon the principles of Bacon, and to restore it to its long-lost connexion with experience, we must build all its doctrines upon this infallible basis. We must discard, as spurious and inadmissible, all suppositions which presume that men will act contrary to their interests. For there is not an individual, who, in the current of private affairs, dares to lose sight of this rule of interpreting human conduct, or to act upon any other, for a single hour in his life.*

When men act conjunctly, either in larger or smaller bodies, this concurrent action must, of course, be interpreted by the same laws as individual action. Pursuant to these principles, it may be unquestionably inferred, that if one hundred persons are intrusted with the privilege of framing and executing laws for a large country; and, in consequence of making demands upon the wealth and services of its inhabitants; they will push these drafts to an extent as great as the people of the country are willing to permit. The smallness of their number, and the magnitude of the benefit to be divided among them,

* I am aware that Lord Bacon himself shrunk from the application of his own Reforming principles to civil or political matters. But that which the modern world values and reveres is the spirit of these principles, not the mode in which he applied them. No one now cites his physical experiments. I have endeavoured to show that political science exhibits those characters which, when detected in the other sciences, appeared to him to call so loudly for Reform. Consequently, if he refuses to treat the same disease with the same remedy, it is he who deviates from his own path.

will render the share, which each individual can appropriate by this mode of conduct, more valuable than that which he could derive from sharing with all the community in the advantages of a cheap government. We may therefore predict, that they will combine in taxing the people to the utmost limit which they imagine to be secure, with as much confidence as we might assume that a company of 100 merchants, possessed of the monopoly of bread, would raise the price of that article as high as could be effected without driving the consumers to the use of some other commodity.

The only mode therefore in which political science can produce results of genuine value and utility, is by suggesting expedients for constructing a ruling company on such a scale, that each of its members, or at least the majority, shall derive as little benefit as possible from misgovernment.

For this purpose two conditions are indispensably necessary.

First, The numbers of the company must be very considerable, in order to render the share of each individual proportionally low.

Secondly, The relative situation of the members must be so arranged, that if they should combine for sinister purposes, the benefits of misrule may be distributed among them in a ratio approaching as nearly as possible to equality; because by such means, the share accruing from this source to each individual, taken one with another, will become a minimum.

The first of these precautions, without the second, will be wholly insufficient and nugatory. For though the governing company should be co-extensive in number with the community, yet if any small detachment of it should possess such a power of inflicting evil, or withholding good, as will compel the remainder to concur in promoting misrule, though obtaining but a slender portion of its benefits for themselves, and leaving an overwhelming remnant for the dominant few—the majority of the company would, even upon this enlarged scale, draw decided profit from a bad administration. Had an open suffrage been bestowed upon every slave in Athens, this immense accession of numbers would have infused no improvement of interest into the governing company. The masters would have compelled their slaves to be satisfied with little or no part of the benefits of misrule, and would consequently have reserved nearly the whole for themselves—though the slaves would still have found it their interest to concur in the views of their masters. Inequality of external situation therefore, if permitted to operate, will produce a distribution of the benefits of misrule so vicious and disproportionate, as to counteract the effect of any augmentation in the numbers of the governing body. Political science therefore ought to prevent such an inequality from influencing the measures of this body, and to distribute among them the advantages which might accrue from misgovernment with all attainable equality.

It should be remarked, that any large number is, from its nature, wholly unfit for that exertion of deliberative power, which the enactment of laws demands. There arises therefore an inevitable necessity of splitting the ruling company into two separate branches—one consisting of periodical electors, the other of elected legislators. An enlarged numerical qualification can be attained only in the class of electors. But this precaution will, as I have before explained, become nugatory, unless the suffrage of each individual member is emancipated from all controul. This can only be effected by a system of secret delivery. A very large number of secret voters will alone constitute an Elective Body so framed, as to draw greater benefit from good than from bad administration.

But unless both the majority of Electors, and the majority of Legislators, are each thus favourably interested, the laws of human nature forbid us to expect a beneficial system. Now, from the limited number of the Elected class and the superior importance of its functions, a Legislative share in the privileges of government is necessarily more valuable than an Electoral share. The two will, however, approximate, or recede in worth, in proportion to the frequent or unfrequent recurrence of the Elective Process. But in order to ensure in the ruling company the least possible disposition to misrule, an equal distribution of its benefits among all the members has been shewn to be essential. Consequently the share

of a Legislator, and the share of an Elector, must as nearly as possible be reduced to a par. This reduction is to be accomplished by rendering the time for which the deputy is elected as short as possible, consistent with the exercise of his deliberative functions.

If then the principles of Lord Bacon and of experience are to be our guides, and if, consequently, we cannot expect that men will govern well when they receive a premium for governing ill—a beneficial result can be attained only by constructing a ruling company composed of two separate bodies. Of these, the one must be Electoral, very extended in number, and each man's vote rendered thoroughly independent by means of a secret suffrage. The other, Legislative, dissolved and re-elected as frequently as its functions permit.

Those who extol the British Constitution appear to ground their panegyrics upon the principles above laid down. If the governing company, they tell us, were composed of King and Peers alone, the most oppressive and extortionate system would be pursued to the extreme injury of the people. The number of rulers would then be so limited, that each individual would derive greater benefit from bad than from good administration. As a remedy to this defect, they notice the extension of number resulting from the incorporation of an electoral body and an elected assembly, into the ruling company. But whether this addition proves an effective remedy or not, will depend upon the constitution of the two newly incor-

porated bodies*. If the House of Commons consisted of ten members, chosen by twenty electors, no one would maintain that such a government by King, Peers, and Commons, was at all better than a government by King and Peers alone. Unless therefore the body of electors, and of elected Legislators, are so constituted, that the majority of each derive greater benefit from good government than from bad—every objection, which can be urged against a system of rule by King and Peers, may be shewn to apply with unimpaired force to a system by King, Lords, and Commons. Such an increase of number, without any conversion of interest, would no more alter the character of the government, than an augmentation of partners in the monopoly, from 100 to 1000, would diminish the price of bread.

In applying these general doctrines, therefore, to the present situation of England, the leading object is to ascertain whether this conversion of interest really has been effected in the ruling company; or

* Among the obstacles which Lord Bacon enumerates as retarding the progress of truth, the following is one of the most memorable—"Atque hominum admiratione quoad doctrinas et artes, per se satis simplici et propè puerili, incrementum accersit ab eorum astu et artificio, qui scientias tractaverunt et tradiderunt. Illi enim eâ ambitione et affectatione eas proponunt, atque in eum modum efformatas, ac veluti personatas, in hominum conspectum producunt, ac si illæ omni ex parte perfectæ essent, et ad exitum perductæ. Atque licet membra illa male impleta, et veluti capsulæ inanes sunt; tamen apud intellectum vulgarem scientiæ formam et rationem integræ præ se ferunt."—*Nov. Organ. Aphor.* 86.

whether the government is better now than it would be if carried on by King and Peers alone. Now if the slightest credit is due to the incessant and flaming proclamations of the Whigs, the inference is irresistible, that the majority of the ruling company, as at present constituted, draw a decided benefit from misgovernment. England has continued with hardly an interval, since the beginning of the late reign, to resound with the Whig philippics against the proceedings of this majority. Year after year these indefatigable watch-dogs loudly denounce to their injured flock the flagrant and notorious abuses under which they are groaning—the monstrous and unpardonable exactions to which wasteful and pernicious enterprises afford continual pretext, and the utter disregard with which all complaints and projects for redress are treated. Now if but one half of these statements be correct, is it credible that the majority of the governing company can be so framed as to possess a dominant interest in good and cheap administration? Have they really been so long pursuing this noxious and extortionate system to their own decided and personal loss?

The same faithful and invaluable Reporters, to whom we owe the communication of these tremendous grievances, do indeed drag forth to our view certain criminals, on whom they would persuade us that the full vial of our indignation ought to be poured. They select for this purpose a detachment of the governing class, called the ministry. But to affirm,

that such incalculable abuses arise from a bad ministry, is to aggravate the imperfection of the system, and to impart additional weight to those arguments on which the necessity of amelioration is founded. The ministry, to whose sinister views they ascribe these enormities, form but a portion of the ruling company. Do the interests of the rest of this company point in the same way with the ministry, or with the people? In other words, are the remaining portions of the governing body unable, or unwilling, to prevent the ministry from pursuing so pernicious a course? If they are unwilling, then the whole of this body has an interest in bad government? If they are unable, then the ministry, who are allowed to have such a sinister interest, are likewise allowed to be the dominant portion of the body. In either case, the existence of notorious abuses can only be referred to a vicious constitution of the ruling company, by which either the whole, or the preponderant section, of it, enjoys a decided benefit from acting in a way hostile to the public good.

But although the nature of this predominant interest might be inferred, with irresistible force, from the wretched results which the Whig declarations attest, yet the subject is fortunately reducible to direct evidence and arithmetical measurement. In 1793, Earl Grey presented to Parliament a petition, in which it was asserted, and evidence was tendered at the Bar of the House, that a majority of the Commons was returned by 71 Peers and 91 Commoners.

Since the Petitioners merely requested an opportunity of establishing the correctness of their allegation, and since their demand was rejected, the fact may be regarded as resting upon evidence as convincing as the nature of the case admits. Besides this, it is in a great measure verified by the authority of the Noble Lord, through whose hands the Petition was transmitted, and such a sanction is in itself sufficient to silence all question as to its credibility. I merely avail myself of his Lordship's name as a powerful certificate of the fact, for I am aware that he has seen cause since that period to dismiss the inferences with which it was then coupled in his mind. Now no very remarkable change in the constitution of the governing body has taken place between 1793 and 1821. Reasoning, therefore, upon the statement as equally applicable to the present time, we may securely affirm, that as the governing company in England consists of King, Peers, and a House of Commons, thus returned, each individual of this very limited number might, if disposed, derive an ampler gain from the imposition of unnecessary taxes, and the share which would devolve to him in the produce, than he could hope to obtain as a partner with all the people of England in the blessings of a cheap administration. The same objection, therefore, may be urged against our present system, as the panegyrists of the Constitution affirm to be conclusive against a government by King and Peers alone.

From this latter fact, resting upon Whig autho-

riety, a body of proof may be collected in favour of Parliamentary Reform, placing the necessity of the measure on grounds the most triumphant and unassailable which can possibly be conceived. The blackest tyranny that ever overshadowed mankind cannot be arraigned on evidence more decisive than the Whig statements present. First, they inform us that the measures pursued are most abominable and injurious to the public happiness; Secondly, they describe the frame of the governing body as such, that if each member chose to follow his obvious interest, the abuses just named must inevitably result. No one who admits these two facts, can deny the connection between them. Political phenomena do not admit of more complete proof of filiation. The Whigs frequently reprobate, in terms of well-merited censure, the abuses which stain the Continental despotisms. They ascribe these pernicious measures to the mal-formation and sinister interest of the ruling company in those countries. But all that can be proved is the co-existence of the two facts on the Continent, and the same co-existence is admitted by the Whigs in England. Nor can we ever be better authorised to consider an extravagant price of bread, in a country where that article is subjected to a monopoly, as originating in the private interests of the privileged dealers.

Such then being the sole assignable origin of those abuses which the Whigs denounce, the nature of the remedy demanded is of course obvious. It is to strip

the governing company of that premium which they at present receive for promoting misrule. It is to alter the constitution both of the legislative and electoral bodies, upon such principles as to hold out, to the majority of each, a decided and preponderant benefit from the pursuit of good government.

To secure an electoral body thus qualified, two conditions have been pointed out as essential—an extended number, and a secret suffrage. With regard to the number indispensably required, it is not necessary to assign a precise and definite limit. It must be a number so large as to be incapable of having an interest different from the community. It need not be co-extensive with the community, because an aliquot part of the whole, possessing this requisite, may unquestionably be found. However the advocates of Reform may repel, as visionary and chimerical, all those disastrous consequences which are imputed to universal suffrage, yet they do not urge the absolute necessity of such a system, because a majority of the population will unquestionably be sufficient for all the purposes of good government.

Secret suffrage, however, they do maintain to be a vital and primary requisite.

The distribution of property in England is highly unfavourable to the numerous classes. Capital augments but slowly, and consequently all the competition is on the side of the labourers and small capitalists, contending with each other for the private custom and support of the wealthy. Besides this, an

enormous proportion of the annual produce is distributed in the form of rent to a class of landlords, whose numbers are narrowed, while their fortunes are transmitted in large masses, by the tendency of the laws of succession. All these circumstances conspire to plunge the bulk of the community into a state of extreme dependance upon a comparatively small number of powerful individuals. If, therefore, this inequality is permitted to affect the exercise of the elective franchise, it will impart to the few a controul, over the votes of the many, so paramount and irresistible, as to render the enlargement of the electoral body merely nominal and delusive. All such interference must therefore be excluded.

To provide a Legislative body equally well qualified, it is requisite to diminish the value of their share in the governing company as nearly as possible to the level of the Electoral shares, in order to counteract the tendency arising from that limitation of number which deliberative functions require. The closest approximation of interest and spirit between the electors and the elected will be accomplished by the most frequent recurrence of the elective process. Re-elections, therefore, should take place as often as possible, consistent with the exercise of deliberative functions.

SECTION II.

*Modes of Attack employed by the Enemies of
Parliamentary Reform.*

THE chain of positions which the Reformers maintain is open to two different modes of attack. An equivalent benefit, it may be said, is to be procured in other ways; or the means proposed are fatal in their tendency, and calculated to produce a destructive result, instead of leading to the happy termination for which they were intended.

Under the first mode of attack we discover three different arguments.

1. Though your ruling class should be so constructed, that the majority of its members can derive greater benefit from bad than from good government, yet it is possible to find a ministry, who, though possessing the ability of promoting their own interest at the expence of the public, will yet act against their own interest, and will create in the rest of the governing body a bias favourable to the general good.

2. Whatever sinister interest there may exist in this body, public opinion will still form a sufficient corrective to it.

3. If the members of this body be properly selected out of certain different classes of the community, the interest which the majority of them would otherwise possess in bad government, will be remedied, and the tendency of the system will be favourable to the public happiness.

These are the three modes in which those, who reject as unnecessary that unison of interest, between the rulers and the community, which the Reformers aim at, propose to obtain an equivalent. It cannot, I think, be asserted that they are delivered in a partial and unfair manner. For it is undeniable, that the ruling class must derive greater benefit, either from governing well, or from governing ill. To implant in them a decided interest in governing well, is the aim of the Reformers. All objections, therefore, to Reform, as not required, must of course preserve to them a predominant interest in misrule. I am then justified in incorporating, as an essential element in the three opposing schemes just enumerated, a discordance of interest between the rulers and the community.

The second mode of attacking the Reformers is by arraiguing the means which they propose, an ample and secret suffrage, together with annual Parliaments, as pernicious and impracticable.

I shall first examine the three several schemes, by which it is affirmed that the necessity for a Reform would be superseded, in the order in which I have stated them.

1. *Plan of a disinterested Ministry.*

“Introduce the Whigs into the administration,” it is said, “instead of the Tories, and the former will not pursue their own interest, as the latter have done. The Whigs will reject the larger mass of

“benefit which they might easily derive from mis-
“government, and will content themselves with that
“which they will obtain from a participation with
“all the people in the advantages of a cheap system.”

Upon what do these splendid pretensions rest? Where are the credentials which authenticate this magnificent interruption of the course of Nature? By what miracles have the Whigs vindicated their title to a confidence of which our Constitution has pronounced King, Peers, and Commons, unworthy? All these three branches would, we are told, infallibly abuse their trust, if the Parliament were invested with any thing beyond a short-lived septennial power. When, therefore, we are desired to repose in the Whig members of Parliament, considered as ministers, a confidence which the Constitution withholds from them as component parts of the Legislative Assembly, we demand, at least, some powerful reason to authorise such an apparent incongruity of judgment. Yet when the record of evidence is unfolded, nothing is found inscribed except the speeches and promises of the Whigs themselves.

Now whether the Whigs really merit that degree of implicit faith which we are at present considering, may certainly be matter of doubt. But thus much I think it is impossible to doubt, that the evidence here produced is wholly insufficient to demonstrate their title to it, and that he who concedes its validity must ground his reliance on certain independent and esoteric knowledge, in which the public do not par-

take. The track of lofty and flattering promise has long been known as conducting to power, and many, too many, are the knaves who walk therein. Painful and often repeated experience has at last taught mankind, in these ancient days of the world, to appreciate duly the worth of a flaming prospectus. Moralists have noticed with becoming indignation the mischievous and encouraging smile with which Jupiter regards the infringement of lovers' vows; But they might with equal justice have extended their censure wider, so as to include the promises of expectants in general. For assuredly, if we remark the licence and impunity with which these drafts upon the future are dishonoured, the Father of gods and men must contemplate all such violations of faith with an eye equally serene and impassive. And until he shall think fit to send forth his thunders, and clear the world from those deceitful hopes with which pretenders unceasingly deluge it, I fear that we must disallow the claim which the best and wisest among us urge to the possession of power, when our only security against its abuse lies in the solemnity of a promise.

But farther, when we hear that there exist citizens among us, who may securely be entrusted with an extensive licence of inflicting evil, we naturally enquire whether, in the analogy of common life, their claim to such a pre-eminence is recognised. For such persons, of course, crime can have no attractions, and laws are needless and inoperative. Does then

our penal code except the Whigs from its sanctions? Is it presumed that these gentlemen are exempt from human peccability, and that no conceivable temptations of interest can induce them to violate the rights of others? We discover no public acknowledgment of these lofty attributes. The law is sweeping and indiscriminate in its threats, and deems it hazardous to withdraw from Lords Grey and Holland even the punishment for theft, murder, and perjury.

Though I think it manifest, that the *onus probandi* cannot be imposed upon me, but upon those who so glaringly overrule, in this particular case, the ordinary measure of human excellence—yet I am prepared to draw the chain of proof, on my own side, one degree closer. When we are required to confide to a man the power of inflicting evil—when of course, to the abuse of this power, there is but this one condition necessary, that he should prefer his own interest to that of the public—any testimony evincing that such a preference is interwoven with his character must determine us to an instant and positive rejection of the claim. But the mere acceptance of a reward attests the reality of this, as completely as the transfer of a fee to the physician proves that he sets a higher value on his own increase of wealth than on that of his patient. Do then the salaries of the Administration of 1806 still remain untouched in the Exchequer? If they do not, then this fact discloses undeniable indications that the Whigs pre-

fer their own interest to that of the public, and affords satisfactory reason for excluding them from a power, which that single preference would infallibly determine them to abuse. This one circumstance places them on the level of ordinary life, and lops off irretrievably all their pretensions to superhuman merit.

Be it carefully remembered, that nothing which has been here urged is designed to operate as a censure upon the Whigs. The line of my argument has simply obliged me to canvass and strike out their claim to a degree of power which I would equally withhold from all other candidates, however highly I might prize their virtues. But if we expand and sum up the catalogue of their demands, it will really appear so ample and unsparing, as to warrant some degree of hesitation even on the part of the most compliant tempers. For were they to claim an immunity from every single penal act or sanction by which crime is prohibited in England—were they to request that the arm of the law should no longer be interposed, to prevent them from robbing or murdering the rest of the community at pleasure—the boon would be trifling, in comparison of that to which they now advance their pretensions. Let us compare the two, and observe which of them presents the most formidable array of future possibilities. If there existed no law to deter them from crime, we could at least form voluntary associations among ourselves, by which we could partially restrain their

inroads upon our happiness. The current of public opinion would set against them with unbroken force. They would be marked out as the licensed company of thieves in the country, and maledictions would assail them from every mouth. All these circumstances would wonderfully contribute to supply that defect which the shortened arm of the law had created. But the real claim which they urge comprehends a far wider range, and perfect emancipation from all those shackles which a mere private licence to rob and murder would never have permitted them to escape. To prove this it is only requisite to exhibit a summary of that guilt, which for a series of years they have charged upon the present Ministry. “*Ab actu ad potentiam valet consequentia.*” To adopt their own valuation of the power which the Tories enjoy, and to which they aspire, it is a power of extracting from the resources of the people immense annual contributions, to be squandered in enriching their own dependants, and in creating influence for themselves, without the smallest view to the advantage of the nation. Besides this, it is a power of sufficient strength to produce an interested current of opinion in its own favour, to defy the public sentiments, and to set at naught all voluntary associations against it. This is the course which they represent the present Ministry to have pursued for a series of years. Now, if this be correct, it is manifest that no exemption from the prohibitory terrors of English private law, could lay at their feet a spoil so secure

and alluring, and, at the same time, so compatible with an untarnished fame, as the posts to which they are thus anxious to be exalted. Can we therefore venture to place in their hands the greater of two powers, or subject them to the greater of two temptations, when they themselves would not dream of whispering their pretensions to the less?

* We have lately witnessed a meeting and association of several commercial gentlemen in this city, for the purpose of petitioning Parliament to terminate the exclusive privileges of the West India Dock Company. Now this assembly will probably frame a petition, pointing out, in strong language, the injury sustained, by many of the river-traders, from the absence of free competition—stating the exorbitant charges and inattention of the Company; and collecting particular facts calculated to maintain these accusations. But should they think fit to conclude by any such prayer as the following: “And your Petitioners, having thus exhibited the injurious use which the present Directors and Proprietors have made of the privileges bestowed upon them, humbly beg that the said privileges may be transferred to themselves, solemnly assuring your Honourable House that they will not conduct themselves in a manner so unfavourable to the Public”—with what feelings would Parliament and the nation treat the request? Would they regard it as any thing better than a design of transferring, from one set of individuals to another, the ease and profit of the monopoly?

Would the engagements of the expectants appear to them any security for the future? On the contrary, would they not intuitively perceive, that no one would demand a prohibition of all rivalry, and an unrestricted power of taxing the sugar-consumers to a large extent, unless with the design of enriching himself at the expence of that body?

But these gentlemen (to judge, at least, by the Resolutions they have promulgated) pursue a different course, and present a memorable picture of the genuine march and spirit of an effectual reform. They have a deep stake in the matter, and therefore fathom and discriminate, with the utmost precision, the real obstacles to be surmounted. Accordingly, they do not commence a personal altercation with the Directors of the Company, and brand them as demons, for merely setting a higher value on their own interest than on that of others, in a case where power has been lodged in their hands. They know well, that it is impossible to find a set of Directors, who will disregard the obvious interest which they possess in elevating the price of their wharfage and warehouses; and that, even if, by any accident, such a set could be found, their efforts would be impotent, since the larger body of Proprietors, whose shares would be depreciated by such conduct, would unanimously revolt and expel them. They are aware that it is the dominant motive which requires to be altered, not the tenement of clay which it directs, and they devote their whole attention to the accom-

plishment of this point. An unfettered trade, therefore, which, by changing the relative situation of the Company, will render it their interest to furnish cheap and good accommodations, is the single aim for which they contend.

I have traced, at some length, a map of the route which this association has pursued, because every attempt to eradicate an abuse ought to borrow the theory and principle of their proceedings. It has likewise been my wish to point out those illusory and unprofitable by-paths, which they have most judiciously chosen to neglect. One of these by-paths it is, the eligibility of which we have been just considering. Were we to inquire of any member of this association, whether, if Parliament should remove the West India Dock Directors, and place any others whatever in their room, he would deem it a remedy equally efficient with the removal of the Company's privileges; the question would scarcely meet with a grave reply. The very supposition, that a set of appropriate Directors could be found, would appear to him visionary and chimerical. But if it be an absurd endeavour to seek for men who will make a disinterested use of these very inconsiderable privileges, by what epithets shall we characterise any plan of amelioration, which demands, as a primary ingredient, the discovery of persons who can wholly forget their own interest, when vested with the immense powers of an English Ministry?*

* Though it is but remotely connected with the present discussion, perhaps I may be allowed to remark that this Associa-

2. *Plan of a Check by means of Public Opinion.*

The next mode of argument, which is directed against the necessity of such a reform, as shall ensure, in the majority of the ruling class, a decided interest to govern well, is now to be examined. "However ample may be the benefit (we hear) which this majority might draw from misgovernment, yet public opinion will act as an effectual check upon

tion affords an example by which the doctrine of the Whigs, respecting *party*, may be elucidated. *Party*, they say, is a good thing. That, however, depends upon the purpose which the party propose by their alliance. *Party* is itself only a means of enhancing, by discipline and concert, the powers of a given number, and is good or bad, according to the end which this number have in view. Thus, when this Association combines for the suppression of the Dock privileges, party is highly valuable; But had it extended its views to the acquisition of similar privileges for itself or others, the very same party would then have become injurious. Burke observes, most justly, "When bad men combine, the good must associate;" But that necessity of union among the latter, to which the combinations of the former had given birth, expires when those combinations are defeated. Whatever ulterior project the defeating corps may contemplate, must be vindicated on its own ground. When the Whigs justify their own union and subordination by pointing to the same qualities among the soldiers of Government, the plea is valid, so far as it extends. While the Government is constituted as it is now, a party to oppose it in the Parliament is an excellent thing; but, when that party enlarges its views farther, and claims for itself the same unrestricted licence of doing evil, it may then be pronounced unequivocally noxious. The sophism lies in justifying a party by one of its objects, and then extending the justification to all the objects which it may ever propose.

“ their proceedings, and will prevent them from complying with this powerful stimulus.”

Let us concede for the present in its utmost latitude the position which this scheme involves. Let us suppose that public opinion is successful in averting the infliction of that evil, and defeating that unnecessary enhancement of the public expenditure, which such an administration, if left to their own guidance, would unquestionably introduce. Yet I think it manifest, that this cannot be considered as an equivalent to that decided interest in good government, which it is the aim of the Reformers to infuse into the Administration. The richest harvest which we could hope to reap from the former scheme, would be to render the government an inert and negative power.* The perfection of a check is to prevent advance, but it can never impel. The sharpest bit can only prevent your horse from carrying you in a wrong direction. If you would avail yourself of his speed to reach your object, you must turn his head round and give him the spur. Should you be unprovided with the means of turning him round, you must struggle towards your goal, not only unassisted, but even encumbered by dragging backwards the perverse and restive animal who might have been your auxiliary. The scheme of the Re-

* It could under these circumstances lay claim to nothing higher than the following compliment: “ *To be merely useless,*” says Adam Smith, “ is the highest eulogy which can ever be bestowed upon a regulated company.” *Wealth of Nations*, vol. iii. 113.

formers alone can impart to the governing body this salutary direction, and supply the stimulus which will provoke, on their part, a voluntary and energetic career. The highest aim of other schemes is to prepare a specific by which the evil tendency of this institution may be neutralised. But a genuine Reform would at once determine the gigantic influence of the ruling class to an active and unremitting promotion of the public happiness. And this enormous amount, could we compute it, would express the difference of value between the two projects which I have now been comparing.

For it is self-evident, that howsoever efficacious public opinion might be in preventing accession to the taxes, its loudest remonstrances could never infuse into the Government a zeal for their reduction. Though a member of this class should possess a secret whereby one half of the taxes might be saved, we may be pretty confident that he would never divulge it, and that if he did, the other members of the Government would employ their utmost skill to stifle and discourage it. No one ever expects that the talents of Lord Grenville will be devoted to mature a plan for superseding the Auditorship of the Exchequer. But this system not only strips the governing class, which usually comprehends the finest intellects in the country, of the most signal incentive to benefit their fellow-citizens. It animates them with a disastrous interest in retarding the progress of knowledge, and in fomenting and aggravating every

species of error which may relax the strictness of the popular watch. Such a government will continually endeavour to alarm the people into unnecessary wars—to create in their minds a childish pride in national waste—and to slip in an useless squad of supernumerary dependents amongst the truly valuable servants of the nation. Though therefore public opinion, when considered as a force, be wholly irresistible; yet will it never be misled or disunited by official pretence or stratagem? Will none of those delusive and intoxicating associations, which the interest of the Government sets afloat, mingle themselves, unperceived, with the sentiments of the people, and pervert or deaden the expression of that single check on which we are to rely?

It appears then, that the system now under examination involves two incurable defects, which the scheme of the Reformers would effectually remove. First, though the Government may be prevented from doing evil, yet they can never be impressed with an equal ardour in the performance of good. Secondly, though the check should be completely paramount, and should meet with no direct resistance in enforcing submission on the Government; yet the interested reaction of that body would disseminate such poisonous matter, that the popular sentiment would probably become highly distempered; and consequently the coercion exercised by it would sink into comparative languor, and would overlook many transactions extremely noxious to the public.

But is it in truth a point so manifest and undeniable, that popular opinion ever could exercise a restraint so effectual as that which has been conceded? Do we not overrate its efficacy, when we imagine it capable of defeating one half of those noxious projects, which the sinister interest of the Administration will continually originate?

If we inspect the machinery of the social system in other cases, we find the value assigned to this check, far less considerable. The universal necessity and construction of laws unequivocally attest the comparative impotence of that bridle which they are destined to reinforce. From the nature of this sanction, it must have been of course the first to arise, in the origin of the political union. Yet we see that the most cursory survey of experience detects its incompetency, and no sooner does the art of writing become known, than every society keenly proclaims its unsheltered condition, and calls upon the Legislator to interpose at every point a cruel array of prohibitory terrors. Unless we are prepared to discard the penal code as an useless scroll, the consequence is inevitable, that there is no one crime from which we should be sufficiently guaranteed by the avenging murmurs and by the uplifted arm of the public. Indeed it is not requisite to call in this inference, for it is a melancholy fact, that even the co-operating force of the popular and legal sanctions can only thin the ranks of malefactors, without terminating even those practices which are the most injurious to society. It is

needless, therefore, to dwell on the insecurity of abolishing the latter, and of entrusting the prevention of crime to the unassisted energy of the former. Yet if the incompetency of public opinion to repress private crime be thus unanswerably attested, we cannot doubt that it would be far less adapted to the maintenance of a vigilant censorship on the proceedings of an evil-intentioned Government. For assuredly the magnitude and difficulty of the latter function outweighs that of the former in a ratio almost incalculable. As a preventive of private enormities, public opinion would act with the greatest possible advantage. First, there are no corrupt associations of power to distort our sentiments, when we hear of a rape or a murder. No one entertains any anticipations of profit, however dim or distant, from connivance, which can chill his horror of the act. Secondly, the general sympathy is kindled to the highest possible intensity by the concentration of the suffering, which consists of an amazing injury inflicted upon one or on a few individuals. Thirdly, the act is perfectly distinct and conspicuous. It is not innocence passing into guilt by an imperceptible growth and gradation. The character of the deed is flagrant, and defies all possibility of mistake. Fourthly, the criminal is a single and marked man, or at least one of a few. He can neither elude punishment amidst an herd, nor call to his assistance a numerous band united by mutual fear. A very small circle, therefore, of the neighbourhood will be suffi-

cient to secure and punish him. Fifthly, there is another natural check, which must be inevitably an active ally of public opinion on these occasions—the resistance of the injured individual, and of those immediately connected with him.

Now mark the enormous deductions which must be made, on all these five counts, from the efficacy of this check, when it is intended to subdue the sinister interest prevalent in a government.

First, the page of history, and the general tone of conversation, decidedly evince the indulgence and even admiration, with which we view robbery and murder when perpetrated on a grand scale; how entirely our feelings abandon the injustice of a war, and the accumulated death and desolation which accompanies it, to partake in the triumph of the general, and to extol the terrific power by which the result has been accomplished. When, therefore, the majesty of power can veil from our eyes the real character of its most flagrant enormities, we cannot wonder that it should completely whitewash all the more insignificant minutiae of oppression. We might anticipate the gentle and reluctant diapproval by which the creation of useless places, the promotion of improper agents, and the enhancement of unnecessary burthens, would be marked. Again, there are numbers into whose bosoms the still small voice of expectation will insinuate its predictions, and suggest the prospect that they, or their friends, or their connexions, may one day draw the prize. At any rate,

no one knows what may happen, and it is unwise to talk despitely of the man in power.

Secondly, The wrongs of a Government, which conducts its measures with any degree of policy, are, from their nature, such as stimulate our sympathies most feebly. It does not inflict any grievous injury upon a single individual. Its extortions impose but a trifling privation on each member of the community; and, though the amount of wrong may be enormous, when this petty privation is multiplied into the numerous assemblage on whom it falls, yet this is a circumstance which does not submit itself to our view, and kindle our sensibilities, but seems to belong rather to the province of cool subsequent reflection. Our feelings are dissipated and crumbled away amidst so scattered a multitude, nor can we stop to compute the immensity of a sum total which has been craftily subdivided into units.

Thirdly, The acts, which public opinion will be called upon to mark, are, in the highest degree, difficult of detection. How can it keep steadily in view the nice and ever-varying boundary between necessary and unnecessary taxation?—How unravel the subtle pretexts, with which the Government will continually preface their factitious demands?—How seize on the precise instant, when a once useful placeman is no longer required? Nor should we forget that, in order to constitute a perfect coercive, it should likewise be able to review the negative acts of the Government. But how shall it hunt out all the cases

in which unpatronised merit has been rejected or dismissed?

Fourthly, Public opinion is, in this case, introduced to act upon a number of individuals, forming the most opulent, powerful, and best instructed class of the community. Their number greatly extenuates the responsibility of each, and lessens the dread both of censure and resistance. Their mutual interest creates and circulates among them a train of peculiar feeling, and a perverted language of praise and blame, which becomes the standard of their conduct, and renders them insensible to the reproach of others, at least until it swells into the loudest pitch. To prove in any degree effectual, a languid disapprobation, on the part of the public, will be very insufficient. The feeling must be kindled into animosity and menace, and England must be stimulated into a clamorous effervescence, from the Thames to the Tay. During this time, the partisans of Government intersect the popular sentiment in all direction: They perplex and disturb its unison, and counterwork its effect on the timid and indifferent, by impeaching the designs of their adversaries, and by setting up, on their own side, a still louder cry of impiety and rebellion. If reduced to yield, they frequently find means, by adroit and well-timed concessions, to effect a compromise, and to retain, at least, a part of the disputed ground. The popular opinion, too, can never be long maintained at this lofty pitch, but will gradually dwindle away, or fasten upon some new

occurrence. So that the Government cannot fail to perceive that, if they hold out for a limited period, the threats of the public, far from realising themselves in any act of forcible opposition, will quickly expend their momentary fury, and lose themselves in that tranquil interest which the ordinary transactions of the State inspire. It is important to remark, too, that, should public opinion be ever so effectual in counteracting the pernicious measures of Government, it yet inflicts no positive punishment, and therefore impresses, upon the defeated party, no motive to abstain from similar endeavours in future.

Fifthly, The abuses introduced by a bad Government seldom press very signally upon any one individual, or upon any small knot of persons. Consequently, the nature of the wrong is not such as to designate and draw forth of itself any leader, to whose zeal and devotion in the cause, volunteer assistants would confidently look up. Public opinion, therefore, must organize itself in desultory detachments, and is stripped of that invincible ardour and inspiration, which the guidance of a person keenly smitten and aggrieved would have communicated to it.

If it be urged, that the reason for framing laws, annexing due measures of sanction is, because the injured person would inflict excessive punishment upon his enemy; I reply, that an incensed people, when a successful insurrection has placed their oppressors on the ground, cannot be expected to impose any stricter rein upon their resentment. In the

latter case, too, there is an overwhelming volume of misery attached to the mere execution of the punishment, which puts in the shade the comparatively trifling evil of a private conflict.

From these considerations, I think it undeniable, that were we to rely simply on the public censure and resistance, for the suppression of individual crime, we should commit to them a task incomparably less arduous and delicate than the repression of those evils towards which a bad Government is continually tending. Yet no one is found to maintain the competency of public opinion, even for this inferior function. It would then be still more insecure to entrust to it another species of controul, where, while its own energies are unstrung and mutilated, those of the opposing force are enhanced by the most favourable circumstances with which they can possibly be allied.

Farther, We have the amplest testimony, which it is possible for experience to afford, upon this question; for the check of public opinion springs up spontaneously, and exists, by its very nature, in every quarter of the globe. We can, therefore, by the inspection of these repeated and long-continued trials, ascertain whether it has, in fact, proved a successful corrective of an evil-intentioned government. Yet, when we unrol the great map of mankind, how striking and irresistible are the proofs of its incompetency! Throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa, we find the ruling functions universally intrusted to a number so confined, as to render misgovernment the

most profitable and enticing path which they can pursue. Yet is it possible to cite a single case, in which the coercion of the popular voice and arm has proved efficacious in subduing this tendency? Can we discover any instance in which it has restricted the Government to that simple backwardness and inactivity towards good, which is inseparably interwoven with its character? On the contrary, will not the result of our inquiry attest, that in spite of this check, all these bodies, some by open terror, others by crafty nibbling, and a series of masked and undistinguishable inroads, have found means to realise those injurious designs towards which a sinister interest beckons them?

That public opinion is an insufficient check upon the present governing class in England, we are informed by the most satisfactory evidence. The Whig members of Parliament expatiate constantly in their speeches upon that entire defiance of the popular sentiments which Ministerial proceedings manifest—upon the extinction of all confidence between the nation and the Parliament—and upon the complete discordance between the opinions prevalent within and without the walls of that House. The Ministers, on the other hand, meet these assertions, by confessing, that though the many are against them, yet the sound, the rational part of the community, those who alone are *known to the Constitution*, are in their favour, and that the rest will quickly come to their senses. “Quand un François et un Anglois

“ pensent de même, il faut bien qu'ils aient raison.”

We are entitled therefore to assert, upon the strongest testimony of which the fact admits, that popular opinion cannot be looked to, in the particular case of England, as an effectual coercive of the ruling class, should the construction of that class be such as to render injurious designs lucrative and alluring to the majority of it.

There are others, however, who deny this discordance between the public sentiments and the measures of the Government, and who maintain that abuses exist in the system solely because public opinion mistakes them for valuable parts of it, and therefore does not pronounce that vehement and unanimous vote of exclusion upon them, which never fails, they say, to prove triumphant. This, however, is only a recognition, in other terms, of the feeble check which the popular voice imposes upon the pernicious views of any evil-intentioned Government. For, assuredly, if knowledge is power, ignorance is impotence. The people, it is said, are unable to tear aside the veil by which misgovernment is concealed: They cannot disentangle those delusive pretexts by which useless exactions are masked, from the genuine services which rigorously demand a contribution from their purse. But this surely constitutes the most powerful argument for a change in the system. If the people are unable to distinguish truth from falsehood, withdraw the falsehood as much as possible from their view. Let no one gain by

cherishing these delusive pretexts. On the contrary, let the benefit resulting from their exposure be universal. Array in the support of truth and good government all that auxiliary force which the associations of rank and power can bestow. Present to men of ability no hope of reward from alliance with the cause of misrule. It seems to me impossible that any one who admits the existence of abuses, and who refers their continuance to a want of knowledge and discrimination on the part of the people, which represses the burst of the general voice and verdict against them, should yet consent to expose the popular judgment, already incompetent as it is, to all these overwhelming provocatives of error.*

A guardian is called upon to review the conduct of an extravagant youth. On inquiry, he finds that

* To palliate the defects of a system, by complaints of this kind, is a very ancient practice: "Nam et illi," says Lord Bacon, "qui tantâ fiduciâ de rebus pronuncioant, tamen per intervalla cum ad se redeunt, ad querimonias de naturæ subtilitate, rerum obscuritate, humani ingenii infirmitate se convertunt. Hoc vero si simpliciter fieret, alios fortasse, qui sunt timidiores, ad ulteriorem inquisitionem detertere; alios vero qui sunt ingenio alacriore et magis fidenti, ad ulteriorem progressum acuere et incitare posset. Verum non satis illis est, de se confiteri, sed quicque sibi ipsis aut magistris suis incognitum aut intactum fuerit, id extra terminos ponunt, et tanquam ex arte cognitum aut factu impossibile pronuntiant; summâ superbiâ et invidia suorum inventorum infirmitatem, in naturæ ipsius calumniam et aliorum omnium desperationem vertentes." *Nov. Org. Aphor.* 75. In this respect, likewise, the present Reformers have inherited Lord Bacon's mantle. His remedy is, "Humano intellectui non fides deroganda, sed auxilia subministranda," a sentence which cannot be too frequently repeated,

the arrangement between this young man and his tutor has been constantly such, as to allow to the latter a large per-centage on all his pupil's disbursements. "I admit (the tutor confesses to him) that "I have been continually suggesting expensive notions to the young man. I have told him that it "was indispensably requisite for him to possess splendid palaces, and magnificent equipments; all of "which have been furnished by lucrative contracts, "given among my own friends. All this immense "train of dependants (many of whom have nothing "to do) receiving ample wages, are of my proposal "and appointment. But then it was all by my "pupil's own will and consent; for I never used force "to compel him to accede. It is true that, if he "made only a feeble opposition, I generally found "means to overrule it: but then if he testified a "loud and decided aversion, I always abandoned the "plan." Now there would on this occasion be three modes of proceeding open to the guardian. First, he might warmly reproach the tutor for having urged this disastrous counsel, and turn him out of his place, engaging another upon the very same terms. Secondly, he might content himself with a remonstrance directed towards the pupil, telling him, "You "see all this extravagance is owing to your own "fault: your tutor never forced you to it: you "should learn to distinguish when he proposes an "unnecessary increase of establishment, and when "he only recommends what is useful and proper.

“ To be sure this is a very nice and difficult point,
“ and I can give you no rules for determining it.
“ But you must contrive somehow or other always to
“ detect it; and when your tutor is advancing be-
“ yond, you must resist vigorously and obstinately.
“ You must not regard all this corps of dependants
“ who are environing you, partly striving to appease
“ and delude, partly to frighten you into a conces-
“ sion : but you must persist in your opposition, and
“ threaten to bring the matter to an open contest ;
“ and then your tutor will always be forced to yield.”

Thirdly, the guardian might cancel the terms of agreement between the tutor and the pupil, and draw up fresh articles, by which the former should not only be deprived of the profit which he formerly derived from the latter's expenditure, but should be compelled to undergo a positive proportional loss from every farthing which the pupil spent.

There would, indeed, be these three modes of proceeding open ; but is there any wise and judicious guardian who could hesitate for one instant which to adopt ? The lower his estimate of the pupil's understanding, the greater would be his eagerness to extricate him from the influence of seductive and misleading causes, and to knit his well-being inseparably with that of a better and stronger intellect.

3. *Plan for a Representation of Classes.*

The two previous schemes, that of a perfectly disinterested ministry, and that of a check by means of public opinion, are the only two modes proposed of ameliorating the vicious tendency of a government whose circumstances implant in it a sinister interest. I now proceed to examine the theory of Representation by Classes—a term which does not necessarily exclude a ruling body involving such conditions as Reformers deem indispensable; though the particular applications of it, which its advocates submit, are directly at variance with all those requisites. I shall select, as the immediate object of my remarks, the article in the *Edinburgh Review* (Dec. 1818), in which the merits of this system are unfolded and vindicated, and the supposed disadvantages of universal suffrage and ballot displayed at considerable length.

The following passage exhibits the general principle of the system:—"To understand the principles of the composition of a representative assembly thoroughly, we must divide the people into classes, and examine the variety of local and professional interests of which the general interest is composed. Each of these classes must be represented by persons who will guard its peculiar interest, whether that interest arises from inhabiting the same district, or pursuing the same occupation, such as traffic, or husbandry, or the useful or ornamental

“ arts. The fidelity and zeal of such representatives
“ are to be secured by every provision, which, to a
“ sense of common interest, can superadd a fellow-
“ feeling with their constituents.”

A rigid adherence to that interest, which the members of this class have in common, therefore, is to be the determining principle of the conduct observed by the deputy. Let us take the simplest particular case in which the theory can be incorporated. A community consists of three classes, lawyers, landholders, and merchants, each returning one member to compose a governing body. Now when this triumvirate meets for the purpose of framing laws, what will be the course of its proceedings? Each deputy is exclusively devoted to the service of his own class; But not a step can be taken without the concurrence of two: Consequently two of them must combine, and that combination can only take place by mutual concessions on the part of the two allies, each consenting to drop such part of his respective class-interest as may interfere with the class-interest of the other. Those two of the three will combine, whose alliance can be accomplished with the smallest sacrifice of their respective class-interests. If each deputy cannot procure the whole sum of benefit which his class desire, he will of course carry away the largest portion possible of it. But when two out of the three have combined, the concurrence of the third becomes a matter of no importance. His interest, therefore, and the interest of his class, is completely

disregarded. The two allies, who, as a majority, are in possession of the whole governing power, would be unfaithful deputies of their respective classes, were they to concede any thing in favour of a colleague whose consent cannot benefit them.

Now the plan of the Edinburgh Reviewer is (p. 186) "to allot to each class in society a share in representation sufficient to protect its interest, compatible with the equal protection of the interests of all other classes." When we speak of the interest of a class, we of course mean that interest which each of its members has in common with the class, and separate from the rest of the society. To afford, therefore, equal protection to the separate interests of all the classes in the society, is the aim of the Reviewer's system.

But this is an object which the slightest inspection must determine us to pronounce unattainable. For the separate interest of every one class is incompatible with the separate interest of every other. Either the Assembly has a majority of its members selected from some one particular class, or not. If the former, then the separate interest of the dominant class is indeed sedulously watched, but that of all the classes in the minority is irrevocably excluded. If the latter, then it is not the separate interest of any class whatever which is protected, but the common interest of those two or more classes who combine to form a majority; all those in the minority are disregarded as before. To afford equal protection

to the separate interests of each class is altogether impracticable.

This process, therefore, of fencing off certain sections of the community into different pens, in order to draw forth deputies exclusively devoted to the interests of the flock whence they emerge, is, in truth, altogether futile and unproductive. For the very instant that the deputy, armed and ardent for the separate interests of his class, presents himself in the assembly, he finds himself obliged to drop all thoughts of prosecuting that separate interest. Either he is in a situation to combine with certain other deputies in forming a majority, in which case he must limit his attention to those common circumstances wherein their interest harmonises with his own; or else he discovers himself thrust out into the minority, in which case the interest of his class is wholly disregarded. One of these conjunctures must infallibly occur, unless the deputies of his class should happen to form singly the majority of the assembly, and then he will of course advance the separate interests of his class to the complete exclusion of the rest. But that privilege can belong to but one set of deputies among the whole number. To what purpose then this minute partition of the people, in order to transmit the separate interest of each fragment, pure and unalloyed, into the Legislative Assembly, through the medium of a deputy devoted to that object—when insuperable obstacles place the promotion of

that separate interest on any occasion beyond his reach?

There are two inadvertencies into which the Reviewer appears to have been unwarily betrayed, and under these the error of the system lurks. The first is involved in a sentence which I have already cited: "We must divide the people into classes," says he, "and examine the variety of local and professional interests of which the general interest is composed." Now I cannot help thinking that these words contain a signal inaccuracy, and I shall endeavour to point it out.

The interest (by which is always meant the *strongest* interest) of every individual is completely distinct from, and inconsistent with, the interest of every other. In order to reconcile it with that of any other individual, each must consent to a mutual reduction, and the fraction which remains constitutes the joint interest of the two. If we would blend this joint interest with the interest of a third or a fourth, a still deeper excision must be mutually applied, and the fraction which remains, forming the joint interest of the four, will be still more inconsiderable. As the number combined increases, the value of the common stake is proportionally pared away and lessened by the repeated processes of subtraction which it is necessary to perform. The minimum is the universal interest—that which an individual has in common with the whole or with a large majority of the

nation. The Reviewer, therefore, is surely incorrect in describing the general interest as composed of different local and professional interests ; for the very reverse is the fact—the general interest forming a minute component part of every local or professional interest. The joint stake varies in an inverse ratio with the number combined. But the Reviewer thoroughly misconceives the real nature of this rule of variation, when he asserts, that in order to attain the general interest, it is requisite to club together the separate professional interests prevalent in the community. For it is obvious, from what has been remarked, that there can possibly exist but three species of interests in a nation. First, the interest of any one man ; secondly, that interest so far pared down as to coincide with the interest of a small number, whether consisting of one, two, or more classes ; thirdly, the same interest still further amputated until it arrives at the point of unison with that of the whole community, or of the major portion of it. And it is equally clear, that these three species mutually exclude each other, so that a governing body which would promote the universal interest, must inevitably discard all inclination to the separate interest of any class whatever.

The Reviewer appears, in the second place, to have overlooked the important fact, that the powers of government are vested in the majority of the assembly. Otherwise, it is scarcely possible to interpret his supposition, that the mere return of Representa-

tives (whatever proportion their number may form of the whole assembly) is sufficient to protect the interests of the returning class. The slightest examination must convince us, that the interests of no class whatever can be protected, except when they return a majority of the legislative body. If that is not the case, then either a fraction of their interests will be protected, by their combining to form a majority; or else they will remain in a minority, and then every part of their interests will be disregarded.

An exposure of these two mistakes unfolds to us the radical vices of the system of class representation in general. Let us now inspect more minutely the particular model of this system which the Reviewer patronises, as far as he has described it in detail. For as the objects, which this plan professes to aim at, have been shown to be incompatible with one another, we must of course surrender some of them, if we retain our attachment to the project, and it therefore becomes highly important to ascertain where this indispensable mutilation will fall.

When we first contemplate the march which the Reviewer pursues in classifying the people, we are amazed at the extreme apparent ease and brevity of the process. The great body of the community is at once laid hold of, and impounded as one class, under the name of the multitude. But after this one gigantic stride, he suddenly relaxes, and proceeds with the trembling and solicitous step of one who treads the most difficult ground. He examines with mi-

microscopic eye the remaining minority, nor does the most insignificant distinction among its members escape his scrutiny. An infinite variety of separate pens are constructed, and this minority is distributed among them with a degree of nicety and precision, which wears the mask not only of deliberation and princely care, but also of the most anxious and hypercritical justice. By thus dispersing the files and variegating the attire of the small remainder, they are made to occupy an extent of field-room incomparably larger than the dense and huddled ranks of the unnoticed majority.

This plan is in spirit and principle a precise copy of the ancient Roman class-system. History informs us that the Roman citizens were divided into six classes, which classes were again subdivided into 193 centuries. Property was the qualification which distinguished the class to which any individual belonged, the wealthiest men constituting the first class and the poorest forming the last. The voting took place by centuries. But these centuries were so unequally distributed, that the first class had a larger number of them than any other, and the first two classes formed a majority of the whole sum of the centuries. Consequently all the rest—that is, an overwhelming majority of the people,—were utterly excluded from any share in the benefits of government.

Here then we have a classification of the people agreeing in every material point of view with that which the Reviewer vindicates, except that the latter

ingeniously diversifies his combining principles, as an artifice to mask the thin array of his sacred band. But in recompense, the Roman system is far more complete, and includes without exception every man in the community : whereas the Reviewer seems to withhold direct representation from some of his classes. (P. 177.) At the worst it is only exposed to those minor objections which he urges (P. 181) against an uniform principle. But it unquestionably includes all that ennobling and remedial influence on the minds of the poorer classes, which the Reviewer ascribes to the simple exercise of the elective franchise by some few belonging to those classes in England. “ By it (we might say with him) the peasant is “ taught to venerate himself as man ; to employ “ his thoughts, at least occasionally, upon high mat- “ ters ; to meditate upon the same subjects with the “ wise and great ; to enlarge his feelings beyond the “ circle of his narrow concerns ; to sympathise, how- “ ever irregularly, with great bodies of his fellow- “ creatures ; and sometimes to do acts which he may “ regard as contributing directly to the welfare of his “ country.” It accomplishes “ the important object “ that they should think and feel—that they should “ contemplate extensive consequences as capable of “ arising from their own actions, and thus gradually “ become conscious of the moral dignity of their “ nature.” (Pp. 179—180.)

It appears, therefore, that all this magnificent portraiture, all those splendid results, which the Re-

viewer describes as "the important object" attained by extending the elective franchise to the people, apply with equal precision to a system which we perceive, at the first glance, to be a delusive transfer of the whole governing powers to a few, disguised under the pretence of understanding more completely, and of cherishing with greater ardour and equality, the separate interests of each component class. I am not ignorant that the functions exercised by the Roman Classes were deliberative and not elective, and this may afford a detached ground of objection against the former system. But it does not vitiate our application of the parallel in the mode which I have brought forward, grounded on circumstances wholly unconnected with the greater or less degree of intellectual aptitude manifested.

It cannot admit of a question, that a system of class-representation, arranged upon the principles of the Reviewer, would be attended with a similar result, and would consign the disposition of the ruling powers to the hands of a small minority in the state. If, from the extreme minuteness of his subdivision, none of his classes should singly return a majority of the Legislative Assembly, it would be absolutely necessary, that, in all its decrees, two or more classes should combine, and those whose interests were the least incompatible would of course conclude such an alliance. But it would never be the interest of any class to combine with the many, because the numbers of the latter render an union with them less profitable

than any other connexion whatever. The latter would, consequently, be in all debates thrust into the minority, and their interests wholly disregarded. At the end, therefore, of this exact and artificial distribution of the people, we find ourselves just at the point whence we set out. The powers of Government are still at the disposition of those who decidedly benefit by a wicked employment of them; nor does the Reviewer suggest any specific to counteract this vicious interest. The labyrinth of classification, in which he has involved himself, seems to have withdrawn his attention entirely from that tremendous elementary truth, which stands in the front of his argument; "To secure the subjects by laws against wrong from the Government, is a problem of a far more difficult sort, which few nations have attempted to solve; and of which it is not so much as pretended, that, since the beginning of history, more than one or two great states have approached the solution." (P. 174.) Now the powers of government have been every where invariably lodged in the hands of the small number. The declaration, therefore, of the Reviewer confirms the melancholy, though undeniable fact, that in all countries, since the beginning of history, the few have been led by their interest to perpetrate amazing wrong towards the great body of the people; excepting one or two particular cases, in which it has been pretended that they have not committed quite so much wrong. Within a few sentences, indeed, of the memorable passage which I

have just cited, the Reviewer informs us, that "every government has, in truth, the same interests with its subjects." From which words an over-scrupulous interpreter of opinions, by the context, would be led to infer, that all the oppression, which he describes as having emanated from every government, since the beginning of history, was purely disinterested and without motive. But, as it is impossible that this can have been his meaning, it will suffice to observe, that a ruling class, constructed upon his principles, would be under the influence of those precise motives, which have given birth to the enormous and universal wrong so justly pointed out by himself.

Should the foregoing arguments prove exempt from fallacy, it appears undeniable, that the opponents of Reform have as yet urged nothing sufficient to supersede its necessity. For it has been shown that the rival system of class-representation still leaves the governing powers at the disposal of a few, who have a decided interest in misusing them. And I have previously examined the two schemes proposed, for converting an evil-intentioned government into an instrument of happiness, which shall be as perfect and efficacious, as a ruling class which draws clear benefit from an useful employment of its powers. If, as I have endeavoured to demonstrate, both these schemes are defective and insufficient, it follows, that no other mode has yet been pointed out for the attainment of that degree of utility which the Reformers profess to

accomplish. Consequently, the necessity of effectual Reform remains still unimpeached.

4. Objections to a thorough Parliamentary Reform, considered.

It remains now to examine the means proposed for the accomplishment of this end—an extended suffrage combined with frequency of election, and the ballot; and if I should succeed in dissipating the apprehension of those injurious consequences which have been ascribed to these schemes, and placing them in the true point of view, the proof in favour of Reform will be rendered entire and irresistible. The Edinburgh Reviewer has subjoined to his exposition of the class-theory, numerous objections to Universal Suffrage and the Ballot; and therefore, the vindication which I am about to attempt will refer to the same source whence the foregoing citations have been borrowed.

“ The question between us and Mr. Bentham is, “ whether all interests will be best protected, where “ the representatives are chosen by all men,—or “ where they are elected by considerable portions only, “ of all classes of men. This question will, perhaps, “ be more clearly answered by setting out from ex- “ amples, than from general reasonings. If we sup- “ pose Ireland to be an independent state, governed “ by its former House of Commons, it will at once be “ admitted, that no shadow of just government ex- “ isted, where the Legislature were the enemies, “ instead of being the protectors of the Catholics,

“ who formed a great class in the community. That
 “ this evil was most cruelly aggravated by the num-
 “ bers of the oppressed, is true. But, will it be
 “ contended that such a government was unjust, only
 “ because the Catholics were a majority? We have
 “ only, then, to suppose the case reversed,—that the
 “ Catholics were to assume the whole power, and to
 “ retaliate upon the Protestants, by excluding them
 “ from all political privilege. Would this be a just
 “ or equal government? That will hardly be avowed,
 “ But what would be the effect of establishing Uni-
 “ versal Suffrage in Ireland? It would be, to do
 “ that in substance, which no man would propose in
 “ form. The Catholics forming four-fifths of the po-
 “ pulation, would, as far as depends on laws, possess the
 “ whole authority of the state. Such a government,
 “ instead of protecting all interests, would be found
 “ in hostility to that which is the second in numbers,
 “ and in many respects the first. The oppressors
 “ and the oppressed would, indeed, change places.—
 “ We should have Catholic tyrants and Protestant
 “ slaves. But our only consolation would be, that
 “ the island would contain more tyrants, and fewer
 “ slaves.

“ If there be persons who believe that majorities
 “ have any power over the eternal principles of jus-
 “ tice, or that numbers can in the least degree affect
 “ the difference between right and wrong; it would
 “ be in vain for us to argue against those with whom
 “ we have no principles in common. To all others

“ it must be apparent, that a representation of *classes* might possibly be so framed, as to secure both interests ; but that a representation of numbers must enslave the Protestant minority.”

We are here presented with the case of a country inhabited by two classes, which evince a rooted antipathy to each other—Protestants and Catholics—blacks and whites. The government is now entirely in the hands of the Protestants, and that is admitted to be unjust. But if universal suffrage be introduced, it will be still unjust, because the government will then be lodged with the Catholics. By what means, however, will it be productive of this injurious result? Simply, because a majority of Catholics will be nominated to the Legislative Assembly, and the Protestant deputies will always be left in a hopeless minority. But the whole island consists of Protestants and Catholics, and how is it possible to avoid a majority either of one or of the other, both among the electors and the elected? Does the class system furnish any imaginable contrivance by which we can extricate ourselves from this dilemma? The Reviewer informs us, that it does afford a solution of this problem ; but I am wholly unable to detect it. The only passage in the paragraph which offers a clue to his proposed solution, is that in which he says, “ That an aristocratical Legislature would consider the disputes of free and servile labourers, with more impartiality than a body influenced chiefly by the first of these classes.”

Hence, therefore, I conclude his meaning to be, that besides those whites and blacks between whom the mutual antipathy exists, there are in the country a class of aristocratical whites, who do not share in the hatred towards the negroes. If, therefore, the Legislative Body is framed partly of this class, partly of blacks, partly of whites, he imagines that the interests of each would be protected. But what will be the conduct of those aristocratical deputies who are exempt from the epidemic antipathy? It should be recollected, that they are elected by their class, and that their avowed and exclusive object is to neglect nothing which may promote the interests of this class. We cannot reject this consequence without infringing the cardinal principle of the class system. Indeed, even the Reviewer occasionally loses sight of this, and represents his class-deputy as an impartial person, which must be a direct violation of a trust solely reposed in him, because he is deemed capable of making the best possible bargain for the common interest of his electors. Now the interests of this aristocratical class will inevitably lead them to combine either with the whites against the blacks, or the reverse, and the welfare of the third party will thus be irretrievably sacrificed.

Again, the Reviewer tells us that there are in every country two classes opposed to each other, though not indeed quite so vehemently as Protestants and Catholics, or blacks and whites—the many and the few. A body of Legislators chosen by universal

suffrage, he objects, would exclusively pursue the interests of the many, and would disregard those of the few. But a well-adjusted representation of classes would secure both. Yet how could it possibly have escaped him, that the majority of the Assembly must be returned either by the many or by the few; and consequently that all its votes must be directed either one way or the other? He seems, indeed, to be fully aware that universal suffrage would necessarily entail a neglect of the interests of the few. But he omits to remark, that the return of a majority of deputies by the few would produce the same inattention to the interests of the many. His view appears to be confused amidst the multiplicity of pigeon-holes into which he has subdivided the few; nor can he conceive that they should dare to overleap the artificial barriers which he has erected between them, for the purpose of acting in concert and alliance. He perceives clearly, when attacking the systems of his opponents, that the Assembly will constantly pursue but one interest—that of its majority. But in proposing his own views, he finds it convenient to assume that they will, on proper occasions, sacrifice it to that of the minority.

If, then, there are two or more rival interests in a country, it is impossible by any scheme to frame a governing body which shall at once secure both. And the objection urged against universal suffrage, that it would bestow entire supremacy and predominance on one of them, may be shown to apply

equally to the scheme of representation by classes, or by any other mode whatever. It only remains for us to select that which best merits our preference.

In the transition which the Reviewer has made from the rivalry between Protestant and Catholic, to that between the many and the few, he has overlooked a distinction which it is of the highest importance to notice. When the ill-will between two persons arises from a desire on the part of each to possess objects of which there is not enough to satisfy both, that very desire will dictate to each a partial renunciation by which their discordance of interest may be appeased. But an antipathy, such as that between blacks and whites, Protestants and Catholics, is not reducible to any such point of coincidence. Where, therefore, there exists this disinterested abhorrence between one part of the population and another, the case is irremediable, and the one must be sacrificed to the other. But it is always possible, by mutual concessions, to discover a point of unison between the interests of any number of persons whatever.

Now we have two classes existing in the country—the many and the few. A coincidence of interest has already been attained between each of the members of the former class, and each of the members of the latter; and every individual has already conceded so much of his separate views as is requisite for the maintenance and supremacy of the interest of his class. It is required to find a point of unison between the interests of these two classes, and to combine

the two into a larger body, the whole, bound together by a common interest. And it is required to create a government, whose aim shall be the promotion of the latter or universal interest, and which consequently shall not sacrifice any one class in the state to another.

Suppose that in an assembly of class representatives, framed after the Reviewer's model, the landholders and merchants should find it expedient to combine to form a majority. What would be the result? A new class would be created, the members of which would be upon the same terms with each other, as the landholders and merchants had been respectively among themselves. The many, therefore, ought to be united with the few, so as to create an whole; the individuals of which shall observe the same conditions towards each other, as each member of the many, and each member of the few, had previously observed towards his colleagues. And that interest, which each of the members of the new class have in common—in other words, the universal interest—should form the object of pursuit with the governing body.

But it is still absolutely necessary that the majority of the Legislative Assembly should be chosen either by the many or by the few. Between these two paths our election must be made. Now, if the majority be chosen by the many, I think it may be undeniably proved, that they will pursue the universal interest, or that which the many have in common

with the few. But if this majority be chosen by the few, their views will be radically different, and they will promote solely that interest which the few have in common with one another. I shall attempt to elucidate my position by a reference to particulars.

Let the many consist of 4,000,000, and the few of 10,000, each of the latter being supposed to possess an annual income of from 5000*l.* to 20,000*l.* These being the richest class, the remaining 4,000,000 will of course comprise every degree of property from 5000*l.* per annum down to the smallest quantity by which life can be maintained. Now, as the many are considered as a class, they of course respect the personal and proprietary rights of each other, just as the few do among themselves—for without this mutual renunciation, it is idle to talk of the existence of a class and of a common interest, or to suppose any number of individuals in a state of combination. Of these 4,000,000 it is probable that the 50,000 richest will possess as much property as the 10,000 few. We see, however, that the 3,950,000 find it their interest to leave this 50,000 in possession of all those rights which they are entitled to as members of the class. Why, then, should not the whole 4,000,000 treat the 10,000 few in the same manner? The temptation is not only no greater, but it is even less. No one, surely, will contend that when the increase of capital and population should naturally add 10,000 souls to the 4,000,000, and still farther enrich the wealthiest among them, the rest

would suddenly snatch from them the benefit of the class rights.

But though the 10,000 few should respect the personal and proprietary rights of each other, it is by no means their interest to extend the same regard to the 4,000,000. The temptation to infringe them, if it is in their power, is enormous and irresistible. Each of the few may expect to appropriate one-tenthousandth part of the property and services of the 4,000,000. So long as there is any hope of realizing this flattering prospect, it is manifest that they will never extend to the many the benefit of those class-rights which form their own bond of union.

Hence, therefore, we see that the many have no interest in opposing such an union and incorporation with the few, as will form an whole, in which the personal and proprietary rights of each member shall be treated with due reverence. For the separate interest of each individual among the many has already undergone so ample a reduction, in order to attain the point of coincidence with the interests of his numerous class-brethren, that it needs no farther sacrifice in order to adapt it to a slight increase of number. But it is the decided interest of the few to reject any such equal terms of alliance with the many, because such an association would at once strike off from each all hope of partaking in a most tempting spoil.

I think it, therefore, unquestionable, that a Legislature, chosen by the many, and pursuing their in-

terests, will manifest a just regard to the personal and proprietary rights of the few. They will direct their views to the promotion of that interest which the few have in common with the many. If, therefore, the extension of the public happiness be the scope and aim of all systems of government, we cannot fail to recognise the superior value and importance of that interest which all the members of the society have in common, above that which is confined merely to a few at the expense of the rest. When the Reviewer affirms, that universal suffrage would place every other interest in society at the disposal of the multitude, the assertion is perfectly true, and means, when extricated from the contemptuous associations with which his language has environed it, that a Legislature, chosen by such a suffrage, would pursue that interest which all the members of the society have in common, and would disregard the separate interests of any small number, when the two might happen to clash: That it would, for example, abstain from bestowing any monopoly or exclusive privilege, which would enrich a few at the expense of the community. But, when he says, that no other class can have a political security for justice, he is, if the preceding arguments be well-founded, by no means warranted in any such assumption; for the same interests which induce the great body of the people to observe the rules of justice among one another, would likewise dispose them to maintain a similar conduct with regard to the remaining small

number. And, therefore, if by security for justice be meant an exemption from all alarm on the subject of personal and proprietary rights, I need only remark, that they would be exactly as well protected in the enjoyment of these privileges, as any other equal number among the many.

If these arguments are correct, the distinction by which the Reviewer attempts to show that universal suffrage, though securely flourishing in America, would yet be hazardous if transferred to England, will appear nugatory. After having stated that universal suffrage has obtained only partial establishment in America, he continues: "Were the fact
" otherwise, America contains few large, and no
" very great towns; the people are dispersed and
" agricultural; and, perhaps, a majority of the in-
" habitants are either land-owners, or have that im-
" mediate expectation of being land-owners, which
" possesses nearly the same effect on character, with
" the possession of property. Adventurers who, in
" other countries, disturb society, are there naturally
" attracted towards the frontier, where they pave the
" way for industry, and become the pioneers of civi-
" lization. There is no part of their people in the
" situation where democracy is dangerous, or even
" usually powerful. The dispersion of the inhabit-
" ants, and their distance from the scene of great
" affairs, are perhaps likely rather to make the spirit
" of liberty among them languid, than to rouse it to
" excess. The majority are in the condition which

“ is elsewhere considered as a pledge of independence, “ and a qualification for suffrage. They have no “ populace, and the greater part of them are either “ land-owners, or just about to be so.” (P. 201.)

Now the whole argument which the Reviewer urges, as justifying the distinction which he draws, is, that the American population is more widely dispersed than the English; and that the distribution of the produce is, in the former country, more favourable to the numerous classes than in the latter. Both these positions are unquestionably true, but they by no means warrant the inference which he builds upon them. The English many are poorer than the American many; but the interest which the whole English population have in common, is precisely the same as that which the whole American population have in common. The argument, which I have endeavoured to enforce, applies, with equal propriety, to the English and to the American labourer, and shows that each possesses and recognises an interest in respecting personal and proprietary rights. But the Reviewer would insinuate that, because the English laws of property do not allot so much to the labourer here, as the American laws do to the labourer there, it would, therefore, be better for the former to have nothing at all allotted to him, which would be the case if there existed no law of property. It is the few who lose, and the many who gain, by the strict maintenance of the proprietary code. The gain or loss, which accrues to an individual from the ob-

servance of that code, should not be measured by the positive quantity which it now allots to him, but by the greater or less quantity which he would possess, supposing there were no such code in existence. Take away all public protection of property, and the rich man immediately finds himself at the head of an association, whose interest leads them to respect proprietary rules among themselves, and to violate them with regard to every one else. There is no person, except himself, whom all the members would concur in reverencing as their chief: But the poor man, when the public safeguards of property are withdrawn, cannot make it the interest of any body to maintain its laws towards him. He is perfectly isolated and defenceless, and stands exposed to plunder and slavery, from the powerful associations in his neighbourhood. Let no one imagine that, because he is poor, he is, therefore, an object not worth aiming at. His labour is the most valuable of properties, and he is incalculably the most profitable of all domestic instruments. Conformably to these principles, in every country where there is no law of property, the rich man is a despot, and the poor man a slave. In England, 500 or 600 years ago, the property of the feudal baron was secure and terrible, while the poor villain had no protection, even for life.

In order to annul the value of that practical testimony which America affords, it was incumbent on the Reviewer to have assigned some reason which made it peculiarly the interest of the American

many to combine with the few into a whole, on terms of mutual respect to personal and proprietary rights. But no motive of this nature can be shown, which does not operate, with precisely the same force, upon the many of any other country. Consequently, the illustration remains perfectly valid and applicable.

I cannot help noticing, in this place, the extreme vagueness and laxity with which the word *property* is frequently employed in political reasonings. In ordinary conversation, it may doubtless be convenient to speak of men of no property, and men of property; implying by the former those who have little, and by the latter those who have much. But, in registering our political notions, we must make allowance for the latitude of these phrases. Property is a thing of which no one can be entirely destitute, for without it life could not be supported. The poorest labourer has a property in his food and clothes, his knife, his tools, and his temporary lodging. Were it not for the law, any labourer stronger than he might bereave him of this little all. Every man, therefore, is a proprietor, and has an interest in maintaining the law of property, although any small number of individuals may have a stronger interest in violating it. The Reviewer tells us (p. 189), "it must never be forgotten, that the whole of the proprietary body must be in a state of permanent conspiracy against an extreme democracy. They are the natural enemies of a constitution, which grants them no power, and no safety. Though property

“is often borne down by the torrent of popular
“tyranny, yet it has many chances of prevailing at
“last. Proprietors have steadiness, vigilance, concert,
“secrecy, and, if need be, dissimulation. They
“yield to the storm, they regain their natural ascend-
“ant in the calm. Not content with persuading the
“people to submit to salutary restraints, they usually
“betray them by insensible degrees into absolute
“submission.”

Now what is here meant by *the whole proprietary body*? Strictly speaking, these words would embrace the whole nation, but that of course cannot be the sense of the Reviewer. Nor can it mean the majority of the nation, for that cannot be in permanent conspiracy against itself. The expression, therefore, must denote the small number of largest proprietors, and if that be its real sense, the objection founded upon it is rather surprising. Universal suffrage, it is said, will impair the dominion and influence of the great proprietors. It will still, however, leave them sufficient power to be very dangerous to the rest of the community, and probably to enslave it. It is therefore hazardous to introduce universal suffrage, because while you abandon to them the whole power which they now possess, they will be content to put forth only a part of it, and to resign all the benefit which they might derive from exerting the rest. But the instant that you attempt to institute a check, and to lessen the mass of evil which they are capable of inflicting, they will be provoked to rouse

their whole might and energy, and we shall then be more completely trampled under their feet than if we had never abridged their power. If, according to the Reviewer, the great proprietors do not enslave the state now, it is not because they want power, but because they do not desire to do so. For the diminished power which they would possess under a system of universal suffrage would be sufficient for that end. "Wherever property (he tells us) is not allowed a great weight in a free state, it will destroy liberty." That is, when the great proprietors have no power, they will enslave the rest of the community: where they have great power, they will not enslave it. This appears a proposition somewhat startling.

I confess that I should myself draw the opposite inference from these premises. If the great proprietors are really possessed of a power so vast, it ought surely to form a strong reason for introducing universal suffrage as a corrective. We do not usually employ augmentation and absence of restraint as a means for preventing any power from injuring us.

The next objection which the Reviewer urges against Universal Suffrage, is founded upon the different character of town-resident and country-resident inhabitants.

"A representation, founded on numbers only, would be productive of gross inequality in that very class to which all others are sacrificed. The difference between the people of the country and those of towns, is attended with consequences which no contrivance

“ of law can obviate. Towns are the nursery of
“ political feeling. The frequency of meeting, the
“ warmth of discussion, the variety of pursuit, the ri-
“ valship of interest, the opportunities of information,
“ even the fluctuations and extremes of fortune, direct
“ the minds of the inhabitants to public concerns, and
“ render them the seats of republican governments, or
“ the preservers of liberty in monarchies.

“ An agricultural people is generally submissive to
“ the laws, and observant of the ordinary duties of life,
“ but stationary and stagnant, without the enterprise
“ which is the source of improvement, and the public
“ spirit which preserves liberty. If the whole poli-
“ tical power of the state, therefore, were thrown into
“ the hands of the lowest classes, it would be really
“ exercised only by the towns. About two elevenths
“ of the people of England inhabit towns which have
“ a population of ten thousand souls or upwards. A
“ body so large, strengthened by union, discipline,
“ and spirit, would without difficulty domineer over
“ the lifeless and scattered peasants. In towns the
“ lower part of the middle classes are sometimes
“ tame, while the lowest class are always susceptible
“ of animation. But the small freeholders, and con-
“ siderable farmers, acquire an independence from
“ their position, which makes them very capable of
“ public spirit. While the classes below them are in-
“ capable of being permanently rendered active ele-
“ ments in any political combination, the dead weight
“ of their formal suffrages would only oppress the

“ independent votes of their superiors. All active
“ talent would, in such a case, fly to the towns, where
“ alone its power could be felt. The choice of the
“ country would be dictated by the cry of the towns,
“ wherever it was thought worth while to take it from
“ the quiet influence of the resident proprietors. The
“ country itself would be divided into a number of
“ provinces, dependent on the democracies of the
“ towns.”

Now surely it is most incorrect to say that universal suffrage is productive of any inequality whatever. If it possesses no other meritorious quality, we cannot at least withhold from it the character of a strictly impartial system. And when we examine more narrowly the inequality to which the Reviewer alludes, we discover, by his own statement, that it is pre-existent and inevitable, whatever system of suffrage may be adopted. But whatever may be the extent of this political inequality, it is a most grievous distortion of language to affirm that the inhabitants of the towns would “ by means of union, discipline, and
“ spirit, domineer over the lifeless and scattered pea-
“ sants.” To characterise in this manner the mere communication of sentiment or rational preference, stripped of every collateral agency either of recompense or terror, is a misrepresentation which ought not to elude our notice. I shall now inspect more narrowly the force of the objection.

“ In the towns, the Reviewer tells us, public spirit
“ is extremely vivid and intense. In the country it

“prevails with equal ardour among the small farmers and landholders, but does not at all reach the classes below them. These small farmers, therefore, finding in the country no participation in their political feelings, will fly to the towns, where there is a vast deal of active talent already at work.”

But really this conclusion seems the very reverse of that to which the Reviewer's premises, as well as other obvious considerations, would lead. The small farmers and landholders will of course act in that position where they have the greatest influence. But we are told that the country labourers have no sentiments at all of their own, but are ready prepared for any exterior impulse, and susceptible of any direction in which the awakening hand may place them. The existence of a body thus situated will supply the small farmers and land-holders with the strongest possible incentive to remain and exert themselves in the country. By what conceivable motive should they be induced to fly to the towns, where they are neither known nor regarded, and where they will find numerous rivals already possessing a native influence and established supremacy? Were they ever so desirous, how would their avocations permit them thus to transfer their theatre of action?

It appears, therefore, that there are two sources whence the country labourers would borrow that political impulse, which it is essentially necessary that they should derive from without. Public sentiment will be communicated to them, first, from the small

farmers and land-holders, and next from the towns. Now it is impossible to make a better provision for quickening the thoughts and aiding the judgments of an inferior class, than by opening this active competition from two distinct quarters. Two different bodies, each more enlightened and more energetic than themselves, would be contending with each other for the formation and guidance of their political sentiments. Neither would have any other means of acquiring influence with them, except by elevating their feelings and correcting their judgments. Candidates would be frequently offering themselves upon both interests, and the struggle between them could not fail of impressing upon the minds of the country-labourers some notion of those qualifications to which their preference ought to be awarded, and of exciting their anxiety in the result.

This argument of the Reviewer therefore, when closely examined, operates rather against his own cause. It reveals to us the ample security, which universal suffrage would provide, for stimulating the feelings and rectifying the erroneous conceptions, even of the most unenlightened portion of the community. It substitutes, instead of that which he terms "the domineering and the cry of the towns," two rival bodies, each striving to influence the country labourers, and each obliged to attain their end by informing and vivifying their duller fellow citizens.

I shall omit all notice of the two other objections which the Reviewer alleges against universal suf-

frage, which are built, first, upon the excessive tumult which it would occasion; secondly, upon that augmentation of the influence of wealth which a multiplication of dependent voters would produce. Because, in truth, these objections apply exclusively to an open universal suffrage; and those which he urges against secret suffrage, are founded on qualities not only distinct, but contrary. There is one point of view, however, in which it is important to consider his admission, that an extension of the suffrage to the lowest classes only increases the power of wealth. If there is any truth in the remark at all, it is equally valid against bestowing the elective franchise, when exercised openly, upon any portion of these classes. Admit an universal open suffrage in ten towns of the kingdom, and you merely confer the privilege of returning members upon a few wealthy individuals in those towns. Consequently, it is idle to speak, as the Reviewer frequently does, of creating a balance to the influence of the great proprietors, by extending the right of suffrage in some places to the lowest classes. This does not impair the power of the former, but merely transmutes and defines the channel through which it is destined to manifest itself. And, as the Reviewer tells us, that if the majority of the people vote openly, the effect will be to enhance the power of the great proprietors; I am authorised in affirming, that a system of open suffrage, however framed, will assuredly abandon the formation and mastery of the Legislative Assembly to the will of a few.

I shall now proceed to examine the observations which the Reviewer has offered on the subject of Ballot, and in performing the task, I shall consider them in an order precisely the reverse of that in which he has presented them. For it seems unquestionably advantageous, first to compare and adjust our conceptions of the ultimate end to be attained, since it is by the intrinsic excellence of this end that all the means conducive to it must be estimated.

“The original fallacy, which is the source of all erroneous reasoning in favour of Ballot, is the assumption, that the value of popular elections chiefly depends on the exercise of a deliberate judgment by the electors. The whole anxiety of its advocates is to remove the causes which might disturb a considerate choice.

“In order to obtain such a choice, which is *not* the great purpose of popular elections, the speculators would deprive them of the power to excite and diffuse *public spirit*,—the great and inestimable service which a due proportion of such elections renders to a free state.” P. 199.

To affirm, that it is beneficial to confer upon a person the power of choice, but that it is, at the same time, of no importance at all whether his choice is dictated by any rational motive, is a proposition which we cannot readily admit. Election is valuable only where there is a better and a worse, one of which must be taken; and how is the one to be dis-

tinguished from the other, except by the application of reason and discernment? If, therefore, it is useful to present two candidates to the people, in order that they may choose the most appropriate; it is likewise useful that they should consider and deliberate which of the two best merits their preference. If tumult and intoxication, and other ceremonies which hoodwink and extinguish the judgment, but which kindle at the same time an intense momentary emotion, are regarded as conveying the benefits desired, the privilege of choice is of course degraded into an inferior and secondary function, and might as well be altogether dispensed with. You may as well nominate the member beforehand, simply bestowing upon some hundred or thousand persons the function of pronouncing his name at the poll, accompanied with shouts and music and banners. To bereave the elector of his choice—and to place him in circumstances where his preference must be either blind and unguided—or else thrust upon him from another quarter, are merely two different modes of accomplishing the same end. Besides, the Reviewer has given us an ample definition of those qualities which are required in a popular representative, and has stated men of this character to be invaluable members of a Legislative Assembly (pp. 177. 183). How are such men to be detected and distinguished from their rivals except by a considerate choice?

But though it may appear at first sight unaccountable, that any value should be attached to choice,

divested of that previous consideration which can alone guide it towards the better, yet if we contemplate the rest of the Reviewer's system, we shall readily interpret this apparent incongruity. This circumstance is highly important, as it exposes to the bottom the real tendency of his scheme of representation.

He begins by separating the community into a certain number of different classes; each comprising an assortment of individuals bound together by a close tie of common interest. For these classes he provides members of their own selection, in order that the separate interest of each class may be watched with greater solicitude; and he professes to constitute his Legislative Body out of the joint deputies of each, so that none may acquire an undue predominance at the expence of the rest. It is proposed to afford only such protection to each as would be compatible with a proper regard for the rest. Yet he now tells us, that when one of these classes, including the great body of the people, prepares to exercise its function of returning to the Legislative Assembly certain guardians of its welfare, there is no necessity for any considerate choice of men for the purpose. One man, it appears, will suit them as well as another. Indeed, he likewise informs us, that they never really make any choice; but, that when the elective franchise is bestowed upon them, the great proprietors infallibly usurp it out of their hands. But the grand and supreme purpose which is answered by assigning to them the pretended nomination of a given propor-

tion of deputies, is to create public spirit in them—to implant in their bosoms a lofty sense of popular right, and a determination to repel encroachments upon it. Now whence, it may be asked, this difference between the purpose of giving the elective franchise to one class and to another? For when the other classes of the society return deputies, they are to exercise a deliberate choice, and to select persons who are best adapted for promoting their interests; nor is the smallest anxiety manifested, to foster in them public spirit, and a resolution to oppose the attacks of injustice. This striking dissimilarity admits but of one solution. The Reviewer is sensible, that the deputies returned by the wealthier classes to his Legislative Assembly, will amply suffice for the task of protecting their interests; but that the members deputed by the great body of the people present not a shadow of security for any regard to the welfare of the latter. Public spirit, therefore, is wholly unnecessary in those classes whose interests are exposed to no hazard; But it is essentially required in those whose rights are subject to continual disregard and invasion; and for that reason the Reviewer, aware that, under his system, the encroachments of the few will know no limits except the dread of public resistance, dwells so much, and so frequently, on the primary importance of cherishing the spirit of liberty. He is perfectly consistent in acquainting us, that it is of no consequence whether the great body of the people exercise any consideration in their choice of deputies, because it is,

in truth, equally unimportant whether they make any choice at all, when the members whom they return impart to them no safeguard. But nothing can more completely unmask the unjust spirit, which the class-system disguises under a delusive pretence of the most exact equality, than the definition which the Reviewer has given of the scope and purpose of popular elections. He frames a Legislative Assembly, which will pursue interests directly at variance with those of the great body of the people: But then, in recompense, he institutes certain septennial games, where portions of the people are to meet together, in which their nerves will be strung, and a spirit so determined infused into their bosoms, that the Assembly will not dare to carry their encroachments beyond a certain point. All the resolutions of the Assembly are to be dictated by the interests of a few, and the major part of the community are consequently to be outlawed: But then the orgies and revelling in which detached parcels of this majority are to be indulged once in seven years, will compensate, in part, for this outlawry, and will render the measures of government, if not productive of any additional happiness, at least somewhat less noxious to them than could have been anticipated!

Nothing can more undeniably manifest the defective and pernicious system on which all governments have hitherto been framed, than the view which is commonly taken of *the people* in political reasonings. The idea usually annexed to this term is, that of a

very numerous assembly collected in one spot. It seems to be imagined that this state of combination is an indispensable requisite to the civil existence of the people; and that they can neither feel, nor think, nor act, except *en masse*. But the truth is, that this close and immediate contact and communication is a situation so very rare and unnatural for any large number of persons, that their usual modes of judging and feeling seem to be suspended. A numerous assemblage of rich and well-educated men is just as much incapable of a considerate decision, as if it were composed of poor. All those who lately attended, when the Whig resolutions were moved at the Mansion House, belonged to the class of gentlemen, yet the tumult was such as to exclude all possibility of deliberation. A Polish Diet, composed of the first noblemen in the country, was as disturbed and riotous as if the assemblage had been of the very poorest order. But the reason why the bulk of the people are, in political calculations, entered as a combined mob, is because the powers of government have been uniformly monopolized by a privileged few; and because the excluded many have been reduced, in order to enforce even the most slender regard to their interests, to manifest, not the soundness of their judgment, but their physical means of resistance. It is not sense and discernment—it is strength and union, which are required to avert from them the injuries of their oppressors. Of what service would it be, though each individual should transmit a separate memorial

of his sufferings to the government, unless he were prepared to back it by more forcible measures? Consequently, the mode in which the bulk of the community have interfered in national affairs, has always been by collecting together an overwhelming portion of physical force, the sole commodity which could be instrumental in securing their wishes. When the ruling powers despise their judgment, and invade their happiness, it is the sole remedy which they have left.

Hence, since this vicious system has been universal, and since the people have been every where driven to employ menace and intimidation, as their sole effective weapons of interference, reasoners on the subject have considered this collective agency as an essential requisite to their political life. An inherent incapacity is ascribed to them of interesting themselves in any other way in public affairs. No one notices their individual character and mode of private life during 364 days in the year. It is only on that one day, when their exclusion from all other influence drives them into the unnatural state of a multitudinous assemblage, and to an exhibition of physical force, that their existence and feelings attract the attention of the powerful. Of course it is from the proceedings of that single day that the extent and soundness of their capacity is estimated. But it is really the very height of injustice to adopt such a valuation as this. A sweeping sentence of incapacity is pronounced upon a large number of individuals,

from their conduct on one single occasion, when assembled under circumstances which infallibly be-
reave all the parties present of sobriety and delibera-
tion. Examine their conduct in the ordinary trans-
actions of life, throughout every other day in the year,
and it will be found to indicate as much prudence
and foresight, where their separate interest is con-
cerned, as the usual behaviour of the rich and power-
ful. Yet, no sooner is any proposal made for enlist-
ing this judgment, which directs with competent
success the affairs of the individual, in the guidance
of the national concerns, than our terror-stricken
associations overwhelm us with pictures of assembled
multitudes, eloquent demagogues, tumult, and blood-
shed. There cannot be, I think, a more thorough
misapprehension of the real springs which actuate
the people. You establish a wretched system of
government, which leaves to them no hope of safety
or power, except in baring the arm of force, and in
exhibiting themselves in the most menacing attitude.
Correct the system, and there will no longer be any
demand for this intimidation. Those multitudinous
meetings, therefore, which sprung solely from this
demand, will at once expire. The judgments of the
great body of the people about public affairs, will
be guided by the same prudence and delivered with
the same sobriety, as the judgment of each individual
among them about his own private affairs. All that
is necessary is, that the system should be such as to
collect them, and to allow them weight and efficacy

when pronounced in this isolated manner; and not such as to force them to swell into one combined, tumultuous, and infuriated cry, before they excite any attention or deference.

Now suppose it were proposed to withdraw from any particular county in England the benefit of legal protection, and to bestow on all their neighbours the privilege of plundering and destroying them with impunity—but to establish at the same time, throughout the outlawed district, gymnastic exercises, in which the inhabitants should be trained, and all possible development given to their muscular force and individual powers of resistance—with what sentiments should we listen to the suggested plan? Should we deem the boon conferred an equivalent for the benefits withdrawn? Should we not perceive that it was merely the iniquity of the law which created the demand for this peculiar excitability and courage in self-defence? Some centuries ago, these qualities were universally valued as the highest perfection of human nature, and constituted the sole end of education. It was essentially requisite for every man to possess and exert them, as the sole mode of sheltering himself against the aggression of his neighbours. We accept this paramount necessity for the display of individual strength and courage, as evincing unquestionably the extreme wretchedness and inefficiency of the established private law. Precisely on the same principle we ought to regard the repeated calls which the Reviewer makes on the spirit of liberty, and the value

which he attaches to a prompt exhibition of defensive ardour on the part of the people, as manifesting the pernicious tendency of his system of government.

If, therefore, the whole compass of our ingenuity is to reach no higher, than to frame a Legislative Assembly, whose interests continually determine it to encroach upon the happiness of the community, and then to provide an antidote to its noxious tendency, by fostering a spirit of resistance in the latter—then indeed there may be some meaning and consistency in asserting, that though the people are to elect a certain number of deputies, it is of no consequence whom they choose. But if we aim at the formation of an Assembly, both inclined and qualified, to multiply as much as possible the happiness of the community, it then becomes important that electors should choose the better and not the worse of the two candidates who present themselves, and of course that their selection should be determined by a rational comparison of qualities.

Though, however, I am thus decidedly at issue with the Reviewer on the necessity of a considerate choice, yet if we consider the ballot simply as the means of securing a previous deliberation, we should form but a slender and inadequate idea of its importance. It is wholly impossible, under any system of open suffrage, to frame an electoral body, the majority of which shall not have a predominant interest in misrule, when the distribution of property in the country is such, as inevitably to plunge the numerous

classes into a state of extreme dependance on the wealthy. Secret voting is the sole mode of securing such a division of the profits of misgovernment among the ruling class, as shall reduce to a minimum the benefit which each individual can extract from this noxious source. It is the sole means of rendering bad government less profitable to the majority of the class than good, as I have already attempted to explain in a foregoing page. Consequently, it not only procures for us a considerate choice, but it is the single specific by which that consideration can be rendered instrumental to the public happiness. Without the ballot it would avail nothing, though the votes were guided by the most mature deliberation. For as the electoral interests would point to the injury of the people, and as the persons chosen would necessarily pursue the same track, the rarest combination of mental qualities would only conduct a deputy to the accomplishment of more extensive ill. The ballot not only procures a considerate preference, but it directs to beneficial purposes the services of the deputy preferred, by a due adjustment of motives in the bosoms of the electors.

“ Again, If secrecy of suffrage could be really adopted, “ it would in practice, contract, instead of extending, “ the elective franchise, by abating, if not extinguishing, the strongest inducements to its exercise. All “ wise laws contain in themselves effectual means for “ their own execution ; but, where votes are secret, “ scarcely any motive for voting is left to the major-

“ rity of electors. In a blind eagerness to free the
“ franchise from influence, nearly all the common
“ motives for its exercise are taken away. The
“ common elector is neither to gain the favour of his
“ superiors, nor the kindness of his fellows, nor the
“ gratitude of the candidate for whom he votes,
“ From all these, secrecy must exclude him. He is
“ forbidden to strengthen his conviction, to kindle
“ his zeal, to conquer his fears or selfishness, in nu-
“ merous meetings of those with whom he agrees;
“ for if he attends such meetings he must publish his
“ suffrage—and the ballot, in his case, becomes alto-
“ gether illusory. Every blameable motive of in-
“ terest, every pardonable inducement of personal
“ partiality, are, indeed, taken away. But what is
“ left in their place? Nothing but a mere sense of
“ public duty, unaided by the popular discipline
“ which gives fervour and vigour to public sentiments.
“ A wise lawgiver does not trust to a general sense
“ of duty in the most unimportant law. If such a
“ principle could be trusted, laws would be unneces-
“ sary. Yet to this cold feeling, stripped of all its
“ most natural and powerful aids, would the system
“ of secret suffrage alone trust for its execution. At
“ the poll it is said to be sufficient, because all temp-
“ tations to do ill are supposed to be taken away,
“ But the motives by which electors are induced to
“ go to a poll have been totally overlooked. The
“ inferior classes for whom this whole system is contri-
“ ved, would, in its practice, be speedily disfranchised,

“ They would soon relinquish a privilege when it was reduced to a troublesome duty. Their public principles are often generous ; but they do not arise from secret meditation, and they do not flourish in solitude.” (P. 195.)

Now it should be recollected, first, that as under a system of open suffrage it would be impracticable to construct an electoral body which had not a predominant interest in misrule, the process of open election would leave the Government just in the same condition as it would be without any election at all. Whence is it that King, Peers, and a perpetual House of Commons, are pronounced unfit to be entrusted with legislative functions ? Simply, because they would have the strongest interest to misemploy them. For that reason the parliament is dissolved, and re-constructed every seven years. But if the elective franchise is so arranged as to leave the returning class exposed to the very same sinister interest, it is manifest that the process of election will not infuse the least improvement of disposition into the Legislative Body. For all purposes of good government, therefore, it is wholly unimportant whether the elector ever travels to the poll-booth at all. It is superfluous to adopt any measures by way of ensuring his attendance, when no amelioration in the legislative system can be expected to result from it. The very best effects which can be anticipated from open suffrage, is the introduction of a set of ceremonies, the performance of which is asserted to inspire the

people with courage to repel all excessive inroads upon their freedom and happiness. But as I have already expressed my complete dissent from the Reviewer upon this head, and as the object which I deem truly valuable and important to humanity is, the formation of a Legislative Body, both anxious and qualified to originate beneficial enactments—not the election of an Assembly whose interest will continually give birth to pernicious laws, accompanied by a counter-preparation of spirit in the people to resist them ;—I shall examine his objections to the ballot, as they bear upon the attainment of the former end,* and not of the latter.

Secondly, If it be really correct, that the great body of the people are so wholly insensible to the benefits which they might reap from good government, as to decline the inconsiderable fatigue of a journey to the neighbouring poll-booth in order to secure them, what is the proper and philosophical corrective of this defect? It is to conquer their indifference, and to provide additional stimulus, by displaying and bringing home to their bosoms the enormous benefits which flow from such a source. It is to lessen as much as possible the force of the vicious principles leading to misrule, and to reduce to a minimum the task which it is necessary to impose upon the insensible citizen, for the purpose of attaining a beneficent system. But when you bestow upon the voter an interest in misgovernment, for the purpose of overpowering his listlessness, and inducing him to take the trouble of

voting, your remedy is an enormous enhancement of the evil. Because he cannot be persuaded, without difficulty, to appear at the poll for the promotion of good government, you are determined that he shall at all events appear there, and you bring him to concur in producing the very opposite end. If, indeed, it is intended merely to attract the elector to the booth, without reference to any ulterior object, it may be wise to strew his path with flowers of every sort. But those who value the elective franchise as a means of attaining good government, will of course view its exercise as a matter of indifference, when stript of its tendency to promote that end. "No wise legislator," says the Reviewer, "trusts to a principle of duty for the execution of the most unimportant law." Unquestionably not, when a more powerful motive can be enlisted for the same end. But he will still less introduce any additional stimulus, by which men may be impelled to the performance of the preparatory ceremonies of the law, for the production of an end directly at variance with that which the law is destined to fulfil. An analogous case, perhaps, will impart to us a more distinct idea of the subject. A very perfect specimen of election is, the choice of the best among a number of anonymous copies of verses, by the examiners of an university, for the purpose of an honorary distinction. Suppose it were maintained, that a task like this was heavy and unattractive, and that it would be difficult to get examiners to perform it; It would then become

necessary to spur them on by an extraordinary stimulus, and to hold out to them the prospect of greater gain from the discovery of the best among the offered compositions. But surely we should not deem it judicious to excite them merely to assemble and make a choice, without considering whether their choice was good or bad. Still less should we introduce the agency of motives, by which, though they might be induced to choose, they would be infallibly impelled to make an improper choice. We should never dream of exposing the names of the writers, in order that the examiners might gain the "favour of their superiors, or the gratitude of the candidate for whom they voted." If such motives as these are to determine their choice, they might exactly as well not choose at all. Secure to the judge large bribes from every wealthy disputant, and he will attend and decide causes with the most rigid punctuality. Yet no wise legislator would let in motives of this sort, as a spur to animate a supine and inattentive magistrate. If, therefore, the Reviewer were really correct in assuming, that the people were so wholly insensible to the benefits of good government, as to neglect the performance even of the lightest duty requisite to procure them; I should still pronounce his remedy most exceptionable and pernicious, as curing an absence of inclination for good by the substitution of a positive tendency towards evil.

But is this utter insensibility of the people with regard to political measures really warranted by the

fact? Are we really to conclude, that the ardent political feeling, which seems so generally diffused, is nothing more than a passion for noise and tumult, and the riot of a crowded meeting? To affirm that a voter cannot be attracted to the poll, unless the favour of a candidate, or of his superiors, is presented to him as a motive, is certainly a proof of the most complete indifference to political measures. It seems, therefore, that whatever may be the case with secret suffrage, open suffrage does not inspire the people with the slightest interest in public measures. If, however, we contemplate more attentively the state of the fact, I think we shall find decisive reason to reject the Reviewer's estimate of the public feeling.

“During the last thirty years the political public “has increased more perhaps than in any equal “period since the Reformation, by the diffusion of “knowledge, the pressure of public distress, and the “magnitude of the revolutions which have occurred.”*

Now it is quite clear, that this increase of interest is wholly independent of the exercise of any suffrage whatever, because there has not been any change in the latter during the period in which the former has sprung forward so rapidly. Besides, the political feeling is equally intense among that portion of the community which exercise no suffrage at all. No one will assert that the inhabitants of Leeds or Manchester are destitute of all interest in public affairs. Nor will it be maintained, that in Scotland this feeling is

* Edin. Rev. p. 172.

confined to the bosoms of the 2700 electors. This seems to evince most incontestably that public sentiments are genuine and widely diffused among the community, and that there would be abundant readiness to undertake the inconsiderable burthen of a journey to the poll. This task is, or might at least be rendered, so very trifling, that when we describe the majority of the people as unwilling to sustain one annual ceremony of the kind, we must affirm them to be destitute of any spark of interest in public matters. But nothing can be so obviously at variance with the fact as such a position.

The complete inconsistency between the arguments by which the Reviewer attacks Universal Suffrage, and those which he urges against the Ballot, is most manifest where he touches upon the points of distinction between England and America. Universal Suffrage, he tells us, (p. 200) "is perfectly secure in the latter country, because the whole population is agricultural, and there are no causes of tumult arising from the assemblage of great multitudes in towns." But this is a situation in which those fatal consequences, which he ascribes to the ballot, would manifest themselves in the most glaring manner, if they were at all real or well-founded. If secret suffrage has indeed a tendency to extinguish all interest in political measures, it would assuredly produce this effect most rapidly and effectually, in a community whose natural circumstances conspired to damp the growth of these sentiments. Yet will it be affirmed, that in those American states where ballot prevails,

the great body of the people are perfectly indifferent about public matters? Have they "in practice become speedily disfranchised," and incapable of being attracted to the poll? We may assume that this is not the fact, because no one has ever remarked any such difference between the different states in which open and secret suffrage is established. This single circumstance overthrows all those injurious consequences which the Reviewer imputes to ballot.

Again, when the Reviewer affirms that the adoption of a secret suffrage is incompatible with free discussion—he appears, if I am not in error, to have misconceived thoroughly the state of the case. A few words will suffice to elucidate the subject, and to show the futility of the charge. Under any system of open suffrage, there will of course be two classes of voters, those who coincide with, and those who dissent from, the opinions of the wealthy who possess the means of injuring them. Among the former of these classes, there may of course be the freest communication of sentiment: They may proclaim their opinions among crowded assemblies, and in the loudest and most undisguised mode. But the dissentients are irrevocably debarred from this privilege by the very nature of their opinions. How can they ever declare their thoughts, or "kindle their zeal and strengthen their conviction in numerous meetings of those with whom they agree," when such an act must draw down upon them immediate ruin? The chain of dependence permits the free circulation of

only one set of opinions. It allows unbounded openness and audacity to one, but it imprisons and prohibits completely the other. It is not, therefore, the secret suffrage, but the inequality of circumstances, which banishes every thing like free discussion. Under an open suffrage, both the speech and the vote of one class of voters is fettered and restricted. A secret suffrage simply unchains the vote, without any direct bearing upon the speech. It enables the dependant to translate his vote into a language unknown to his master, though his speech may still remain cognizable and open to punishment or recompense. But though secrecy thus releases something which was before under coercion, it represses nothing which had been previously free. The voter whose sentiments were such as to render publicity desirable and productive to him, may still continue to lift up his voice, and to display his loyalty amidst numerous assemblies of sympathizing hearers. No one desires to place him under any restraint, but simply to extend a fair licence and emancipation to his rival, and to unfetter opinions which are condemned to perpetual suppression and imprisonment.

Nothing, therefore, can be more unfounded than the assertion that a secret suffrage would deaden the interest of the people in public affairs. I have previously endeavoured to show, that even if that interest remained at its present level, it would be amply sufficient to maintain in action a good system of government. But the principles of human nature

fully warrant us in anticipating an amazing enhancement of the general interest in political measures, from the adoption of a system of secret suffrage. By thus imparting to the majority of electors a self-determining power, their minds are laid open to the action of that controversy and persuasion, for which there is no demand, so long as their voices remain shackled and dependant. Every candidate would then use his utmost exertions to create a political opinion in minds which had previously harboured nothing of the kind, and to kindle and vivify it where it had before been faint or partial. As this path would be accessible to many, the number of parliamentary aspirants would be exceedingly multiplied, and both the frequency and the vigour of genuine competition proportionally augmented. Each contest would produce an active circulation of the pretensions urged and credentials exhibited by the respective candidates, and the judgment of the electors would be provoked by the discussion and comparison of them. For it should be recollected, that when the landlord or the master loses his control over the dependant's vote, it no longer becomes his interest to employ terror as a means of enchaining his opinions. Unavailing threats will merely ensure the vote of the dependant against him; and the galling curb which has imprisoned the elector's voice, will at the poll add nerve and energy to the stroke of his emancipated pen. So far from repressing discussion, the ballot is the only means of liberating it, and

of placing all opinions upon an equality. When, too, the pressure of hope and fear is removed, an immediate arena is cleared for the range and expansion of intellectual superiority. It would become the interest of the strongest minds in the community to implant and develop political sentiments among their fellow-citizens, as the sure mode of diffusing their own influence and reputation.

From these considerations, I think it perfectly unquestionable, that secresy of suffrage could not fail to quicken and diffuse very materially the growth of public feeling among the people. An open suffrage is either a privilege or a nullity, according to the degree of dependance in which the voter's circumstances may happen to place him. A secret suffrage is of necessity the most valuable of privileges, under all imaginable circumstances. Had an open vote been allotted to every slave in Athens, it would not have shielded him from any excess of atrocity on the part of his master. A secret suffrage would have proved an act of virtual manumission to the whole body, and would have exalted them at one step into credit and importance. Can we for an instant doubt, in which of the two cases the greatest intensity and expansion of political feeling would have sprung up among them?

Under a system of secret suffrage, the immense influence of property and power, in the hands of the small number, would be diverted to the production of pure and unalloyed benefit, instead of being the

source of incalculable evil. When no mode remained of influencing a vote, except through the medium of a secret motive, the great would be reduced to the employment of none but beneficent weapons. The difference between the kind and the tyrannical master would then be exhibited in the clearest point of view. Benevolence in the former would not pass unrequited, for the gratitude of the dependant will act secretly as well as openly; and the extinction of the tyrant's influence will form at least a slight atonement for the injuries which he has inflicted. All those amiable feelings which sway humanity most delightfully, and which operate as a reward and an incentive to virtuous conduct, would retain unimpaired influence. None but the odious and compulsory motives, or the selfish prospect of sinister emolument, would be extinguished and disarmed. But the grand and important mode, in which the action of wealth would assume a beneficial character, arises from the interest which its possessors would instantly feel in improving the understandings of the poorer classes. Those favours which can stimulate ardent gratitude, must of necessity be confined to a narrow circle: But a sound and correct judgment may be diffused without limit; and it is to the secret influence of reason that the appeal must in all ordinary cases be directed. Hence the overwhelming authority and the superior education of the powerful would be employed in spreading knowledge and intelligence, and in enlarging those minds whose errors

might be productive of fatal consequences to their mutual happiness. It is scarcely possible to frame an adequate conception of the stimulus which this conversion of motive on the part of the great would imprint upon the public mind, or of the general amelioration of character and circumstances which would be its infallible result. The annals of history present not a single instance of this complete reconciliation and unison of interest.

I have endeavoured,* I trust successfully, to re-

* "There are occasions on which the use of the Ballot is advantageous. There are occasions on which it is hurtful. If we look steadily to the end, to which all institutions profess to be directed,—the common and public good, we shall not find it very difficult to draw the line of demarcation.

"On all those occasions on which the interests which are liable to act secretly upon the voter, have a tendency to seduce him from the path of probity, while those which act openly and are avowed, have a tendency to retain him in that path, the publicity of the vote is of the highest importance.

"On all those occasions on which the motives which act secretly are on the side of probity, those which act publicly on the side of vice, the secrecy of the vote is eminently useful. In other words, wherever the voter's own interests and inclinations if he is left to himself, are such as to point in the right direction, while he is liable to be acted upon in a sinister direction by the will and power of others, the ballot is a great security for good. Wherever a man's own interests and inclinations point in the sinister direction, while he is still capable of being restrained by the voice of public detestation or applause, the ballot affords only a security for corruption. The East India Company presents an instance of the baneful operation of the ballot; where it is possible for a majority of proprietors to have interests in the highest

move the sum of those objections which the Reviewer adduces against secrecy of suffrage. There is, however, one more passage on which I think it necessary to animadvert:

“ The advocates of Ballot tell us, indeed, that it
 “ would destroy canvass and tumult. But after the
 “ destruction of canvass, elections would no longer
 “ teach humility to the great, nor self-esteem to the
 “ humble. Were the causes of tumult destroyed,
 “ elections would no longer be nurseries of political
 “ zeal, and instruments for rousing national spirit.”—
 (P. 199.)

On the value of a tumultuous election, it will not be requisite to offer any farther remarks. Those who aim at the construction of a well-disposed Legislative Body, will naturally treat with contempt a circumstance which, if such a body can be procured, cannot fail to prove superfluous and troublesome. But the observation of the Reviewer on the subject of canvass appears truly singular. It should be recollected, that a secret suffrage leaves open every species of electioneering competition, except that

“ degree inconsistent with those of the public, but interests
 “ which the force of the public sanction, concentrated upon the
 “ acts of every individual, would have a tendency to prevent
 “ them from pursuing. The election of members to serve in
 “ Parliament presents an instance of the salutary operation of
 “ the ballot; it being impossible for the mass of individuals who
 “ compose the nation to have interests hostile to the nation;
 “ but it being very possible for a great proportion of them to
 “ be acted upon by persons who have.”

Mill's Hist. of British India, vol. ii. p. 303.

which is founded on bribery and intimidation, and that it sharpens exceedingly all the other weapons of contest. But can the Reviewer possibly mean, that the lesson of humility inculcated upon the proud, would become less impressive, when they were disarmed of their most cutting and efficacious means of offence, and confined to the use of those gentle and innocuous stimulants, the application of which demands extreme patience, self-denial, and precaution? What mode so infallible of repressing pride, as the total or partial erasure of those peculiar prerogatives on which it is built? Or does the Reviewer maintain that the self-esteem of the humble dependant will be heightened, when he acts in the mere capacity of a funnel or vehicle for the transmission of his lord's opinion—when his own sentiments are neither asked nor valued—when he is compelled, on pain of utter ruin, to march under the banners of a cause which he detests, and to be instrumental in inflicting oppression on himself; and that it will be depressed when he is presented with a privilege which renders him invisible, and shelters him from all menace and apprehension—when the liveliest appeals from all sides court his unfettered and self-operating judgment—and when all necessity of lending himself to the support of an odious system, as a preservative from immense individual evil, is abrogated? To bestow an open vote upon a dependant, is precisely the same as if every gentleman were compelled to send his suffrage to the poll by his butler, instead of

carrying it thither himself. Would such a regulation teach humility to the former, or self-esteem to the latter? It would manifestly leave the relation between the two quite unaltered. But condemn the master to complete ignorance of the mode in which his butler acts at the booth, and the lesson which you inculcate will become profound and important.

But the Reviewer is also of opinion, that even if secrecy were desirable, the ballot would not produce it. His reasoning on this subject appears to me erroneous and inconclusive. The vote at the poll is sheltered from direct inspection, and the number of voters is very considerable. By what means, then, is the sense of the vote to be ascertained? By the previous conduct and sentiments of the elector, if it be at all cognizable. But these may of course be assumed and counterfeited by all the electors, and how shall the genuine be distinguished from the spurious? The analogy of clubs, which the Reviewer produces, is unsatisfactory, because the parallel fails, according to his own avowal, in the essential circumstance on which the question hinges. The excluding minority of a club, he says, are always discovered. But in the very next sentence he reveals to us the reason:—"Exclusion by ballot is not considered a just cause of offence." Consequently, the dissentients have not the smallest interest in concealing their votes, and when they promulgate the direction in which their balls have been dropped, the assertion is implicitly believed. But no one would ever think

of enquiring from an elector what vote he had given at the poll, or attach any value to his statement, where there was so manifest an interest in returning an affirmative answer. Among so small a number as the ministerial members of Parliament, between whom there exists a complete unison of interest, the introduction of ballot is a mere farce. Nor is the analogy of an East India election at all closer. Not the slightest precaution is there adopted to ensure secrecy. Slips of paper containing the names of the different candidates lie upon the desk, and of these every voter selects one, so that his choice is as open and undisguised as it would be if his lips pronounced the favoured name. Both friends and enemies are engaged in remarking which paper he takes up; and should he manifest any anxiety to conceal the direction of his vote, it is of course construed into a design of falsifying a promise which the candidate to whom it has been given has registered and reckoned upon. Wherever secrecy of suffrage is optional and not compulsory, the effect is precisely the same as if the suffrage were open.

If we contemplate the matter accurately, we shall perceive that the Ballot cannot fail of producing the effect which its advocates promise, and of bestowing upon every vote a direction determined exclusively by the genuine sentiments of the elector. Suppose the worst, that his powerful oppressor should learn that he has dared to express independent feelings on political subjects, what will it avail the elector to

attempt to avert his indignation by an altered and falsified vote? His master can never obtain any evidence that his suffrage has really undergone this transmutation, nor will he repose any confidence either in the promise or the asseveration of the trembling dependant. Under no conceivable circumstances can the latter benefit himself by deviating at the poll-booth from his genuine persuasion. Whatever may be the hazard incurred by the adherence to any particular party, the sole refuge of the voter must consist in profound and successful dissimulation. Every act of coercion which could be resorted to would merely occasion a stricter silence and disguise. It would fortify and aggravate the sentiment which was forcibly blockaded within. But whether the voter is fortunate enough to dissemble his opinions, or whether in spite of his precautions, events should divulge them, thus much is evident, that he will not have the slightest temptation to belie them at the poll. The Reviewer merely endeavours to show that the sentiments of voters must become known, in defiance of every attempt to disguise them. It would be easy to expose the weakness of what he adduces for this purpose; but granting his assumptions to be perfectly exact, the efficacy of the Ballot will remain unimpaired. Whatever misery may be suspended over the head of the elector, in consequence of the notoriety of his sentiments, a falsified vote can neither avert nor mitigate the slightest portion of it. No imaginable occurrence can rob the Ballot of that important pro-

perty which exclusively belongs to it, nor prevent it from reserving the disposal of every vote to the genuine conviction of the voter.

When by this system, all modes of coercion had been rendered incapable of determining a single vote, the natural result would be, as I have before remarked, that no one would ever recur to an impotent display of menace and intimidation, which might defeat, but could never accomplish, their own ends. There would then be no apprehension connected with publicity in any case, and a secret suffrage would thus actually unbridle every man's tongue. It would extinguish all the necessity of previous secrecy, and would introduce, instead of the mystery and reserve of the "Venetian Council of Ten," a latitude and equality of discussion, and an unrestricted collision of ideas, such as no open suffrage could ever permit. It would bestow that free admission on every man's sentiments, which the prohibitory terrors of the latter monopolises for the opinions of the powerful.

It may be useful to offer a few remarks in this place on the subject of that influence which a secret suffrage permits to be exerted. "The leaders of the democratic party, who now predominate in their Caucus or Committee, at Washington," says the Reviewer (p. 201), "do in effect nominate to all the important offices in North America." By removing the rival principles of bribery and intimidation, the Ballot would naturally occasion an increased growth and diffusion of all that species of influence which

operates upon the judgment. Such an increase is one of its most important and infallible results. The ascendant of superior ability, the paternal guidance of a tried monitor, are inestimable blessings, when unperverted by any sinister interest, of which it would indeed be unwise to bereave the community. It is not all influence which deserves to be extinguished, but simply that noxious influence which conducts to bad government. The American Caucus can neither bribe nor intimidate; they can only instruct and persuade; and where this result is to be brought about, truth and reason must in the long run be the decisive and triumphant weapons.

I have hitherto exclusively animadverted on the species of interest which may animate the bosoms of the governing class, or of the Legislative Assembly, and which of course determines the tone and character of their proceedings. It is not because there are no other qualities which a perfect assembly of the latter kind should possess, but because a conformity of interest with the people forms that vital and primary requisite, the importance of which puts in the shade all other conceivable attributes. Knowledge is merely power, and is a benefit or an evil according to the interest which its possessor has in employing it. No one considers talent as desirable in the enemy's general. It is not, therefore, merely idle—it is absolutely detrimental and pernicious, to seek out the most skilful and best instructed persons as depositaries of power, unless you at the same time

breathe into them a spirit of amity and a coincidence of interest with yourself. To inspect the lock and trigger of your fowling-piece, and to measure out the proportions of powder and shot with a proper adjustment to its capacity, is doubtless of importance. But it is incomparably more important to ascertain the direction in which the muzzle is pointed—for all your other precautions will merely terminate in a dreadful aggravation of your own danger and misery, if it be turned against yourself. Yet if we examine the writings and conversation in which the subject of government is daily discussed, it would appear as if a conformity of interest between the ruling class and the people, was a thing which could not fail to occur, and which no pains were requisite to ensure. This is, indeed, a striking instance, among others, of the predominant sway which the ruling aristocracy have exercised in moulding the general cast of thought and philosophy. We never fail to hear the importance of those qualities which they themselves either possess, or can always encourage and purchase—knowledge and instruction—enforced in every possible shape. They never omit to assert that the multitude are unable to detect and estimate these qualities. The Reviewer dismisses this topic with an air of perfect ease, informing us, in the passage which I have cited, “that every government has in truth the same interest with its subjects.” His reverence for nobility does not permit him even to hint the insulting truth, that as the

small number uniformly derive benefit from oppressing the community, every additional particle of knowledge or power which is enlisted on the side of the former, is an enhancement of suffering to the latter. The relation between the blacks and whites, in the western hemisphere, presents a melancholy proof of the incalculable misery which a superior and cultivated class shower down upon the heads of the inferior and ignorant, when they have the full power of realizing those intentions which a discordant interest universally engenders.*

For this reason I have devoted the whole of the preceding analysis to an examination of those motives which the laws of human nature unavoidably implant in the bosoms of the governing class, according as their number and construction may be regulated. I have attempted to demonstrate, that there are but three points, towards which the intentions and the measures of this class can possibly be directed. They may pursue either the separate interest of one, or the separate interests of a few, or the universal interest which all the members of the society have in common. One of these three must be selected to the exclusion of the others; for any two of them are thoroughly discordant and irreconcilable. I have further endeavoured to prove, that there exists no other mode of constructing a ruling body which shall have a pre-

* A concise, but masterly and perspicuous, development of this subject may be seen in the article *Government*, in the Supplement to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

ponderant interest in pursuing the latter, except by means of very frequent elections, a ballot, and a suffrage so widely extended as to be in practice the same as if it were universal. The theory of representation by classes appears, when exposed and stated in full, to be merely a disguised and surreptitious method of securing unqualified predominance to the separate interests of the few, and consequently as complete a disregard and oppression of the community as the apprehension of resistance will permit.

Now if the foregoing positions are well founded, they are of themselves sufficient to evince the paramount necessity of a complete Reform, and the exclusive preference which its proposed scheme deserves—even though I should concede, that a reformed Legislature would be defective in other respects, and would manifest a very inferior share of talent and education. For assuredly there is no man who would not rather entrust any business, however difficult, to the conduct of his most ignorant friend, himself warmly interested in its success, than to the most finished negociator who was to be benefited by its failure. But it is time to examine whether there really is any ground for imagining, that the system would fail in enlisting a sufficient body of talent in the service of the community.

If a stranger falls sick in a distant place, and is anxious to obtain the best medical advice, what course does he pursue in selecting a physician? He inquires which among the resident profession has the

greatest practice. That is to say, he asks the name of the physician in whose favour the greatest number of independent judgments, each interested in selecting well, converge. But this is nothing more than a summary and abridged method of choosing a physician by universal suffrage and ballot. Yet it will be generally acknowledged, that a more politic or infallible rule for deciding comparative merits could not be adopted. Why then are we to be told that the same district which is so perfectly competent to elect its own lawyer or physician by universal suffrage and ballot, will not evince equal discrimination in the choice of a member for the Legislative Body? Is there any difference between the two proceedings, which can warrant us in pronouncing the inhabitants unexceptionable arbiters in the one, yet unfit and improper for the other? It will doubtless be contended that, the uninstructed portion of them accept the countenance and approval of their discerning superiors, as attesting the skill of the physician on whom they are bestowed: But it is impossible to assign even the shadow of a reason, why this guidance should not be equally held out and followed in the election of a deputy. There is a similar interest in choosing well, a similar absence of interest in the contrary; and where the parallel, both in point of motive and circumstances, is so precise, the laws of human nature promise an exact analogy of conduct and result.

I shall even advance a step farther, and affirm that

universal suffrage and ballot could not fail to prove infinitely more unerring and efficacious in the election of a legislative deputy, than in the choice of a lawyer or physician. In the latter case, each voter is abandoned to his own unaided exertions, nor does any one take pains to enlighten or set him right. No one ever computes and unfolds to him the patients whom his physician has killed, or the cases which his lawyer has mismanaged. When the one or the other have once attained his confidence, etiquette precludes all endeavour on the part of competitors to rob them of it. Inattention or unskilfulness in the professional man, may, for a considerable period, remain concealed. Besides, a person is unwilling to depart from a connection which he has once formed, when the change must be open and cannot fail of giving offence ; and he may consent, for that reason, still to employ one whose comparative inferiority he may long have detected. Now in every one of these particulars, parliamentary elections would present ample materials for facilitating and guiding the choice of each individual. First, the most complete information would be communicated to every one regarding the merits of the respective candidates. The excellence or defects of their previous conduct will be universally made known ; nor will it be requisite for the voter to incur the smallest effort in procuring the data for comparison. Committees organized for the purpose, will make it their whole business to impress the subject upon his mind, by collecting the facts,

and superadding their own comments and inferences. Secondly, there will be no law of custom or etiquette to secure the candidate, when once elected, from an immediate repetition of contest and the hazard of his seat. Rivals will be upon the watch to remark and take advantage of any neglect or delinquency, and to diffuse and magnify it in the eyes of the electors. Thirdly, from the public situation of the members, and the additional solicitude with which a reformed Legislature would provide for the promulgation of political acts, all inattention or incompetency in the member cannot fail to be discovered. Lastly, the very instant that the voter arrives at this discovery, all shadow of motive for retaining his former preference immediately expires. His vote must in any case remain unknown, and he may consequently give instant expression to his altered sentiments, without the smallest apprehension of occasioning open offence or pain to one with whom he has been habitually connected.

Combining these circumstances together, I think it unquestionable, that in electing members of the Legislative Assembly, there would be a far more copious supply of all those aids by which a correct and discriminating preference could be facilitated, and a more complete removal of all those causes which either occasion or perpetuate erroneous choice, than could ever occur in the case of lawyers or physicians. If then we admit, that under all these disadvantages, universal suffrage and ballot scarcely ever fail to

award the palm to the ablest men in these two professions—we cannot, with the least regard to consistency, deny the efficacy of these methods in furnishing the most skilful and appropriate members to the Legislature.

But let us inquire what machinery those who allege the incompetency of the popular voice, for the selection of able representatives, would themselves introduce for the attainment of superior excellence. They will, of course, withdraw the power of choice from the many, and appeal to the judgment of the few, for there is no third way of proceeding. Yet will they indeed contend, that the most perfect method of procuring the ablest physicians and lawyers would be, to bestow on certain Earls and Dukes exclusive patents for nominating medical delegates in some places—to confer the appointment of others upon narrow self-elected corporations, and to vest the remainder of the medico-elective franchise in the hands of other small societies, designated by any title which the few might assume? Shall we hear it affirmed, that this variegated monopoly would more effectually ensure the acquisition of professional skill, than the simple and uniform qualification of universal suffrage and ballot?

I have deemed it preferable, in my previous appeal to analogy, to elucidate my meaning more distinctly, by selecting the particular instances of two most eminent professions. But the real question, between the opponents and the advocates of a secret universal suf-

frage, involves in truth nothing more than a discussion of the comparative efficacy of patents and monopoly on the one side, and of free competition on the other. Is it requisite or advisable that one or a few individuals should possess the privilege of marking out the bakers, tailors, weavers, &c. of the community? Or will the general demand be sufficient to call forth numerous candidates in these different lines, among whom public opinion will infallibly select the best and the fittest? Universal suffrage and ballot, it should be remembered, are mere expedients for collecting with precision the aggregate of public opinion. Now the present tone of philosophy will not permit any one seriously to maintain, that privileged tradesmen will, in any other capacity without exception, administer as effectually to the public wants as a free competition would provide. According to this doctrine, then, it appears, that whenever the performance of any particular services is required, a number of volunteers immediately start forward to claim the post—that among these candidates, universal suffrage and ballot always selects, with sufficient exactness, the most competent, giving the greatest number of votes to the best of all, and so downwards according to their comparative merits—that the preference of the generality of voters is constantly built upon the fitness of the candidate for the discharge of his office, and not upon any irrelevant or delusive considerations—that as soon as any one ceases to discharge his functions correctly, the electors depose

him and choose another in his place—that the knowledge of this vigilant superintendence renders each functionary assiduous in performing his services as well and as cheaply as possible. Such are or must be the positions of those who advocate the cause of free trade. But if, in all other cases without exception, universal suffrage and ballot are such perfect and unerring expedients of choice, invariably promoting to every other office the best and most skilful functionary, where is our authority for supposing, that this precision and excellence will suddenly fail when it is required for the election of legislative members?

Should we reject this system, our only other alternative is, to lodge the power of selection in the hands of a few. I shall not now repeat what I have before so urgently insisted upon, that if by this process the ablest nominees could really be secured, the sinister and inauspicious interest of the electors would unavoidably devote this accumulated stock of talent to the injury of the community. But will it in truth draw forth a larger portion of talent? What are the reasons which are allowed, in all other monopolies, to render the services of the privileged functionary unskilful and ineffective? The ties of blood or friendship with the few, procure and continue for him his appointment, and to them alone he is responsible for the tenor of his conduct. The interest which they have in nominating a friend or a dependant, is far greater than that which they have in the complete

performance of any official functions, and consequently there is no stimulus to force on them a comparison of the genuine merits of two different candidates. To affirm, that the few are more discerning judges of valuable qualities than the many, even if it were true, is to no purpose, if they have a paramount interest in attending exclusively to other accessories, and abandoning all regard to comparative fitness. Of what importance would it be, though the patron of a living possessed the most critical eye for the detection of clerical excellence? He has a son, or a brother, just entering into orders, and no one expects that he will ever consider whether there exists any person more capable of discharging the office with propriety. But the case is very different where there is no clerical patronage, and where the choice of the minister is left to the universal suffrage of the congregation.

To all these motives by which privileged patrons, in other cases, are uniformly led to the appointment of backward and inactive nominees, the few, to whom it is proposed to entrust the provision of skilful Legislators, would be unavoidably exposed. The evidence of analogy is most direct and ample, and he who would maintain that one or a few patent electors would nominate Legislators of greater fitness and ability than universal suffrage and the ballot, can employ no arguments, except such as apply with equal justice to the case of lawyers or physicians, or any other functionaries whatever. In all these cases his reasoning would be annihilated by the largest expe-

rience, and by generally received principles, and we cannot, therefore, admit its validity or follow its counsel in a new instance where no tenable ground of distinction can be shown.

When, therefore, the Reviewer alleges, that an universal secret suffrage would introduce into the Legislative Body "no talents, no attainments, except such as recommend men to the favour of the "multitude;" (p. 186.) I reply, that the encouragement of the public is uniformly awarded to those qualities which best adapt any functionary to the service which the public interest requires of him. The favour of any small number is, by a similar rule, distributed according as consanguinity, or friendship, or any other interest common to a small number, may dictate. The frame of the human heart would naturally lead us to anticipate these results, and experience daily, in a thousand shapes, attests their practical infallibility. If then the views of the Legislature ought to be directed towards the public interest, and not towards the separate interest of any small number, it is highly desirable that such qualities only as the public judgment may approve, should find admission into it.

But an amazing variety of talents and attainments, the Reviewer contends, is required in different members of the Assembly; and the public is incapable of valuing and apportioning the quantity of each which it may be proper to infuse. Some members, he affirms, should be versed in the affairs of the land,

others in manufacturing concerns; while others, again, should be qualified to carry on discussions about law or foreign policy. To this it may be replied—first, that the diversity of those functions, which the public wants demand in the ordinary course of life, is far wider and more complicated than any variety of qualifications which can be required among the different members of the Assembly. Yet, amidst all this prodigious diversity of services, we observe that numerous pretenders to every one of these posts, aware of the public necessities, start forward to supply them; and that the free election and deposition of the general voice weighs the comparative merits of the claimants with an accuracy which never fails to promote the fittest. But, though experience would justify me in offering this alone as an adequate security, that the public choice will spontaneously provide all varieties of talent which may be necessary; yet there is another consideration peculiar to the present case, which places the attainment of this object beyond all doubt:—The Legislative Assembly, exclusively devoted to the promotion of the universal interest, will itself be the very first to descry any such imperfection in its own body. It would immediately recognise the defect, if, in any discussion which concerned the law or the colonies, no member should arise qualified to guide and enlighten its judgment. The sentiments of the Assembly, relative to this imperfection, would be promulgated, either in some general resolution, or in the speeches of in-

dividual members; and this weighty authority could not fail to call forth, at the next election, additional offers of the kind of talent in demand, and to impart to its possessors a strong claim on the public preference. The East India elections, determined as they are almost wholly by private interest and solicitation, present us with a partial illustration of this principle. The nature of the vacancy which is to be filled up, whether nautical, military, or commercial, always affects, more or less, the result of the poll. Those among the directors, whom private friendship may not happen to influence very warmly, usually espouse the cause of that candidate whose services are most required among their own body. The candidate himself, or his friends, never omit to set before the proprietors, in the strongest manner, the importance of that deficiency which he is peculiarly adapted to supply. In like manner, I think it perfectly certain, that if any particular species of talent were really a desideratum in the Assembly, the defect would be so immediately perceived and divulged, and so much encouragement would be thus bestowed at the subsequent elections, on the pretensions of those who could supply it, that we may in this case, as well as in others, rely most confidently on the efficiency of the universal choice.

But I frankly confess that I do not recognise the necessity of this nice admixture of so many various talents and attainments, which the Reviewer pronounces to be the primary requisite of an Assem-

bly. The grand intellectual quality which the function of a legislator demands, is that thorough acquaintance and familiarity with comprehensive principles, and that power of combination, by virtue of which particular facts become productive of correct and extensive inferences. Without thus stripping facts of their peculiar and adventitious qualities—without considering them simply as manifestations of human motives, and weighing them one against another with reference to the greater or less universality of the motive from which they emanate—it is impracticable to frame enactments which shall include, as much as possible, the happiness of a very large number of people. Supposing the member to possess this essential requisite, I cannot help thinking that a partial acquaintance with the detail of any particular branch of the system, will rather disqualify than adapt him for legislating on the subject. If some of the particular facts, on which his judgment is to be built, have been submitted to his own inspection, while others have merely been derived from the relation of witnesses, the former will probably strike far deeper root, and ally themselves with more powerful associations: They will govern the march of his thoughts, and insensibly affect his general conclusions, with a preponderance inconsistent with that just and universal application on which a law ought to be framed. A legislator, to reverse the statement of Lord Bacon, “*judicis, non indicis personam sustinet,*” and the judicial function can scarcely be exercised in its purity

and perfection by one who has beheld and been concerned in a detached part of the transactions under review. To an historian who is to deliver a general narrative of a battle, or of a considerable series of military transactions ; or to the writer, who is tracing the progress of society throughout an extensive country and population, a partial acquaintance or intimacy with any insulated province becomes a dangerous source of prejudice. From these considerations, I cannot concur in the opinions of the Reviewer, as to the importance of securing this diversity of practical habits and experience in the composition of the Legislative Assembly. It seems to me far preferable that its members should be presented with that mass of particular facts, on which their determination is to be founded, in a mode which will dispose them to affix a just value to each separate item ; and that they should themselves merely bring to the task those powers of arrangement and comprehension which will enable them to sum up a correct result. There cannot be a worse legislator in commercial affairs than a merchant ; nor would Mr. Brougham have been better qualified for undertaking the guidance of the Education Committee, had he previously acquired a practical knowledge of the subject in the capacity of a village school-master.

No one who is accustomed to detect identity of meaning, under the disguise of different modes of expression, can fail to be surprised when he hears it affirmed, that the selections made by universal suf-

frage and ballot will be so extremely erroneous and inadequate. We hear from all quarters appeals to the shelter and countenance of public opinion : Every one recognises its jurisdiction, and courts it as a tribunal before which roguery and imposture are disarmed and unmasked, and from whence a righteous verdict is sure to emanate. All factions and parties, however opposite, prefix to their manifestoes a claim, real or pretended, to the esteem and confidence of the nation. The importance of submitting to public notice and criticism all judicial and legislative proceedings, is acknowledged without a dissentient voice. Yet, what mean the words *public opinion*? Who are the *public*? Are they not the great body of the people, the majority of the individuals inhabiting the country? When we employ the terms *public interest*, *public opinion*, we can refer to nothing else but this majority. Now, Universal Suffrage and Ballot are mere proposals for summing up in full, without the possibility of omissions or errata, the aggregate opinions of the whole community. They are the machinery for securing a precise and authentic printed record of those sentiments, which must otherwise be gathered from a manuscript version, always scattered and incomplete, sometimes wholly illegible. They furnish a perfect enumeration of the affirmative and negative voices, and consequently leave no doubt as to the ultimate result : Without their aid, the verdict is frequently equivocal, and public opinion is confidently appealed to by two opposing parties.

They are plans which obtrude upon every one the necessity of a decision, thus providing the most extensive demand for skilful and correct guides, and ensuring a diffusion of all the preparatory documents, through the interest of those who are to benefit by a just verdict: In all these respects they are merely solemn methods of drawing forth, interpreting, and concentrating, the dispersed voices of the community. But is it not strangely inconsistent to extol the opinion of the majority, when collected under every possible disadvantage and defect—and to decry and ridicule it, when transcribed in full, when accurately computed, and demanded and delivered with such a degree of solemnity as to ensure the most mature deliberation of which each individual is capable? Shall we hear it maintained, that the desultory buz of public opinion, the irregular show of hands, will be in favour of truth and reason—and that when a day is named, and the solitary, forewarned, and considerate judgment of each individual is computed at a poll, this decision will be reversed?

Listen to a reasoner, who is vindicating the importance of an open court of justice. You will hear him insisting, that an impartial decision is best secured by multiplying the number of judgments to which it is submitted—that, by thus augmenting the number of the judges, the universal interest, and not the separate interest of a few, will dictate the verdict—that this step will likewise ensure the overthrow of all those *idola specús*, which

one or a few may worship, inasmuch as these separate prejudices will mutually neutralise each other. "Truth," says Hume, "is one, but errors are numberless, and each man has a different one." Every increase, therefore, in the body consulted affords an additional prospect of victory to the truth. But all these arguments conduct us directly to an universal suffrage. Or, is there a point beyond which it is impolitic to multiply the jurors? Can any boundary be shown, beyond which the mind of man loses its power of contributing to the chance of a true conclusion, and becomes a negative quantity, ready to enlist, at all times, under the banners of error? If there really exists any such boundary, it is of the highest importance to ascertain and define it minutely; and those who may affirm it ought not to repose until they have fulfilled this task. If there be no such boundary, then those who eulogise public opinion as a valuable corrective, cannot, with any consistency, maintain that universal suffrage and ballot are vicious instruments of choice and decision. Is public opinion sufficiently enlightened to review the judicial proceedings, and to bridle the partiality of the judge, by the unerring sagacity with which it detects and stigmatises every unjust determination? Then it is perfectly unquestionable, that an annual vote of censure and approbation on his conduct, by universal suffrage and ballot, would prove a still more solemn and efficacious coercive.

But if, by the sentiments of the public, it is not

intended to designate the sentiments of the whole community, whom does the word *public* comprise? It cannot denote any large number of individuals thinking at variance with the whole nation. Because you cannot vindicate and extol the judging power of any considerable number, above that of one or a few, except by the production of reasons, which would sanction and ratify, with still greater force, the collective decision of all. The public voice, therefore, if distinguished from the universal voice, can only mean the sentiments of a number so considerable as to coincide and harmonize with the judgment of the whole. Public opinion must designate a faithful and compendious abstract of that result which universal suffrage and the ballot would exhibit at length; and an appeal to this abridged copy can only be preferred as superseding the more burdensome necessity of computing the opinion of each individual *seriatim*. This is the only genuine and tenable ground of distinction between the public and the universal voice. I have already remarked, that the interest which the major portion of the community possess in common one with another, is the same as that which each member of this majority possesses in common with the whole. Consign, therefore, the decision to a detachment of this magnitude, and you will elicit the same verdict as the universal interest would dictate. You may securely strike off the voices of the remainder, because the voters cannot watch over their own interests without likewise protecting the common in-

terests of their brethren. No person maintains the necessity of a suffrage absolutely universal, when there is a shorter process for arriving at the same result. But it is not easy to assign any unexceptionable line of demarcation, nor is it politic to fence off any detachment of the people by an unnecessary exclusion from the exercise of any particular privilege. This, however, is a matter of very inferior importance, provided a decision conformable to the universal interest be secured. And the mode of attaining this end, would be to demand from those who so loudly magnify the value of public opinion, whom they mean by the *public*. To any body, who could with propriety lay claim to that appellation, the suffrage might be confided, with as great a certainty of procuring just decisions as if it were extended to the whole.

But the question which I have been examining is, whether a reference to the public voice, and a free exercise of general election and deposition, will be more effectual methods of securing a zealous and skilful performance of legislative duties: or whether, by vesting electoral patents in the hands of one or a few, nominees of greater talent and assiduity will be provided? If ever there was a discussion in which the undivided weight both of theory and experience was cast into one side of the scale, it is this. Theory acquaints us, that the motives to choice in the few are their own separate interests, tending (if

possible) to the plunder and oppression, but uniformly to the neglect, of the community. Their nominee; therefore, may hope to benefit by a bad performance of his functions, but can expect nothing from a zealous attention to them. On the other hand, the motives to choice in the public are likewise their common interests, or the desire of securing the greatest possible happiness to each individual of the state. Consequently, the Legislator whom they appoint, dares not deviate from that direction; and the fear of losing his seat continually spurs him on to the warmest efforts of which he is capable. "Claudus *"in viâ antevertit cursorem extra viam,"* says Lord Bacon. Experience confirms these principles by the amplest citation of particulars. We continually observe an exact attention to the requisite qualities, and an unexceptionable allotment of favour and patronage, where free competition is admitted, which ensures the most excellent and assiduous functionaries for all that immense variety of services which the public wants require. To all this irresistible mass of analògical proof, it may likewise be added, as I have attempted to show, that peculiar circumstances would, in the present case, stimulate, enlighten, and facilitate, the judgment of the choosers to such an extent, as to impart to the public voice an accuracy and discrimination far exceeding that which it generally attains. Nothing, therefore, can be more satisfactory, than the security afforded by universal suffrage and

ballot, or by public opinion, which is their abridged copy, for the nomination of assiduous and skilful Legislators.

But however perfect these instruments may be for attaining an excellent nomination of deputies, they will be unavailing and useless, if the periodical elections are not of very frequent recurrence. One leading property of that free competition, which is so successful in providing able ministers for the supply of all the public wants, is its unremitting constancy. Were every man obliged to elect his physician or his lawyer for a certain term of years, and to resign for that period all power of change, though the choice were in other respects perfectly unrestricted, yet these practitioners would rapidly degenerate, both in assiduity and skill. The fear of instant deposition acts as the most powerful spur to their diligence. But this continual and unceasing check can only be brought to operate where the separate interest of each individual is concerned, and where the elective power is vested exclusively in a single bosom. When a number of isolated and distant votes are to be combined, competition can be introduced only at stated periods. Besides this, the nature of the trust confided to the Legislative Body, and the process of collecting evidence, as well as framing laws which it is required to go through, demands a period of some length before it can begin to realise the public expectation. This temporary monopoly, however, ought not to be protracted a moment longer than necessity enjoins. The

more quickly periodical elections revert, the closer is the approximation which we attain to that watchful and healthy spirit of competition, which enforces the exact performance of all other functions. The Legislative Body, therefore, should be dissolved and remodelled as often as can possibly recur, with a due regard to the exercise of its deliberative office. A period of one year seems amply sufficient, and will enable it to meet all ordinary exigencies. Should any peculiar emergency happen, which may render it expedient that a particular set of members should continue in office for a longer period, the notoriety of this single circumstance could not fail to procure their re-election.

The Reviewer, however, thinks that if elections were made annual, "there would be much oftener an acquiescence (in the continuance of members) from the evil of frequent contest, than from a continued preference of political merit." To this it may be replied, that a tranquil collection of secret suffrages would remove all the evils of contest, and therefore would leave to the people no motive whatever to retain an unpopular functionary. He cites likewise, with approbation, a passage from one of Mr. Bentham's earlier works, relative to frequent elections: "As the mischiefs of changing so often as you might change are so palpable, and as you see no more reason for changing at one time than another, you even take things as they are, and enter into a sort of implicit engagement with yourself not to change

“at all.” But to assume that there is no more reason for changing at one time than another, is to pronounce that things are proceeding very well. If so, change is unnecessary and impolitic. The principle does not embrace those cases, in which more ground for change can be pointed out at one time than at another.

The analogy of other functions, to which I have before alluded, evinces clearly, that a power of frequent deposition by no means leads to the permanent retention of defective servants. Every man may change his lawyer or physician, if he pleases, not only annually, but daily. But, “though the mischiefs of changing as frequently as he might change are palpable,” the result manifests, nevertheless, that he seizes the precise moment when change really becomes desirable. He deposes the functionary when the business of his office is ill performed. Unless the generality of men acted in this manner, we should not see the best lawyer, and the best physician, almost uniformly engaged in the greatest practice.

Change is in itself a very considerable evil, and is merely eligible as a preventive of the still greater evil of bad government. It supposes previous mal-practices, of which it is to be the corrective. The anxiety for change will be proportioned to the fulness and emphasis with which these mal-practices are singled out and exposed before the eyes of the nation. But the exposure of these abuses forms the sole source

from which many of the finest intellects draw their whole reputation. A reformed Legislature would infallibly multiply writers of this spirit, whose sole vocation is to excite in the people a desire to change, by pointing out present defects. Whenever they were successful in spreading a conviction of these abuses, other candidates would be at hand to take advantage of the general dissatisfaction, and to exalt themselves by its aid to the eminent post which it might render vacant. To diffuse among the community a knowledge of mal-practices, and an anxiety to remove them—to annihilate all interests which might be benefited by their continuance—and to provide a strong competition of candidates, is all which any system can do to secure the deposition of bad members. Is it possible to believe that the mere power of annual change would frustrate the improving effect of all these preparations? If this be true, it must arise from one of two causes:—Either the voters cannot be drawn once a year to the poll; or else, if attracted thither, they will be sure to support a member already proved guilty of misconduct, in preference to one who is untried. To believe the first of these suppositions, we must imagine that the people have not the smallest interest in political affairs; for the mere ceremony of delivering the vote may be rendered so very light a task, that the smallest motive would suffice to procure its annual performance. In treating of the Ballot, I have already given my reasons for believing that this extinction of political

stimulus is the last of all events to be apprehended. Supposing the voter already at the poll, is it probable that he will bestow his support on one with whom he has positive reason to be dissatisfied, in preference to another to whom no such ground of exclusion applies? When the feeling of discontent has reached any height, in other words, when the misconduct of the member has become at all glaring, it can hardly fail to outweigh, in the mind of the voter, the evil of general change. It should be recollected that members of this description are by no means likely to be engaged in any extensive plans of amelioration, for the conduct of which it might be desirable to secure to them a more permanent possession of legislative powers. Aversion to change in general, therefore, will not be assisted by any peculiar motives to screen the guilty deputy. The analogy of joint-stock companies, and other private corporations, which has been cited as a proof that annual elections prove in effect appointments for life, is defective in many important points. In the first place, there are no writers who draw their livelihood and reputation from an exposure of malpractices. There is no portion of activity and intelligence enlisted as it were under the banners of change, and watching sedulously every opportunity of recommending it to the electors. Consequently, the knowledge of abuses is never diffused, and the abuses themselves grow up into an habitual and recognised system, of which it is deemed unfair to bereave the directors. The absence of these zealous watch-

dogs is a defect which nothing can compensate. Secondly, the election is confined to one spot, and the frequent assemblage of many remote proprietors is inconvenient and impracticable. Thirdly, the elections are open, which not only lets in motives of personal friendship, and considerations of gentlemanly etiquette and forbearance, but also lodges in the hands of the directors an overwhelming mass of influence, to be employed in obstructing change. Will it be affirmed that, with these very imperfect contrivances, change would be more frequent, if the elections for these companies were triennial instead of annual?

Objections therefore to annual elections, founded upon their supposed tendency to relax the exercise of the deposing power, with regard to undeserving members, appear premature and unfounded. Nor can they be suffered to preclude our adoption of that frequent periodical choice, by which alone public elections can be made to approach the certainty and continuity of check resulting from private competition. The very best functionaries, when their tenure becomes unfettered and independent, degenerate into neglect and misconduct—

Vidi lecta diù, et multo spectata labore,

Degenerare tamen, ni vis humana quotannis

Optima quæque manu legeret.

VIRG. *Georg.*

I shall now sum up, in as few words as possible,

the principles which the foregoing pages are intended to establish.

When any set of persons are entrusted with the power of raising contributions from the community, their use or abuse of such a privilege will of course be determined by their interest. Should the majority of them draw greater benefit from extorting and appropriating undue taxes, they will infallibly pursue this course. Nor will this spirit ever be extinguished, unless such a Reform be adopted, as will ensure a governing class, whose majority shall have a different interest. The object of genuine Reform, therefore, is to construct this class in such a manner, as shall give to each of its members the least possible interest in bad government.

The means employed for this end are to extend very considerably the numbers of the ruling company, and to place its members on such a footing, that if they should intend to promote misrule, the advantages thence accruing shall be shared among them all, in a manner as equal as possible. By this means, the interest which each individual has in bad government, will be reduced to a minimum. By an universal or extended suffrage, the first of these two ends will be accomplished; by short parliaments and ballot, the second.

There are two modes by which it may be proposed to supersede the necessity of implanting this converted interest in the minds of the governing company. First, it may be said, you may discover per-

sons who, though possessing both the interest and the power to extract money from the community, will not act agreeably to this temptation. Secondly, even if they should be so disposed, public opinion will effectually defeat any such intention. Each of these schemes I have reviewed, and endeavoured to estimate at their proper worth.

Another plan has been proposed, for framing a governing class out of certain fraternities into which the nation is to be divided. In discussing this scheme, I have attempted to show, that there are two objects, one of which every government must pursue—either the interest which a few have in common, or the interest which all the individuals in the state have in common; That a ruling class, constructed upon this system, will infallibly pursue the former, and will therefore be an organ of bad government. It can therefore (like other systems of bad government) only be corrected by a combination with one of the two remedies before mentioned, and I have before shown those to be incomplete.

Should this reasoning prove correct, it will appear that there is no other scheme by which the same amount of good can be attained, as by that of the Reformers. My next endeavour, therefore, has been to remove the objections urged against the means which the scheme of Reform would employ for the accomplishment of this valuable aim. I have cited the arguments by which Universal Suffrage, Ballot, and Short Parliaments have been assailed by an emi-

nent hand in the Edinburgh Review, and have endeavoured to prove them destitute of foundation,—to show that the great body of the people recognise the interest which they have in respecting personal and proprietary rights, and will aim entirely at the promotion of that interest which all the members of the society have in common. Besides this, the amplest proof has been adduced, both from theory and experience, that they likewise possess sufficient discernment to select the most skilful Legislators; and that the ardour, as well as proficiency, which we might expect from members of their choice, would infinitely outweigh all the qualifications attainable in the nominees of one, or a few patent electors.

Two separate demonstrations, therefore, may be produced in favour of an extended Suffrage, Ballot, and Annual Parliamentary Elections. First, they are the only means of securing a ruling body inclined to govern well: Secondly, they are the means of securing the greatest possible sum both of talent and assiduity in the Legislature.

THE END.

