ment. But it is also necessary that they should have the power of explaining their views to the nation; of being heard as other people are heard. There are various plans for so doing, which I may discuss a little in speaking of the House of Commons. But so much is evident: the House of Lords, for its own members, attains this object; it gives them a voice, it gives them what no competing plan does give them—*position*. The leisured members of the Cabinet speak in the Lords with authority and power. They are not administrators with a right to speech—clerks (as is sometimes suggested) brought down to lecture a House, but not to vote in it; but they are the equals of those they speak to; they speak as they like, and reply as they choose; they address the House, not with the "bated breath" of subordinates, but with the force and dignity of sure rank. Life-peers would enable us to use this faculty of our Constitution more freely and more variously. It would give us a larger command of able leisure; it would improve the Lords as a political pulpit, for it would enlarge the list of its select preachers.

The danger of the House of Commons is, perhaps, that it will be reformed too rashly; the danger of the House of Lords certainly is, that it may never be reformed. Nobody asks that it should be so; it is quite safe against rough destruction, but it is not safe against inward decay. It may lose its veto as the Crown has lost its veto. If most of its members neglect their duties, if all its members

continue to be of one class, and that not quite the best; if its doors are shut against genius that cannot found a family, and ability which has not five thousand a year, its power will be less year by year, and at last be gone, as so much kingly power is gone—no one knows how. Its danger is not in assassination, but atrophy; not abolition, but decline.

No. V.

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.*

THE dignified aspect of the House of Commons is altogether secondary to its efficient use. It *is* dignified: in a government in which the most prominent parts are good because they are very stately, any prominent part, to be good at all, must be somewhat stately. The human imagination exacts keeping in government as much as in art; it will not be at all influenced by institutions which do not match with those by which it is principally influenced. The House of Commons needs to be impressive, and impressive it is: but its use resides not in its appearance, but in its reality. Its office is not to win power by awing mankind, but to use power in governing mankind.

The main function of the House of Commons is one which we know quite well, though our common constitutional speech does not recognise it. The House of Commons is an electoral chamber; it is the assembly which chooses our president. Wash-

* I reprint this chapter substantially as it was first written. It is too soon, as I have explained in the introduction, to say what changes the late Reform Act will make in the House of Commons.

ington and his fellow-politicians contrived an electoral college, to be composed (as was hoped) of the wisest people in the nation, which, after due deliberation, was to choose for President the wisest man in the nation. But that college is a sham; it has no independence and no life. No one knows, or cares to know, who its members are. They never discuss, and never deliberate. They were chosen to vote that Mr. Lincoln be President, or that Mr. Breckenridge be President; they do so vote, and they go home. But our House of Commons is a real choosing body; it elects the people it likes. And it dismisses whom it likes too. No matter that a few months since it was chosen to support Lord Aberdeen or Lord Palmerston; upon a sudden occasion it ousts the statesman to whom it at first adhered, and selects an opposite statesman whom it at first rejected. Doubtless in such cases there is a tacit reference to probable public opinion; but certainly also there is much free will in the judgment of the Commons. The House only goes where it thinks in the end the nation will follow; but it takes its chance of the nation following or not following; it assumes the initiative, and acts upon its discretion or its caprice.

When the American nation has chosen its President, its virtue goes out of it, and out of the Transmissive College through which it chooses. But because the House of Commons has the power of dismissal in addition to the power of election, its relations to the Premier are incessant. They guide

him, and he leads them. He is to them what they are to the nation. He only goes where he believes they will go after him. But he has to take the lead; he must choose his direction, and begin the journey. Nor must he flinch. A good horse likes to feel the rider's bit; and a great deliberative assembly likes to feel that it is under worthy guidance. A minister who succumbs to the House,—who ostentatiously seeks its pleasure,—who does not try to regulate it,—who will not boldly point out plain errors to it, seldom thrives. The great leaders of Parliament have varied much, but they have all had a certain firmness. A great assembly is as soon spoiled by over-indulgence as a little child. The whole life of English politics is the action and reaction between the Ministry and the Parliament. The appointees strive to guide, and the appointors surge under the guidance.

The elective is now the most important function of the House of Commons. It is most desirable to insist, and be tedious, on this, because our tradition ignores it. At the end of half the sessions of Parliament, you will read in the newspapers, and you will hear even from those who have looked close at the matter and should know better, "Parliament has done nothing this session. Some things were promised in the Queen's speech, but they were only little things; and most of them have not passed." Lord Lyndhurst used for years to recount the small outcomings of legislative achievement; and yet those were the days of the first

Whig Governments, who had more to do in legislation, and did more, than any Government. The true answer to such harangues as Lord Lyndhurst's by a Minister should have been in the first person. He should have said firmly, "Parliament has maintained ME, and that was its greatest duty; Parliament has carried on what, in the language of traditional respect, we call the Queen's Government; it has maintained what wisely or unwisely it deemed the best Executive of the English nation."

The second function of the House of Commons is what I may call an expressive function. It is its office to express the mind of the English people on all matters which come before it. Whether it does so well or ill I shall discuss presently.

The third function of Parliament is what I may call—preserving a sort of technicality even in familiar matters for the sake of distinctness—the teaching function. A great and open council of considerable men cannot be placed in the middle of a society without altering that society. It ought to alter it for the better. It ought to teach the nation what it does not know. How far the House of Commons can so teach, and how far it does so teach, are matters for subsequent discussion.

Fourthly, the House of Commons has what may be called an informing function—a function which though in its present form quite modern is singularly analogous to a mediæval function. In old times one office of the House of Commons was to inform the Sovereign what was wrong. It laid

before the Crown the grievances and complaints of particular interests. Since the publication of the Parliamentary debates a corresponding office of Parliament is to lay these same grievances, these same complaints, before the nation, which is the present sovereign. The nation needs it quite as much as the king ever needed it. A free people is indeed mostly fair, liberty practises men in a give-and-take, which is the rough essence of justice. The English people, possibly even above other free nations, is fair. But a free nation rarely can be —and the English nation is not—quick of apprehension. It only comprehends what is familiar to it—what comes into its own experience, what squares with its own thoughts. "I never heard of such a thing in my life," the middle-class Englishman says, and he thinks he so refutes an argument. The common disputant cannot say in reply that his experience is but limited, and that the assertion may be true, though he had never met with anything at all like it. But a great debate in Parliament *does* bring home something of this feeling. Any notion, any creed, any feeling, any grievance which can get a decent number of English members to stand up for it, is felt by almost all Englishmen to be perhaps a false and pernicious opinion, but at any rate possible — an opinion within the intellectual sphere, an opinion to be reckoned with. And it is an immense achievement. Practical diplomatists say that a free government is harder to deal with than a despotic government;

you may be able to get the despot to hear the other side; his ministers, men of trained intelligence, will be sure to know what makes against them; and they *may* tell him. But a free nation never hears any side save its own. The newspapers only repeat the side their purchasers like; the favourable arguments are set out, elaborated, illustrated; the adverse arguments maimed, misstated, confused. The worst judge, they say, is a deaf judge; the most dull government is a free government on matters its ruling classes will not hear. I am disposed to reckon it as the second function of Parliament in point of importance, that to some extent it makes us hear what otherwise we should not.

Lastly, there is the function of legislation, of which of course it would be preposterous to deny the great importance, and which I only deny to be *as* important as the executive management of the whole state, or the political education given by Parliament to the whole nation. There are, I allow, seasons when legislation is more important than either of these. The nation may be misfitted with its laws, and need to change them: some particular corn law may hurt all industry, and it may be worth a thousand administrative blunders to get rid of it. But generally the laws of a nation suit its life; special adaptations of them are but subordinate; the administration and conduct of that life is the matter which presses most. Nevertheless, the statute-book of every great nation yearly contains many im-

portant new laws, and the English statute-book does so above any. An immense mass, indeed, of the legislation is not, in the proper language of jurisprudence, legislation at all. A law is a general command, applicable to many cases. The "special acts" which crowd the statute-book and weary parliamentary committees are applicable to one case only. They do not lay down rules according to which railways shall be made, they enact that such a railway shall be made from this place to that place, and they have no bearing upon any other transaction. But after every deduction and abatement, the annual legislation of Parliament is a result of singular importance; were it not so, it could not be, as it often is considered, the sole result of its annual assembling.

Some persons will perhaps think that I ought to enumerate a sixth function of the House of Commons—a financial function. But I do not consider that, upon broad principle, and omitting legal technicalities, the House of Commons has any special function with regard to financial different from its functions with respect to other legislation. It is to rule in both, and to rule in both through the Cabinet. Financial legislation is of necessity a yearly recurring legislation; but frequency of occurrence does not indicate a diversity of nature or compel an antagonism of treatment.

In truth, the principal peculiarity of the House of Commons in financial affairs is nowadays not a special privilege, but an exceptional disability. On

common subjects any member can propose anything but not on money—the minister only can propose to tax the people. This principle is commonly involved in mediæval metaphysics as to the prerogative of the Crown, but it is as useful in the nineteenth century as in the fourteenth, and rests on as sure a principle. The House of Commons—now that it is the true sovereign, and appoints the real executive—has long ceased to be the checking, sparing, economical body it once was. It now is more apt to spend money than the minister of the day. I have heard a very experienced financier say, "If you want to raise a certain cheer in the House of Commons make a general panegyric on economy; if you want to invite a sure defeat, propose a particular saving." The process is simple. Every expenditure of public money has some apparent public object; those who wish to spend the money expatiate on that object; they say, "What is £50,000 to this great country? Is this a time for cheeseparing objection? Our industry was never so productive; our resources never so immense. What is £50,000 in comparison with this great national interest?" The members who are for the expenditure always come down; perhaps a constituent or a friend who will profit by the outlay, or is keen on the object, has asked them to attend; at any rate, there is a popular vote to be given, on which the newspapers—always philanthropic, and sometimes talked over—will be sure to make encomiums. The members against the expenditure rarely come

down of themselves; why should they become unpopular without reason? The object seems decent; many of its advocates are certainly sincere: a hostile vote will make enemies, and be censured by the journals. If there were not some check, the "people's house" would soon outrun the people's money.

That check is the responsibility of the Cabinet for the national finance. If any one could propose a tax, they might let the House spend it as it would, and wash their hands of the matter; but now, for whatever expenditure is sanctioned—even when it is sanctioned against the ministry's wish—the ministry must find the money. Accordingly, they have the strongest motive to oppose extra outlay. They will have to pay the bill for it; they will have to impose taxation, which is always disagreeable, or suggest loans, which, under ordinary circumstances, are shameful. The ministry is (so to speak) the breadwinner of the political family, and has to meet the cost of philanthropy and glory, just as the head of a family has to pay for the charities of his wife and the toilette of his daughters.

In truth, when a Cabinet is made the sole executive, it follows it must have the sole financial charge, for all action costs money, all policy depends on money, and it is in adjusting the relative goodness of action and policies that the executive is employed.

From a consideration of these functions, it follows that we are ruled by the House of Commons; we are, indeed, so used to be so ruled, that it does not

seem to be at all strange. But of all odd forms of government, the oddest really is government by a *public meeting*. Here are 658 persons, collected from all parts of England, different in nature, different in interests, different in look, and language. If we think what an empire the English is, how various are its components, how incessant its concerns, how immersed in history its policy; if we think what a vast information, what a nice discretion, what a consistent will ought to mark the rulers of that empire,—we shall be surprised when we see them. We see a changing body of miscellaneous persons, sometimes few, sometimes many, never the same for an hour; sometimes excited, but mostly dull and half weary,—impatient of eloquence, catching at any joke as an alleviation. These are the persons who rule the British Empire,—who rule England,—who rule Scotland,—who rule Ireland,—who rule a great deal of Asia,—who rule a great deal of Polynesia,—who rule a great deal of America, and scattered fragments everywhere.

Paley said many shrewd things, but he never said a better thing than that it was much harder to make men see a difficulty than comprehend the explanation of it. The key to the difficulties of most discussed and unsettled questions is commonly in their undiscussed parts: they are like the background of a picture, which looks obvious, easy, just what any one might have painted, but which, in fact, sets the figures in their right position, chastens them, and makes them what they are. No-

body will understand parliament government who fancies it an easy thing, a natural thing, a thing not needing explanation. You have not a perception of the first elements in this matter till you know that government by a *club* is a standing wonder.

There has been a capital illustration lately how helpless many English gentlemen are when called together on a sudden. The Government, rightly or wrongly, thought fit to entrust the quarter-sessions of each county with the duty of combating its cattle-plague; but the scene in most "shire halls" was unsatisfactory. There was the greatest difficulty in getting, not only a right decision, but *any* decision. I saw one myself which went thus. The chairman proposed a very complex resolution, in which there was much which every one liked, and much which every one disliked, though, of course, the favourite parts of some were the objectionable parts to others. This resolution got, so to say, wedged in the meeting; everybody suggested amendments; one amendment was carried which none were satisfied with, and so the matter stood over. It is a saying in England, "a big meeting never does anything;" and yet we are governed by the House of Commons—by "a big meeting."

It may be said that the House of Commons does not rule, it only elects the rulers. But there must be something special about it to enable it to do that. Suppose the Cabinet were elected by a London club, what confusion there would be, what writing and answering! "Will you speak to So-

and-So, and ask him to vote for my man ? " would be heard on every side. How the wife of A. and the wife of B. would plot to confound the wife of C. Whether the club elected under the dignified shadow of a queen, or without the shadow, would hardly matter at all ; if the substantial choice was in them, the confusion and intrigue would be there too. I propose to begin this paper by asking, not why the House of Commons governs well ? but the fundamental—almost unasked question—how the House of Commons comes to be able to govern at all ?

The House of Commons can do work which the quarter-sessions or clubs cannot do, because it is an organised body, while quarter-sessions and clubs are unorganised. Two of the greatest orators in England—Lord Brougham and Lord Bolingbroke—spent much eloquence in attacking party government. Bolingbroke probably knew what he was doing ; he was a consistent opponent of the power of the Commons ; he wished to attack them in a vital part. But Lord Brougham does not know ; he proposes to amend parliamentary government by striking out the very elements which make parliamentary government possible. At present the majority of Parliament obey certain leaders ; what those leaders propose they support, what those leaders reject they reject. An old Secretary of the Treasury used to say, " This is a bad case, an indefensible case. We must apply our *majority* to this question." That secretary lived fifty years ago, before the Reform Bill, when majorities were very

blind, and very "applicable." Nowadays, the power of leaders over their followers is strictly and wisely limited: they can take their followers but a little way, and that only in certain directions. Yet still there are leaders and followers. On the Conservative side of the House there are vestiges of the despotic leadership even now. A cynical politician is said to have watched the long row of county members, so fresh and respectable-looking, and muttered, "By Jove, they are the finest brute votes in Europe!" But all satire apart, the principle of Parliament is obedience to leaders. Change your leader if you will, take another if you will, but obey No. 1 while you serve No. 1, and obey No. 2 when you have gone over to No. 2. The penalty of not doing so, is the penalty of impotence. It is not that you will not be able to do any good, but you will not be able to do anything at all. If everybody does what he thinks right, there will be 657 amendments to every motion, and none of them will be carried or the motion either.

The moment, indeed, that we distinctly conceive that the House of Commons is mainly and above all things an elective assembly, we at once perceive that party is of its essence. There never was an election without a party. You cannot get a child into an asylum without a combination. At such places you may see "Vote for orphan A." upon a placard, and "Vote for orphan B. (also an idiot!!!)" upon a banner, and the party of each is busy about its placard and banner. What is true at such minor

and momentary elections must be much more true in a great and constant election of rulers. The House of Commons lives in a state of perpetual potential choice; at any moment it can choose a ruler and dismiss a ruler. And therefore party is inherent in it, is bone of its bone, and breath of its breath.

Secondly, though the leaders of party no longer have the vast patronage of the last century with which to bribe, they can coerce by a threat far more potent than any allurement—they can dissolve. This is the secret which keeps parties together. Mr. Cobden most justly said, "He had never been able to discover what was the proper moment, according to members of Parliament, for a dissolution. He had heard them say they were ready to vote for everything else, but he had never heard them say they were ready to vote for that." Efficiency in an assembly requires a solid mass of steady votes; and these are *collected* by a deferential attachment to particular men, or by a belief in the principles those men represent, and they are *maintained* by fear of those men—by the fear that if you vote against them, you may yourself soon not have a vote at all.

Thirdly, it may seem odd to say so, just after inculcating that party organisation is the vital principle of representative government, but that organisation is permanently efficient, because it is not composed of warm partisans. The body is eager, but the atoms are cool. If it were otherwise, parliamentary government would become the worst of

governments—a sectarian government. The party in power would go all the lengths their orators proposed—all that their formulæ enjoined, as far as they had ever said they would go. But the partisans of the English Parliament are not of such a temper. They are Whigs, or Radicals, or Tories, but they are much else too. They are common Englishmen, and, as Father Newman complains, "hard to be worked up to the dogmatic level." They are not eager to press the tenets of their party to impossible conclusions. On the contrary, the way to lead them—the best and acknowledged way—is to affect a studied and illogical moderation. You may hear men say, "Without committing myself to the tenet that 3 + 2 make 5, though I am free to admit that the honourable member for Bradford has advanced very grave arguments in behalf of it, I think I may, with the permission of the Committee, assume that 2 + 3 do not make 4, which will be a sufficient basis for the important propositions which I shall venture to submit on the present occasion." This language is very suitable to the greater part of the House of Commons. Most men of business love a sort of twilight. They have lived all their lives in an atmosphere of probabilities and of doubt, where nothing is very clear, where there are some chances for many events, where there is much to be said for several courses, where nevertheless one course must be determinedly chosen and fixedly adhered to. They like to hear arguments suited to this intellectual haze. So far from caution or hesitation in the statement of

the argument striking them as an indication of imbecility, it seems to them a sign of practicality. They got rich themselves by transactions of which they could not have stated the argumentative ground—and all they ask for is a distinct though moderate conclusion, that they can repeat when asked; something which they feel *not* to be abstract argument, but abstract argument diluted and dissolved in real life. "There seem to me," an impatient young man once said, "to be no stay in Peel's arguments." And that was why Sir Robert Peel was the best leader of the Commons in our time; we like to have the rigidity taken out of an argument, and the substance left.

Nor indeed, under our system of government, are the leaders themselves of the House of Commons, for the most part, eager to carry party conclusions too far. They are in contact with reality. An Opposition, on coming into power, is often like a speculative merchant whose bills become due. Ministers have to make good their promises, and they find a difficulty in so doing. They have said the state of things is so and so, and if you give us the power we will do thus and thus. But when they come to handle the official documents, to converse with the permanent under-secretary—familiar with disagreeable facts, and though in manner most respectful, yet most imperturbable in opinion—very soon doubts intervene. Of course, something must be done; the speculative merchant cannot forget his bills; the late Opposition cannot, in office, forget those sen-

tences which terrible admirers in the country still quote. But just as the merchant asks his debtor, "Could you not take a bill at four months?" so the new minister says to the permanent under-secretary, "Could you not suggest a middle course? I am of course not bound by mere sentences used in debate; I have never been accused of letting a false ambition of consistency warp my conduct; but," etc., etc. And the end always is that a middle course is devised which *looks* as much as possible like what was suggested in opposition, but which *is* as much as possible what patent facts—facts which seem to live in the office, so teasing and unceasing are they—prove ought to be done.

Of all modes of enforcing moderation on a party, the best is to contrive that the members of that party shall be intrinsically moderate, careful, and almost shrinking men; and the next best to contrive that the leaders of the party, who have protested most in its behalf, shall be placed in the closest contact with the actual world. Our English system contains both contrivances; it makes party government permanent and possible in the sole way in which it can be so, by making it mild.

But these expedients, though they sufficiently remove the defects which make a common club or quarter sessions impotent, would not enable the House of Commons to govern England. A representative public meeting is subject to a defect over and above those of other public meetings. It may not be independent. The constituencies may not

let it alone. But if they do not, all the checks which have been enumerated upon the evils of a party organisation would be futile. The feeling of a constituency is the feeling of a dominant party, and that feeling is elicited, stimulated, sometimes even manufactured by the local political agent. Such an opinion could not be moderate; could not be subject to effectual discussion; could not be in close contact with pressing facts; could not be framed under a chastening sense of near responsibility; could not be formed as those form their opinions who have to act upon them. Constituency government is the precise opposite of parliamentary government. It is the government of immoderate persons far from the scene of action, instead of the government of moderate persons close to the scene of action; it is the judgment of persons judging in the last resort and without a penalty, in lieu of persons judging in fear of a dissolution, and ever conscious that they are subject to an appeal.

Most persons would admit these conditions of parliamentary government when they read them, but two at least of the most prominent ideas in the public mind are inconsistent with them. The scheme to which the arguments of our demagogues distinctly tend, and the scheme to which the predilections of some most eminent philosophers cleave, are both so. They would not only make parliamentary government work ill, but they would prevent its working at all; they would not render it bad, for they would make it impossible.

The first of these is the ultra-democratic theory. This theory demands that every man of twenty-one years of age (if not every woman too) should have an equal vote in electing Parliament. Suppose that last year there were twelve million adult males in England. Upon this theory each man is to have one twelve-millionth share in electing a Parliament; the rich and wise are not to have, by explicit law, more votes than the poor and stupid; nor are any latent contrivances to give them an influence equivalent to more votes. The machinery for carrying out such a plan is very easy. At each census the country ought to be divided into 658 electoral districts, in each of which the number of adult males should be the same; and these districts ought to be the only constituencies, and elect the whole Parliament. But if the above pre-requisites are needful for parliamentary government, that Parliament would not work.

Such a Parliament could not be composed of moderate men. The electoral districts would be, some of them, in purely agricultural places, and in these the parson and the squire would have almost unlimited power. They would be able to drive or send to the poll an entire labouring population. These districts would return an unmixed squirearchy. The scattered small towns which now send so many members to Parliament, would be lost in the clownish mass; their votes would send to Parliament no distinct members. The agricultural part of England would choose its representatives from

quarter sessions exclusively. On the other hand a large part of the constituencies would be town districts, and these would send up persons representing the beliefs or unbeliefs of the lowest classes in their towns. They would, perhaps, be divided between the genuine representatives of the artizans—not possibly of the best of the artizans, who are a select and intellectual class, but of the common order of workpeople—and the merely pretended members for that class whom I may call the members for the public-houses. In all big towns in which there is electioneering these houses are the centres of illicit corruption and illicit management. There are pretty good records of what that corruption and management are, but there is no need to describe them here. Everybody will understand what sort of things I mean, and the kind of unprincipled members that are returned by them. Our new Parliament, therefore, would be made up of two sorts of representatives from the town lowest class, and one sort of representatives from the agricultural lowest class. The genuine representatives of the country would be men of one marked sort, and the genuine representatives for the county men of another marked sort, but very opposite: one would have the prejudices of town artizans, and the other the prejudices of county magistrates. Each class would speak a language of its own; each would be unintelligible to the other; and the only thriving class would be the immoral representatives, who were chosen by corrupt machination, and who would

probably get a good profit on the capital they laid out in that corruption. If it be true that a parliamentary government is possible only when the overwhelming majority of the representatives are men essentially moderate, of no marked varieties, free from class prejudices, this ultra-democratic Parliament could not maintain that government, for its members would be remarkable for two sorts of moral violence and one sort of immoral.

I do not for a moment rank the scheme of Mr. Hare with the scheme of the ultra-democrats. One can hardly help having a feeling of romance about it. The world seems growing young when grave old lawyers and mature philosophers propose a scheme promising so much. It is from these classes that young men suffer commonly the chilling demonstration that their fine plans are opposed to rooted obstacles, that they are repetitions of other plans which failed long ago, and that we must be content with the very moderate results of tried machinery. But Mr. Hare and Mr. Mill offer as the effect of their new scheme results as large and improvements as interesting as a young enthusiast ever promised to himself in his happiest mood.

I do not give any weight to the supposed impracticability of Mr. Hare's scheme because it is new. Of course it cannot be put in practice till it is old. A great change of this sort happily cannot be sudden; a free people cannot be confused by new institutions which they do not understand, for they will not adopt them till they understand them. But

if Mr. Hare's plan would accomplish what its friends say, or half what they say, it would be worth working for, if it were not adopted till the year 1966. We ought incessantly to popularise the principle by writing; and, what is better than writing, small preliminary bits of experiment. There is so much that is wearisome and detestable in all other election machineries, that I well understand, and wish I could share, the sense of relief with which the believers in this scheme throw aside all their trammels, and look to an almost ideal future when this captivating plan is carried.

Mr. Hare's scheme cannot be satisfactorily discussed in the elaborate form in which he presents it. No common person readily apprehends all the details in which, with loving care, he has embodied it. He was so anxious to prove what could be done, that he has confused most people as to what it is. I have heard a man say, "He never could remember it two days running." But the difficulty which I feel is fundamental, and wholly independent of detail.

There are two modes in which constituencies may be made. First, the law may make them, as in England and almost everywhere: the law may say such and such qualifications shall give a vote for constituency X; those who have that qualification shall *be* constituency X. These are what we may call compulsory constituencies, and we know all about them. Or, secondly, the law may leave the electors themselves to make them. The law may

say all the adult males of a country shall vote, or those males who can read and write, or those who have £50 a year, or any persons any way defined, and then leave those voters to group themselves as they like. Suppose there were 658,000 voters to elect the House of Commons; it is possible for the legislature to say, "We do not care how you combine. On a given day let each set of persons give notice in what group they mean to vote; if every voter gives notice, and every one looks to make the most of his vote, each group will have just 1000. But the law shall not make this necessary—it shall take the 658 most numerous groups, no matter whether they have 2000, or 1000, or 900, or 800 votes—the most numerous groups, whatever their number may be; and these shall be the constituencies of the nation." These are voluntary constituencies, if I may so call them; the simplest kind of voluntary constituencies. Mr. Hare proposes a far more complex kind; but to show the merits and demerits of the voluntary principle the simplest form is much the best.

The temptation to that principle is very plain. Under the compulsory form of constituency the votes of the minorities are thrown away. In the city of London, now, there are many Tories, but all the members are Whigs; every London Tory, therefore, is by law and principle misrepresented: his city sends to Parliament not the member whom he wished to have, but the member he wished *not* to have. But upon the voluntary system the London Tories, who

are far more than 1000 in number, may combine; they may make a constituency, and return a member. In many existing constituencies the disfranchisement of minorities is hopeless and chronic. I have myself had a vote for an agricultural county for twenty years, and I am a Liberal; but two Tories have always been returned, and all my life will be returned. As matters now stand, my vote is of no use. But if I could combine with 1000 other Liberals in that and other Conservative counties, we might choose a Liberal member.

Again, this plan gets rid of all our difficulties as to the size of constituencies. It is said to be unreasonable that Liverpool should return only the same number of members as King's Lynn or Lyme Regis; but upon the voluntary plan, Liverpool could come down to King's Lynn. The Liberal minority in King's Lynn could communicate with the Liberal minority in Liverpool, and make up 1000; and so everywhere. The numbers of popular places would gain what is called their legitimate advantage; they would, when constituencies are voluntarily made, be able to make, and be willing to make the greatest number of constituencies.

Again, the admirers of a great man could make a worthy constituency for him. As it is, Mr. Mill was returned by the electors of Westminster; and they have never, since they had members, done themselves so great an honour. But what did the electors of Westminster know of Mr. Mill? What fraction of his mind could be imagined by any per-

centage of their minds? A great deal of his genius most of them would not like. They meant to do homage to mental ability, but it was the worship of an unknown God—if ever there was such a thing in this world. But upon the voluntary plan, one thousand out of the many thousand students of Mr. Mill's book could have made an appreciating constituency for him.

I could reckon other advantages, but I have to object to the scheme, not to recommend it. What are the counter-weights which overpower these merits? I reply that the voluntary composition of constituencies appears to me inconsistent with the necessary pre-requisites of parliamentary government as they have been just laid down.

Under the voluntary system, the crisis of politics is not the election of the member, but the making the constituency. President-making is already a trade in America; and constituency-making would, under the voluntary plan, be a trade here. Every party would have a numerical problem to solve. The leaders would say, "We have 350,000 votes, we must take care to have 350 members;" and the only way to obtain them is to organise. A man who wanted to compose part of a Liberal constituency must not himself hunt for 1000 other Liberals; if he did, after writing 10,000 letters, he would probably find he was making part of a constituency of 100, all whose votes would be thrown away, the constituency being too small to be reckoned. Such a Liberal must write to the great Registration

Association in Parliament Street; he must communicate with its able managers, and they would soon use his vote for him. They would say, "Sir, you are late; Mr. Gladstone, sir, is full. He got his 1000 last year. Most of the gentlemen you read of in the papers are full. As soon as a gentleman makes a nice speech, we get a heap of letters to say, 'Make us into that gentleman's constituency.' But we cannot do that. Here is our list. If you do not want to throw your vote away, you must be guided by us: here are three very satisfactory gentlemen (and one is an Honourable): you may vote for either of these, and we will write your name down; but if you go voting wildly, you'll be thrown out altogether."

The evident result of this organisation would be the return of party men mainly. The member-makers would look, not for independence, but for subservience—and they could hardly be blamed for so doing. They are agents for the Liberal party; and, as such, they should be guided by what they take to be the wishes of their principal. The mass of the Liberal party wishes measure A, measure B, measure C. The managers of the registration—the skilled manipulators—are busy men. They would say, "Sir, here is our card, if you want to get into Parliament on our side, you must go for that card; it was drawn up by Mr. Lloyd; he used to be engaged on railways, but since they passed this new voting plan, we get him to attend to us; it is a sound card; stick to that and you will be right."

Upon this (in theory) voluntary plan, you would get together a set of members bound hard and fast with party bands and fetters, infinitely tighter than any members now.

Whoever hopes anything from desultory popular action if matched against systematised popular action, should consider the way in which the American President is chosen. The plan was that the citizens at large should vote for the statesman they liked best. But no one does anything of the sort. They vote for the ticket made by "the caucus," and the caucus is a sort of representative meeting which sits voting and voting till they have cut out all the known men against whom much is to be said, and agreed on some unknown man against whom there is nothing known, and therefore nothing to be alleged. Caucuses, or their equivalent, would be far worse here in constituency-making than there in President-making, because on great occasions the American nation can fix on some one great man whom it knows, but the English nation could not fix on 658 great men and choose them. It does not know so many, and if it did, would go wrong in the difficulties of the manipulation.

But though a common voter could only be ranged in an effectual constituency, and a common candidate only reach a constituency by obeying the orders of the political election-contrivers upon his side, certain voters and certain members would be quite independent of both. There are organisations in this country which would soon make a set of constitu-

encies for themselves. Every chapel would be an office for vote transferring before the plan had been known three months. The Church would be much slower in learning it and much less handy in using it; but would learn. At present the Dissenters are a most energetic and valuable component of the Liberal party; but under the voluntary plan they would not be a component—they would be a separate, independent element. We now propose to group boroughs; but then they would combine chapels. There would be a member for the Baptist congregation of Tavistock, cum Totnes cum, &c., &c.

The full force of this cannot be appreciated except by referring to the former proof that the mass of a Parliament ought to be men of moderate sentiments, or they will elect an immoderate ministry, and enact violent laws. But upon the plan suggested, the House would be made up of party politicians selected by a party committee, chained to that committee and pledged to party violence, and of characteristic, and therefore immoderate representatives, for every "ism" in all England. Instead of a deliberate assembly of moderate and judicious men, we should have a various compound of all sorts of violence.

I may seem to be drawing a caricature, but I have not reached the worst. Bad as these members would be, if they were left to themselves—if, in a free Parliament, they were confronted with the perils of government, close responsibility might improve them and make them tolerable. But they would not be left to themselves. A voluntary constituency will

nearly always be a despotic constituency. Even in the best case, where a set of earnest men choose a member to expound their earnestness, they will look after him to see that he does expound it. The members will be like the minister of a dissenting congregation. That congregation is collected by a unity of sentiment in doctrine A, and the preacher is to preach doctrine A; if he does not, he is dismissed. At present the member is free because the constituency is not in earnest; no constituency has an acute, accurate doctrinal creed in politics. The law made the constituencies by geographical divisions; and they are not bound together by close unity of belief. They have vague preferences for particular doctrines; and that is all. But a voluntary constituency would be a church with tenets; it would make its representative the messenger of its mandates, and the delegate of its determinations. As in the case of a dissenting congregation, one great minister sometimes rules it, while ninety-nine ministers in the hundred are ruled by it, so here one noted man would rule his electors, but the electors would rule all the others.

Thus, the members for a good voluntary constituency would be hopelessly enslaved, because of its goodness; but the members for a bad voluntary constituency would be yet more enslaved because of its badness. The makers of these constituencies would keep the despotism in their own hands. In America there is a division of politicians into wire-pullers and blowers; under the voluntary system

the member of Parliament would be the only momentary mouth-piece—the impotent blower; while the constituency-maker would be the latent wire-puller—the constant autocrat. He would write to gentlemen in Parliament, and say, "You were elected upon 'the Liberal ticket;' and if you deviate from that ticket you cannot be chosen again." And there would be no appeal for a common-minded man. He is no more likely to make a constituency for himself than a mole is likely to make a planet.

It may indeed be said that against a septennial Parliament such machinations would be powerless; that a member elected for seven years might defy the remonstrances of an earnest constituency, or the imprecations of the latent manipulators. But after the voluntary composition of constituencies, there would soon be but short-lived Parliaments. Earnest constituencies would exact frequent elections; they would not like to part with their virtue for a long period; it would anger them to see it used contrary to their wishes, amid circumstances which at the election no one thought of. A seven years' Parliament is often chosen in one political period, lasts through a second, and is dissolved in a third. A constituency collected by law and on compulsion endures this change because it has no collective earnestness; it does not mind seeing the power it gave used in a manner that it could not have foreseen. But a self-formed constituency of eager opinions, a missionary constituency, so to speak, would object; it would think it its bounden

duty to object ; and the crafty manipulators, though they said nothing, in silence would object still more. The two together would enjoin annual elections, and would rule their members unflinchingly.

The voluntary plan, therefore, when tried in this easy form, is inconsistent with the extrinsic independence as well as with the inherent moderation of a Parliament—two of the conditions which, as we have seen, are essential to the bare possibility of parliamentary government. The same objections, as is inevitable, adhere to that principle under its more complicated forms. It is in vain to pile detail on detail when the objection is one of first principle. If the above reasoning be sound, compulsory constituencies are necessary, voluntary constituencies destructive ; the optional transferability of votes is not a salutary aid, but a ruinous innovation.

I have dwelt upon the proposal of Mr. Hare and upon the ultra-democratic proposal, not only because of the high intellectual interest of the former and the possible practical interest of the latter, but because they tend to bring into relief two at least of the necessary conditions of parliamentary government. But besides these necessary qualities which are needful before a parliamentary government can work at all, there are some additional pre-requisites before it can work well. That a House of Commons may work well it must perform, as we saw, five functions well : it must elect a ministry well, legislate well, teach the nation well, express the nation's will well, bring matters to the nation's attention well.

The discussion has a difficulty of its own. What is meant by "well?" Who is to judge? Is it to be some panel of philosophers, some fancied posterity, or some other outside authority? I answer, no philosophy, no posterity, no external authority, but the English nation here and now.

Free government is self-government—a government of the people by the people. The best government of this sort is that which the people think best. An imposed government, a government like that of the English in India, may very possibly be better; it may represent the views of a higher race than the governed race; but it is not therefore a free government. A free government is that which the people subject to it voluntarily choose. In a casual collection of loose people the only possible free government is a democratic government. Where no one knows, or cares for, or respects any one else all must rank equal; no one's opinion can be more potent than that of another. But, as has been explained, a deferential nation has a structure of its own. Certain persons are by common consent agreed to be wiser than others, and their opinion is, by consent, to rank for much more than its numerical value. We may in these happy nations weigh votes as well as count them, though in less favoured countries we can count only. But in free nations, the votes so weighed or so counted must decide. A perfect free government is one which decides perfectly according to those votes; an imperfect, one which so decides imperfectly; a bad, one which

does not so decide at all. Public opinion is the test of this polity; the best opinion which, with its existing habits of deference, the nation will accept: if the free government goes by that opinion, it is a good government of its species; if it contravenes that opinion, it is a bad one.

Tried by this rule the House of Commons does its appointing business well. It chooses rulers as we wish rulers to be chosen. If it did not, in a speaking and writing age we should soon know. I have heard a great Liberal statesman say, "The time was coming when we must advertise for a grievance." * What a good grievance it would be were the ministry appointed and retained by the Parliament a ministry detested by the nation. An anti-president government league would be instantly created, and it would be more instantly powerful and more instantly successful than the Anti-Corn-Law League.

It has, indeed, been objected that the choosing business of Parliament is done ill, because it does not choose strong governments. And it is certain that when public opinion does not definitely decide upon a marked policy, and when in consequence parties in the Parliament are nearly even, individual cupidity and changeability may make Parliament change its appointees too often; may induce them never enough to trust any of them; may make it keep all of them under a suspended sentence of coming dismissal. But the experience of Lord Palmerston's second Government proves, I think, that

* This was said in 1858.

these fears are exaggerated. When the choice of a nation is really fixed on a statesman, Parliament will fix upon him too. The parties in the Parliament of 1859 were as nearly divided as in any probable Parliament; a great many Liberals did not much like Lord Palmerston, and they would have gladly co-operated in an attempt to dethrone him. But the same influence acted on Parliament within which acted on the nation without. The moderate men of both parties were satisfied that Lord Palmerston's was the best government, and they therefore preserved it though it was hated by the immoderate on both sides. We have then found by a critical instance that a government supported by what I may call "the common element,"—by the like-minded men of unlike parties,—will be retained in power, though parties are even, and though, as Treasury counting reckons, the majority is imperceptible. If happily, by its intelligence and attractiveness, a cabinet can gain a hold upon the great middle part of Parliament, it will continue to exist notwithstanding the hatching of small plots and the machinations of mean factions.

On the whole, I think it indisputable that the selecting task of Parliament is performed as well as public opinion wishes it to be performed; and if we want to improve that standard, we must first improve the English nation, which imposes that standard. Of the substantial part of its legislative task the same, too, may, I think, be said. The manner of our legislation is indeed detestable, and

the machinery for settling that manner odious. A committee of the whole House, dealing, or attempting to deal with the elaborate clauses of a long Bill, is a wretched specimen of severe but misplaced labour. It is sure to wedge some clause into the Act, such as that which the judge said "seemed to have fallen by itself, *perhaps*, from heaven, into the mind of the legislature," so little had it to do with anything on either side or around it. At such times government by a public meeting displays its inherent defects, and is little restrained by its necessary checks. But the essence of our legislature may be separated from its accidents. Subject to two considerable defects I think Parliament passes laws as the nation wishes to have them passed.

Thirty years ago this was not so. The nation had outgrown its institutions, and was cramped by them. It was a man in the clothes of a boy; every limb wanted more room, and every garment to be fresh made. "D-mn me," said Lord Eldon in the dialect of his age, "if I had to begin life again I would begin as an agitator." The shrewd old man saw that the best life was that of a miscellaneous objector to the old world, though he loved that world, believed in it, could imagine no other. But he would not say so now. There is no worse trade than agitation at this time. A man can hardly get an audience if he wishes to complain of anything. Nowadays, not only does the mind and policy of Parliament (subject to the exceptions before named) possess the common sort of moderation essential

to the possibility of parliamentary government, but also that exact gradation, that precise species of moderation, most agreeable to the nation at large. Not only does the nation endure a parliamentary government, which it would not do if Parliament were immoderate, but it likes parliamentary government. A sense of satisfaction permeates the country because most of the country feels it has got the precise thing that suits it.

The exceptions are two. First. That Parliament leans too much to the opinions of the landed interest. The Cattle Plague Act is a conspicuous instance of this defect. The details of that Bill may be good or bad, and its policy wise or foolish. But the manner in which it was hurried through the House savoured of despotism. The cotton trade or the wine trade could not, in their maximum of peril, have obtained such aid in such a manner. The House of Commons would hear of no pause and would heed no arguments. The greatest number of them feared for their incomes. The land of England returns many members annually for the counties; these members the constitution gave them. But what is curious is that the landed interest gives no seats to other classes, but takes plenty of seats *from* other classes. Half the boroughs in England are represented by considerable landowners, and when rent is in question, as in the cattle case, they think more of themselves than of those who sent them. In number the landed gentry in the House far surpass any other class. They have, too, a more intimate connection

with one another ; they were educated at the same schools ; know one another's family name from boyhood ; form a society ; are the same kind of men ; marry the same kind of women. The merchants and manufacturers in Parliament are a motley race —one educated here, another there, a third not educated at all ; some are of the second generation of traders, who consider self-made men intruders upon an hereditary place ; others are self-made, and regard the men of inherited wealth, which they did not make and do not augment, as beings of neither mind nor place, inferior to themselves because they have no brains, and inferior to Lords because they have no rank. Traders have no bond of union, no habits of intercourse ; their wives, if they care for society, want to see not the wives of other such men, but " better people," as they say—the wives of men certainly with land, and, if Heaven help, with the titles. Men who study the structure of Parliament, not in abstract books, but in the concrete London world, wonder not that the landed interest is very powerful, but that it is not despotic. I believe it would be despotic if it were clever, or rather if its representatives were so, but it has a fixed device to make them stupid. The counties not only elect landowners, which is natural, and perhaps wise, but also elect only landowners *of their own county*, which is absurd. There is no free trade in the agricultural mind ; each county prohibits the import of able men from other counties. This is why eloquent sceptics—Bolingbroke and Disraeli—have been so

apt to lead the unsceptical Tories. They *will* have people with a great piece of land in a particular spot, and of course these people generally cannot speak, and often cannot think. And so eloquent men who laugh at the party come to lead the party. The landed interest has much more influence than it should have; but it wastes that influence so much that the excess is, except on singular occurrences (like the cattle plague), of secondary moment.

It is almost another side of the same matter to say that the structure of Parliament gives too little weight to the growing districts of the country and too much to the stationary. In old times the south of England was not only the pleasantest but the greatest part of England. Devonshire was a great maritime county when the foundations of our representation were fixed; Somersetshire and Wiltshire great manufacturing counties. The harsher climate of the northern counties was associated with a ruder, a stern, and a sparser people. The immense preponderance which our Parliament gave before 1832, and though pruned and mitigated, still gives to England south of the Trent, then corresponded to a real preponderance in wealth and mind. How opposite the present contrast is we all know. And the case gets worse every day. The nature of modern trade is to give to those who have much and take from those who have little. Manufacture goes where manufacture is, because there and there alone it finds attendant and auxiliary manufacture. Every railway takes trade from the little town to

the big town because it enables the customer to buy in the big town. Year by year the North (as we may roughly call the new industrial world) gets more important, and the South (as we may call the pleasant remnant of old times) gets less important. It is a grave objection to our existing parliamentary constitution that it gives much power to regions of past greatness, and refuses equal power to regions of present greatness.

I think (though it is not a popular notion) that by far the greater part of the cry for parliamentary reform is due to this inequality. The great capitalists, Mr. Bright and his friends, believe they are sincere in asking for more power for the working man, but, in fact, they very naturally and very properly want more power for themselves. They cannot endure—they ought not to endure—that a rich, able manufacturer should be a less man than a small stupid squire. The notions of political equality which Mr. Bright puts forward are as old as political speculation, and have been refuted by the first efforts of that speculation. But for all that they are likely to last as long as political society, because they are based upon indelible principles in human nature. Edmund Burke called the first East Indians, "Jacobins to a man," because they did not feel their "present importance equal to their real wealth." So long as there is an uneasy class, a class which has not its just power, it will rashly clutch and blindly believe the notion that all men should have the same power.

I do not consider the exclusion of the working classes from effectual representation a defect in *this* aspect of our parliamentary representation. The working classes contribute almost nothing to our corporate public opinion, and therefore, the fact of their want of influence in Parliament does not impair the coincidence of Parliament with public opinion. They are left out in the representation, and also in the thing represented.

Nor do I think the number of persons of aristocratic descent in Parliament impairs the accordance of Parliament with public opinion. No doubt the direct descendants and collateral relatives of noble families supply members to parliament in far greater proportion than is warranted by the number of such familes in comparison with the whole nation. But I do not believe that these families have the least corporate character, or any common opinions, different from others of the landed gentry. They have the opinions of the propertied rank in which they were born. The English aristocracy have never been a caste apart, and are not a caste apart now. They would keep up nothing that other landed gentlemen would not. And if any landed gentlemen are to be sent to the House of Commons, it is desirable that many should be men of some rank. As long as we keep up a double set of institutions,—one dignified and intended to impress the many, the other efficient and intended to govern the many, —we should take care that the two match nicely, and hide where the one begins and where the other

ends. This is in part effected by conceding some subordinate power to the august part of our polity, but it is equally aided by keeping an aristocratic element in the useful part of our polity. In truth, the deferential instinct secures both. Aristocracy is a power in the "constituencies." A man who is an honourable or a baronet, or better yet, perhaps, a real earl, though Irish, is coveted by half the electing bodies; and *cæteris paribus*, a manufacturer's son has no chance with him. The reality of the deferential feeling in the community is tested by the actual election of the class deferred to, where there is a large free choice betwixt it and others.

Subject therefore to the two minor, but still not inconsiderable, defects I have named, Parliament conforms itself accurately enough, both as a chooser of executives and as a legislature, to the formed opinion of the country. Similarly, and subject to the same exceptions, it expresses the nation's opinion in words well, when it happens that words, not laws, are wanted. On foreign matters, where we cannot legislate, whatever the English nation thinks, or thinks it thinks, as to the critical events of the world, whether in Denmark, in Italy, or America, and no matter whether it thinks wisely or unwisely, that same something, wise or unwise, will be thoroughly well said in Parliament. The lyrical function of Parliament, if I may use such a phrase, is well done; it pours out in characteristic words the characteristic heart of the nation. And it can do little more useful. Now that free government

is in Europe so rare and in America so distant, the opinion, even the incomplete, erroneous, rapid opinion of the free English people is invaluable. It may be very wrong, but it is sure to be unique; and if it is right it is sure to contain matter of great magnitude, for it is only a first-class matter in distant things which a free people ever sees or learns. The English people must miss a thousand minutiæ that continental bureaucracies know even too well; but if they see a cardinal truth which those bureaucracies miss, that cardinal truth may greatly help the world.

But if in these ways, and subject to these exceptions, Parliament by its policy and its speech well embodies and expresses public opinion, I own I think it must be conceded that it is not equally successful in elevating public opinion. The teaching task of Parliament is the task it does worst. Probably at this moment, it is natural to exaggerate this defect. The greatest teacher of all in Parliament, the head-master of the nation, the great elevator of the country—so far as Parliament elevates it—must be the Prime Minister: he has an influence, an authority, a facility in giving a great tone to discussion, or a mean tone, which no other man has. Now Lord Palmerston for many years steadily applied his mind to giving, not indeed a mean tone, but a light tone, to the proceedings of Parliament. One of his greatest admirers has since his death told a story of which he scarcely sees, or seems to see, the full effect. When Lord

Palmerston was first made leader of the House, his jaunty manner was not at all popular, and some predicted failure. "No," said an old member, "he will soon educate us *down* to his level; the House will soon prefer this Ha! Ha! style to the wit of Canning and the gravity of Peel." I am afraid that we must own that the prophecy was accomplished. No prime minister, so popular and so influential, has ever left in the public memory so little noble teaching. Twenty years hence, when men inquire as to the then fading memory of Palmerston, we shall be able to point to no great truth which he taught, no great distinct policy which he embodied, no noble words which once fascinated his age, and which, in after years, men would not willingly let die. But we shall be able to say "he had a genial manner, a firm, sound sense; he had a kind of cant of insincerity, but we always knew what he meant; he had the brain of a ruler in the clothes of a man of fashion." Posterity will hardly understand the words of the aged reminiscent, but we now feel their effect. The House of Commons, since it caught its tone from such a statesman, has taught the nation worse, and elevated it less, than usual.

I think, however, that a correct observer would decide that in general, and on principle, the House of Commons does not teach the public as much as it might teach it, or as the public would wish to learn. I do not wish very abstract, very philosophical, very hard matters to be stated in Parlia-

ment. The teaching there given must be popular, and to be popular it must be concrete, embodied, short. The problem is to know the highest truth which the people will bear, and to inculcate and preach that. Certainly Lord Palmerston did not preach it. He a little degraded us by preaching a doctrine just below our own standard ;—a doctrine not enough below us to repel us much, but yet enough below to harm us by augmenting a worldliness which needed no addition, and by diminishing a love of principle and philosophy which did not want deduction.

In comparison with the debates of any other assembly, it is true the debates by the English Parliament are most instructive. The debates in the American Congress have little teaching efficacy ; it is the characteristic vice of Presidential Government to deprive them of that efficacy ; in that government a debate in the legislature has little effect, for it cannot turn out the executive, and the executive can veto all it decides. The French Chambers * are suitable appendages to an Empire which desires the power of despotism without its shame ; they prevent the enemies of the Empire being quite correct when they say there is no free speech ; a few permitted objectors fill the air with eloquence, which every one knows to be often true, and always vain. The debates in an English Parliament fill a space in the world which, in these auxiliary chambers, is not possible. But I think

* This of course relates to the assemblies of the Empire.

any one who compares the discussions on great questions in the higher part of the press, with the discussions in Parliament, will feel that there is (of course amid much exaggeration and vagueness) a greater vigour and a higher meaning in the writing than in the speech: a vigour which the public appreciate—a meaning that they like to hear.

The *Saturday Review* said, some years since, that the ability of Parliament was a "protected ability:" that there was at the door a differential duty of at least £2,000 a year. Accordingly the House of Commons, representing only mind coupled with property, is not equal in mind to a legislature chosen for mind only, and whether accompanied by wealth or not. But I do not for a moment wish to see a representation of pure mind; it would be contrary to the main thesis of this essay. I maintain that Parliament ought to embody the public opinion of the English nation; and, certainly, that opinion is much more fixed by its property than by its mind. The "too clever by half" people who live in "Bohemia," ought to have no more influence in Parliament than they have in England, and they can scarcely have less. Only, after every great abatement and deduction, I think the country would bear a little more mind; and that there is a profusion of opulent dulness in Parliament which might a little—though only a little—be pruned away.

The only function of Parliament which remains to be considered is the informing function, as I

just now called it; the function which belongs to it, or to members of it, to bring before the nation the ideas, grievances, and wishes of special classes. This must not be confounded with what I have called its teaching function. In life, no doubt, the two run one into another. But so do many things which it is very important in definition to separate. The facts of two things being often found together is rather a reason for, than an objection to, separating them, in idea. Sometimes they are *not* found together, and then we may be puzzled if we have not trained ourselves to separate them. The teaching function brings true ideas before the nation, and is the function of its highest minds. The expressive function brings only special ideas, and is the function of but special minds. Each class has its ideas, wants, and notions; and certain brains are ingrained with them. Such sectarian conceptions are not those by which a determining nation should regulate its action, nor are orators, mainly animated by such conceptions, safe guides in policy. But those orators should be heard; those conceptions should be kept in sight. The great maxim of modern thought is not only the toleration of everything, but the examination of everything. It is by examining very bare, very dull, very unpromising things, that modern science has come to be what it is. There is a story of a great chemist who said he owed half his fame to his habit of examining after his experiments, what was going to be thrown away: everybody

knew the result of the experiment itself, but in the refuse matter there were many little facts and unknown changes, which suggested the discoveries of a famous life to a person capable of looking for them. So with the special notions of neglected classes. They may contain elements of truth which, though small, are the very elements which we now require, because we already know all the rest.

This doctrine was well known to our ancestors. They laboured to give a *character* to the various constituencies, or to many of them. They wished that the shipping trade, the wool trade, the linen trade, should each have their spokesman; that the unsectional Parliament should know what each section in the nation thought before it gave the national decision. This is the true reason for admitting the working classes to a share in the representation, at least as far as the composition of Parliament is to be improved by that admission. A great many ideas, a great many feelings have gathered among the town artizans—a peculiar intellectual life has sprung up among them. They believe that they have interests which are misconceived or neglected; that they know something which others do not know; that the thoughts of Parliament are not as their thoughts. They ought to be allowed to try to convince Parliament; their notions ought to be stated as those of other classes are stated; their advocates should be heard as other people's advocates are heard. Before the Reform

Bill, there was a recognised machinery for that purpose. The member for Westminster, and other members, were elected by universal suffrage (or what was in substance such); those members did, in their day, state what were the grievances and ideas—or were thought to be the grievances and ideas—of the working classes. It was the single, unbending franchise introduced in 1832 that has caused this difficulty, as it has others.

Until such a change is made the House of Commons will be defective, just as the House of Lords was defective. It will not *look* right. As long as the Lords do not come to their own House, we may prove on paper that it is a good revising chamber, but it will be difficult to make the literary argument felt. Just so, as long as a great class, congregated in political localities, and known to have political thoughts and wishes, is without notorious and palpable advocates in Parliament, we may prove on paper that our representation is adequate, but the world will not believe it. There is a saying of the eighteenth century, that in politics "gross appearances are great realities." It is in vain to demonstrate that the working classes have no grievances; that the middle classes have done all that is possible for them, and so on with a crowd of arguments which I need not repeat, for the newspapers keep them in type, and we can say them by heart. But so long as the "gross appearance" is that there are no evident, incessant representatives to speak the wants of artizans, the "great

reality" will be a diffused dissatisfaction. Thirty years ago it was vain to prove that Gatton and Old Sarum were valuable seats, and sent good members. Everybody said, "Why, there are no people there." Just so everybody must say now, "Our representative system must be imperfect, for an immense class has no members to speak for it." The only answer to the cry against constituencies *without* inhabitants was to transfer their power to constituencies *with* inhabitants. Just so, the way to stop the complaint that artizans have no members is to give them members,—to create a body of representatives, chosen by artizans, believing, as Mr. Carlyle would say, "that artizanism is the one thing needful."

No. VI.

ON CHANGES OF MINISTRY.

THERE is one error as to the English Constitution which crops up periodically. Circumstances which often, though irregularly, occur naturally suggests that error, and as surely as they happen it revives. The relation of Parliament, and especially of the House of Commons, to the Executive Government is the specific peculiarity of our constitution, and an event which frequently happens much puzzles some people as to it.

That event is a change of ministry. All our administrators go out together. The whole executive government changes—at least, all the heads of it change in a body, and at every such change some speculators are sure to exclaim that such a habit is foolish. They say, "No doubt Mr. Gladstone and Lord Russell may have been wrong about Reform; no doubt Mr. Gladstone may have been cross in the House of Commons; but why should either or both of these events change all the heads of all our practical departments? What could be more absurd than what happened in 1858? Lord Palmerston was for once in his life over-buoyant;

he gave rude answers to stupid inquiries; he brought into the Cabinet a nobleman concerned in an ugly trial about a woman; he, or his Foreign Secretary, did not answer a French despatch by a despatch, but told our ambassador to reply orally. And because of these trifles, or at any rate these isolated *un*administrative mistakes, all our administration had fresh heads. The Poor Law Board had a new chief, the Home Department a new chief, the Public Works a new chief. Surely this was absurd." Now, is this objection good or bad? Speaking generally, is it wise so to change all our rulers?

The practice produces three great evils. First, it brings in on a sudden new persons and untried persons to preside over our policy. A little while ago Lord Cranborne * had no more idea that he would now be Indian Secretary than that he would be a bill broker. He had never given any attention to Indian affairs; he can get them up, because he is an able educated man who can get up anything. But they are not "part and parcel" of his mind; not his subjects of familiar reflection, nor things of which he thinks by predilection, of which he cannot help thinking. But because Lord Russell and Mr. Gladstone did not please the House of Commons about Reform, there he is. A perfectly inexperienced man, so far as Indian affairs go, rules all our Indian empire. And if all our heads of offices

* Now Lord Salisbury, who, when this was written, was Indian Secretary.—*Note* to second edition.

change together, so very frequently it must be. If twenty offices are vacant at once, there are almost never twenty tried, competent, clever men ready to take them. The difficulty of making up a government is very much like the difficulty of putting together a Chinese puzzle; the spaces do not suit what you have to put into them. And the difficulty of matching a ministry is more than that of fitting a puzzle, because the ministers to be put in can object, though the bits of a puzzle cannot. One objector can throw out the combination. In 1847 Lord Grey would not join Lord John Russell's projected government if Lord Palmerston was to be Foreign Secretary; Lord Palmerston *would* be Foreign Secretary, and so the government was not formed. The cases in which a single refusal prevents a government are rare, and there must be many concurrent circumstances to make it effectual. But the cases in which refusals impair or spoil a government are very common. It almost never happens that the ministry-maker can put into his offices exactly whom he would like; a number of placemen are always too proud, too eager, or too obstinate to go just where they should.

Again, this system not only makes new ministers ignorant, but keeps present ministers indifferent. A man cannot feel the same interest that he might in his work if he knows that by events over which he has no control,—by errors in which he had no share,—by metamorphoses of opinion which belong to a different sequence of phenomena, he may have

to leave that work in the middle, and may very likely never return to it. The new man put into a fresh office ought to have the best motive to learn his task thoroughly, but, in fact, in England, he has not at all the best motive. The last wave of party and politics brought him there, the next may take him away. Young and eager men take, even at this disadvantage, a keen interest in office work, but most men, especially old men, hardly do so. Many a battered minister may be seen to think much more of the vicissitudes which make him and unmake him, than of any office matter.

Lastly, a sudden change of ministers may easily cause a mischievous change of policy. In many matters of business, perhaps in most, a continuity of mediocrity is better than a hotch-potch of excellences. For example, now that progress in the scientific arts is revolutionising the instruments of war, rapid changes in our head-preparers for land and sea war are most costly and most hurtful. A single competent selector of new inventions would probably in the course of years, after some experience, arrive at something tolerable; it is in the nature of steady, regular, experimenting ability to diminish, if not vanquish, such difficulties. But a quick succession of chiefs has no similar facility. They do not learn from each other's experience;—you might as well expect the new head boy at a public school to learn from the experience of the last head boy. The most valuable result of many years is a nicely balanced mind instinctively heedful of

various errors ; but such a mind is the incommunicable gift of individual experience, and an outgoing minister can no more leave it to his successor, than an elder brother can pass it on to a younger. Thus a desultory and incalculable policy may follow from a rapid change of ministers.

These are formidable arguments, but four things may, I think, be said in reply to, or mitigation of them. A little examination will show that this change of ministers is essential to a Parliamentary government ;—that something like it will happen in all elective governments, and that worse happens under presidential government ;—that it is not necessarily prejudicial to a good administration, but that, on the contrary, something like it is a pre-requisite of good administration ; that the evident evils of English administration are not the results of Parliamentary government, but of grave deficiencies in other parts of our political and social state ;—that, in a word, they result not from what we have, but from what we have *not*.

As to the first point, those who wish to remove the choice of ministers from Parliament have not adequately considered what a Parliament is. A Parliament is nothing less than a big meeting of more or less idle people. In proportion as you give it power it will inquire into everything, settle everything, meddle in everything. In an ordinary despotism, the powers of a despot are limited by his bodily capacity, and by the calls of pleasure ; he is but one man ;—there are but twelve hours in his

day, and he is not disposed to employ more than a small part in dull business :—he keeps the rest for the court, or the harem, or for society. He is at the top of the world, and all the pleasures of the world are set before him. Mostly there is only a very small part of political business which he cares to understand, and much of it (with the shrewd sensual sense belonging to the race) he knows that he will never understand. But a Parliament is composed of a great number of men by no means at the top of the world. When you establish a predominant Parliament, you give over the rule of the country to a despot who has unlimited time,—who has unlimited vanity,—who has, or believes he has, unlimited comprehension, whose pleasure is in action, whose life is work. There is no limit to the curiosity of Parliament. Sir Robert Peel once suggested that a list should be taken down of the questions asked of him in a single evening ; they touched more or less on fifty subjects, and there were a thousand other subjects which by parity of reason might have been added too. As soon as bore A ends, bore B begins. Some inquire from genuine love of knowledge, or from a real wish to improve what they ask about,—others to see their name in the papers,—others to show a watchful constituency that they are alert,—others to get on and to get a place in the government,—others from an accumulation of little motives they could not themselves analyse, or because it is their habit to ask things. And a proper reply must be given.

It was said that "Darby Griffith destroyed Lord Palmerston's first Government," and undoubtedly the cheerful impertinence with which in the conceit of victory that minister answered grave men much hurt his Parliamentary power. There is one thing which no one will permit to be treated lightly,—himself. And so there is one too which a sovereign assembly will never permit to be lessened or ridiculed,—its own power. The minister of the day will have to give an account in Parliament of all branches of administration, to say why they act when they do, and why they do not when they don't.

Nor is chance inquiry all a public department has most to fear. Fifty members of Parliament may be zealous for a particular policy affecting the department, and fifty others for another policy, and between them they may divide its action, spoil its favourite aims, and prevent its consistently working out either of their own aims. The process is very simple. Every department at times looks as if it was in a scrape; some apparent blunder, perhaps some real blunder, catches the public eye. At once the antagonist Parliamentary sections, which want to act on the department, seize the opportunity. They make speeches, they move for documents, they amass statistics. They declare "that in no other country is such a policy possible as that which the department is pursuing; that it is mediæval; that it costs money; that it wastes life; that America does the contrary; that Prussia does the

contrary." The newspapers follow according to their nature. These bits of administrative scandal amuse the public. Articles on them are very easy to write, easy to read, easy to talk about. They please the vanity of mankind. We think as we read, "Thank God, *I* am not as that man; *I* did not send green coffee to the Crimea; *I* did not send patent cartridge to the common guns, and common cartridge to the breech loaders. *I* make money; that miserable public functionary only wastes money." As for the defence of the department, no one cares for it or reads it. Naturally at first hearing it does not sound true. The opposition have the unrestricted selection of the point of attack, and they seldom choose a case in which the department, upon the surface of the matter, seems to be right. The case of first impression will always be that something shameful has happened; that such and such men did die; that this and that gun would not go off; that this or that ship will not sail. All the pretty reading is unfavourable, and all the praise is very dull.

Nothing is more helpless than such a department in Parliament if it has no authorised official defender. The wasps of the House fasten on it; here they perceive is something easy to sting, and safe, for it cannot sting in return. The small grain of foundation for complaint germinates, till it becomes a whole crop. At once the minister of the day is appealed to; he is at the head of the administration, and he must put the errors right, if such they are.

The opposition leader says, "I put it to the right honourable gentleman, the First Lord of the Treasury. He is a man of business. I do not agree with him in his choice of ends, but he is an almost perfect master of methods and means. What he wishes to do he does do. Now I appeal to him whether such gratuitous errors, such fatuous incapacity, are to be permitted in the public service. Perhaps the right honourable gentleman will grant me his attention while I show from the very documents of the departments," &c., &c. What is the minister to do? He never heard of this matter; he does not care about the matter. Several of the supporters of the Government are interested in the opposition to the department; a grave man, supposed to be wise, mutters, "This is *too* bad." The Secretary of the Treasury tells him, "The House is uneasy. A good many men are shaky. A. B. said yesterday he had been dragged through the dirt four nights following. Indeed I am disposed to think myself that the department has been somewhat lax. Perhaps an inquiry," &c., &c. And upon that the Prime Minister rises and says, "That Her Majesty's Government having given very serious and grave consideration to this most important subject, are not prepared to say that in so complicated a matter the department has been perfectly exempt from error. He does not indeed concur in all the statements which have been made; it is obvious that several of the charges advanced are inconsistent with one another. If A. had really died from eating

green coffee on the Tuesday, it is plain he could not have suffered from insufficient medical attendance on the following Thursday. However, on so complex a subject, and one so foreign to common experience, he will not give a judgment. And if the honourable member would be satisfied with having the matter inquired into by a committee of that House, he will be prepared to accede to the suggestion."

Possibly the outlying department, distrusting the ministry, crams a friend. But it is happy indeed if it chances on a judicious friend. The persons most ready to take up that sort of business are benevolent amateurs, very well intentioned, very grave, very respectable, but also rather dull. Their words are good, but about the joints their arguments are weak. They speak very well, but while they are speaking, the decorum is so great that everybody goes away. Such a man is no match for a couple of House of Commons gladiators. They pull what he says to shreds. They show or say that he is wrong about his facts. Then he rises in a fuss and must explain; but in his hurry he mistakes, and cannot find the right paper, and becomes first hot, then confused, next inaudible, and so sits down. Probably he leaves the House with the notion that the defence of the department has broken down, and so the *Times* announces to all the world as soon as it awakes.

Some thinkers have naturally suggested that the heads of departments should as such have the right

of speech in the House. But the system when it has been tried has not answered. M. Guizot tells us from his own experience that such a system is not effectual. A great popular assembly has a corporate character; it has its own privileges, prejudices, and notions. And one of these notions is that its own members—the persons it sees every day—whose qualities it knows, whose minds it can test, are those whom it can most trust. A clerk speaking from without would be an unfamiliar object. He would be an outsider. He would speak under suspicion; he would speak without dignity. Very often he would speak as a victim. All the bores of the House would be upon him. He would be put upon examination. He would have to answer interrogatories. He would be put through the figures and cross-questioned in detail. The whole effect of what he said would be lost in *quæstiunculæ* and hidden in a controversial detritus.

Again, such a person would rarely speak with great ability. He would speak as a scribe. His habits must have been formed in the quiet of an office: he is used to red tape, placidity, and the respect of subordinates. Such a person will hardly ever be able to stand the hurly-burly of a public assembly. He will lose his head—he will say what he should not. He will get hot and red; he will feel he is a sort of culprit. After being used to the flattering deference of deferential subordinates, he will be pestered by fuss and confounded by invective. He will hate the House as naturally as the House does

not like him. He will be an incompetent speaker addressing a hostile audience.

And what is more, an outside administrator addressing Parliament can move Parliament only by the goodness of his arguments. He has no votes to back them up with. He is sure to be at chronic war with some active minority of assailants or others. The natural mode in which a department is improved on great points and new points is by external suggestion; the worst foes of a department are the plausible errors which the most visible facts suggest, and which only half visible facts confute. Both the good ideas and the bad ideas are sure to find advocates first in the press and then in Parliament. Against these a permanent clerk would have to contend by argument alone. The Minister, the head of the parliamentary Government, will not care for him. The Minister will say in some undress soliloquy, "These permanent 'fellows' must look after themselves. I cannot be bothered. I have only a majority of nine, and a very shaky majority, too. I cannot afford to make enemies for those whom I did not appoint. They did nothing for me, and I can do nothing for them." And if the permanent clerk come to ask his help, he will say in decorous language, "I am sure that if the department can evince to the satisfaction of Parliament that its past management has been such as the public interests require, no one will be more gratified than myself. I am not aware if it will be in my power to attend in my place on Monday; but if I can be

so fortunate, I shall listen to your official statement with my very best attention." And so the permanent public servant will be teased by the wits, oppressed by the bores, and massacred by the innovators of Parliament.

The incessant tyranny of Parliament over the public offices is prevented and can only be prevented by the appointment of a parliamentary head, connected by close ties with the present ministry and the ruling party in Parliament. The parliamentary head is a protecting machine. He and the friends he brings stand between the department and the busybodies and crotchet-makers of the House and the country. So long as at any moment the policy of an office could be altered by chance votes in either House of Parliament, there is no security for any consistency. Our guns and our ships are not, perhaps, very good now. But they would be much worse if any thirty or forty advocates for this gun or that gun could make a motion in Parliament, beat the department, and get their ships or their guns adopted. The "Black Breech Ordnance Company" and the "Adamantine Ship Company" would soon find representatives in Parliament, if forty or fifty members would get the national custom for their rubbish. But this result is now prevented by the parliamentary head of the department. As soon as the opposition begins the attack, he looks up his means of defence. He studies the subject, compiles his arguments, and builds little piles of statistics, which he hopes will have some effect.

He has his reputation at stake, and he wishes to show that he is worth his present place, and fit for future promotion. He is well known, perhaps liked, by the House—at any rate the House attends to him; he is one of the regular speakers whom they hear and heed. He is sure to be able to get himself heard, and he is sure to make the best defence he can. And after he has settled his speech he loiters up to the Secretary of the Treasury, and says quietly, "They have got a motion against me on Tuesday, you know. I hope you will have your men here. A lot of fellows have crotchets, and though they do not agree a bit with one another, they are all against the department; they will all vote for the inquiry." And the Secretary answers, "Tuesday, you say; no (looking at a paper), I do not think it will come on on Tuesday. There is Higgins on Education. He is good for a long time. But anyhow it shall be all right." And then he glides about and speaks a word here and a word there, in consequence of which, when the anti-official motion is made, a considerable array of steady, grave faces sits behind the Treasury Bench—nay, possibly a rising man who sits in outlying independence below the gangway rises to defend the transaction; the department wins by thirty-three, and the management of that business pursues its steady way.

This contrast is no fancy picture. The experiment of conducting the administration of a public department by an independent unsheltered authority has often been tried, and always failed. Parliament

always poked at it, till it made it impossible. The most remarkable is that of the Poor Law. The administration of that law is not now very good, but it is not too much to say that almost the whole of its goodness has been preserved by its having an official and party protector in the House of Commons. Without that contrivance we should have drifted back into the errors of the old Poor Law, and superadded to them the present meanness and incompetence in our large towns. All would have been given up to local management. Parliament would have interfered with the central board till it made it impotent, and the local authorities would have been despotic. The first administration of the new Poor Law was by "Commissioners"—the three kings of Somerset House, as they were called. The system was certainly not tried in untrustworthy hands. At the crisis Mr. Chadwick, one of the most active and best administrators in England, was the secretary and the motive power: the principal Commissioner was Sir George Lewis, perhaps the best selective administrator of our time. But the House of Commons would not let the Commission alone. For a long time it was defended because the Whigs had made the Commission, and felt bound as a party to protect it. The new law started upon a certain intellectual impetus, and till that was spent its administration was supported in a rickety existence by an abnormal strength. But afterwards the Commissioners were left to their intrinsic weakness. There were members for all the localities, but there

were none for them. There were members for every crotchet and corrupt interest, but there were none for them. The rural guardians would have liked to eke out wages by rates; the city guardians hated control, and hated to spend money. The Commission had to be dissolved, and a parliamentary head was added; the result is not perfect, but it is an amazing improvement on what would have happened in the old system. The new system has not worked well because the central authority has too little power; but under the previous system the central authority was getting to have, and by this time would have had, no power at all. And if Sir George Lewis and Mr. Chadwick could not maintain an outlying department in the face of Parliament, how unlikely that an inferior compound of discretion and activity will ever maintain it!

These reasonings show why a changing parliamentary head, a head changing as the ministry changes, is a necessity of good Parliamentary government, and there is happily a natural provision that there will be such heads. Party organisation ensures it. In America, where on account of the fixedly recurring presidential election, and the perpetual minor elections, party organisation is much more effectually organised than anywhere else, the effect on the offices is tremendous. Every office is filled anew at every presidential change, at least every change which brings in a new party. Not only the greatest posts, as in England, but the minor posts change their occupants. The scale of the

financial operations of the Federal government is now so increased that most likely in that department, at least, there must in future remain a permanent element of great efficiency; a revenue of £90,000,000 sterling cannot be collected and expended with a trifling and changing staff. But till now the Americans have tried to get on not only with changing heads to a bureaucracy, as the English, but without any stable bureaucracy at all. They have facilities for trying it which no one else has. All Americans can administer, and the number of them really fit to be in succession lawyers, financiers, or military managers is wonderful; they need not be as afraid of a change of all their officials as European countries must, for the incoming substitutes are sure to be much better there than here; and they do not fear, as we English fear, that the outgoing officials will be left destitute in middle life, with no hope for the future and no recompense for the past, for in America (whatever may be the cause of it) opportunities are numberless, and a man who is ruined by being "off the rails" in England soon there gets on another line. The Americans will probably to some extent modify their past system of total administrative cataclysms, but their very existence in the only competing form of free government should prepare us for and make us patient with the mild transitions of Parliamentary government.

These arguments will, I think, seem conclusive to almost every one; but, at this moment, many people will meet them thus: they will say, "You prove

what we do not deny, that this system of periodical change is a necessary ingredient in Parliamentary government, but you have not proved what we do deny, that this change is a good thing. Parliamentary government may have that effect, among others, for anything we care: we maintain merely that it is a defect." In answer, I think it may be shown not, indeed, that this precise change is necessary to a permanently perfect administration, but that some analogous change, some change of the same species, is so.

At this moment, in England, there is a sort of leaning towards bureaucracy—at least, among writers and talkers. There is a seizure of partiality to it. The English people do not easily change their rooted notions, but they have many unrooted notions. Any great European event is sure for a moment to excite a sort of twinge of conversion to something or other. Just now, the triumph of the Prussians—the bureaucratic people, as is believed, *par excellence*—has excited a kind of admiration for bureaucracy, which a few years since we should have thought impossible. I do not presume to criticise the Prussian bureaucracy of my own knowledge; it certainly is not a pleasant institution for foreigners to come across, though agreeableness to travellers is but of very second-rate importance. But it is quite certain that the Prussian bureaucracy, though we, for a moment, half admire it at a distance, does not permanently please the most intelligent and liberal Prussians at home. What are two among the prin-

cipal aims of the *Fortschritt Partei*—the party of progress—as Mr. Grant Duff, the most accurate and philosophical of our describers, delineates them ?

First, "a liberal system, conscientiously carried out in all the details of the administration, with a view to avoiding the scandals now of frequent occurrence, when an obstinate or bigoted official sets at defiance the liberal initiations of the government, trusting to backstairs influence."

Second, "an easy method of bringing to justice guilty officials, who are at present, as in France, in all conflicts with simple citizens, like men armed *cap-à-pie* fighting with undefenceless." A system against which the most intelligent native liberals bring even with colour of reason such grave objections, is a dangerous model for foreign imitation.

The defects of bureaucracy are, indeed, well known. It is a form of government which has been tried often enough in the world, and it is easy to show what, human nature being what it in the long run is, the defects of a bureaucracy must in the long run be.

It is an inevitable defect, that bureaucrats will care more for routine than for results ; or, as Burke put it, "that they will think the substance of business not to be much more important than the forms of it." Their whole education and all the habit of their lives make them do so. They are brought young into the particular part of the public service to which they are attached ; they are occupied for years in learning its forms—afterwards, for

years too, in applying these forms to trifling matters. They are, to use the phrase of an old writer, "but the tailors of business; they cut the clothes, but they do not find the body." Men so trained must come to think the routine of business not a means, but an end—to imagine the elaborate machinery of which they form a part, and from which they derive their dignity, to be a grand and achieved result, not a working and changeable instrument. But in a miscellaneous world, there is now one evil and now another. The very means which best helped you yesterday, may very likely be those which most impede you to-morrow—you may want to do a different thing to-morrow, and all your accumulation of means for yesterday's work is but an obstacle to the new work. The Prussian military system is the theme of popular wonder now, yet it sixty years pointed the moral against form. We have all heard the saying that "Frederic the Great lost the battle of Jena." It was the system which he had established—a good system for his wants and his times, which, blindly adhered to, and continued into a different age—put to strive with new competitors—brought his country to ruin. The "dead and formal" Prussian system was then contrasted with the "living" French system—the sudden outcome of the new explosive democracy. The system which now exists is the product of the reaction; and the history of its predecessor is a warning what its future history may be too. It is not more celebrated for its day than Frederic's for his,

and principle teaches that a bureaucracy, elated by sudden success, and marvelling at its own merit, is the most unimproving and shallow of governments.

Not only does a bureaucracy thus tend to under-government, in point of quality; it tends to over-government, in point of quantity. The trained official hates the rude, untrained public. He thinks that they are stupid, ignorant, reckless—that they cannot tell their own interest—that they should have the leave of the office before they do anything. Protection is the natural inborn creed of every official body; free trade is an extrinsic idea, alien to its notions, and hardly to be assimilated with life; and it is easy to see how an accomplished critic, used to a free and active life, could thus describe the official.

"Every imaginable and real social interest," says Mr. Laing, "religion, education, law, police, every branch of public or private business, personal liberty to move from place to place, even from parish to parish within the same jurisdiction; liberty to engage in any branch of trade or industry, on a small or large scale, all the objects, in short, in which body, mind, and capital can be employed in civilised society, were gradually laid hold of for the employment and support of functionaries, were centralised in *bureaux*, were superintended, licensed, inspected, reported upon, and interfered with by a host of officials scattered over the land, and maintained at the public expense, yet with no conceivable utility in their duties. They are not, however, gentlemen at large,