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ART. 1.—1. *Corn and Currency, in an Address to the Landlords.* By Sir James Graham, (of Netherby,) Bart. M.P.

2. *Letters on Agricultural Protection, and Currency.* By the Right Hon. Lord Stourton.

3. *Price of Corn, and Wages of Labour; with Observations upon Dr. Smith's, Mr. Ricardo's, and Mr. Malthus's, Doctrines upon these subjects; and an Attempt at an Exposition of the Fluctuation of the Price of Corn, during the last Thirty Years.* By Sir Edward West, late Fellow of University College, and Author of an Essay on the Application of Capital to Land.

4. *The Political Primer; or, Road to Public Honour.*

5. *A Letter to the Earl of Liverpool, on the Cause of the present Embarrassment and Distress, and the Measures necessary for our Effectual Relief.* By C. C. Western, Esq. M.P.

6. *Letters to Lord John Russell, upon the Original Formation of the House of Commons.* By Thomas Creevy, Esq.

THE productions which we have placed at the head of this article bring before us almost every particular in the present state of the nation. It has, therefore, appeared to us, that we shall gain something in condensation, and still more in the order and coherence of our ideas, if we take for our subject the state of the nation as a whole, and advert to the conclusions and arguments of the several pamphlets, as they may be suggested to us in pursuing the train of our own reflections.

Le present est gros de l'avenir. This profound remark of a celebrated philosopher, and sage observer of human affairs, we

may translate into the corresponding maxim, "that the present is the child of the past."

This nation has enjoyed, if it can be called enjoyment, some years of peace since the termination of one of the most wasteful wars that ever nation waged, since nations existed on the earth: a war not begun in self defence, for where were we attacked? a war not begun for conquest, for we had no desire to add to our territory: a war, then, for what? A war against ideas! Whose ideas? The supposed, the imputed ideas of a part of the population of a neighbouring nation.

A war, the most wasteful and destructive recorded in the annals of time, waged against certain ideas of a certain part of the population of a neighbouring country, is a parent, the novelty in the nature of which may well account for something curious in the nature of the progeny.

The parent must be a little more minutely described. A neighbouring nation set about the reform of its government, under an opinion, very generally diffused, not only in that nation but throughout Europe, that a reform was very much wanted in it. In the progress of the work of reform, the people of the country were found to differ widely in their ideas of the sort of reform that would answer best. Not to detain ourselves with all the minute differences, which were many, we may say, generally, that the said people were divided into two grand classes; that of those who called for extensive changes; and that of those who wished, at the utmost, for very little change. The two parties gradually became violent, and after a time proceeded to blows; in other words, the country fell into a civil war. This is a state of great calamity. It has seldom happened in a civil war, that the two parties have not become highly inflamed, and ready to inflict atrocities upon one another. This, though certainly not to any unusual degree, was the case with the parties in France.

After the lapse of some time, and it was a considerable time, it became apparent that the party demanding extensive changes, and which had gone on, as commonly happens, demanding changes more and more extensive, as the quarrel proceeded (men's ideas become exaggerated when they are in a heat) would prove the stronger. Then it was, and not till then, that the government of Great Britain struck in, and took part in the civil war of France; struck in to prevent the success of the party demanding extensive changes, and give the victory to the party which (its ideas also becoming exaggerated in the struggle) was at last for resisting every change.

It may be asked, and assuredly it is a natural question, what

concern had we in the changes, whether small or great, which a foreign people might introduce into their government; or what business had we to insist that the majority of such a people (the greater strength in such cases naturally implies the greater number) should please us rather than themselves, in the form of their institutions?

The question was not put in those terms to the British people. They were not asked, whether they wished success to the party in France opposed to change; and if so, whether they would go to war to prevent them from being overcome. Much less were they asked, whether they would go to war to compel the people of France to please them with their institutions rather than themselves. They were told that the party in France which aimed at extensive changes had horrid ideas.

Interesting will be the chapter which the philosophical historian will hereafter write, when he collects together and describes the artifices which were employed to persuade the people of England that they ought to go to war against horrid ideas.

But horrid ideas! What had we to do with the horrid ideas of the people of France? If they were horrid with respect to themselves, that is, calculated to bring horrid consequences on themselves, they soon would have had experience for their instructress, and to her lessons we safely might have left them. Oh, but they were horrid also with respect to us! That is serious. Permit us to ask, in what way? The people of France did not breathe fire and sword against us. It was not in that form that their ideas were horrid with respect to us. They had no ideas of invading England, and exterminating her people.

No, but the people of England would have adopted the horrid ideas of the people of France, and the horrid things which would have resulted from those ideas in France, would have resulted from them here. Ah, that was the case, was it? That being the danger, we must look at it nearer, and examine it a little more minutely.

The party desiring extensive changes in France had ideas calculated to bring horrid consequences upon themselves, calculated also to be adopted by the people of England, and to bring like horrid consequences upon them. This was the theory! And certainly a more remarkable theory was never propounded to the world. The practical consequence, pressed upon the people of England, was, if possible, still more wonderful. They were called upon to go to war against a set of ideas,

for fear lest they themselves should adopt them; to go to war against ideas, because they were calculated to bring horrid consequences upon whosoever adopted them; and they, believing this already, as the ground why they should go to war, were also made to believe that it was necessary to go to war to prevent themselves from adopting those ideas; to prevent themselves from adopting ideas, which they were already persuaded, to so intense a degree, were unfit for adoption.

This is a curious item to be found in the state of a nation; and having been an item in the state of this nation at so recent a period, must have an intimate connexion with much of what it is now our purpose to expound.

No such monstrous case of gulling, no such inordinate swallow of delusion, we verily believe, is to be found in the history of civilized man.

Foreigners who visit England are very apt to say of our dear country, *Ma foi, c'est le pays le plus aristocratique de l'Europe.* Here we have a cause which will account satisfactorily for many phenomena.

The party demanding extensive changes in France, demanded, among other things, the extinction of those privileges of the aristocratical class, by which that class were enabled to perpetuate bad government for their own advantage. These ideas were horrid, no doubt, to the aristocratical class in England. What deserves profound consideration is, the degree to which they persuaded the rest of the people that they were horrid to them, and the ways and means by which they brought about that extraordinary persuasion.

It is a signal manifestation of their mighty power. First of all, they possessed the privilege, up to that time but little encroached upon, of setting the opinions of the people. In opinions, as in other things, the ambition of the lower sort has been, to follow the example of the higher. In the next place, they had the instruments of noise to a great degree in their own hands; the means of filling the ears of the nation so constantly with the din of their own opinions, as almost to exclude the hearing of any other. "Give me," says Addison, in one of the Spectators, "the power of stating every day without contradiction, to a man at his breakfast, any opinion for a sufficient length of time, and I shall make sure of having his belief in the long run."

The contagion of the passions is another power of which the aristocracy availed themselves on that occasion to an astonishing degree. How naturally one man becomes inflamed by another, needs no illustration. How much more naturally and strongly we catch the passions of those to whom we look up,

than of those upon whom we look down, is also matter of certain experience. The aristocratical class, on that occasion, were agitated with real fears; they used every sort of artifice, many theatrical, many far less justifiable, to act still more tragic fears than they felt. The great players found in the people a sympathetic, far too sympathetic, audience.

Wielding all the powers of government, having all the punishments and all the rewards of the state at command, they were able, after they had gotten the passions of the people a little on their side, to silence all contradiction. Of the men who addressed, or were capable of addressing, the public, by far the greater number were on their side, part from sympathy, part because they saw it greatly for their interest. Against those who would have opened the eyes of the people, they had the instrument of punishment, in tremendous power. With a law such as ours, prosecution itself, tormenting, harassing, ruinous by the expense whatever the result, and the result itself almost always uncertain whatever the case, is despotism in the hands of the aristocracy, or the ministry, its organ. Every artifice of delusion employed on the one side, the means of exposing the delusion denied on the other, what wonder is it that the people were dragged, if not willing, yet unresisting, victims to the sacrifice, passing through the fire to Moloch, and feeding the fire which burned them with their substance!

A war of such length, of such desperate prodigality, waste, and destruction, waged for the sole purpose of quieting aristocratical fears, and consolidating aristocratical dominion, was the parent of a numerous family.

First of all, it left, as a distinguishing ingredient in the state of the nation, an intense jealousy of popular privileges. Every proposal for giving the people, not power, for that is not the proper name for it, but security against being treated as powerless victims at the mercy of an aristocracy wielding, as they pleased, the powers of government, was treated as a crime; and the man who had the imprudence to make it, was marked out for persecution, the persecution at any rate of scorn, and indignation, and abuse; the persecution of society and opinion. He was a man to be shunned, a man not only to be hindered from rising, but to be thrust down. The countenance of authority was turned against him, and all who courted authority, all who claimed alliance with it, or wished for the reputation of having alliance with it, all who, from blind or base imitation, were incited to follow its example, let loose the tongue of reproach, and shook the hand of enmity in his face. He was not an object for good offices, he was an object for all the ill offices which could render

his situation, as an advocate of the people, painful to him and degrading.

Of course the current of our legislation ran in the same direction. Intense was the anxiety to strengthen the bulwarks of aristocratical power, and to exclude the people, as effectually as they had always been excluded, from any share in the management of their own affairs, from any the smallest power of hindering the aristocracy from managing the affairs of the community as they pleased, in other words, from doing as much for themselves at the expense of others as the nature of the case would permit.

As far as regarded the direct powers of legislation, there was not the smallest difficulty. The people had never had a share more than nominal in them. And a motion for such a reform of the legislature as would give them any thing more, was only an occasion for heaping contumely upon the people, and the man who spoke for them. On this subject, of course, there was no anxiety. But a new power had risen, that of public opinion. The legislating class did not well understand it; but they guessed that it boded them no good. The strength of their endeavours therefore was directed against it. Every thing was done to crush public opinion. Law after law was enacted to punish assemblies of the people, and to prevent the expression of their opinions in large bodies. Law after law was passed to restrict the liberty of the press, to render the dissemination of opinions in general difficult and costly, the dissemination of some opinions, those called dangerous, that is, unfavourable to the monopoly of power in the hands of a particular class, in a high degree penal.

Next of the articles left us by the war carried on for the purpose of quieting aristocratical fears and consolidating aristocratic dominion, we may notice the increase of the national debt.

Money raised by loan, and spent in war, is the destruction of so much of the national capital; the destruction, therefore, of so much of the means of national production, that is, of the means of paying taxes, at the very time that there is imposed upon the nation the burthen of new taxes to the amount of the interest of such debt: it acts therefore with double oppression, the oppression of the new tax, and the oppression of diminished means.

It is not, in general, sufficiently considered to what an extent an expensive government is a bad government; not merely when it trenches upon the national capital, and cuts off so much of the means of annual production, but when it absorbs too much of the annual produce, and harasses the people with taxes.

The whole of the mischief does not consist in the degree to which it robs the people of the fruits of their labour and capital, and deprives them of the enjoyments for which they have laboured and cared. An enormous mass of evil is further generated, in the misdirection which taxes force upon national industry, in the impediments to improvement in the various manufacturing processes with which the taxes interfere, and the destruction of the means of adding annually to the national capital, and increasing the wealth and prosperity of the nation.

Even this is far from being the whole of the dismal account. The moral evils are still more, perhaps, to be deprecated. A vast amount of taxes raised upon the people supposes a great amount of persons who live upon the taxes. Of all classes of men, in any country, the most noxious is that of those who live upon the labour of others, without rendering them an equivalent. This includes the whole race of evil-doers in the nation; robbers, thieves, and cheats of every description. Of all dispositions of mind that can be generated in a nation, the most noxious by far is that of desiring to live upon the labour of others. This is increased to the greatest degree by extravagant taxation. Not only does extravagant taxation increase enormously the number of those who live noxiously upon the labour of others, but, in addition to every person who does so live, it raises up two or three who expect so to live, who are striving to be placed in that situation, and who, of course, have the disposition in full perfection.

Reflect upon another circumstance which dreadfully increases the amount of this evil. It is well known that the leading class in every country, the class most remarkable for power and wealth, give the tone to the rest of the community. It is a matter of ambition to imitate them, and a source of honourable distinction to resemble them. Their opinions are the esteemed opinions, their manners are the elegant manners, and their maxims of conduct the refined morality.

Those who have observed the workings of human nature upon the greater as well as the smaller scale, are well aware of this most important fact, that every class or combination of men have a strong propensity to get up a system of morality for themselves, that is, conformable to their own interests; in other words, to urge upon other men, as good, such lines of conduct as are good for them; as evil, such as are evil for them, whether good or evil to other people. Thus, the first of virtues in a family of servants is, to conceal from the master the faults of one another; and a tale-bearer is among them the most opprobrious of all designations. We should feel great pleasure,

and we should render great service, in fully illustrating this important phenomenon of human nature; but, on the present occasion we must take the fact for granted, only referring those of our readers who wish to render themselves more familiar with it, to a work which, to this purpose at least, is highly instructive, that of Helvetius, "De l'Esprit."

The aristocracy of each country feel this propensity not less strongly than any other class, and have much greater advantage for giving it extensive effect. The consequence is, what every one would expect to find, that the morality in every country is to a great degree aristocratical morality; in other words, that among the maxims laid down and approved for the classification of actions as good and bad, as right and wrong, there are many by which actions are received into the class of good, solely or chiefly because they are good for the aristocracy, though not good for the rest of the community; into the class of evil, solely or chiefly because they are evil for the aristocracy, though not for the rest of the community. As the truth of this proposition cannot be disputed, we shall not occupy any of the space which is too limited for other more immediate objects of this article, with the illustration of it, which we recommend to each of our readers to follow out for himself. To a student in Ethics, few exercises will prove more useful than that of culling out the parts of the system of English morality which rest solely or chiefly upon their usefulness to the aristocracy, and distinguishing them from those which are founded on a more comprehensive and generous scheme of good.

Of course, of those who live upon the taxes, in an over-taxed country, the greater proportion by far belong to the class who legislate and who impose the taxes. This, at any rate in this country, is the aristocratical class. Of those who live upon the labour of others without rendering them an equivalent, by far the greater proportion, therefore, belong to the aristocracy. It follows, that the disposition of so living, that most immoral of all dispositions, the real origin of almost all the crimes which infest human society, exists in the aristocracy to a degree far greater than that in which it exists in any other class in the community. The aristocracy get up a morality to favour this propensity, and this interest. Among them the thing does not pass for wicked and shameful. It is treated as an excellent part of the wisdom of the world. Their example and approbation give countenance and encouragement to the propensity; and the disposition to live upon the labour of others is diffused throughout the community. The moral sense of the nation is perverted; the distinction between what is right and what is

wrong, in one of the great departments of human action, is lost, and the horror of crime is almost wholly extinguished. In vain the aristocracy endeavour to distinguish the cases in which the disposition to live upon the labour of others is useful to themselves though hurtful to others, from those in which it is hurtful to them in common with others; and endeavour to make a crime of the one without making a crime of the other; to make a crime of robbing the people by unlicensed, no crime of robbing them by licensed, imposture. They do not succeed. Profitable imposture ceases to be opprobrious. The nation becomes a nation of swindlers; and nothing hinders them from being as generally thieves and robbers, but the greater risk to which these vices expose the practitioners. It is demonstratively certain that an over-taxed country must be an immoral country.

Assuredly among the items in the state of this country may be enumerated, as standing in the first rank, prodigal expensiveness on the part of the government; and consequent upon this, and inseparable from it, the vice, in the aristocratical class, of living upon the labour of others. An enormous enhancement of both evils we owe to the war waged against the horrid ideas of the leading party in France, the war for quieting aristocratical apprehensions, and consolidating aristocratical power. During that war the substance of the people was lavished on the aristocracy, in a manner which had no parallel in this or in any other country. The practice became a habit on both sides; the habit on the one part of receiving the public money; and the habit, the no less fatal habit, on the other, of submitting to be deprived of it. When the war ceased, the expenditure went on; and it is perfectly amazing to see how small is the difference between the burthens of the people during the most expensive of all wars, and the peace by which it was succeeded. Enormous fleets and armies during the war paved the way for enormous establishments during peace; the nation was inured to such a state—the aristocracy to hold the lucrative posts, and the people to pay the expense. The connection between cause and effect is here abundantly obvious; but suppose that our interpretation is challenged; what can be said? That it is not the aristocracy, but the ministry, to whom the blame of such expenditure belongs? If this be asserted by any person, he must be able to tell us distinctly what inducement a ministry can have for adopting this mischievous policy; and it is plain he can render but one account: the ministry make a large expenditure in order to make partisans.

But partisans, where? In parliament, to be sure. And when you say partisans in parliament, you mean the aristocracy.

do you not? To this our objector must of course reply in the affirmative. The ministers, because the creatures of the aristocracy, make an extravagant expenditure, that the aristocracy may profit by it; and this he calls an expenditure not made by the aristocracy.

So much for that grand item in the state of this country, the enormous expense of the government, and the morals which it tends to engender. We must hasten to other topics.

The fluctuations which have attended the enterprises of industry, have been a remarkable feature in the period which has intervened since the termination of the war. One season of distress has followed another, each involving a great portion of the population, and some grand division of the national industry, from that to the present time. It would be an inquiry of length, and of some difficulty, accurately to assign the causes of all that disorder which has afflicted the productive classes of the community, and impaired the efficacy of their powers and endeavours. No one can be mistaken in assigning all that is peculiar in it to the position in which we were placed by the monster of a war, at last destroyed, and the errors of legislation by which it had been accompanied and followed. The position, as a commercial people, in which we were placed by the war, is too complicated a subject to be unfolded here. One thing will easily be understood to have had an extensive operation, that it was savagely, and, for a commercial nation, insanely, a war upon the commercial intercourse of the world. Short-sighted aristocrats! Little did you know, when you boasted of giving England, by your vigour, as you called it, the monopoly of the world's commerce, that is of extinguishing the commerce of other nations, in the magnitude of which commerce, not in its destruction, England of all countries, as the most commercial, most peculiarly found her interest, that you were preparing the greatest calamities for your country, insuring the return of a season when the guides of commerce would be unable to see their way, and when calamitous suspension, or hazardous speculation, would be the only alternations. Alas, we have drunk of both these cups, to the bitter dregs.

Of the bad legislation which aggravated the evils of this bad position, three cases deserve peculiarly to be considered and understood; the alterations in the currency, the corn laws, and the usury law.

At a certain period of the war, to meet a pressure upon the Bank of England, the legislature came to the resolution of enabling it to suspend payments in cash, in other words, to

issue its notes without the obligation of paying them on demand. This the legislature did, in profound ignorance of the consequences, and under the comfortable feeling of being entirely practical, without one ray of that foresight which theory would have bestowed. The measure was intended to be very temporary. A practical legislature did not foresee that payments once suspended, would not be very easily resumed. The suspension continued, and the legislature began shortly to proclaim that vast advantages were derived from it; that it strengthened the nerves of war; and that its services could by no means be dispensed with as long as the war endured. The same legislature, however, at the same time proclaimed its design of destroying this mighty instrument of good at the end of the war; though, why depreciation of the currency should produce good in war, not in peace, practical legislature never explained.

First, by depreciation of the currency the legislature disturbed all pecuniary contracts, and altered the price of all commodities one way; producing all the loss, all the disorder, all the uncertainty which necessarily result from such an operation.

Secondly, by raising the value of the currency to its ancient standard, it again disturbed all pecuniary contracts, and altered the price of all commodities another way, producing similar loss, disorder, and uncertainty: it rendered a state of fluctuation habitual in the pecuniary transactions of the nation, and nourished a spirit nearly allied to gambling in those who desired to make their profit amid the agitations of commerce, and ventured for a prize in the lottery of profit and loss. We are now but slowly recovering from a terrible crisis, which that spirit contributed mainly to produce.

In excluding foreign corn, the object of the legislature, which essentially consists of landlords, was to keep the price of corn high. The laws for this purpose have had the intended effect only since the peace of 1815. Up to the year 1793 this country was an exporting country: the war placed the trade in corn, as it did other trades, on a footing peculiar to itself. In the mischievous revulsions which we have experienced since the termination of the war, the share of the corn laws has been most important. Their tendency to renew such calamities in endless succession no man of reflection can fail to perceive.

That they have a tendency to produce enormous fluctuations in the value of corn is seen and lamented, even by the persons who are most eager to preserve them.

The period of low prices is a period of calamity to the growers of corn. The period of high prices is a period of calamity to the consumers. To see-saw between these two horrible con-

ditions, with one half of our population always in misery, is a grand item in the present state of the nation; and one of the blessings which we owe to a practical and landholding legislature.

All the calamities which arise from fluctuations in commerce and manufactures are heightened enormously by the operation of the corn laws. When the price of corn is high, there is a forced exportation of British commodities. When the price of corn is low, there is a forced importation of foreign commodities. The connexion here between cause and effect is obvious. When we import foreign corn we must pay for it in commodities; our manufactories are called into increased exertion; manufacturers augment their establishments, employ an augmented number of hands, and retain a larger stock for the supply of an extended market. This state of things having lasted for a few years, another state comes round. Price of corn falls; we cease to import; possibly we export; the whole of that demand for our manufactures which was created by our importations ceases, and perhaps something more; stagnation ensues; the price of manufactured commodities falls; increased establishments become useless, and the expense bestowed upon them is lost; while hands are thrown out of employment, wages fall, and bankruptcy and starvation are the lot of the manufacturing population.

That the high price of corn produced by the corn laws is a tax upon the rest of the community for the benefit of the receivers of rent and the receivers of tithe, exclusively, and that it exists only to make them richer, the rest of the community poorer, has been so often and familiarly proved, that we may here take it for granted. A tax, however, of this description, though a curious item in the state of a country which pretends to be well governed, is too familiar to the people of England to excite any peculiar indignation. It has, further, been often shown, that the corn laws extract from the people much more than they bestow upon the landlords. The mode in which this effect is produced will be explained in a subsequent article. Even this, however, is far from being a peculiarity of the bread tax. It does not carry this atrocity to a length which can be compared with the taxes for the support of extravagant fleets, and armies, and colonies. There the benefit to the aristocracy, for whose benefit solely their extravagance is maintained, is often not one hundredth part of the cost to the people. A regiment of soldiers, for example, is good for the aristocracy only by its colonelcies and majorities, but it is bad for the people in the whole cost of the regiment, men and horses,

which is many times as great. Ships of war are good for the aristocracy only in the admiralships and captainships; but the cost of every ship to the people is enormous. Colonies are good for the aristocracy only in the governorships, and other places they afford; the cost of colonies is always atrocious. To make good things in sufficient abundance for the aristocracy in fleets, and armies, and colonies, the minister, it is evident, must put the nation to a ruinous expense; witness that under which we labour. By far the best mode of feeding the aristocracy would be by pensions. The minister should have a licence to give pensions, almost at his pleasure, to the aristocracy, provided he kept them out of all those employments which give them an interest in enormous establishments. If, instead of regiments, and ships, and colonies, he were to give them pensions to twice the amount of what they can derive from the regiments, the ships, and the colonies, we should be gainers to a prodigious amount. In such a case we should be sure to have no more of any of those things than would be really good for us. Feeding the aristocracy, as we do now, under a veil of imposture, we are sure to have much more than is good for us. In feeding the aristocracy in the direct way, by pensions, the people would lose no more than what the aristocracy would receive. In feeding them through enormous establishments the people lose infinitely more.

Beside the laws regarding currency and corn, we mentioned the usury laws as a third case of the bad legislation by which the evils of a bad position were aggravated. We have seen in what manner the laws affecting the currency and the trade in corn have tended to introduce fluctuations in commerce, producing alternate periods of high confidence and deep depression. When the depression comes, and demand is contracted, prices fall, and loss is sustained unavoidably; but prices will fall, less or more, and the loss will be more or less severe according to circumstances. If the merchants can find the means of meeting their pecuniary engagements without crowding their goods into a falling market, they prevent any considerable fall, and lose little more than interest till the glut is expended. If they cannot find the means of meeting their pecuniary engagements without hurrying their goods to an unseasonable market, many of them lose enormously, and many are ruined; a panic seizes the commercial world; payment of debts is demanded with eagerness; loans are refused, or scantily given, and the evils of fluctuation are carried to their greatest excess. The means, on the other hand, of confining those evils within the narrowest limits, are all summed up in the means whereby the merchants

meet their pecuniary engagements without unseasonably parting with their goods.

As if to exemplify bad legislation in its perfection, not only have we had laws to carry fluctuation to excess, but, in addition to them, we have had a law to prohibit the means of best obviating the effects of these fluctuations, and to force up the evils of them to their greatest height. That such is the effect of the usury law it must be a thoroughly ignorant legislature which can still need to be taught. In periods of depression a greater number of merchants than usual need loans, to enable them to keep back their goods from market. Of course the rate of interest rises. The merchant repairs to the monied man, and requests a loan. "No," says the monied man, "you can give me only five per cent interest, such is the law, and I can make more by using my money in another way." Without this wretched law the merchants, in a period of depression, would obtain the means of meeting their engagements to the utmost extent of the disposable funds of the community. Under this law they are, to a great degree, excluded from the means of meeting them. And for whose benefit does this law exist? Why should you inquire? Is it possible that such a law could continue in existence if the landlords did not imagine it were good for them? This is another of the blessings we owe to a landholding legislature.

With a people whose productive powers are so enormous as ours, and where there is so strong a disposition to accumulate property among all the classes of men by whom capital is employed, it would require a still worse legislature than ours to prevent the progress of wealth. Accordingly, we have no doubt that the nation is growing richer. It would have been richer still had not our bad legislation sent a portion of our capital to other countries, where the employment of it was more advantageous. Something more than a beginning has been made in the passage of our capital to other countries; and nothing can hinder it from passing in greater and greater quantities, except either an improvement in our legislation, and a diminution of our burthens, improving the advantages of employing capital here, or a deterioration of the legislation and increase of burthens in all other countries on the globe to which it can possibly migrate. For it is vain now to put trust in that aversion, which was once so strong, of removing from the country of one's birth. The intercourse of nations is upon such a footing, that there is now little strangeness among them. Different countries are hardly separated by such lines as formerly divided the different provinces in the same country. All over the civilized world

men are hastening to become, as it were, different branches of the same family, having fewer points of repulsion, and far more numerous points of attraction.

But, although accumulation is making progress among the capitalists, who are one class of our productive population, and though, under all these disadvantages, they may still be considered prosperous, there are many symptoms of adversity among the other, the far more numerous class, the labouring part of the productive population. We are not among those who think that their condition has greatly deteriorated, because we see no reason to suppose that it ever was good. We can have very little doubt that, in former times, when accumulation was very slow, compared with what it is now, the increase of population pressed as sorely upon the means of employment and subsistence as it does at present. And though the people are now harassed and degraded by parochial officers, unpaid magistrates, and game laws, we can have no doubt that their state of servitude, when lords were still more lordly, and squires still more squirish than they are at present, was, though in another form, even harder and more corrupting than at present.

The remarkable thing in the present day is, that the state of the labouring classes is not improving; does not keep pace with the progress of the times. It is not enough to say lazily and coldly that they have themselves to blame, and that where a given amount of produce is to be divided, and the numbers among whom it is to be divided are too great, the share to each cannot but be small. This is perfectly true; but it is not true that all the blame of making the numbers too great belongs to those who suffer by it. Why are any institutions allowed to exist which have a tendency to augment the evil? Why is not every expedient, which it belongs to wise legislation to devise, adopted to lessen or to prevent it? Are the people incapable of being taught to understand their own interest in a case of such importance as this? The condition of the people is low, and their numbers superabundant, because they are stupid, because no pains have been taken with their understandings, and because a bad morality is propagated through the nation. Why is it not felt by the labouring man to be infamous to live upon the labour of others? If it were so, a numerous brood, sprung from the engendering of a base couple, unable to support them, would be as rare a phenomenon in the immoral world as robbery and murder. But how can it be infamous among the labouring class to live upon the labour of others, while it is the subject of universal competition among the leading classes? The Turkish proverb says, "When a fish stinks it begins at the

head." This is not only most true, but it is likewise true that when the stinking has begun at the head, it certainly goes on to the tail.

Still the progress of civilization has not been without its influence on the lower classes. In manners, in all the little moralities of daily intercourse, there is, even within the memory of men still living, a prodigious amelioration. There is a gentleness and civility in their deportment towards one another, not to speak of their superiors, rarely met with a century ago. Riot and drunkenness are greatly diminished. There is also, which cannot be regarded as less than a signal improvement, not only a great diminution, but almost a cessation of the more atrocious crimes. Reading is becoming every day more and more a practice and a habit. Books adapted to their wants and improvement will follow, as the supply follows the demand; and then doubtless we shall have a more prudent and high-minded, as well as a more honest and intelligent population.

But here a most serious consideration occurs. An Irish population, wretched and degraded to the last degree, is pouring into this country. Suppose that we should succeed in implanting that high-toned morality in the minds of our people, whence an English labouring man should feel it as a crime, and a turpitude, more to be shunned than death, to be the means of bringing children into life without the means of maintaining them; what would be the consequence? Such conduct, if left to its own natural effects, would speedily raise the condition of the labourer, and place him in those circumstances of physical well-being which are essential to his existing in a state of intellectual and moral well-being. It can have no such effect if a perpetual influx is permitted of starving Irish. This may be sufficient, and there is the strongest probability that, unchecked, it will be sufficient, to keep wages down to the starving degree, whatever the prudence and morality of the English population. If so, the continued prudence of the English population would have no other effect than gradually to diminish their number, and increase that of the Irish, till our own superior population would be wholly rooted out and supplanted by the Irish, a misfortune with which no other which can be dreaded for this land, is at all to be compared. Here is an evil, against which a wise and beneficent legislature would lose no time in seeking a remedy. If a cordon against the ordinary plague is an expedient measure, a cordon against the most dreadful plague that ever infested human nature cannot be regarded as too much.

We must now touch upon the more extended interests, those in which all other interests are included.

The composition of our legislature, the main spring of government, is pretty nearly the same as it has been for ages. A great majority of it is composed of the landed aristocracy; and a still greater majority is nominated and sent there by the will of that aristocracy. The consequences hardly need to be pointed out. The resolves of an assembly are the resolves of the majority. A class of men who have the power of speaking in an assembly, but are always out-voted whenever it is the interest of the predominant class to out-vote them, exist in that assembly in one capacity only. They exist in the capacity of advocates, but it is a delusion and mockery to say that they exist in the capacity of legislators. They have no legislating power whatever beyond the influence which they can exercise on the minds of the major class, by their powers of persuasion. This, it is evident, they could exercise as much if they were admitted into the assembly in the capacity of advocates merely. And we are fully persuaded that it would be a great improvement if our House of Commons were made to be in appearance what it is in reality. It is substantially as much an aristocratical, hereditary assembly as the House of Lords. Why continue the farce of election? Let the principal landholders, by hereditary right compose the House of Commons. Only let the other classes of the people have the power of choosing men who, under the name of advocates, shall attend their debates, and have the power both of originating motions, and taking part in discussions. The operation of the machinery would then appear without disguise; the real authors of every measure would be seen to be the authors; the business of advocation would be much better performed; and all the advantages which at present are derived from the proceedings of the House would, in our opinion, be derived in much greater perfection.

But, steady in its composition as our legislature has been, and steady in the prevalence of those interests which its composition implies, it is subject to influences which deserve the greatest attention. The maxim has long been established, that all government depends upon opinion. And this is universally and rigidly true; because government is made out of obedience, and obedience rests upon the opinion either of good to be got by the obedience, or evil by the want of it. But there is this difference between the present times and all former times; that, in former times, governments made and fashioned the opinions of their people nearly as much as they made their laws; at present,

the people throughout Europe, and especially in England, form opinions to a great degree for themselves, and are every day allowing government less and less of a share in settling what they shall think on any subject. This is a novelty in the state of the times, the force of which existing governments might be expected to undervalue. We find that actually they have hardly any idea of its importance. They are going on as if such a power (a power, in the long-run, destined to overmaster every other power) had no existence.

This power has begun to be felt in the British legislature, which is often puzzled to know what is the matter with it, and what it is that is possessing it. The knowledge that what they do, and what they say in parliament, will come before the public, and that they in parliament have very imperfect means of determining what the public shall think of their proceedings, is an element in the motives of action. It is not a matter of indifference to have or not to have the good opinion of the people of England; but it is a matter of greater importance to one set of people than another. This has produced a great change in the practical workings of the House of Commons; a change amounting, in reality, to a great revolution, and implying the most important consequences.

The ministry are, beyond all comparison, more dependent upon public opinion than the hereditary aristocracy who compose the legislature. This needs very little illustration. They who fill the House of Commons, by regularly nominating themselves and others, are hardly dependent upon the opinion of the public at all, except in the way of sympathy, which they are too high above the public much to feel; or by the prospect of the ultimate loss of power, which is too distant to produce much effect. The state of the ministry, and the amount, as well as the stability, of their power, are deeply affected by the favour or disfavour in which they are held by the nation. The advantage or disadvantage which it gives to their enemies—we mean their enemies at court, of whom they always have abundance—when the voice of the nation is for or against them, is one of the prime elements in their condition. Their influence with their friends, as well as with their enemies, is much greater when the esteem of the public is greater. In fact, nothing can be more different than the position of a popular and an unpopular ministry.

The consequence is remarkable. Formerly the House of Commons was considered the check upon the king's ministers. Now it is the king's ministers who are the check upon the House of Commons. Whoever has contemplated the proceedings in the House during recent years must have observed many

occasions on which it would have gone much greater lengths in evil courses, had it not been withheld by the ministry; and that most of the useful measures which the ministry have promoted, they have promoted not without ill will on the part of the House. This is a change, the effects of which every session of parliament must render more conspicuous. The great makers of the House care little for the people. Why should they? And why should they be retarded in the promotion of their interests by the fear of what the people will think of them? They are more apt to be irritated, than subdued, by the opposition of the public voice. Not so the ministry. They are the conspicuous marks. The mode in which they must answer at the bar of public opinion amounts already to something of a real responsibility; it carries punishment and reward along with it.

One phenomenon of the public mind deserves to be well considered by those who are collecting the signs of the times. During recent years, in the course of which the nature of the composition of the House of Commons has become better understood, and its inherent incompetency to the business of good government has become an opinion more deeply impressed, and more widely diffused, the efforts on the part of the people to procure the requisite alterations in the mode of forming the House have almost ceased, and the demand for parliamentary reform is scarcely heard.

What are we to augur from this? Are the wise men of practice satisfied, that the silence of the people is the indifference of the people? Are they fully assured that there is not a spirit collecting, which, like a fixed air, will issue with unexpected force, when the moment of disengagement arrives? What if the people have ceased to importune the legislature from something more deep-rooted than the want of prospect of success? Their present repose is rather an indication of confidence than of despair, and of strength, if strength consists in wisdom, rather than of weakness. The people can afford to wait, and they know it. They know that every day adds strength to their cause, and takes it from their enemies. Why should they approach a legislature in which, for years, their appearance was only an occasion of laughter; in which those who dared to ask for them such a share in legislation as their protection required had gradually diminished, till at last there seemed to be not a man who had courage for the enterprise? Yes; the people must wait the birth of events. The womb of time will not be found barren. The petitions of the people for reform of parliament will not be met with laughter by-and-by. Scurril

jests will not exclude grave consideration upon the subject, when a few more years have gone over our heads. In the mean time, it is not the less discreditable to those who assume the character of advocates for the people in parliament to have become silent from pusillanimity, or, which is still worse, the force of sympathy with those among whom they are placed.

In Literature and Education, the most remarkable feature of the present times is their diffusion. This is of immense importance. Literature and education become valuable in a national point of view, only as they are diffused. That a few men in a nation, or some one narrow class, should be very learned, has seldom much effect upon the happiness of the community. Sometimes it has a bad effect; by enabling the few more perfectly to enthral the many. But when the knowledge of useful things becomes general among the people, the knowledge of what is useful in politics, and good in morals, as well as the knowledge of those powers of the natural world which can be rendered subservient to their advantage, it is impossible that their condition should not be improved in every way; impossible that the vices of government, which are seen through and hated, should not be removed; that the mental qualities which are known to be the foundation of happiness, should not be cultivated, and that a sound intellect and high morality should not characterize the nation. Toward this diffusion in England a great commencement has been made. The rising generation are almost all taught to read. This is the first step. Knowledge gains access to the mind through books. The next step is, to make the proper provision of good books. And, afterwards, all that remains is, to put in operation the best means for facilitating the access of the people to such books; of placing them within their reach, and exciting the desire to peruse them, and to profit by them. Every thing is in the highest degree encouraging in the signs of the times. The mechanics' Institutes, which have been erected in many parts of the country, and are still rapidly multiplying, have been received in every instance with all the tokens of their being duly appreciated by those for whose benefit they were intended. In a short time we may expect that the inhabitants of the towns, even those of the poorest classes, will all have within their reach the means of much useful instruction. There is considerably greater difficulty in forming satisfactorily the channels of communication with the agricultural population, in placing books within their reach, or in giving them a taste for reading, which is so much stimulated by sympathy and communication with others. However, the example of the towns

always acts upon the country; and with much more rapidity now than heretofore, when the intercourse between the inhabitants of town and country was so little, compared with what it is. The accommodations for reading and instruction, which will exist in the towns that are situated in the agricultural districts, may be partaken of by those of the agricultural population who are in the immediate vicinity, who will spread the taste to a circle beyond them; and, when the demand for books comes to exist, it will suggest the means of supply. There are few parishes in which there is not some centrical spot, in which a reading-room, and a small library of useful books, might not be resorted to without inconvenience by most of the inhabitants. In all the more populous villages something, even on a larger scale, might be provided. In few districts, too, in England, will it be found that there is not resident some individual or individuals, both qualified and disposed to render important aid in making those little establishments as useful as possible. In fact, we are persuaded, that when the thing is begun it will go on with rapidity.

The great difficulty in such establishments is with religion; because in respect to religious books there is a total diversity of opinion. What one man likes, another detests. This is a troublesome source of discord. It would, in our opinion, be useful if those establishments were regarded as having to do with that instruction only, which is subservient to the happiness of this life: leaving that instruction which is important with respect to the future life to be derived through channels appropriated to itself; channels which the zealous individuals concerned in the diffusion of that instruction have been so much before-hand with those whose object is instruction for the present life in opening and employing.

Not only the circumstances favourable to the diffusion of useful knowledge among the lower classes are an important ingredient in the present state of this nation, another case of diffusion, the highest and the most important of all, presents a prospect, which we trust we may number among the constituents, and the cheering constituents, of our present situation. The value of the middle classes of this country, their growing numbers and importance, are acknowledged by all. These classes have long been spoken of, and not grudgingly by their superiors themselves, as the glory of England; as that which alone has given to us our eminence among nations; as that portion of our people to whom every thing that is good among us may with certainty be traced. Surprising it is, that, notwithstanding this value, so acknowledged, it remained for those who projected

the University of London, to take the first steps towards affording to those classes the means of education in the higher departments of learning; the first steps for effectually diffusing among them those kinds of knowledge, which are, indeed, most difficult of attainment, but the most potent to bestow the grand faculty of judging soundly of all the circumstances and combinations of circumstances which affect the happiness and prosperity of the individual, the family, and the state. Surely the understandings of that portion of the people to whom we owe almost every thing which understanding has done for this nation, and to whom we must look for all the great products of mind in time to come, should be trained to the greatest perfection in our power. London affords a field of singular importance. There is an aggregate of persons of the middle rank collected in one spot in London, the like to which exists in no other spot on the surface of the earth. It is deplorable to consider how defective an education has been provided for the children of this vast and unspeakably important portion of our population; and how completely the years and the expense which would have sufficed for accomplishing a highly perfect education have been wasted in acquiring hardly one idea, or one faculty which can be useful to them as men and as citizens, beyond the acquirements now common to the lowest of the people, of reading, writing, and accounts. An aversion to reading is a much more common effect of their education, than a taste for it; and a taste for any reading which implies a serious exercise of the understanding, and can yield it any discipline and improvement, is one of the rarest and most unaccountable of accidents.

To supply this great desideratum, an Institution, such as the projected University, is the very object desired. Without entering here into the details of the plan, which our space will not permit, and which may have more or less of excellence according to circumstances, one thing is certain, that it can stand upon its merits only; its existence will depend upon the satisfaction it affords, and it is only a high degree of approbation that will draw to it that resort of pupils, in which its prosperity must consist. It must, therefore, act under the strongest motives to perform the business of education well. It will have no ties to withhold it from changing a less important for a more important mode of instruction; and the business of education may be confidently expected to improve in its hands.

It is not at all surprising that old establishments of education, possessed of a monopoly, should regard with a jealous

eye the designs of interlopers. They will soon, we doubt not, perceive that, whatever the interlopers take from them, they will replace with interest. Ease and dignity are two good things: but utility and dignity are two better. There is no doubt, if the new Institution answer to its design, that it will render the idea of a much more perfect education, than has been exemplified in this country before, familiar to the nation. It will then be impossible that Oxford and Cambridge should not improve themselves up to the demand of the nation. But, surely, this will be no calamity to them. Though old monopolies, and, above all, monopolies of influence over the mind, are not a favourable soil for the higher moralities, and tend strongly to generate incurable selfishness, we doubt not that both Oxford and Cambridge possess in their bosoms men of generous feelings, to whom a great loss of ease, for a great acquisition of utility, would not appear a thing to be deprecated. The class of men whom these two establishments have hitherto educated, they will continue to educate, if they do not remain too far, which they have no occasion to do, behind the point of perfection attained by other institutions. The London population, to whom primarily the University of London will be useful, will be rescued, not from Oxford and Cambridge, but from themselves; from that misemployment of time which young men without a guide are so apt to fall into.

Beside the stronger symptoms exhibited by the country, some of the discussions and opinions which recently have been brought forward yield useful indications of the state of the public mind.

We know nothing, in this respect, more worthy of examination than the Equitable Adjustment which has justly excited an extraordinary degree of attention. The proposition, under all the disguises which it puts on, is one and simple, that the contract with the national creditor shall not be kept, and that we shall pay him less than we bargained to pay him. Between individual and individual, this would no doubt be reckoned a very shameful proposition; as it is upon the observance of a rule directly the reverse, that all the happiness of human society is built. Destroy confidence in men's engagements, and society exists no longer. Confidence in engagements is the cement which makes an aggregate of human beings to differ from a rope of sand.

Had this proposition met with a favourable reception from the nation, we should have thought it a fearful prognostic; and our estimate of the progress made by the people in intellect and morality would have had to sustain a very serious reduction. We have been saved from this mortification, and a high con-

firmation it is of the opinion we entertain of our fellow countrymen. The numerous newspapers in town and country, the sentiments of which are so carefully adapted to the taste of their readers and may therefore be taken as a pretty good index of their state of mind, have been, with hardly an exception, loud in their condemnation of this immoral proposition, and have proclaimed the value of inviolate faith and justice.

The whole glory of this proposition belongs to the class who hold the lands, and the powers of legislation. It is a singular proof to what a degree, even in this country, the continued exercise of power demoralizes the man. From no class but the landlord class could such a proposition have come in the present day; because they are the only class whom the possession of power has taught habitually to consider their interest as morality, what is inconvenient to them as vice. If morality and intellect be the grand blessings of man, what advantage would the landlords of this country derive from a radical reform in parliament!

One of the tracts of which the titles stand at the head of this article holds a conspicuous place among the endeavours which have been made to show the propriety of robbing the public creditor. It is the work of a young landlord of great promise, and of amiable qualities; for the immorality which is generated in men, as a body, by the possession of power, and makes them act badly in their public capacity, does not necessarily adhere to them in their private relations, and in that respect any imputation upon landlords in general would be wholly unjust.

Sir James Graham is for carrying the remedy to the full extent of relief to the landlords. He proposes to deduct as much as he thinks convenient from the interest due to two classes of men; those who have lent their money to the state, and those who have lent it individually to the landlords. He proposes that about two thirds only of their due shall be paid to all annuitants upon the treasury and the land; or, in other words, that 30 per cent shall be deducted in the payments hereafter to be made to them. This is, in other words, cancelling about one third of the debt of the government and of the landlords. But why should the landlords and the government have the privilege of contracting debts without paying? For one reason, and one reason only, that it is for the interest of landlords.

Neither is this a new thing to landlords. It would be wonderful if it were. They have long provided themselves the benefit of a law, by which their property is protected from the claims of their creditors.

Sir James Graham supports the proposition of the landlords,

by a long and not very sapient disquisition on the currency; in which, after the very perfect exposition he gave of the principle of rent, we expected to find a more accurate discrimination of truth from error. In all that can be said about the currency, nothing is material to the question but the two alterations in its value; first, from a higher to a lower; secondly, from a lower to a higher, value. The first alteration followed the suspension of cash payments in 1797. Paper was issued in such quantity, as materially to reduce the value of the currency. In 1797 the nation had a great debt, all contracted when the currency was of full value. When the value of the currency was reduced, the interest of this debt was paid in the degraded currency. So far the national creditor was defrauded. He got less than his due. Was any proposition heard from the landholding and legislating class to make up the difference to the national creditor? Not one. No one's inconvenience touches them but their own. All depositaries of power are the same. This is the strong man's morality all over the earth.

During the period of the depreciation, a great amount of new debt was contracted. This was contracted in the depreciated currency. When the value of the currency was raised by the return to cash payments, the interest of this debt was paid in a currency more valuable than that in which the loans were advanced. "On this account," say the landlords, "30 per cent should be deducted from the interest of the national debt."

But, first of all, if we make from the last portion of the debt a deduction equal to the increased value of the currency, we shall, of course, perform a similar act of justice with regard to the former part, which, during the whole period of depreciation, received less interest than ought to have been paid for it. The amount of what we should have to pay in that case, has been accurately computed by Mr. Mushet, and the result exhibited in a set of very valuable Tables. The fact is, that the annuity we should have to pay in perpetuity to the first set of creditors, as an equivalent for their loss, would be greater than the annual deduction which could be made from the annuities of the second class. The creditors, taken as a whole, have a demand upon the nation for loss, on account of changes in the currency. The nation has no demand upon them on account of over-payment.

There is another view of the case, which will be of great importance as often as equity and morality are deemed elements in the calculation. The loans which were made during the period of depreciation, were made by open competition, and of course were as favourable to the government as the circumstances of

the times, all taken together, would permit. If any of the favourable circumstances had been taken away, the terms of the loans would have been less favourable. If any had been added they would have been more.

During the whole time of these loans, it was the law of England, by an express act of parliament, not considered as words without a meaning, not regarded as a case of legislative fraud, but an enactment of the highest importance, that payments in cash should be resumed six months after the termination of the war. Unquestionably this resumption was as much a part of the terms of each of those loans, as the amount of stock which was to be given for the money advanced. It is false, therefore, glaringly false, to say that the holders of such stock are not entitled to the payment of their interest in the reformed currency. They are entitled to it. It was part of their bargain.

The attempts to give this "equitable adjustment," as they are pleased to call it, a show of equity, failing totally, it stands in its true colours, an act of bare spoliation. Some of the highest names in parliament have implicitly confessed as much. It was an event, they said, greatly to be deprecated; it was to be avoided, if possible; but then necessity has no law except its own; and they pedantically quoted the law jargon of *nemo tenetur ad impossibile*.

There is in this language a singular union of folly and atrocity. An act of confiscation, more extensive than was almost ever perpetrated by the injustice of hostile factions in the fury of a civil war, is proposed to be founded, in a state of profound tranquillity, on an assumption, the absurdity of which may be made visible to a child.

At the present moment the annual produce of the country, leaving out the portion unavoidably consumed by the labourer, is divided, in certain proportions, among the landlords, the capitalists, and the national creditors. Can there ever be an impossibility of so dividing it? Can less than the due share ever be given to one of those classes, to any other end, than to enrich the other two at that one's expense?

Impossibility! When, in common justice, is this plea held valid on the part of a private debtor? Only when the whole of his property transferred to his creditors will not pay his debts. To allege impossibility, then, on the part of the people of England, is the most impudent of all pretences.

Impossibility! Is that plea to be listened to on the part of a debtor who is all the time rioting in boundless extravagance? Oh, no! Before the people of England will think of the impossibility of paying their debts, they will cut off every atom of

wasteful expenditure, and apply to their discharge the last penny of public property. All sinecure places must be abolished. All overpaid places must be retrenched. All extravagant establishments must be reduced. Army, navy, ordnance, all must come down to a fraction of what they are. What a breaking up of the resources of the aristocracy! Why, all that they pay to the national creditor is a trifle to what they must relinquish, in such a reform as this, a reform which must take place before we dare articulate the word, Impossibility. Even then, we should not be at the end of our resources. There is, first of all, the crown lands, which should be sold to the last acre, and the last brick. Next we shall be able to do, and much better than we do now, with a far less costly ecclesiastical establishment; and the whole of the tythes and church-lands may be rendered available to the discharge of the national debt. Even "the decent splendor of royalty" must part with some feathers to avert the calamity of a national bankruptcy. We therefore believe we have said enough on the subject of impossibility.

It may be thought a work of supererogation to talk of the want of foresight on the part of the landholding and legislating class. Desire blinds the understanding in men less corrupted by power than they are. Yet there is something so incredibly foolish in their setting a great, an almost unparalleled example of disregard for the rights of property, that it is worth dwelling upon for a moment.

There is no man who considers the present state of the government of this country, and the changes which are working in the public mind, who feels not an assurance that important changes at no very distant period will take place in the administration of public affairs. These changes will affect so many potent interests, that it would be too much to expect they can be brought about without something of a struggle. In times of this description, it is of all things the most important that respect to the rights of property should be held an inviolable principle. The insecurity and revolutions of property in times of transit from one state of government to another constitute almost wholly the evil that attends them. The people, the mass of the people of England, are attached to the laws of property; they know their value; and in any change which can be contemplated in this country—for we need but a very easy change if there be any danger to property—it will arise from the aristocracy themselves. If the aristocracy commit an act of confiscation upon a class of their fellow-citizens, they may be assured that it will suggest the idea of another confiscation

when the monopoly of the powers of government is made to quit their hands. And, as far as men who should have committed such an act were concerned, who but would feel his indignation cooled?

There is another case of opinion and discussion, of so much importance that it is with regret we perceive we have left hardly any room for its consideration. A new era with regard to the law has begun. It is not many years ago since an Englishman was treated as a sort of traitor to his country who questioned the goodness of its laws, or of their administration. Already no writings are received with more favour than those which point out defects in both. On no subject, perhaps, is the public mind advancing more rapidly toward the right opinions, than on the legal system of England as a whole. At no distant period that system, we may with full confidence predict, will be seen for what it is, the best preserved piece of barbarism, and the most hideous, that ever was found in any civilized country.

In all countries, the rude, and very often the fraudulent, expedients of barbarous times have been allowed to hold their place in law, after improved modes of thinking have changed almost every thing in all other departments of human action. There are reasons for this, to which we may return on a future day, but which we cannot explain at present. All that, in the mean time, is necessary to be said is, that such reasons have nothing to do with utility, and that old laws are continued in no country because bad laws in existence are preferable to good laws by which they might be replaced. It is, at least, something remarkable, that, of all civilized nations, the English have preserved, to the greatest extent and with the greatest veneration, the wretched laws of a barbarous period. In no great concern, certainly, in the hands of any civilized people, is the adaptation of the means to the end so unspeakably absurd as in the law of England. If the ends of law, the most perfect protection of property and person, be, of all the ends attainable by human ingenuity, the most important, how disgraceful must it be to the legislature of England to have remained to this day with a set of means so utterly inadequate, that they would be perfectly ridiculous, if they were not absolutely atrocious.

The beginnings of better thinking, which have been made on this subject, have reached both the legislature and the profession. The attempts of Mr. Peel deserve the thanks of the nation: the timidity which marks them ought neither to be wondered at nor blamed. It is not possible that Mr. Peel should have familiarized to his mind the ends of law, and the means of accomplishing them; and should hence be aware to

what extent the ends must remain without attainment by the present means. When a man walks in the dark, he walks fearfully of course, especially if he is surrounded by people who are crying out that there are pitfalls around him. Let us give our assistance to Mr. Peel, and believe that his timidity will give other men courage; perhaps, in the end, will give it to himself.

Of the progress of philosophical views of law in the profession, we could mention several striking indications; for some of which we may refer to the Report of the Chancery Commissioners, with its Evidence. But the most important by far is the work of Mr. Humphreys, on the law of Real Property, where great knowledge is exhibited, both of the defects of one of the worst parts of our law, and of the means of remedying them. We destine this work, however, to what it well deserves, an article apart. We shall now, therefore, check the desire which we feel of enlarging upon its merits.

Oh, Ireland! blind would be the man who, making a sketch of the state of England, should overlook thy influence on the fortunes of thy predominant neighbour! It is the knowledge of the impossibility of doing justice to this part of the subject in a sketch, which has induced us to mention it only at the end, and that for little other purpose than to mark our sense of the evil which that country lays upon this. It is, in fact, the great drawback upon the energy and resources of England. It stands the foremost among our mountainous burthens. There is the genuine picture, the *beau idéal* of an aristocratic government. The principle of aristocracy acts there without any disturbing force. In its double form, partly secular, partly ecclesiastical, it seeks from its country that which is good for itself, without any, the smallest, regard of the evils which it brings upon others. A government in England which would not have sympathized with aristocratical abuses in Ireland would have rendered that country unspeakable service, by extinguishing the principle of misrule, by making good laws, and enforcing obedience to them. A government in England thoroughly sympathizing with them has rendered them tenfold more atrocious than they would otherwise have been. Why? Because it has protected them with English bayonets. In the worst of governments the patience of the people can be counted upon only to a certain extent. Had the Irish aristocracy rested on its own strength, it could have carried misrule only as far as the Irish people would bear. Being sure of English soldiers to kill Irish people, whenever it needed to kill them, of course it had no motive to set any limit to its oppressions. Good God! what a tissue of evils! And how one detestable thing grows out of another, and another

out of that, and so on, without end, when the principle of rascality is the *primum mobile* in affairs! It would go a great way towards the remedy of the evils in Ireland to withdraw entirely the English soldiers, and leave the parties there to settle their quarrels among themselves. A long experience has shown us, that we interfere in them only to exasperate them. Nothing could be lost by this experiment, for it is impossible that the Irish could render themselves more wretched than they are; and a great deal would be gained to us, for we might disband all the soldiers. We have not the least doubt, that the expedient thing for England would be, at once to dissolve her connexion with Ireland, and to live with her as we live with Sweden or Denmark, as good neighbours only. The commercial intercourse of the two countries would be most important to both. It never could be the interest of Ireland, unless by some very gross misconduct of ours, to join with our enemies in war; and, if she did, she would add to their dangers, not to ours. But this, we are aware, is idle talk. While the aristocratical government of England remains as it is, so will that of Ireland. That which shall improve the first, can alone be looked to as affording a chance for the improvement of the latter.

ART. II.—1. *Don Esteban, or Memoirs of a Spaniard; written by Himself.* 3 vols. 8vo. London. 1825.

2. *Letter from a Spaniard (the Author of Don Esteban) to the Editor of the Quarterly Review.* London. 1826. pp. 32.

3. *Sandoval; or the Freemason, a Novel. By the Author of Don Esteban.* 3 vols. London. 1826.

THESE novels are the production of an industrious foreigner. Whatever their merits may be, it is an undoubted fact, that they have attained very extensive circulation—a proof in this age of novel-reading, and of novel-writing, that they possess some qualities to recommend them to the attention, and to a certain extent to the favour, of the public.

To the higher attainments of a fictitious narrative, a well-connected plot, a vivid and forcible delineation of character, deep pathos, exquisite humour, or lively description, in a word, to the eminent poetical powers, whether tragical, comical, or descriptive, exhibited in the works of our first-rate novelists, these books can lay no claim. They are little more than a succession of anecdotes, containing some very entertaining descriptions of foreign manners, and not a little information about