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I.—*Address at the close of the Thirty-sixth Session of the Society.*
By the Right Hon. Lord Monteagle.

[Read Tuesday, 19th June, 1883.]

IN addressing this Society, as I do for the first time, I feel myself weighted with a double difficulty. For not only am I deeply conscious of the honour done me by election to the chair which I occupy, but I am painfully conscious that, as regards ability, knowledge, and experience, I should appear rather, as becomes one of the Society's youngest members, in the humble capacity of a pupil. There may be those, perhaps even countrymen of our own, who on the night of taking their seats in a National Assembly, would undertake with a light heart the government of an empire. If no shred of their mantle has fallen upon me, and I lack that happy confidence which is often the best earnest of success, it may be a consolation to you to reflect that in this calm atmosphere even the utterances of its president can hardly imperil the interests of your Society; and that if I do any harm it will be to myself alone.

Soliciting then your forbearance for any poverty of matter or crudeness of form, I will venture to discuss for a few moments the general objects we set before members here, and then to consider some of the particular aims which at the present time it seems to me we could all unite in furthering with the greatest advantage to the country.

The title of the Society appears to indicate pretty clearly its general objects. But while there can be no reason to fear that a body composed of such varied elements should dwell too much on either the statistical part of our work, on the one hand, or upon the social part, on the other, I cannot altogether avoid misgiving that we are regarded by the public as a strange body, living on blue books and dry bones of knowledge, with a tendency to political monomania. It is said that when the ostrich was first exhibited in England, one of the attractions held out to the public was that the ostrich could digest nails. Thousands flocked to see the wondrous bird, but in a short time it sickened and died. A post-mortem examination soon

showed the cause of death—the stomach being full of nails administered by the admiring visitors. The ostrich could digest nails, but it could not live on them.

We are commonly known as “The Statistical,” and this abbreviation of our full title probably encourages the idea that we are a kind of literary ostriches. It is perhaps inevitable that our name should be put into this strait waistcoat, but we should be all the more careful on that account to remember that statistics are only a means to an end, and to impress on the public, that, though we can digest nails we refuse to be fed on them exclusively. I trust, therefore, I shall be pardoned if I endeavour this evening to give prominence to some of the social problems which most demand our attention at the present time—if I devote myself rather to the deduction of principles from acknowledged facts, than to the selection and critical examination of fresh pabulum for the inquiring mind, or of new material for the culinary art of the statistician, and merely indicate the points on which further elucidation from facts and figures seems to be required.

Before going further, however, I wish just to recall to your minds the important work which may be done by our organization, not only in the collection of statistics and their presentment in a digestible form to the public (remembering always that in this respect the ever-increasing mass of the reading world is far from resembling ourselves or the ostrich), but also by systematic action on Parliament and the government for the production of fresh information, the completion of scattered fragments (which are too often the only result of the inquiries of individual members of the legislature), and the harmonious co-ordination of the great body of reports and returns regularly presented to Parliament every year. I need hardly remind you how much has been effected by the Society in the way of suggestion for the collection of fresh information. Among the most striking and by no means the least useful are the returns of migratory labourers which we owe, together with so much else, to Dr. Hancock’s initiative. Probably no class in Ireland is so important in proportion to its size; and yet, until two years ago, their existence was hardly known to the public in this country, much less in England. The value of such suggestions is most strikingly shown in the very instructive paper read at the meeting of this Society on the 22nd May, by Dr. Grimshaw, on the “Comparative Statistics of 1841 and 1881,” in which (as he expressed it) he put all the counties through a competitive examination in statistics. Some of the most valuable columns of his abstract are due to the action of our council and of individual members.

But as regards the last and perhaps the most important point, the harmonizing of statistics as a whole, much remains to be done. A committee appointed by the Treasury, under the chairmanship of Mr. Childers, reported in 1879 that the official statistics of the United Kingdom, taken collectively as a statement of the condition of the country, presented confusion amounting to chaos—and they go on to describe them as “a huge and forbidding mass of figures, without order, harmony, or proportion.” To take one instance I find that of the annual returns of the principal Irish departments,

some terminate with the calendar year, some with the financial year, some on the 29th September; in one or two cases the exact period is not stated at all, the only thing certain being that it is *not* the calendar year; while the report of the Local Government Board includes returns which terminate at no less than eight different periods.

The confusion of area and boundaries in Ireland is worse again. A few years ago, I was told on inquiring at the Ordnance Survey Office that no unit of area could be found as a basis for symmetrical returns until you reach the townland. Until a year or two ago, when Mr. Ball Green supplied the deficiency, there was no map of Ireland of ordinary size which showed the boundaries of poor-law unions, the consequence being that for many purposes tables prepared with the unions as the unit of area were almost useless.

The investigations of Mr. Childers' committee show how fully alive many of the public departments are to these defects, and some of the recommendations of the committee are I believe being carried out in England. I am not sure that anything is being done in our public departments here; but I doubt not they would welcome any external support for impressing on Parliament the importance of applying effective remedies.

Coming now to consider the social problems in this country which at present most urgently demand solution, I find myself confronted with this difficulty—that in the present state of Ireland every social question of any importance—I fear I might almost say any public question of any kind—inevitably becomes political. And as in this place it is our privilege and our pride to meet without distinction of party, class, or creed, and to conduct our discussions in that friendly spirit which does not always characterize the proceedings of political assemblies (unless when they are all one way of thinking), I hesitated before embarking on a sea where the storms of controversy might arise. Perhaps I shall be told it would have been well if I had hesitated a little longer. But, in the first place, I have so strong a sense of the importance of facing certain facts, and of handling certain questions before they become actually burning, that I came to the conclusion that under present circumstances it was justifiable and even necessary, to run the risk; in the second place, I reflected that politics in themselves are not necessarily poisonous, if the venom of party spirit is not infused into the blood. Even at this time, and in this city, social questions, though inevitably political, are not necessarily party questions—at any rate until they come to be dealt with by Parliament; and deeply lamenting as I do the curse of party spirit in Ireland, I trust I may be successful in exorcising the demon from my remarks to-night. In so far as I touch upon questions which are within the range of practical politics, I shall endeavour to treat them in a judicial—I would almost venture to say in a scientific—spirit, and if, working by inductive methods, I venture to draw conclusions which may seem presumptuous, I beg you to consider them rather as working hypotheses for fresh enquiry, than as the dogmatic utterances of a partisan.

What then are the most vital social questions in Ireland to-day? Some might say the condition of those congested districts of the

western sea-board and the measures to be adopted—I will not say for their relief, but—for their permanent amelioration. But this, though in many respects the most anxious problem that can engage the thoughts of statesmen, is after all a local difficulty; and it should never be forgotten that it must be dealt with by remedies specially adapted to those local circumstances which have produced it, and which, from the nature of the case, remedies of more general application must fail to touch. The unique position of these districts has never (to my knowledge) been so strikingly exhibited as in Dr. Grimshaw's paper to which I have alluded above, and which ought to be in the hands of every Member of Parliament.

Others may think that this congestion of population in certain districts is but part of a huge labour question which embraces the whole island in one form or another, and is similar to those movements which agitate almost every civilized country at the present time—that, far from being local in its essence, it is the world-wide problem of problems, the social question *par excellence*, which involves the existence of society itself. Doubtless questions of this kind will arise in Ireland. It is quite clear, however, that no general labour movement, embracing even three out of the four provinces, can take shape and acquire solidarity for some time to come. Meantime, the relation of labour to the rest of the community, and the form in which the problem will present itself, will depend very largely on the constitution of society in the near future.

Others again may urge that this matter of the constitution of society, and the mutual relations of the classes composing it, really depends ultimately, as most social questions do, on education, and that here is the foundation upon which all progress must rest. In the wider sense of the word education is of course fundamental, but it is also so comprehensive and far-reaching that it is only by considering it in its narrower and commoner sense, as the furnishing of man with the raw material of knowledge, and with the tools for working up that raw material, that it can be brought into practical relations with politics. In this narrower sense the seed has already been sown and taken root. Much remains to be done to develop and perhaps to modify the system, and to unite the different parts and bridge the gaps between the different grades; but the points that remain to be decided are hardly likely to affect very profoundly the structure of society, though in the course of time they cannot fail to influence its development and destiny.

Precedent to all these, and more vital than all, seems to me the question—"whether an upper class is to continue to exist, especially in country districts?" And closely connected with this, both socially, as regards the mutual relations of the two, and politically, as to the means by which both ends might be attained, is this other—"whether the growth of an independent middle class is to be fostered in pursuance of a deliberate policy or to be left to chance?" On the answers to these two questions the future of Ireland for many generations to come will depend.

By the term "upper class" I do not mean an aristocracy privileged to rule by virtue of birth or possessions. Still less do I mean

a caste maintained in a position of political ascendancy by a distant central authority. I mean a resident gentry, bound by ties of common interest, personal knowledge, and mutual good feeling, to those around them, and at the same time enabled by their position to command a wider range of vision, and to place at the service of the public an intelligence trained by higher cultivation and attainments and by a deeper hold upon principles—trusted stewards of public interests in local affairs, pioneers of agricultural improvements, promoters of what has been called “developmental policy,” employers of labour, administrators of justice between man and man.

Speaking in this sense, I do not propose to discuss the question whether such a class is desirable. We should probably be almost unanimous on that point, and the experience of every civilized country seems either negatively or positively to lead to that conclusion. Even if society were absolutely destroyed, or resolved into elemental anarchy, classes would probably arise again, in the course of centuries, more or less similar to those grades with which we are familiar in the world of to-day. Moreover, our countrymen are of all races the most susceptible to personal influences, and are capable of the greatest devotion to those who they believe identify themselves with the interests of the people. But quick to trust they are also quick to suspect, and therefore personal knowledge and frequent contact are essential to render such influences permanent. And I am convinced that, notwithstanding all the passions of party and class that have been aroused during the last few years, the large majority of resident landlords are not personally unpopular with the people around them, and that if once the causes of division were removed—which arise from their position and not from their own personality—they might win a new position, based on the confidence, respect, and even affection of the people, that would be fruitful for generations to come. The problem then, let us hope, is not so much one of entire reconstruction, but rather of retaining and utilizing material already employed, of developing new features or modifying the balance of the parts, of renewing pillars within and strengthening with buttresses without; let us not seek an impracticable unity, reared like a pyramid from the desert sand and destined to be the tomb of the great idea that gave it birth; let us rather strive to preserve and perfect the forms we have inherited, and by breathing into them a new spirit, to blend into one harmonious whole the multiform aspirations of all sorts and conditions of men—a fit emblem and dwelling place of national life.

It is this new spirit that imposes the most essential conditions upon the fulfilment of which both the maintenance of a resident gentry and the growth of a middle class seem to me to depend. The upper class must be brought into harmony with the social needs of the rest of the country. The middle class must be enlisted in the maintenance of order. Both must, if possible, be brought together for management of local affairs.

The first step towards satisfying these conditions is the removal, where possible, of any definite causes of dissension. There are two such which I believe are far the most powerful, and which can both

be removed. In the first place the gentry must cease to be landlords; and, secondly, it must be made clear that they are no longer the English garrison. The first, and as it seems to me the most important, is happily the one as to the principle of which there is a body of agreement in this country almost amounting to unanimity. There may be differences of opinion as to the means by which the change is to be accomplished, and if effected peaceably the process must probably take a considerable time. But we all desire to have a very large and speedy increase in the number of occupying landowners; and I fancy most of us would agree that it would be for the good of the country if the number of landlords could be proportionately diminished, especially if the number of resident gentry were not thereby decreased. In fact, everyone in Ireland now regards the system of dual ownership embodied in the first parts of the Land Act of 1881, not as final but as transitional.

"The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft interred with their bones."

For any good purpose, the landlord and tenant system is practically dead. If it is artificially kept alive, it will, I fear, be not only useless but mischievous. I have the zeal of a convert on this subject, for I was one of those who earnestly advocated the "Three F's" before the government bill was introduced, and opposed on public grounds what I believed to be the only alternative, namely, the compulsory expropriation of the landlords. Not that I did not desire the growth of a peasant proprietary—I had long done so—but I wished that growth to be gradual and slow, hoping in the meantime that a solid basis for social stability would be provided by the "Three F's." For I believed, in common with the large majority of both houses of Parliament, and with the government itself, that while giving ample security for the future to the tenant, the Act would not, except in a comparatively small number of extreme cases, reduce the existing rents. We all know that the average reduction has completely falsified these expectations. But an average may be produced in an infinite variety of ways, and, so far as I am aware, it is but vaguely known how it has been arrived at in this instance. An average reduction of 20 per cent. might arise from one rent of £200 being reduced 50 per cent., and thirty rents of £10 each being confirmed; or from one rent of £200 being confirmed, and thirty rents of £10 each being reduced 33 per cent. Obviously the social results in the two cases would be very different. An exhaustive analysis of the returns of judicial rents by an experienced statistician would be extremely useful, and give indications of the probable social effects, by showing the number of landlords, as well as of tenants, whose rents have been respectively reduced, confirmed, or raised. I have not felt myself equal to the task on any scale, nor do I desire to enter into the general controversy which such an inquiry might open up. I have, however, examined the official returns of judicial rents from the beginning of the operations down to the end of August 1882, to ascertain what per-centage of the rents fixed are reductions, and I think the result is significant. I give my figures in tabular form.

JUDICIAL RENTS TO END OF AUGUST, 1882.

County	Fixed by Land Commission			Fixed by County Court			TOTAL		
	Cases	Con- firmed	Raised	Cases	Con- firmed	Raised	Cases	Con- firmed	Raised
Antrim, ..	383	4	1	—	—	—	383	4	1
Armagh, ..	654	10	—	—	—	—	654	10	—
Cavan, ..	252	22	—	429	4	—	681	26	—
Donegal, ...	550	22	5	7	1	—	557	23	5
Down, ...	787	28	—	—	—	—	787	28	—
Fermanagh,	305	25	—	11	—	—	316	25	—
Londonderry	248	6	2	2	—	—	250	6	2
Monaghan,	322	21	3	21	—	—	343	21	3
Tyrone, ...	784	19	—	40	1	—	824	20	—
Ulster, ...	4,285	157	11	510	6	—	4,795	163	11
Carlow, ...	81	3	—	—	—	—	81	3	—
Dublin, ...	125	19	8	—	—	—	125	19	8
Kildare, ...	204	31	3	6	1	—	210	32	3
Kilkenny, ...	156	17	—	10	2	—	166	19	—
King's Co. ...	187	27	1	1	—	—	188	27	1
Longford, ...	108	4	1	5	2	—	113	6	1
Louth, ..	170	7	2	—	—	—	170	7	2
Meath, ...	218	18	4	1	—	—	219	18	4
Queen's Co.	170	11	1	3	—	—	173	11	1
Westmeath,	194	8	5	—	—	—	194	8	5
Wexford, ...	235	11	2	—	—	—	235	11	2
Wicklow, ...	227	10	7	2	—	—	229	10	7
Leinster, ...	2,075	166	34	28	5	—	2,103	171	34
Galway, ...	547	12	4	—	—	—	547	12	4
Leitrim, ...	204	13	2	95	1	—	299	13	3
Mayo, ...	491	33	3	449	12	3	940	45	6
Roscommon,	381	36	2	168	1	—	549	37	2
Sligo, ...	200	3	—	23	—	—	223	3	—
Connaught,	1,823	97	11	735	13	4	2,558	110	15
Clare, ...	258	5	1	8	4	—	266	9	1
Cork, ...	834	73	6	—	—	—	834	73	6
Kerry, ...	270	13	1	32	2	—	302	15	1
Limerick, ...	427	27	1	—	—	—	427	27	1
Tipperary, ...	410	11	2	—	—	—	410	11	2
Waterford,	306	5	—	72	2	—	378	7	—
Munster, ...	2,505	134	11	112	8	—	2,617	142	11

SUMMARY.

Provinces	Fixed by Land Commission			Fixed by County Court			TOTAL		
	Cases	Con- firmed	Raised	Cases	Con- firmed	Raised	Cases	Con- firmed	Raised
Ulster, ...	4,285	157	11	510	6	—	4,795	163	11
Leinster, ...	2,075	166	34	28	5	—	2,103	171	34
Connaught,	1,823	97	11	735	13	4	2,558	110	15
Munster, ...	2,505	134	11	112	8	—	2,617	142	11
Ireland,...	10,688	554	67	1,385	32	4	12,073	586	71

It will be seen that the proportions approximate to a remarkable degree in the four provinces—the number of reductions in Ulster being 4,621, out of a total of 4,795, or 96.3 per cent. ; in Leinster, 1,898 out of 2,103, or 90.2 per cent. ; in Connaught, 2,433 out of 2,558, or 95.1 per cent. ; and in Munster, 2,464 out of 2,617, or 94.1 per cent. : and for the whole of Ireland, 11,416 out of 12,073, or almost exactly 95 per cent., are reductions.

How many landlords are affected, I have no precise information to show, but my strong belief is that those of them who escape altogether will not be one in a hundred, while the number who will be absolutely ruined must be very considerable.

I have not been able to continue my investigation through all the returns presented which come down to the end of last year ; but as a rough test I have made out the figures for one county from each of the four provinces during the last month of December, and compared them with the figures for the same four counties given in the table above. I subjoin the figures for December, together with those for the earlier period.

County	Judicial Rents fixed					
	Down to August, 1882			During December, 1882		
	Cases	Confirmed	Raised	Cases	Confirmed	Raised
Armagh, ...	654	10	—	157	1	—
Mayo, ...	940	45	6	72	4	1
Queen's, ...	173	11	1	122	6	1
Tipperary, ...	410	11	2	128	3	—
Totals, ...	2,177	77	9	479	14	2

From this it appears that during the earlier period the reductions for these four counties were 2,091 out of 2,177, or 96.04 per cent., and during December, 463 out of 479, or 96.6 per cent. The proportion seems therefore to be rather increasing than otherwise.

I do not now inquire whether these reductions are just or unjust as regards the letter of the law, expedient or inexpedient as a matter of policy; nor am I bringing any charge against those who administer the Act. I merely state facts, when I say—first, that such a result was quite unexpected in England (and I believe also in Ireland), and secondly, that it has created an idea in the minds of the tenants that everyone of them is to get something from the Land Courts.

As regards the effect upon the landlords, I am sure I shall be excused for saying that I believe a very large number of them feel, infinitely more than any pecuniary loss, the cruel, and I must say the unjust, imputations that have in consequence been cast upon them—of having universally and systematically rack-rented their tenants, of being convicted as a class of wholesale robbery. If this were true, the words of the Duke of Wellington would have been realized—a strike against rent would have sprung up, compared with which the Tithe War would have been child's play, and which might have baffled the whole military forces of the crown; the outrages would have been turned against landlords and agents, instead of against the unfortunate tenants who paid their rents. No system of boycotting would have been necessary, for the whole population would have united as one man against the oppressors. Another consideration that is forgotten is that the operations of the Land Court almost immediately followed a succession of bad years, and a panic about foreign competition. Even supposing that the decisions of the Land Courts are proof positive of the rents being too high now, it by no means follows that they were too high before the bad years, during which many landlords gave large abatements; and it can hardly be doubted that the scale would have been very different if the decisions had been begun six or even five years ago, before the disastrous harvest of 1879. When I recall these considerations, I cannot help remembering also the indignant outburst of Edmund Burke, that he did not know how to draw an indictment against a whole nation. For I have no desire to revenge my class, nor could I console myself by sweeping accusations and counter charges against the tenant farmers.

Of one thing however there can be little doubt, that the almost universal reductions by the Land Courts will have a twofold result—they stifle the nascent desire on the part of the tenants to become absolute owners, and they raise an expectation of further reductions at the end of the fifteen years judicial term. This means (if things are left as they are) the perpetuation of jealousy and strife between the upper class and the people amongst whom they live, and the indefinite postponement of the growth of an independent middle class in rural districts. Under these circumstances, it is of supreme importance to the whole community that everything should be done to promote the transfer of land from the landlords to the tenants, not only by the removal of all technical and legal difficulties, which unfortunately still remain to a great extent, but also, if necessary, by the offer of greater facilities from the state to the tenants to become purchasers.

Recommendations to this effect have proceeded during the last year from some of my class who had always been regarded as the strongest

opponents of a peasant proprietary ; and, as a not unnatural though a very unfortunate consequence, the proposal seems in some danger of being attacked by its former supporters, because of its being incidentally an advantage to the landlords. I regret the more that this vital question should be made the battle ground of party, because it is not as a landlord relief bill that I give it precedence over all other measures. For, though much may be justly urged on that account, I am not one of those whose only desire is to realize all they can and escape from the country. It is as a social measure affecting every class in the country that I advocate it so strongly ; and I can hardly think anyone will object if, amongst other effects, it renders less difficult the position of those landlords who wish to remain, and, freed from the bitterness of class prejudice, to serve the public, or lead lives of unobtrusive usefulness among their neighbours.

I have dwelt at some length on this matter, not only because of its intrinsic importance, but also because the principal objects to be attained in this direction are constantly obscured, especially in England and in Parliament, by the difficulties of detail that surround them. Lord Hartington indeed described the tenure clauses of the Land Act, even before it was passed, as a bridge to a system of occupying ownership. Mr. John Morley, who may be taken as a typical representative of the modern school of philosophic radicals, has lately given it as his opinion that if Home Rule (which he regards as inevitable in some form or other) is to be granted, it must be preceded by some equitable expropriation of the landlords. And Mr. Gladstone himself more than a year ago spoke of the purchase clauses of the Land Act of 1881 as "what a very large majority of the House of Commons appeared to contemplate as the ultimate solution of the Irish Land Question." But the question has not advanced an inch since those words were spoken, and the solution remains as ultimate as ever. It is time that enlightened public opinion in this country should make itself heard on the subject, and this society might, I am certain, do much to clear up the difficulties that surround it.*

As regards the second condition which I consider essential to the continuance and usefulness of a class of resident country gentlemen, namely, that it should be made clear that the landlords are no longer the English garrison, there is not so much need for legislative change, if once the process of the tenants buying out the landlords were fairly set going. So long as the gentry remain receivers of rent they will be subject also to the suspicion of being the English garrison, even though they have practically ceased to exercise or even to possess any such power. The institution of the constabulary and of a paid magistracy has enabled the state largely to dispense with their services for executive purposes. The Ballot Act has destroyed what remained to them of political influence. Protestant ascendancy is dead. But, so long as one of the principal functions of the police is to enforce the law for the recovery of rent, it will be supposed that, even though the landlords

* These words were written before the recent debate on Lord George Hamilton's motion—which I hope has decidedly advanced the question.

are not themselves the garrison, it is on their account the garrison is maintained—that, in fact, they are part of the system. If this were no longer so, the ground would at any rate be cleared, the position of the gentry would cease to be invidious, and the main political issues would no longer be entangled with social complications. The state has undertaken the maintenance of order, and how much would its task not be simplified if it became clear that order was maintained for the good of all classes, and not of one only? The only great question that would then remain—whether the State was to continue British and Imperial, or to be National and Irish, would then be decided on its merits and not on side issues.

One function, however, still remains to the gentry, which is of the greatest practical importance to social well-being in the future, and forms a most valuable link between them and other classes—I allude to their magisterial position. It is true the commission of the peace, from which their authority is derived, in theory clothes them with executive powers as important as those judicial powers conferred on them by statute, and of much more ancient date. But in practice these powers have for many years past been exercised with great discretion, and the executive duties have been left more and more to the paid magistracy. It is well that this should be so, because these executive powers are just such, if wielded by the local magistrates, as to give rise to the old jealousies of the landlords as the “English garrison.” The exercise of the judicial functions of magistrates, on the other hand, the administration of justice between man and man, is one of the most valuable public services country gentlemen can perform. It would be a great advantage no doubt to have more Roman Catholics amongst the local magistrates, but I am persuaded that as a rule they are respected and trusted in the discharge of these judicial duties quite irrespective of religion, and that it would be an almost unmixed disaster to the poorer classes if they were swept away or superseded.

Unfortunately the local magistracy fail us just where they are most wanted—namely in the west of Connaught. The want is of course only another aspect of the evil of absentee landlords, the extent and distribution of which latter every one who has ever looked into Irish problems, and sought to gauge them by statistics, must have longed to have investigated. In default, however, of this, which must I fear now be considered unattainable, it occurred to me that a valuable index might be obtained by a comparatively simple return showing the number of magistrates who reside during any part of the year in each petty sessions district; and to this might easily be added one or two other items which do not at present appear in the judicial statistics. As an experiment, I last year by circular asked the petty sessions clerks of a few counties to furnish me with some figures bearing on this point, the result of which I will briefly communicate. Taking what are probably extreme cases at either end of the scale, I find that Antrim has one local magistrate residing and attending sessions for about every *thirteen square miles* of its area. Mayo, on the other hand, has one such magistrate for about every *thirty-four square miles*. In Mayo about *twenty-six*

per cent. of the petty sessions held are not attended by a single local magistrate. In Antrim, the number of such sessions is about *one per cent.* I do not of course claim anything like perfect accuracy for these figures, but I think a complete return of this kind would be very instructive, and I should like to see the subject added to those in which Dr. Grinshaw has put all the counties through the competitive examination to which I have alluded more than once.*

Where such a deficiency of local magistrates exists, the gap must of course be filled by paid magistrates, and if it should unfortunately increase, a considerable extension of the paid magistracy may become necessary. I shall have a few words to say on this point by-and-bye, but so far as the social services of the upper class are concerned, there seems to be little else for the state to do except to remove such causes of friction as I have instanced. For the rest, the future of the class must depend chiefly on its own action; and my own opinion is that its members would do well to direct their activities rather into social and economical than political channels. By devoting their energies to local administration, to developing the resources of the country, to the employment of labour in remunerative enterprises, and above all to the introduction and diffusion of improved methods of agriculture, they may win a new position, based on something stronger and more durable than privilege or rank, and more in harmony with their surroundings—serving the people and thereby proving their capacity to lead them.

But, side by side with these modifications, no opportunity should be lost, and no means neglected, for promoting the growth of an independent middle class. And here again the increase of an occupying proprietary is of the greatest consequence, especially among the larger farmers. For social stability, perhaps the multiplication of even small peasant owners may be desirable. But for intelligence, independence, and public spirit, we must look rather to what would in England be called “yeomen.” The responsibilities of ownership are essential to progress of this kind, and acting on such a class would teach most effectively the proper exercise of the rights of citizenship, and form the principal element in sound political education. And if once the change of ownership were proceeding, and the new system were based on simple and effective methods of registration and transfer, a healthy ebb and flow would be set up between town and country, between capital and raw material, the result of which would probably be the development of new enterprises, which in their turn would attract recruits from among the upper ranks of the agricultural class, thus forming the nucleus of a middle class of more varied character, and more balanced interests. I need not dwell on this point at greater length, as it has almost become a truism, but it is one of the main considerations which show

* Since writing the above, I have discovered what amid “the huge and forbidding mass” of Blue Books I may perhaps be pardoned for having overlooked, namely, a return printed by the House of Commons last year which would give information, to those who analysed it, of the number of local magistrates who reside in different counties. There is, however, no information as to the amount of attendance at petty sessions, which is after all the cardinal point.

how far this particular measure of the purchase of their holdings by the tenants is from being merely a relief of landlords' distress. Once the necessary steps were taken by Parliament to bring about this change, which appears to me the first and most essential condition of all peaceful progress in Ireland, the next step, which every one must agree is inevitable, even if they do not all admit its advisability, is the reform of grand juries, and the embodiment, in the reformed county organization, of the constitutional principle that taxation should be controlled by those who pay the taxes. I do not propose to discuss the numerous points of controversy with which this question bristles. I am to-night only concerned with the broad principles upon which I hope and trust a more or less general agreement may be looked for, or at any rate no violent feelings may be aroused. But as regards the existing county authority—the grand jury—I think I shall hardly exceed the limits I have set myself, if I state my firm belief that, however anomalous their constitution, and however invidious in consequence their position has of late years become, they have on the whole discharged their duties with remarkable fidelity, discretion, and justice, and in expenditure have erred rather on the side of economy than of extravagance. I can say this the more freely as I have never served on a grand jury, and therefore my opinion, if not perfectly instructed, is at least fairly impartial. If the anomalies surrounding their appointment had been removed even five years ago, and the system had been combined with a fair representation of the cesspayers, it might have lasted for generations, and still have afforded the groundwork of political education for the classes to whom power was thus extended. But whatever form the change may now take, or by whatever name the new arrangements are described, it appears to me of the greatest consequence that privilege should not be retained as a basis for authority, though every inducement should be offered to gentlemen of independent means to take their share of county business, side by side with men of other classes. And if a reform of this kind is to be carried out, it is surely also better (always provided that the development of a peasant proprietary should have the first place), that it should be done soon, and rather as the concession of a wise and far-seeing statesmanship, than be extorted from a reluctant government by agitation and perhaps by violence. At least, let it not be said that government forgets to be generous when it is strong, and yields to clamour what it denies to reason. It may be urged, of course, that any such concession will be turned against government and made the vantage ground of further agitation. Without going at length into the discussion this opens up, I will only say, that already the existence of the grand jury has been imperilled by delay, and the preservation of continuity, with the past rendered more difficult; that moreover the educational value of such local institutions is so great as almost to justify some risk; but that the risk does not appear to be great so long as government retains and exercises the responsibility of maintaining order; and, finally, that the change is inevitable, as I began by saying, and that I cannot think that agitation is likely to be disarmed or weak-

ened by withholding a reform which is so plausible in itself, and so secure of sympathy on the other side of the channel.

I come now to the last and certainly by no means the least of those main lines of policy which I have been endeavouring to trace out. It is also that which is likely to lead to the most divergence of opinion, and to demand the most careful handling. But, while I am deeply conscious of my shortcomings in treating such a question, it is so completely an integral part of my general subject, that I should be compelled to withdraw much that I have said this evening if I shrank from dealing with it.

Suppose then that the purchase clauses of the Land Act of 1881 were extended, and that a peasant proprietary were springing up; suppose also that by a reform of the grand jury laws the co-operation of resident gentlemen, of farmers and traders were secured for the dispatch of county business. Class differences would probably be much mitigated, and local public business would begin to occupy the attention of the ratepayers, especially if they were absolute owners of the soil. But one want, it seems to me, would still remain—the want of any effective interest in the administration of government, and in the maintenance of order, on the part of the middle classes. Until this is supplied, social stability cannot be really secure, and the remedying of this deficiency should not be lost sight of, even though it can only be accomplished by degrees. There are at present only three professions open to the sons of larger farmers; they may become clergymen, or doctors, or solicitors. A certain proportion of the sub-inspectors of constabulary are drawn from the ranks, which are chiefly recruited from the sons of the labourers and small farmers, and some of the most zealous and devoted officers of the force come from that class. But I imagine the larger farmers do not find their way into that service at all. The paid magistracy, again, who are appointed by the Lord Lieutenant, are selected entirely from the upper class, or from the army, except those who are transferred from the sub-inspectors of constabulary; and an Irishman, who might attain the position of governor of a province in India, might look in vain for any share in the government of his own country. Appointments by the patronage of government, however carefully they are made, are always open to the suspicion of jobbery and class interest, and I have no doubt those who exercise the patronage would personally be as glad to be relieved of it as ministers in England have been. In any case candidates, whether selected by the Lord Lieutenant or otherwise, should be required to pass an examination to qualify them for the duties they have to perform, as is the case with the sub-inspectors of constabulary nominated by the Lord Lieutenant. But I should also like to see an attempt made to attract the energy and ability of the upper-middle-class to this and other branches of the administration.

I dare say I shall be told that such an experiment has been tried in the appointment of tenant farmers as local magistrates, and that it has not been successful in its effects, either upon the individuals themselves, or upon their neighbours of the same class. But there is a very wide difference, especially in Ireland, between the work of amateurs and of professionals. If the experiment has not succeeded

in the case of the local magistrates who are unpaid and are regarded as amateurs enjoying a privilege, I reply that it has succeeded in the constabulary, who are professionals known to be discharging a duty, and a duty for which they are paid. Again, I would point to the association of men of various classes, including tenant farmers, in the highly important work of the Land Commission. And whatever may be thought of the results of their operations, I cannot but regard the mere fact of such combinations being found possible, as of good omen for the future, and I should be surprised if candid men amongst the Assistant Commissioners did not admit that they found they had much to learn from one another.

Show the country clearly that government is for the good of all, make the middle classes feel that they can share in it, and give them a flag under which they can serve without any sacrifice of national feeling, and the day would be practically won. If the experiment succeeded it would be by far the most powerful means of developing the middle class, and a new era would dawn upon the land. If it failed, we should be no worse off than we are now. Unless ignorance is really bliss, it is well to face these things, and to remember that if nothing is done in this direction, the alternative may be the disfranchisement of Ireland.

In fact, if social progress is not pursued along the lines I have indicated, there are only two possible alternatives. One is, as I have said, the disfranchisement of Ireland, and its government as a military dependency, or a crown colony; and the duration of such a system in the nineteenth century may be easily calculated. The other is what may be called the Canadianization of the country—its complete severance from Great Britain, except as regards foreign relations and naval and military expenditure; for this is the only practicable form of Home Rule. It would result of course in the annihilation of the upper class, which would speedily be followed, I believe, by a violent labour movement, after which society would have to be entirely re-constructed. There is yet time to consider the three alternatives. We cannot stand still. We can hardly turn back. But we may at least choose our direction and regulate our pace.

II.—*The Future of American Agricultural Competition.* By William F. Bailey, B.A. Barrister-at-Law.

[Read 12th December, 1882.]

IN this paper I shall endeavour to bring before the members of the Statistical Society some figures, which seem to me to throw considerable light on the vexed question of the extent to which farming in the United Kingdom is likely to be affected by foreign competition, especially that of the United States of America. For some years past we have been constantly warned of the great danger with which our agricultural interests are threatened by the importations of food supplies. The friends of the farmer prophesy his ruin as the inevit-