

are primogeniture and entail. It was a drastic medicine and one which may yet prove fatal; but it was not a suicide, as the dose now supposed to be meditated would be. In the middle ages, the English aristocracy was an aristocracy of local judicature and military command; it is now an aristocracy of territorial wealth, without which the mere titles would soon be in the gutter; and the estates are held together, in the great families, by the law of primogeniture and the custom of entail. The law leads and consecrates the custom, though it takes effect itself only in the rare case of intestacy. On the marriage of the eldest son, and as the condition of providing his allowance, the family estate is resettled in trustees, on the principle of primogeniture; and this goes on from generation to generation. There are those who think that if entails were done away with, land, instead of being divided among more owners, would be concentrated in still fewer hands, because the only obstacle to its sale being removed, it would be bought up in great tracts by the colossal millionaires, of whom there are many in England, and with whom territorial aggrandizement and the political influence attached to it are always favourite aims. We happen to know that experienced land agents in England are not of that opinion. But, be this as it may, the permanent retention of estates by particular families would certainly receive a fatal blow: in a large percentage of cases wealth, idleness, and social temptation, acting upon the characters of the young nobility, would be sure to produce effects which would bring many a Stowe and Clumber to the hammer. With primogeniture and entail aristocracy stands or falls. Knowing this right well, the aristocratic government is preparing to conjure the gathering storm by a concession in the shape of a measure giving somewhat larger powers of leasing and improvement to holders of settled estates. The device will not succeed. In this, as in many other instances, that which political agitation might never have accomplished has been brought about by economical causes. By the immensely increased importation of food from abroad, English land has been so much reduced in