

and immediate change in the method of conducting these affairs. Similarly, while affirming the public ignorance of the colonies, he appeals to public opinion about them as bearing out his assertion that they are ill-governed. Even the colonial office, he says, "labours under an impossibility of forming a correct judgment with regard to colonial affairs," yet he, himself, has no hesitation in saying how they would be best managed.

It is but too true that the House of Commons, or the public, know very little of our colonial system. It is seldom that they hear so much about it as Sir W. Molesworth has contrived to tell them in a single speech. It is also true that, in this as in some other important matters, the strength of opinions is for the most part in the inverse ratio of the knowledge on which they are founded. The public, knowing little or nothing of the colonial system, has, accordingly, been led to entertain a profound conviction that it is anything but what it ought to be. And upon this common opinion, as upon a vantage ground unassailable except by that most difficult of tasks—the dispelling of an ignorance which believes itself knowledge—the party with which Sir W. Molesworth is leagued takes its stand.

Perhaps they are of opinion that a popular delusion of this kind, too vaguely founded to be readily argued down, and always at the service of anybody disposed to have a fling at the Colonial Office, is serviceable, as tending to induce additional circumspection in the conduct of that department of the government. But I think it may be reasonably doubted whether a real reform ever was promoted by such means. It is abundantly certain that systematically to weaken the hands of the Government, in any department, is an evil—one which may sometimes be counterbalanced by a consequent improvement in the system of Government—but always in itself a serious injury to the state. Never, however, was there a more meagre prospect of public gain from any such process than that presented by the recent efforts to cry down our present colonial policy. A less reasonable, or more purely factious, movement never was made. The most able and