

country. They subsequently succeeded, however, in getting their military service commuted for money; but this, and various other payments they were compelled to make, and continued to pay down to the time of the restoration of Charles II., when the Convention Parliament entered into an agreement with him, that he should free them from all the landed obligations, which they had hitherto paid for their estates, and that they would present him and his successors with an Exchequer law. In other words, that he would enable them, for this boon, to shift the burden from their own shoulders on to those of the people. Having thus, for their own selfish ends, cut off the principal source of revenue, and having subsequently cajoled our rulers out of the chief portion of the crowned lands, there were no means of the carrying on of the government; so that in the reign of William the Third they were under the necessity of imposing a land-tax of four shillings in the pound on the full annual value of land. This, however, was too good a thing to be continued, and our aristocracy now managed to shirk, or to render it almost a nullity; for in 1798 they passed a law declaring that "the land-tax should only be levied on the original assessment of William the Third." So that, taking into account the large increase in the value of the land, the tax does not now amount to a farthing in the pound; for, if it were assessed at this present value, at four shillings in the pound it would realize a sum of upwards of twenty-five millions; whereas, the land-tax raised in 1888 amounted to only £1,092,693. But in the interim the Excise duties, which they imposed on the people, have increased from about a million to upwards of twenty millions, and the customs, and all other public burdens, to a total of 60½ millions. With the possession of the land, they have possessed the control over the tenantry, and the power of returning to what ought to be the people's house, the majority of their own tools and mouth-pieces, to do their bidding, and to crush and retard all measures made by the friends of the people in favor of retrenchment or reform.

The possession of this power to pack the House of Commons, has placed the State also at their disposal, and most of its offices have been filled by our aristocracy or their nominees; and fierce and savage have been their attacks upon the few outsiders who have lately obtained possession of places in the ministry. The Church, too, has ever been a creature and a tool of their own, and its bishops and clergy, their brethren or relations, or their own nominees, or slavish dependants; for, in addition to the vast estates of the Church, which, at different times, they have shared among them, they have now 15,950 Church livings to bestow on whom they choose, and about nine or ten millions of Church revenue to divide between the persons they elect. The clergy and aristocracy have always got all the charities of England under their control, amounting to above nineteen million sterling. The army and navy also, are for the most part ruled and officered by them; and all efforts to reduce the enormous sum of about twenty-eight millions paid annually to support them, and strenuously opposed by the numerous representatives of these two services found in both Houses of Parliament.

In fact, the aristocracy have ruled our country for centuries; have divided all places of profit or honor between the two factions of them; have shared among themselves and tools the greater portion of the revenue; have warred against freedom at home and abroad; have