

government is the object; it is the only rational aim of politics, and whenever an alteration of the franchise is to be made, the question ought to be, whether government is likely to be improved by the change. Unhappily, the question more often asked is, whether the new votes are likely to be cast in favour of the party in power. Even among British Statesmen, Lord Grey is perhaps the only one who has persistently advised that inquiry should precede extension. A man who is wholly unqualified to form an opinion on public questions can take part in government only to his own hurt, as well as the hurt of the commonwealth: he not only is not entitled to a vote, but he is entitled to have the vote withheld from him; for natural rights belong to the primeval woods, and social rights are defined by the interest of society, which comprises that of the man himself. Perhaps we are still a little under the influence of ideas derived, through our political literature and the Classics, from the Republics of antiquity, in which every citizen had a vote; but the citizens were an oligarchy of Slaveowners, while those whom we now call the people were slaves; so that to Solon and Pericles the problem of democracy presented itself in a comparatively simple form. At Athens and Rome, the community being still partly Tribal, and the idea of Tribal ownership not having died out, citizenship was supposed to entitle to a share of land. Feudalism reversed this principle, and made territorial proprietorship the title to political power. The property qualification which now obtains in England may be described as the feudal principle reduced to a vanishing point. It does not seem that on this, or on such a qualification as the payment of taxes, the Constitution can permanently rest; indirect taxes are paid by all, and often in undue proportion by the poorest. Personal qualifications alone seem likely to command rational respect, and to furnish a stable foundation for the commonwealth; nor have we ever seen among the intelligent artisans any unwillingness to accept the view that the suffrage was a trust requiring at least common education in the holder. A settled domicile is an obvious guarantee for responsibility. But he who seeks a share of the sovereign power might surely be called upon to apply for it, and to show, at the same time, that he can read