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THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF THE BRITISH HOUSE OF COMMONS 1868-1885

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In 1867 the Second Reform Bill enfranchised more fully the growing industrial population of Great Britain. Under the new electoral dispensation and the subsequent competition of the political parties for the workingman's vote, Parliament entered upon a period of intense legislative activity. Much has been written about the crowded political events and far-reaching legislation of the electoral era between the Second Reform Bill and the Third Reform Bill of 1884-85. Save for the leaders, however, little is known about the personnel of the contemporary Parliaments which voted the momentous changes into law. Who were the men elected to Parliament between the Second and Third Reform Bills? What was their background and training, and their social status in the community? Above all, what was the total social composition of the House of Commons of this epoch, and did it vary markedly from that of preceding legislatures? In fact, the era of economic and political change after 1867 was also one which saw significant alterations in the traditionally aristocratic social structure of the British House of Commons.

A social analysis of a large body such as the British House of Commons raises considerable problems. It is frequently difficult to discern class borderlines in a society whose social structure was in some ways surprisingly fluid. Some landed aristocrats possessed larger business interests than many businessmen, and businessmen sometimes owned large estates. Analyses of the same body inevitably differ somewhat in their findings because of the varying definitions of class employed, the different social categories set up, and the varying criteria used to classify individual members. Any social survey of the House of Commons must to a degree involve some arbitrary decisions on these matters and some arbitrary judgments on the social classing of individual M.P.s.

In the present analysis of the social structure of the House of Commons between 1868 and 1885, the social position and economic interests of every member have been considered. Each member has been placed in the broad social and economic group with which he appears to be chiefly identified. The main such groups represented

in Parliament in our period were: the landed aristocracy, the businessmen, and the professional men. Workingmen and tenant farmers were represented only to a minor degree. The totals of Commons members belonging to the aristocracy in general are also given, but these statistics do not form an integral part of the analysis, since they comprise not only those aristocrats who were essentially landed aristocrats but also those who were chiefly connected with the business world or the professions, and who are thus included in the groups of businessmen and professional men. [1] My survey of the social structure of the House of Commons from 1868 to 1885 involves the analysis of the membership of the three legislatures elected in this period, those returned in 1868, 1874, and 1880. The last legislature elected before the Second Reform Bill is also analyzed, for the purposes of comparison. [2]

Information about the education, economic interests and general background of the M.P.s was secured from contemporary parliamentary guides and other directories and from biographical sketches in the newspapers and periodicals of the time. More detail was obtained from published surveys of the parliamentary representation of regions, counties and towns, and from biographies of individual members. The antecedents of many members could be traced in contemporary editions of the standard histories of the peerage, baronetage, and landed gentry of Great Britain and Ireland. The landed holdings of a member, if substantial, could be ascertained with some precision by reference to the various editions of John Bateman's *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland.* This exceedingly interesting compilation was based upon an exhaustive

[1] The term "aristocracy" as used in this article denotes the members of the peerage, baronetage and landed gentry.

[2] My analysis of the various Parliaments yields the following table:

	1865	1868	1874	1880
Aristocrats primarily concerned with land	437	410	382	325
Businessmen	144	162	171	194
Lawyers	56	57	69	83
Other professionals	20	27	24	44
Tenant farmers	1	2	4	3
Workingmen	—	—	2	3
Totals	658	658	652	652

J. A. Thomas published in 1939 a study of the economic interests represented in the House of Commons in the period 1832-1901. Thomas counted the minor as well as the major interests of all members, thus obviously counting some members more than once. He brought out well the various economic interests represented in the Commons. However, simply adding up the number of land-holding "interests" and business "interests" tended to overemphasize the importance of the latter, since the average businessman had more economic interests than did the landowner. Thomas concluded that business and the professions dominated the Commons by 1865, whereas the above analysis, conducted on a different basis, indicates that the landed aristocracy still held the great majority of the seats at that time. See J. A. Thomas, *The House of Commons, 1832-1901; A study of its economic and functional character* (Cardiff: 1939).

governmental survey of the owners of land in the United Kingdom, carried through in the middle 1870's and published as parliamentary bluebooks.

The House of Commons contained 658 seats in 1865 and in 1868, 652 in 1874 and 1880. Before 1868, the House had long been profoundly aristocratic in its social character. The overwhelming majority of the seats were occupied by landed squires, baronets, and relatives of peers, and many of the seats were handed down from father to son along with the family estate. Even after the First Reform Bill of 1832, little change had taken place in the social character of the chamber.[3] In the period 1868 to 1885, however, several factors were working to recast the traditional character of the House, some of them new, some of them long-range forces now growing in power and intensity. At the same time, many of the conditions which had fashioned the legislatures of the past continued to exist and acted as a brake upon change.

The constitutional and electoral changes of the times were not without their effect on the social composition of the Commons. The extension of the franchise to the urban workingman in 1867 and the accompanying redistribution of seats displaced a number of members of the old type. Lord Edward Howard, son of the Duke of Norfolk, had sat for Arundel in Sussex from 1852 onwards and had been re-elected without opposition in 1865. The small rural borough of 2,500 inhabitants and 185 electors had been dominated of old by the Howards, who were seated at nearby Arundel Castle and owned over 21,000 acres of land in Sussex. Lord Edward never sat in the House of Commons again after the family borough was abolished. The introduction of the ballot in 1872 operated to reduce intimidation and "undue influence", particularly that exercised by the landlords of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland.

On the other hand, the electoral system remained essentially geared to the election of men of wealth. Manhood suffrage was still far from a reality. The distribution of seats still favoured the rural and static areas. According to an analysis made in 1871, the one million people residing in parliamentary boroughs whose population was under 20,000 were represented by 111 members, while the eight millions in towns over 50,000 in population were represented by only 96.[4] Elections remained stained by corruption and

[3] S. F. Woolley, "The Personnel of the Parliament of 1833", *English Historical Review*, vol. LII (April, 1938), pp. 240-62. See also W. L. Guttsman, *The British Political Elite* (London: 1963), chapter 2, "A Traditional Elite in Power", pp. 34-59.

[4] E. H. Knatchbull-Hugessen, "Redistribution of Political Power", *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. XXVII (November, 1872), p. 71.

marked by heavy expenditures almost until 1885. H. J. Hanham, who has made a detailed study of elections in this period, claims that between 1865 and 1884 corrupt practices occurred in between "one third and one half of the English boroughs on sufficient scale for them to be noticed".[5] Thirty members of the 1868 Parliament were unseated on petitions alleging corrupt practices, 28 of the 1874 Parliament, and 24 of the 1880 Parliament.[6] The returned costs of the general election of 1880 reached a sum of 1,800,000 pounds.[7] The unofficial estimates of the cost of that election went as high as three million pounds.[8] The lack of any provision for the payment of members meant that the average member perforce had to be a person of substance who could afford the time and money to become and remain a member of Parliament.

Broader political and economic forces also played their part in determining the social composition of the House of Commons in the era 1868-1885. Nationalism and agrarian unrest in Ireland produced the Home Rule party and a revolution in the parliamentary representation that far exceeded the change in England, even though the Irish franchise had been extended but slightly by the Second Reform Bill and no redistribution of Irish seats had taken place. According to my estimates, aristocrats primarily connected with land held 73 of the 105 Irish seats in the Parliament elected in 1865 and 76 in that of 1868, but only 58 of the now 103 seats in 1874 and a mere 39 in 1880.

Regional feeling and rural unrest also played a part in bringing new members to the fore in Scotland and Wales. Aristocrats chiefly connected with land occupied 26 of the 29 Welsh seats in the Parliament of 1865 but only 15 of the 30 in 1880. Similarly, although from 1865 to 1880 the number of Scottish Commons seats rose from 53 to 60, the number of seats won by landed aristocrats fell from 35 to 28. However, in the placid English counties, the traditional Tory and Whig landowning members continued to be returned by an acquiescent peasantry undisturbed by the tumult in the Celtic fringe. The movements of agrarian protest elsewhere only found in England a muted echo in the restricted activities of the Farmers' Alliance, founded in 1879 to bring into the legislature members who could represent more forcibly the grievances of the depressed tenant farmer. The number of English county seats had increased

[5] H. J. Hanham, *Elections and Party Management. Politics in the Time of Disraeli and Gladstone* (London : 1959), p. 263.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 258.

[7] Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers* (hereafter cited as *Parl. Papers*), 1880, vol. LVII (*Accounts and Papers*, vol. XXVIII), no. 382, "Return of Election Expenses".

[8] Great Britain, 3 *Hansard*, vol. CCLXXIX (June 4, 1883), pp. 1672-3.

in 1867 from 147 to 172. Landed aristocrats held 134 seats in 1865, 140 in 1880. Their strength declined relative to the number of seats available, but only to a minor degree.

Industrialism, however, was one basic force making for change that *was* gathering momentum in England. Although its effect was muffled by the restricted franchise and unequal apportionment of seats that prevailed, industrialism inevitably thrust forward new men associated with the business communities of growing regions of England. This was especially true in growing towns which had recently received parliamentary representation. The English borough seats numbered 324 in 1865 but only 291 in 1868 and 287 in 1874 and 1880. Nevertheless the mercantile representation from the English boroughs rose slowly but steadily from 105 in 1865 to 112 in 1868, 114 in 1874 and 120 by 1880. In Wales and Scotland too the industrialization of certain areas had its effect upon their parliamentary representation: the number of Welsh members chiefly associated with trade and industry rose from 2 in 1865 to 6 in 1880, while their Scottish counterparts doubled from 12 in 1865 to 24 by 1880.

An important factor working against radical change in the Commons Chamber was undoubtedly the slow development of political self-consciousness among the lower classes of the English people. Although the urban worker was enfranchised in 1867, but few of his fellows appeared in the Commons, to the bewilderment of some political commentators. The explanation lay in part in the high costs involved in getting and keeping a parliamentary seat. On the other hand, the majority of the working class seem to have felt little desire or need to be represented by men drawn from their own class. Many of the lower class even felt a vicarious pride in the knowledge that their member was a well-known aristocrat or rich banker. And the conservative working class leaders of the time gave little support to efforts to form a workingman's party or to elect working class M.P.s. Indeed in the election of 1868 the leaders of the working class Reform League formed a secret alliance with the Gladstonian Liberals and, in several constituencies, refused to support workingmen who came forward as candidates. [9]

At the same time the workingman would hardly have put in middle and upper class members if it had not been the case that many of these members prudently supported policies conciliatory towards at least the immediate interests of the worker. That there

[9] Royden Harrison, *Before the Socialists. Studies in Labour and Politics 1861-1881* (Toronto: 1965), chapter IV, "The Reform League and the General Election of 1868", pp. 137-209.

was no revolutionary change in the social composition of the lower House after 1867 was due in large part to the fact that there was a noteworthy change in the attitude of the House of Commons and the administration towards the working class. They were now much more sensitive to the demands of the workingman and sooner or later acted to meet what might seem today very modest and reasonable requests. Some of the new "advanced liberals" elected during the period aided in establishing contact between the legislature and the mass electorate by acting as spokesman for labour in the House. Such were Thomas Hughes, a squire's son who had become a Christian Socialist, and Anthony Mundella, a Nottingham hosiery manufacturer who was one of the pioneers in the field of industrial arbitration.

The array of landed aristocrats in the Commons Chambers of the era 1868-1885 continued to be impressive. Some aristocratic families not unnaturally continued to dominate county or borough seats in regions where their ancestral estates were located. The Whig Cavendish house, headed by the Duke of Devonshire, enjoyed multiple representation at the beginning of the period. The Cavendishes were the most prominent landed family in Derbyshire. All three sons of the seventh Duke of Devonshire found seats in the legislature elected in 1865. In addition, the brother of the seventh Duke retained his seat for North Derbyshire. The three sons continued their parliamentary careers throughout our era, sitting for electoral districts in Derbyshire, Sussex, Yorkshire, Lancashire and Radnorshire. Many members of the traditional class continued to come from the English county constituencies, one of the strongholds of the landed aristocracy, as we have seen. One of the deans of the country gentry in the House was Joseph Henley of Waterperry, Oxfordshire. He sat for Oxfordshire county from 1841 until 1878, when he retired at the age of 85. It was reported that Henley's experience as a landowner, magistrate, and legislator enabled him to speak with authority on a variety of matters. He was listened to as attentively as if he had been talking at the Oxfordshire Quarter Sessions.[10] In the small English boroughs, old noble families like the Whig Russells and Tory Churchills demonstrated their ability to retain family seats such as Tavistock in Devonshire and Woodstock in Oxfordshire. Even some of the large towns, such as Liverpool, which had an electorate of 63,946 by 1880, returned in this period members of well-known aristocratic families. One of the most redoubtable and firmly entrenched of the aristocratic members from Scotland was the Tory Lord Elcho, eldest son of the Earl of Wemyss and March. His Lordship held Haddingtonshire county

[10] *Annual Register*, 1884, p. 166.

against all opposition from 1847 until he became the tenth Earl in 1883, at which time his son succeeded him in Haddingtonshire.

The landed members in the House of Commons were now, however, joined on a large scale by men of newer wealth whose accumulations of riches had given them leisure time.[11] This inevitably led to the displacement of not a few representatives of the more traditional type. According to my calculations, the total of M.P.s connected with the aristocracy fell from 499 in the Parliament elected in 1865 to 481 in that of 1868, 452 in 1874 and to 394 by 1880. Even more strikingly, the total of aristocratic members with primarily landed interests declined from 437 in 1865 to 410 in 1868, 382 in 1874 and to 325 by 1880.

Even in English county constituencies, especially in populous industrial ones, old members sometimes had to give way. This was evident, for example, in the constituency of North Durham, where the elections in the period 1868-1885 almost degenerated into spending campaigns between great rival capitalists of new wealth. The electorate rose from 5,929 in 1865 to 13,165 by 1880. Two of the Liberal aristocracy of the county, Robert Shafto of Whitworth Park, and Sir Hedworth Williamson of Whitburne Hall, represented the constituency in the Parliament elected in 1865. In 1868, however, these members of old parliamentary families had to face a contested election in which their opponent was the Tory capitalist, George (later Sir George) Elliott. Robert Shafto retired; in his place ran Isaac Lowthian Bell, a rising iron manufacturer who also held interests in the chemical industry and in railroads. The combined expenses of Williamson and Bell amounted to 11,703 pounds; those of Elliott totalled an unprecedented 15,302 pounds.[12] Sir Hedworth and Elliot were elected. The latter had begun work at nine years of age in a Durham coal mine. He had subsequently risen to become the owner of coal mines in Durham, South Wales, Staffordshire and Nova Scotia, as well as a prominent wire rope and cable manufacturer.[13]

In 1874 Sir Hedworth Williamson retired. Isaac Lowthian Bell again ran for the Liberals. He was now joined by Charles Palmer, the scion of one of the great shipbuilding families of Durham and himself the founder of the North Durham shipbuilding centre of Jarrow. Bell and Palmer together spent about 17,600 pounds, as

[11] Donald Southgate estimates that, in the general election of 1868, 60% of the former Liberal members who were re-elected came from the aristocracy, while 60% of the new Liberal M.P.s did not. Donald Southgate, *The Passing of the Whigs* (London : 1962), p. 336.

[12] *Parl. Papers 1868-9*, vol. L (*Accounts and Papers*, vol. XXVII), no. 424, "Return of Election Expenses".

[13] See *Illustrated London News*, May 15, 1875.

against costs of 10,600 pounds returned by Elliot and his Conservative colleague.[14] The Liberal candidates won the election but were promptly unseated on grounds of intimidation carried on by their miners. The Liberals of the constituency immediately put forward the unseated members for the by-election. As a result of this contest, Charles Palmer was elected but Sir George Elliot regained his seat. Wealthy businessmen like Palmer and Elliot continued to dominate further elections in North Durham. Rising capitalists were prepared to pay almost any price and to make repeated costly attempts in order to gain a seat.[15]

The landowners also lost seats in the English boroughs, apart from those which disappeared due to redistribution of seats. In 1865 the rural borough of Wenlock in Shropshire re-elected George Cecil Weld Forester and James Milnes Gaskell, two landed aristocrats who had each been members for Wenlock for over a generation. The Foresters owned 14,000 acres in the county and had represented the borough frequently since 1529. George Forester had sat since 1828. James Milnes Gaskell, one of the most cultivated of the old squirearchy, had sat since 1832, and without a contest since 1835.[16] He had been a moderate Conservative, like his partner Forester, but was now becoming a "ripening Liberal". However, in 1868 the augmented Liberal voters of Wenlock came out for Alexander Brown of Druid's Cross, Liverpool, partner in the widespread shipping firm of Brown Shipley, founded by his grandfather. Caught in a triangular struggle with Forester and the shipping magnate, James Milnes Gaskell retired.[17] His son offered himself as a Liberal candidate in 1874 but Brown and Forester were again victorious. The Gaskell family made no further attempt to regain its lost seat. Alexander Brown and members of the Forester family held the two seats for Wenlock to 1885.

In Ireland the landed aristocrats, particularly those of Anglo-Irish family, lost heavily with the development of the Home Rule movement, especially with the rise of the extreme nationalists under Charles Stewart Parnell. The change that took place in Southern Ireland was strikingly illustrated by the course of events in the county constituency of Roscommon. Fitz-Stephen French and Charles Owen O'Connor (the O'Connor Don) represented that county in

[14] *Parl. Papers 1874*, vol. LIII (*Accounts and Papers*, vol. XIX), no. 358, "Return of Election Expenses".

[15] Hanham reports, on the basis of a memorandum in the Salisbury papers, that Elliot's election expenditure in the period 1868-1885 was 90,000 pounds. Hanham, *Elections and Party Management*, p. 260.

[16] H. T. Weyman, *Members of Parliament for Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Bishop's Castle, Wenlock* (privately printed), pp. 354-6.

[17] *Illustrated London News*, October 17, 1868.

1865. Both were the heads of ancient Irish parliamentary families of Roscommon. The French family had represented Irish ridings at Dublin and then at Westminster since 1374. Fitz-Stephen French had sat for Roscommon county continuously since 1832; his father had been member for the county for 38 years before that. When Fitz-Stephen French died in 1873, he was followed in the seat by a nephew, Charles French. Ever since an O'Connor had acted as Roscommon's first shire member in the sixteenth century, the chief of the house had usually sat for the county.[18] Charles Owen O'Connor was re-elected unopposed in 1868 and 1874. Along with the Frenchs, he was one of the early leaders of the Home Rule movement. However, in 1880 Charles French and O'Connor balked at taking the pledge to the Home Rule program of Parnell, who subsequently put up his own candidates. Charles French refused to run again; the O'Connor Don was defeated. Arthur Commins and James O'Kelly took their places. The former was a Liverpool lawyer and the leader of the Home Rule organization there; the latter had been successively a French army captain, a soldier of fortune in the American Civil War and, of late, a reporter for the *New York Herald.* The enlightened representatives of old Irish and Catholic county families had been forced from their ancient places by unknowns elected because they were Parnellites.

One of the chief changes in the social composition of the House of Commons, then, was the fall in the number of members drawn from the landed class. This decline, although gradual, was steady. By the close of our era, the House of Commons was no longer essentially a chamber of landowners, although the landed aristocracy still held more seats than any other social group.

More and more merchants and industrialists, especially elderly ones retired or semi-retired from business, sought a parliamentary seat as a fitting climax to their careers. Successful lawyers found it possible to combine legal with parliamentary careers. These new members had much in common with the older landed members and generally fitted in with them quite easily. Many rising merchants and professional men quickly acquired country places, secured for their sons the educational advantages of the upper class and even married off their daughters and sons into the aristocracy. They financed their own election campaigns and underwrote the other expenses incident to getting and retaining a parliamentary seat, just as the landed aristocrats did.

For the whole of the United Kingdom, the number of members of the Commons chiefly connected with trade and industry rose

[18] See Sir John Bernard Burke, *History of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland* (5th ed.; London : 1875), vol. II, pp. 1511-2.

from 144 in the Parliament of 1865 to 162 in that of 1868, 171 in 1874 and to 194 by 1880, increasing the size of the mercantile bloc by a quarter. The business interest registered its greatest gains in 1868, when the effect of the redistribution of seats of 1867-68 was first felt, and in 1880, when the fortunes of the Liberals and the Irish nationalists were both at floodtide.

Of course the enormously wealthy business houses already represented in the Commons, such as those of Rothschild and Baring, continued to be prominent. However, side by side with the old mercantile names were the pushing "new-made" men of more recent fortune. In constituencies like North Durham and Wenlock, as we have seen, rising businessmen tended to replace members of a more traditional stamp. In many medium-sized boroughs, the town prosperity depended on a dominant local mercantile firm or factory. The proprietors of such enterprises usually had little difficulty in procuring a town seat. At Burton on Trent, close to Derby, had arisen in the nineteenth century the great brewery of the Bass family. Michael Thomas Bass, a grandson of the founder, had expanded rapidly the business which "eventually made his name known throughout the civilized world".[19] At the same time he played the part of the civic patron in Burton and Derby. In 1873 he climaxed his generosity to Derby by presenting a public bathing centre – "the whole of the bathing sheds and dressing rooms are of cast iron, panelled, with the monogram M.T.B. (the initials of Mr. Bass's names) on each panel".[20] Michael Bass was first elected for Derby in 1848 and was thereafter returned at every general election until his retirement in 1883. His eldest son, Michael Arthur Bass, later Baron Burton, took in 1868 one of the new county seats in Staffordshire, the county in which Burton on Trent was located. A younger son, Hamar Bass, sat for Tamworth in Staffordshire from 1878 onwards and for West Staffordshire after 1885. Thus three Basses sat in Parliament at one time for constituencies contiguous to the family brewery.

So, too, beside the old Quaker upper class banking and mercantile families of Buxton, Gurney and Hoare, Nonconformist families of more recent prominence took their place. The Peases, the wealthy Quaker coal and iron family of Northern England, supplied members for a Durham county seat from 1865 onwards and captured a Yorkshire borough in 1880. A solicitor of the Fry clan was elected in 1880 from Bristol, where the family chocolate-making firm was located. In the same year Darlington in Durham returned one of his cousins, an iron manufacturer related by marriage to the Peases.

[19] *Annual Register*, 1884, p. 134.
[20] *Illustrated London News*, July 26, 1873.

The ranks of the mercantile M.P.s were swollen by the increased election of businessmen of diverse trades and social standing. Railroad financiers such as Sir Edward Watkin or Sir Daniel Gooch became more common. Rising commercial men like the London bookseller W. H. Smith increasingly dominated the metropolitan boroughs. More and more businessmen came in who were self-made men engaged in mining and manufacturing. Among them were such figures as the great coal owner, Sir George Elliot, who sat for North Durham after 1868, Sir Andrew Fairbairn, the head of a huge machine tool firm and member for an industrial division of the West Riding of Yorkshire, and Heinrich Bolckow, the coal and iron magnate elected as the first member for Middlesborough, the new industrial town he had created in Northern Yorkshire. Local middle class manufacturers and merchants became more numerous. They included Edward Backhouse, the Darlington banker elected as the town's first member in 1868, members from Glasgow like the radical merchants George Anderson and Charles Cameron, and some of the representatives of Birmingham and similar towns.

The number of Commons members drawn from the professions rose quite rapidly in the period 1868-1885. This was true for both legal and non-legal professional men. The M.P.s chiefly associated with the legal profession climbed from 56 in 1865 to 57 in 1868, 69 in 1874, and to 83 by 1880. As before, eminent lawyers, often with upper class connections, were present in Parliament, frequently returned by way of a nomination borough in order to provide legal talent for the ministries of the day. They were now joined by increasing numbers of aspiring lawyers of the middle class. Many of the latter strove to enter for constituencies in and around London, the metropolis in which, of course, the judicial business of the nation centered. One of the most outstanding of the self-made lawyers in Parliament was Edward (later Sir Edward) Clarke. He came in for Southwark as the result of a by-election held early in 1880. Clarke's father had been a retail jeweller in London, his grandfather a yeoman farmer. However, by unremitting industry and study he gradually came to the forefront in the legal profession and by 1878 possessed an income of 5,000 pounds a year, enough to run for Parliament. Clarke lost his Southwark seat at the general election of 1880; the two elections for Southwark had cost him 22,000 pounds. Later in 1880 he contested successfully the borough of Plymouth, for which he sat for the next 20 years. Clarke moved out into the countryside in the 1880's, sent his son to Eton and Cambridge, and married his daughter to a military officer. [21]

[21] See Sir Edward Clarke, *The Story of My Life* (London: 1918); *Illustrated London News*, February 28, 1880.

Home Rule lawyers of little social standing formed a distinct group in the legal representation of this period. After 1874 they often broke a tradition of aristocratic representation in southern Irish constituencies. The members for Kilkenny county in the Parliament of 1865 were a Conservative, Captain L. S. F. Agar-Ellis, and a Liberal, George Bryan of Jenkinstown Park. Both belonged to landed houses long settled in Kilkenny, and both were re-elected unopposed until 1874. In that year a third candidate, Patrick Martin, ousted Captain Agar-Ellis. The newcomer, the son of a Dublin solicitor, was a Home Rule lawyer who practised in England but resided in Dublin. George Bryan, who had stood as a moderate nationalist, was returned safely. But this last of the local landed representatives retired in 1880, when a second out-and-out Home Ruler was nominated as a running mate to Martin. The new member for Kilkenny, E. P. M. Marum, was another lawyer, this time resident in Queen's county.

The number of non-legal professional men in the Commons more than doubled : 20 were present in the House of 1865, 24 in 1874 and a total of 44 in 1880.[22] Eminent professional men drawn from the Victorian intelligentsia had been present before the Second Reform Bill.[23] They were returned in greater strength after 1867. John Stuart Mill came in for the metropolitan constituency of Westminster in 1865. Mill was defeated at the general election of 1868 but such well-known academic and literary figures as Leonard Courtney, the brilliant political scientist, and James Bryce, the regius professor of Civil Law at Oxford, followed him into the House and continued to provide intellectual leadership for the advanced Liberals. One of the most prominent Scottish members was Lyon Playfair, professor of Chemistry, sanitation expert and Fellow of the Royal Society, who represented the new constituency of Edinburgh and St. Andrew's Universities. For the first time professional men from the lower social strata won election : Charles Bradlaugh, the atheist lecturer and journalist from radical Northampton in 1880; Henry Richard, the Dissenting minister and Welsh nationalist from Merthyr Tydfil, an expanding industrial centre in South Wales. In large part the increase in the professional group was due to the return of Home Rule doctors and journalists after 1874. Into the House came such personages as James O'Kelly, the New York newspaper reporter who defeated the O'Connor Don in Roscommon, and T. P. O'Connor, the London journalist elected from Galway borough in 1880.[24]

[22] Army and navy officers are not included in these figures because in this period they were almost invariably landed aristocrats who did not rely upon their service professions for a livelihood.

[23] See F. B. Smith, *The Making of the Second Reform Bill* (Cambridge : 1966), p. 54.

[24] See Justin McCarthy, *Reminiscences* (London : 1899), vol. II, pp. 397-8.

Only a token representation of farmers and workingmen entered the House of Commons in this period. One tenant farmer was elected in 1865, two in 1868, four in 1874 and three in 1880. Interestingly enough, the rising agitation against the landlord in Ireland was not accompanied by the nomination or election of large numbers of tenant farmers there, at least in the years before 1885. The tenantry were content to voice their protest through the better educated men of the middle and upper classes who directed their cause. No tenant farmers were elected from Ireland either in 1865 or in 1868, only two in 1874 and one in 1880. In the English counties the Farmers' Alliance helped to unseat some representatives of old Tory families in 1880. However, the more liberal-minded replacements were drawn usually from the lesser gentry; only two came from the ranks of the tenant farmers themselves. In West Suffolk, William Biddell, a land agent and large farmer, and the chairman of two farmers' clubs, was returned in place of a Conservative country gentleman of the county who had sat since 1859. He was joined by Thomas Duckham, liberal tenant farmer candidate elected from Herefordshire.

Two workingmen were elected in 1874, three in 1880, all from English boroughs. Ex-miners were the first workingmen to be elected to Parliament. Thomas Burt and Alexander Macdonald entered the House in 1874 for the coal-mining constituencies of Morpeth and Stafford and were joined in 1880 by Henry Broadhurst, the stonemason elected from Stoke on Trent. Morpeth in Northumberland demonstrated in particular what thorough organization could do in the cause of workingman representation. The growing mining town, which returned one member, had been represented since 1853 by Sir George Grey, a substantial landowner connected with one of the great Liberal families of Northumberland. The electorate of Morpeth rose from 429 in 1865 to 1,698 in 1868. Sir George Grey was returned unopposed in the election of 1868, as he had been in the previous one. The Northern Reform League, however, was now working with the Miners' Franchise Union to get more miners on the electoral registers under the new franchise and selected Morpeth for special attention. An intensive campaign was launched in 1872, culminating in demonstrations by the unenfranchised miners. As a result, many pitmen's claims for the vote, before rejected under a restrictive interpretation of the Act of 1867, were accepted in 1873 and the electorate leaped from 2,661 to 4,916 in one jump.[25] The

[25] G. D. H. Cole and A. W. Filson, *British Working Class Movements. Select Documents, 1789-1875* (London : 1951), pp. 589-90; A. Watson, *A Great Labour Leader : Being a Life of the Hon. Thomas Burt, M.P.* (London : 1908), p. 129.

workers nominated forthwith Thomas Burt, a self-educated former working miner, now secretary of the 18,000-member Northumberland Miners' Association. He ran as an advanced Liberal. Sir George Grey retired. The courageous Conservative candidate, a military officer, did well to poll 585 votes against the 3,332 recorded for Burt. The miners' representative was re-elected unopposed in 1880; while in the House he received a yearly salary of 500 pounds raised as a "voluntary tax" by his constituents.

There were now entering the House of Commons for the first time propertyless members of the middle class and labouring class who could not themselves finance the expenses incident upon their elections and their sojourns at Westminster. Such were many of the Irish nationalists elected under the banner of Parnell in the latter part of our period. They were returned not by virtue of personal prominence or by means of their own pocketbooks, but rather because they were pledged to Parnell and were financed by his organization. England returned a few trade union leaders to present the case of labour directly to the legislature. They were financed by the contributions of union members. Thus was beginning in the epoch 1868-1885 the transition from the traditional political order under which the average M.P. was elected in large part on the basis of his personal or local eminence and by his own money. In the more modern age of politics, the election of the member was to be tied much more closely to his party affiliations. His party now more frequently underwrote his election expenses and, after 1911, he got an annual salary from the state.

The social character of the House of Commons was, of course, not unaffected by the fortunes of the political parties after the Second Reform Bill. The Conservative party was more closely allied with the landed aristocracy than was the Liberal party and more frequently offered aristocratic candidates. Thus Tory triumph at the polls tended to give the Commons a more aristocratic complexion than otherwise might have been the case. However, forces of change were at work in the Conservative as well as the Liberal parliamentary party, replacing members of the traditional class with new men, especially as more middle-class constituencies turned Tory. The social composition of successive Parliaments became cumulatively more varied, regardless of the party in power. The Liberals under Gladstone won a clear-cut victory in the elections of 1868. The swing to the right in 1874 placed Benjamin Disraeli in power. There then followed in 1880 the second administration of Gladstone. Landed aristocrats were fewer in number in the Tory Parliament of 1874 than in the previous Liberal one. The Liberal Parliament of 1880, which had a smaller Liberal majority than the Parliaments

of 1865 or 1868, was much less dominated by the landed interest than either of those previous legislatures. Of course the rise of the Home Rule party removed many an old landed member. But even taking the social representation of England, Wales and Scotland separately, it is noteworthy that in each of these regions, the strength of the landed aristocratic group declined in our era from Parliament to Parliament without exception.

The extent to which the changing composition of the House of Commons enabled it to deal more effectively with the problems of an increasingly complicated society is, of course, a large question whose nature can be only indicated here. What contribution was made to the debates and legislation of Parliament by the newly-elected merchants, manufacturers and professional men, the middle-class intellectuals and the few workingmen? The newer members made significant contributions on a broad range of subjects. The intellectual radicals led the fight for state education and further electoral reform, tenant farmers and their middle and upper class friends called attention to demands of the farmer such as compensation for improvements, workingmen members and their allies of other classes secured passage of reforms such as those which placed trade unions on a firm legal footing, an augmented host of businessmen safeguarded the interests of capital.

Between 1868 and 1885 electoral activity intensified, popular interest grew, the number of candidates multiplied, and their social backgrounds became more diversified. The lower House of Parliament lost its character as an aristocratic club and became a body more capable of dealing with the problems of all classes of the community. Yet the change was gradual and evolutionary. The landed aristocratic element retained control of almost half the seats. The House remained composed almost entirely of property-owners of the upper or middle classes. After 1885 and the Third Reform Bill, landed aristocrats continued to decrease in number, the totals of business and professional men increased, and members from the lower middle class and working class came more to the fore, especially in the twentieth century. The social change in the period we have examined fits into a broader evolutionary development through which a traditionally aristocratic Chamber became better adapted to govern an increasingly industrialized and democratic nation.