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JOURNAL OF THE STATISTICAL SOCIETY,

SEPTEMBER, 1871.

THE SECOND TAYLER PRIZE ESSAY.

On LOCAL TAXATION. By JOHN SCOTT, ESQ., of the Inner Temple.

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PART I.

I.—Introductory.

THERE is a general feeling in the country that the present system of Local Taxation is inequitable, and the demand increases for both a readjustment of its burthens and a reform of its administration. It is said to be antiquated and obsolete—that it takes its origin from a cause that is now only one of many reasons for its existence, and that it was originally levied on what may have been at one time

the chief national property, but which is now only a fractional portion of the country's wealth. It is charged with an offence against almost every canon of taxation, being unequal, uncertain, and inconvenient in its incidence, and by no means giving satisfaction to those upon whom it is levied. It is maintained that the proper people are not taxed, that the taxes are not raised in the best way, that the system of administration is inefficient, and that those who contribute the funds, have little or no control over the expenditure. It is pointed out, that whilst this want of equity in the system exists, the burthens of local taxation are annually increasing; that pauperism is an increasing quantity in the State, and with pauperism the poor rate; that town improvements, comprehensive drainage and sewage, an improved road system, and the other chief objects of local expenditure, are increasing in number and the amount of this requirement, and with them the rates by which they are paid. It is also urged, that whilst the existing burthens are multiplying from year to year, there is a growing tendency on the part of the State to cast new charges upon the rates, and diminish the drain upon the treasury by emptying the pocket of the ratepayers. All these statements may be founded upon fact, and many indeed have been endorsed by the report of a parliamentary committee. But the system of local taxation is wrapped up in so much obscurity and confusion of detail, that it is impossible to examine satisfactorily into its merits and demerits, without an elaborate statement of what it is. It is proposed, therefore, in the present pages, before entering on such an examination, to state clearly the nature of each existing rate, upon whom and how it is levied, and by whom it is controlled and expended.

Owing to the existence of local acts and charters giving special and peculiar powers to various towns and districts, it is difficult to enumerate every local tax that is levied in England and Wales. But the following list of all rates levied under general statutes, and of general application, is taken from a report furnished by Mr. Danby P. Fry to the Parliamentary Committee on Local Taxation, which sat and reported during the Session of 1870, and it is believed to be tolerably complete. It is divided into two classes, of what Mr. Fry calls rates of primary districts, and rates of aggregate districts. By a primary district, he means any independent district or area of taxation whatsoever. By an aggregate district he means a group of such primary districts thrown together, into a larger area of taxation. The list does not strictly carry out this division, and perhaps a better division would be one of kind rather than locality; as, for instance, rates levied for district purposes, and rates levied for county purposes. But no strictly logical division can be made, as local taxation has been of gradual growth, varying

in every district, and has never been based on any scientific and general plan.

Rates of Primary Districts.

		<i>The Poor Rate.</i>
Not now levied separately.	{	The Workhouse Building Rate.
		The Survey and Valuation Rate.
		The Jail Fees Rate.
		The Constables' Rate.
In abeyance		The Militia Rate.
		<i>The Highway Rate.</i>
		The Burial Board Rate.
		The Lighting and Watching Rate.
		The Public Library and Museum Rate.
		<i>The General District Rate.</i>
		<i>The Town Improvement Rate.</i>
		The Parish Improvement Rate.
		The Animal Contagious Diseases Rate.
	Voluntary	{
The Sewerage Rate.		
Levied together.	{	The Sewers Rate.
		The General Sewers Tax.
		The Special Rate under Land Drainage Act.
		Drainage Embankment and Inclosure Rate.
Levied together.	{	Inclosure Rate.
		Regulated Pasture Rate.

Rates of Aggregate Districts.

		<i>The County Rate.</i>
Levied under County Rate or as a separate rate.	{	The County Police Rate.
		The Shire Hall Rate.
		The County Lunatic Asylum.
		The County Burial Rate.
		The Hundred Rate.
		<i>The Borough Rate.</i>
Levied under Borough Rate.	{	The Borough Jail Rate.
		The Borough Prisoners Rate.
		The Borough Lunatic Asylum Rate.
		The Borough Library and Museum Rate.
		The Borough Baths and Washhouses Rate.
		The Borough Improvement Rate.
		The Borough Burial Rate.

The relative importance of these rates will be seen from the following "Amended Return of Local Taxation for the Year

"1867-68," presented to the House of Commons on the 9th August, 1870:—

Amended Summary.

	£
Amount levied for poor relief.....	7,825,592
County, Hundred, Borough, and Police—	
Contributed from poor rate.....	£2,462,922
Levied separately	493,285
	<hr/> 2,956,207
Highway rate—	
Contributed from poor rate	£621,436
Levied separately.....	916,779
	<hr/> 1,538,215
Church rates	217,482
Lighting and watching rate.....	79,393
Improvement Commissioners	410,105
General district rates	1,683,702
„ and lighting rates in metropolis	981,140
Rates under Courts of Commissioners of Sewers } (including drainage and embankment rates).... }	714,734
Rates of other kinds—	
Contributed from poor rates	£152,076
Levied separately.....	224,574
	<hr/> 376,650
	<hr/> <hr/> 16,783,220
	£
Gross estimated rental	118,431,102
Rateable value	100,668,698

In order to arrive at the total local taxation, it is necessary to add the indirect taxation. This consisted, according to the "Local Taxation Returns of 1868," of—

	£
Market dues	30,000
Bridges and ferries	110,000
Harbours	1,260,000
Turnpike tolls	970,000
Pilotage and light dues	610,000
City coal and wine duty	235,000
	<hr/>
Total indirect taxation.....	3,215,000
„ direct „	16,783,220
	<hr/>
	<hr/> 19,998,220

II.—*The Poor Rate.*

This rate cannot properly be explained without a slight reference to its origin, which is the more necessary as the whole rating system is supposed to date from the foundation of the poor rate.

The original object of rates was the maintenance of the poor. That portion of the community which did not support itself, originally supported by the great nobles and the monasteries, was first by the statutes of maintenance, and afterwards by the suppression of all religious houses, thrown directly on the country in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Strenuous efforts were then made to suppress a poverty which had always existed, though not previously observed, but without success. Flogging and branding, cutting and maiming, and even hanging failed to clear the country of beggars, and England was driven to maintain what it could not extinguish. In 1551 a weekly offertory was established in the churches, but this voluntary system of poor relief was an equal failure. At length, after other unsuccessful attempts to control the evil, the well known statute of Elizabeth, the basis of the present poor law, was passed in 1601, and the duty of the maintenance of its own poor was cast upon each parish throughout the country.

The portion of the Act which founded the present system of rating runs as follows :—

“ Be it enacted that the churchwardens of every parish, and
“ four, three, or two substantial householders there shall be called
“ overseers of the poor of the same parish, to raise, weekly or other-
“ wise (*by taxation of every inhabitant, parson, vicar, and other, and of*
“ *every occupier* of lands, houses, tithes impropriate, propriations of
“ tithes, coal mines, or saleable underwoods in the said parish, in
“ such competent sum or sums of money as they shall think fit)
“ a convenient stock of flax, &c., to set the poor on work, and also
“ competent sums of money for and towards the necessary relief,
“ and for the putting out of such children to be apprenticed, to be
“ gathered out of the same parish *according to the ability of the same*
“ parish.”

This was the origin of the present poor rate. It was a contribution levied on every inhabitant according to his ability, and devoted exclusively to the maintenance of the impotent, the education of pauper children, and the employment of such able-bodied persons as may be out of work. The changes which this rate has gradually undergone will be seen from the following account of it as it exists at the present day.

The poor rate is now only in part applied to purposes connected with the relief of the poor, and a large proportion is devoted to other charges which have been from time to time cast upon it, on account of the convenience of collection, without much, if any, deference to similarity of purpose. For instance, in the year ending Lady-day, 1869, out of rather more than eleven millions and a-half, raised under the name of poor rate, about four millions were expended on other purposes. The following statement, taken from

the "Amended Return" already quoted, shows the total amount of the poor rate for 1867-68, and how it was composed:—

	£
Total amount levied for poor rate	11,062,026
Deduct contributions for—	
County, hundred, borough, and } police rate	£2,462,922
Highway boards	621,436
Burial boards, baths and wash- } houses, fire brigade.....	152,076
	<hr/>
	3,236,434
Poor rate proper	<hr/> 7,825,592 <hr/>

The purposes which the poor rate serves, apart from the relief of the poor, are both varied and numerous. They may be divided into two classes. (I.) Those purposes which are provided for directly out of the poor rate funds, and (II.) those which are provided for by means of a payment made by the overseers to some other local administrative body, in whom the right of requisition from the overseers of such money as they may want, is vested.

I. The following are the chief payments made directly from the poor rates fund, in addition to what is required for poor relief:—

The cost of prosecutions for felonies or misdemeanors, in places not contributing to the county rate.

The cost of prosecuting persons for keeping disorderly houses.

The cost of prosecuting pawnbrokers in certain cases.

The expenses incurred by constables in doing the business of the parish or township.

The fees and allowances under the Parish Constables' Act, and the salaries of parish constables.

The remuneration of examiners of measures, and the cost of procuring proper measures in certain cases.

The compensation payable to gaolers and others in certain cases.

The cost of making out, preparing, printing, and collecting the jury lists.

The compensations payable by the hundred in places not contributing to any county rate.

The expenses of emigration in certain cases.

Certain expenses connected with the registration of births, deaths, and marriages.

The expense of criminal lunatics and insane prisoners.

The expenses of public vaccination.

The expenses of boroughs in the parliamentary elections.

The expenses of beating the bounds and repairing the boundary stones.

The expenses of fencing, draining, and levelling lands allotted under the Commons Enclosure Act, for the exercise and recreation of the inhabitants.

II. The overseers may be called upon, by other authorities, to collect through the poor rate sums of money required by those authorities, and to be expended by them, in the following cases:—

For the main county rate and the various subordinate county rates.

For the hundred rate.

For the borough rate and the subordinate borough rates.

For highway rates.

For the expense of burial boards in parishes.

For the expense of public libraries and museums in certain cases.

For the expense of baths and washhouses.

For the expense of parish improvements.

In all these cases the contribution from the parishes may be obtained either by means of the poor rate, or by means of a separate rate levied for the special purpose. But, as a matter of fact, the sum is raised in most cases through the poor rate, and not separately. Thus the poor rate has become, in effect, a consolidated rate, under which is collected the sums required for most of the borough, district, or county purposes, in addition to the amount necessary for the objects implied under its name. As the tendency is still to increase the number of charges cast upon it, it may be presumed that its secondary objects would probably under the present system encroach on its primary purpose more and more every year.

The poor rate, though expended in the wider area of the union, is collected by the overseers of each parish separately. It was, before the Poor Law Amendment Act (4 and 5 Wm. IV, cap. 76), the business of the overseer to expend, as well as to make out and collect, the poor rates. But such portion of his duties as related to ascertaining fit objects for assistance, the amount of relief to be given, and the manner of giving it, is now transferred to the board of guardians, saving that the overseers may give assistance in kind, though not in money, in "cases of sudden and urgent necessity." The overseers are appointed annually by the county justices acting and resident in the district. Only a very small portion of the amount levied is expended by, or subject to, their control. Their chief function is that of collectors, and they merely constitute the channel by which the various amounts pass from the ratepayers to the several administrative bodies whose precepts the overseers are

bound to obey. The rate is levied upon all occupiers of real property of any description whatever, and it is levied on the full rateable value in all cases. The valuation list of each parish is furnished by the overseers to the union assessment committee, elected annually by the guardians out of their own number. If the lists are found correct, the committee assesses, by means of them, the amount to be paid towards the rate by each parish, and the overseers apportion it amongst the individuals. Any ratepayer has the right of appeal to the quarter sessions against the rate. Owners, as owners, are not called upon to pay at all.

The incidence of the rates in the case of mines is a little complicated. Occupiers of coal mines are rated like occupiers of any other kind of property, coal mines being expressly declared rateable to the poor in the statute of Elizabeth. But other mines are not assessed to the poor rate at all. Where, however, the owner of mines, other than coal mines, receives rent in kind, or by way of dues or tolls, in proportion to the produce of the mine, he is liable to be rated. But in this case the owner is rated as an occupier on the proportion he receives, and the remainder is not rated at all. The only real exception to the exemption of owners, is under the Assessed Rates Act of 1869. Under this Act, the owner may be rated instead of the occupier, by resolution of vestry; or he may, in certain cases, agree to pay the rates instead of the occupier—and in these cases he is entitled to a deduction on the amount otherwise payable. Under the provisions of the same Act, occupiers for a term not exceeding three months, are authorised to deduct the poor rates paid by them from the rent payable to the owner.

If any person refuses to pay any rates after a proper demand has been made, the same may be enforced by distress, and sale of the goods of the defaulter, and, if there be no goods, the defaulter may be committed to prison for three months. A rate may be appealed against, and quashed at the next special sessions after its making, on the ground of inequality or incorrectness.

So far as regards the mode in which the whole poor rate is levied. As regards its administration, it is proposed at present only to treat of the poor rate proper. The application of the other amounts supplied by the poor rate will be more fitly explained under the heads of those rates to which the money is assigned.

The guardians of the poor constitute the local authority entrusted with the expenditure of this, the largest item of local taxation. This board of guardians is formed partly by election, partly by an *ex officio* appointment by the justice of the peace of the county, or the division of the county in which the union is situated, who are resident in the union. The number of elected guardians for each union is regulated by the Poor Law Board, but there must be at least

one guardian for each parish, except in the case of very small parishes which are thrown together for the purposes of election. The elected guardians are chosen from the ratepayers by the owners and occupiers of rateable property within the several parishes of each union.

Proxies are allowed to owners, but no owner can vote without previously sending in his claim and obtaining registration.

To qualify for the office of guardian, the candidate must be a ratepayer, rated to the poor upon a minimum value determined by the Poor Law Board, but that minimum must not be higher than 40*l.* a-year. It will be observed, that although owners under this system can vote, they cannot become members of the board, except as occupiers, and that whilst their right to vote is hampered by the necessity of previous registration, the occupier is under no such restriction. The votes are given by voting papers, and a plurality of voting is allowed, commencing at one vote for a rateable value, at and under 50*l.* a-year, and rising to the maximum of six votes for 250*l.* a-year.

The five rates which follow next on the list are rarely, if ever, levied at present, and very brief notice of them will suffice. The workhouse building rate was intended for the provision of workhouses under the Poor Law Amendment Act, and the survey and valuation rate for the payment of the expense of a parochial survey and valuation, under 6 and 7 Wm. IV, cap. 76. These separate rates have never been raised in fact, and the expenses for which they were intended to provide have always been paid out of the poor rate. The jail fees rate was authorised by an Act passed in 1815 for payment of compensations to jailers and others, in certain cases. In the report of the Poor Law Commissioners on local taxation, published in 1843, it was stated: "The jail fees rate" was, we believe, never collected separately, being, in fact, too small "in amount to be capable of collection. It was, therefore, unlawfully but almost necessarily paid out of the county rate." The constables rate was originally intended to defray the expenses of constables in townships, but is probably not now levied anywhere. The militia rate was intended to provide for the payments to volunteers or substitutes, and for the fines of 10*l.* for each man deficient. But as the balloting for the militia is at present in abeyance, this rate is not now required.

Poor Rates Levied and Expended for 1864-69.

[000's omitted.]

	Amount Levied (exclusive Receipts in Aid).	Expended in Relief.	Expended on Other Purposes.	Total Spent.
	£	£	£	£
1864.....	9,448,	6,423,	3,257,	9,680,
'65.....	9,392,	6,265,	3,527,	9,792,
'66.....	9,574,	6,440,	3,550,	9,989,
'67.....	10,304,	6,960,	3,945,	10,905,
'68.....	11,055,	7,498,	3,883,	11,381,
'69.....	11,364,	7,673,	4,101,	11,774,

Note.—This and some other subsequent statements were furnished by Professor Rogers to the Statistical Society in the *Journal* of the Society, June, 1870.

III.—*The Highway Rate.*

The object of the highway rate is indicated by its name, and consists in the maintenance and repair of highways. It must be remembered that all turnpike roads are upon a different system, and their maintenance and repair fall upon various bodies of trustees and commissioners, whose funds are raised by means of subscription and tolls, and whose authority depends on various local acts. All turnpike roads are, however, so far highways, that in case a trust becomes insolvent, and fails to provide funds sufficient for the maintenance of their roads, the burden falls on the occupiers of lands and tenements within the parish through which the road passes. A general highway system exclusive of turnpike roads was introduced by the Highway Act of 1862, but its adoption is permissive, not compulsory. In parishes and places whose highways were under a board established under the old Highway Act (1835), the old system is in many cases retained, and many other districts are also beyond the application of the recent Act. These latter exemptions consist of the whole of South Wales, the Isle of Wight, and any district under the Public Health or Local Government Acts. It is proposed first to describe the highway rating under the General Act of 1862.

Parishes are empowered to unite into a district, for highway purposes. The requisite funds are sometimes levied as a separate rate by the Highway Board, sometimes paid by the overseers out of the poor rate, on the precept or requisition of the highway board of the district. In the amended return already quoted, the highway rate altogether amounts to 1,538,215*l.*, of which 621,436*l.*, is contributed from the poor rate, whilst 916,779*l.* is levied separately.

The practice of various countries differs very much as to the

mode of levying the rate, as will be seen from the following list:—

Counties.	Levied Out of Poor Rate.	Separate Rate.
	£	£
Chester	26,346	5,777
Derby	1,109	19,950
Devon	46,717	5,625
Lincoln	4,441	109,123
Somerset	43,946	5,660
York	10,433	140,201

A separate highway rate is levied in two cases. If the highway parish is not conterminous with the poor law parish, then the board requires the money from the waywarden of the highway parish, who makes a separate rate in that parish, but on the poor rate assessment. If, again, the highway rate was before 1862 levied upon a particular class of property, such as woods, mines, or quarries (which, except coal mines are excluded in the poor law assessment), then a separate highway rate is made by the waywarden upon the old footing, even although the highway parish and the poor rate parish be conterminous. The duty of maintenance of the highways of each district falls upon the highway board of that district. The board, like the board of guardians, is composed of *ex officio* members who are justices of peace for the district, and of elected members, consisting of waywardens, chosen annually by the several parishes which compose the highway district. The waywardens are elected by the vestry, and the vestry is composed of the ratepayers. Every ratepayer assessed upon 50*l.* is entitled to one vote, and to an additional vote for every 25*l.* more, within the limit of six votes. The qualifications of a waywarden are an estate in lands within the parish of the yearly value of 10*l.*, or personalty of the value of 100*l.*, or an occupation of the rateable value of 20*l.* It will be observed that this system permits of the election of owners to the board of management, whilst it excludes them from the body of voters, thus reversing the poor law arrangement, which allows owners to vote, but denies them any administrative power.

It has been stated that the adoption of this system is permissive, and not compulsory, and that it has not yet been applied in some parishes, where the old Highway Act of 1835 is still in force. Under that Act surveyors of highways were appointed by the parish vestry, and upon them fell the duty of repair and maintenance of the highways, and in them was vested the right to levy the requisite funds from the occupiers by a separate highway rate.

The administration of the highways in the exempted cases

already mentioned, varies in each instance. The highways of the Isle of Wight are managed under a local Act. Districts under the Public Health Act, and the Local Government Act, are also under a separate management, which will be explained under the head of general district rate. The Acts which regulate the whole of South Wales provide for the management of all kinds of roads, turnpikes included. County roads boards are established in each of the six counties, with control over all the turnpike roads and highways in the county. The tolls on the turnpike roads, though not abolished, are very much reduced and equalized; the reduced tolls being supplemented, when necessary, by a separate county road rate. In 1865 the tolls amounted to 28,000*l.*, the rates to 8,000*l.* In 1866 and 1867 the rates were 25,000*l.*, and the tolls 10,000*l.* The rate is levied on a uniform assessment in all the counties, like an ordinary county rate, with an important provision, empowering the occupier to deduct the amount paid from his rent.

Sums Raised under the Highway Acts of 1862 and 1864, 1865-67.

	Separate Rates.	Other Receipts.	Paid Out of Poor Rate to Highway Boards.
	£	£	£
1865.....	1,340,000	63,000	551,000
'66.....	1,345,000	67,000	578,000
'67.....	1,428,000	68,000	615,000

*Turnpike Tolls. Amount Raised in England and North Wales for
1861 and 1864-67.*

	Tolls.	Parish Aid.	Total.
	£	£	£
1861.....	1,039,000	31,000	1,070,000
'64.....	1,009,000	31,000	1,040,000
'65.....	998,000	32,000	1,030,000
'66.....	945,000	31,000	977,000
'67.....	890,000	33,000	923,000

IV.—The Burial Board Rate.

The burial board rate is levied for the object implied in its name. In boroughs the town council acts as the burial board, and estimates and administers the requisite funds, which are paid out of the borough fund. The council may, however, if it thinks fit, raise the amount by means of a separate rate. In districts which have adopted the Local Government Act, the local board acts as the burial board, and the amount required may be levied as part of the

general district rate, or by a separate burial rate. In towns governed under a local act, the improvement commissioners act as the burial board, and the amount required may be levied as part of the improvement rate, or by a separate burial rate. In other districts where burial boards are established, the rate is levied under the poor rate, and not separately, excepting when the district is not contiguous with the parish, in which case a separate rate is levied. The board consists exclusively of members appointed by the ratepayers in vestry. The qualification of membership consists in being a ratepayer of the parish, and the incumbent of the parish is eligible without this qualification. A plurality of votes is allowed, as in the election for guardians of the poor, but owners have no voice in the election of the board. The rate is paid by the occupier.

V.—*The Lighting and Watching Rate.*

This rate is only levied in a few parishes under an Act of Wm. IV. The rate is levied and funds administered by inspectors, whose members must not exceed twelve, and must not be less than three. The inspectors are elected by the ratepayers without plurality of voting, and one-third go out of office yearly. The rate is paid by the occupier. The assessment upon houses, buildings, and property other than land, is three times greater than upon land.

VI.—*The Public Library and Museum Rate.*

This rate may be levied under two Acts, passed respectively in 1855 and 1866. The Acts may be adopted in any municipal borough with more than 5,000 population, or in any district within the limits of an Improvement Act containing more than 5,000, or in any parish with more than 5,000. It applies to public libraries or museums, or both, and to schools for science or art. In boroughs the expenses are defrayed out of the borough rate or out of a separate rate levied like the borough rate, and in a district under an Improvement Act out of the improvement rate, or out of a separate rate levied like the improvement rate. In parishes commissioners are appointed, and their expenses are paid out of a rate made and recovered in like manner as a poor rate. The assessments upon lands used as arable, meadow, or pasture ground only, or as woodlands, or market gardens, or nursery grounds are assessed at one-fourth only of the assessment upon other property.

VII.—*The General District Rate.*

The general district rate is levied wherever the Public Health Act has been applied, or the Local Government Act has been adopted. The districts under the former Act are not now many in

number. The latter Act has been very generally applied, and the districts, as they are technically called, number rather less than 700. The funds required for the purposes of the Act are raised by the general district rate. The districts may be boroughs, towns, parishes, hamlets, or even places with no other division known to the law, other than the boundaries fixed for the purposes of the Local Government Act. It may be applied to all purposes of town improvement, such as sewerage, road repair, street improvement, lighting, scavenging, markets, police, &c. The administration of it is vested in the local board of health. The board has power to divide districts into separate areas of taxation, to meet local differences of requirement. In the case of a borough the town council becomes the local board, so far as the borough is concerned, and only outlying places elect members. Local boards are elected by the rate-payers and owners of property in the district. The votes are given in writing, and collected in voting papers. The system of plurality of voting obtains, but within the limit of six votes, commencing at one vote for property rated at less than 50*l.*, and rising to six votes for 250*l.* An owner who is also *bonâ fide* occupier, has votes in both capacities, so that it may happen that one person has twelve votes. Joint property gives votes to each person jointly interested, and twenty people jointly interested in one piece of property rated below 50*l.*, would have each a vote in respect of that property on proof of interest. Qualifications under the Public Health Act for membership, are either real or personal property of an amount fixed by Order in Council, but not exceeding 1,000*l.*, or an occupation rated at a value fixed by the same authority, but not exceeding 30*l.* The qualifications for membership under the Local Government Act are fixed by the Act itself. In districts with less than 200,000 inhabitants, there must be real or personal property of the value of 500*l.*, or an occupation of the rateable value of 15*l.* In districts over 200,000, the values must be respectively 1,000*l.* or 30*l.* The rate is paid exclusively by the occupier, except in the case of small tenements, when the owner can pay the rate; and where the rate is levied in respect of private improvement, *i.e.*, when the improvement goes to the benefit only of a particular set of premises, as, for instance, the plant of a water supply to a particular house, the occupier is entitled to deduct three-fourths of his payment from his rent. In this last case the owner is called upon to pay when the tenement is vacant. The assessment is uniform, save in the case of land used as arable, meadow or pasture land only, or as woodlands, market gardens, or nursery grounds, and land covered with water, or used only as a canal or towing path, or as a railway, and also tithes. In all these cases the assessment is only one-fourth of their rateable value. It will be observed that the

occupiers of such property are only relieved from three-fourths of the burden of the tax where the tax is expended on purposes of town improvement. But when, for instance, the highway expenses are charged in the district rate, these occupiers then escape a burden which they ought to share equally with the occupiers of other kinds of rateable property. This inequality, however, is considered to be roughly compensated by the fact that this class of occupiers, perhaps, pay more than they ought for the general purposes of the rate, which are mainly directed to town improvement. The general district rate is levied to a great extent for heavy and costly works of permanent improvement. The capital required for these undertakings is borrowed on the security of the rates, and paid off gradually with the interest year by year. The supply of water to a town may be instanced as an example. The occupier pays for the whole outlay gradually, and, in the course of years, the owner receives his property so much the more valuable, without having, at any rate directly, contributed to the expense of the improvement.

Local Government Rates, 1864-68.

	District Rate.	Highway Rate.	Other Rates and Receipts.	Total.
	£	£	£	£
1864.....	249,000	31,000	148,000	428,000
'65.....	293,000	34,000	166,000	493,000
'66.....	249,000	36,000	110,000	394,000
'67.....	671,000	66,000	296,000	1,033,000
'68.....	840,000	83,000	358,000	1,281,000

VIII.—*The Town and Parish Improvement Rates.*

The town improvement rate is levied as a separate rate, by Improvement Commissioners appointed under various local Acts, and the General Act, known as the Town Improvement and Police Clauses Act. The constitution of the board of commissioners varies in different localities, according to the local Acts from which they derive their authority. The purpose of the parish improvement rate is to carry out the provisions of the Act 23 and 24 Vict., cap. 30, which may be adopted in any borough or parish with a population of more than 500. The expense may be paid either out of the poor rate, or by means of this separate rate. The main object of the Act is the formation of public walks, exercise and playgrounds, and the improvement of open walks and footpaths, and the placing of convenient seats, or places of shelter from rain, and for other purposes of a similar nature.

IX.—*The Animals Contagious Diseases Act.*

The compensation and other charges that arise under the Animals Contagious Diseases Act, may either be levied as a separate rate, or may be paid out of the existing rates of the locality. In the latter case, the amount levied in respect of the Act must be specified in the demand note, and the occupier may deduct half the amount paid by him, so far as it relates to slaughtered cattle and the payment of principal and interest of loans. This deduction may of course be made if the rate is levied separately.

X.—*The Sewerage Rate.*

This rate is levied by the sewer authority under the Sewage Utilisation Act. That authority may either be a town council or the improvement commissioners of a district, or a parish vestry. In the two first cases, the expenses come out of the general rate or the borough funds; in the last a precept is issued to the overseers, who levy a separate rate, in the same manner as if it were a poor rate, except that tithes, lands, and other property are assessed on a different scale, just as in the case of a general district rate. Special drainage districts may be formed of parts of parishes, or parishes may be united and placed under a joint sewerage board, and in the latter case a common fund is to be formed from the various districts.

XI.—*The Sewers Rate, and the General Sewers Tax.*

These rates are levied for the purposes of drainage, especially of marsh lands, and the making of embankments against the inroads and inundations of the sea. The object of these rates show that the rates were established when the word sewer still retained its original and primary meaning—of sea-weir. They are levied and administered by commissioners of sewers appointed under Henry VIII, cap. 5, and are collected by officers specially appointed by them. The commissioners are appointed by the Crown from the owners of the district. This ancient board of management is not in any way representative of the ratepayers, any more than is the *ex officio* element in the boards of guardians. To the sewers rate the owners and occupiers are rated according to their interest. The general sewers tax is paid exclusively by the occupier. The same board administers the general sewers tax which is devoted to the current expenditure in drainage and embankment in the districts under the management of the commissioners. Further powers were given to the sewers commissioners by the Land Drainage Act, 1861, and a special rate may be levied by them under that Act, which is payable by the owner.

Sewers Rate. Sum Levied, 1864-68.

	In Counties.	In City of London.	Total.
	£	£	£
1864.....	44,000	17,000	61,000
'65.....	42,000	18,000	60,000
'66.....	41,000	18,000	59,000
'67.....	43,000	40,000	83,000
'68.....	45,000	25,000	70,000

The drainage, embankment, and enclosure rate is levied and expended under various local Acts by the authorities constituted by those Acts.

Drainage and Embankment Rates and Rents, 1864-68.

	Total Receipts.	Rates under Act.	Rent Rates by Charter or Custom.
	£	£	£
1864.....	216,000	140,000	7,000
'65.....	165,000	135,000	8,000
'66.....	161,000	131,000	11,000
'67.....	199,000	162,000	14,000
'68.....	230,000	141,000	13,000

The enclosure rate and regulated pasture rate, are levied to meet the expenses of the enclosure of common lands, under the General Enclosure Act (8 and 9 Vict., cap. 118), and for the purpose of converting the enclosed land into pasture.

XII.—The County Rate.

The main purposes to which the county rate is applied, are the erection and maintenance of county bridges, gaols, shirehalls, county lunatic asylums, and prisons, and the maintenance of the county police. This rate is also applied to many other minor objects, which are principally contained in the following list:—

The payment of expenses of prosecutions at sessions and assizes, and summary convictions before the justices.

The payment of the expenses of the conveyance of prisoners by the constabulary to the county prison.

The payment of the expenses of criminal and pauper lunatics confined in county lunatic asylums.

Payments to reformatories.

The expenses of inquests.

The maintenance of militia stores.

The maintenance of the county hall or other buildings not connected with the police.

The payment of the salaries of public officers.

The payment of the interest of the county debt and the payment of the principal by instalments.

The expenses connected with the preparation of voters' lists and the various registers of the county.

The necessary office expenses for the administration of county business.

The justices of the peace for the county in courts of general or quarter sessions assembled, are the authority for assessing this rate, and the administration of it is also in their hands. The expenses of the county police may be raised by a separate rate. There may also be separate rates for the expenses of the county lunatic asylum, the shirehall, and the burial of dead bodies cast on shore by the sea. But these expenses are generally paid out of one consolidated county rate, and in either case they are administered by the same board. The main county rate, and the minor county rates, when separately raised, are all levied by means of the poor rate. The sums required are paid over to the county treasurer by the overseers through the board of guardians, upon the precepts of the county justices. But although the amount is paid out of the poor rate, it is assessed according to a standard settled by the justices, which may, and very often does, differ from the poor rate valuation.

There is obviously nothing of a representative character in the board which administers these funds. The county magistrates are appointed by the Crown from the upper classes of society, and the main body of ratepayers remains unrepresented. But it must be remembered that the function of the magistrates in the administration of the rates is almost entirely ministerial, and that they have no control over the main objects of expenditure. In a statement furnished by Mr. Pownall to the committee that recently reported upon local taxation, the county expenditure for Middlesex is given for the year 1868, and the return distinguishes the expenditure over which the quarter sessions have no control, from the expenditure over which they are supposed to have control. The whole amount is over 170,000*l.*, out of this more than 100,000*l.* is paid under statute. The amount over which the quarter sessions can have control is about 65,000*l.*, but of this latter sum the three prisons, and the industrial and reformatory schools, absorb more than 60,000*l.*, over which the quarter sessions can have but little control; consequently the quarter sessions in Middlesex have real control over about 4,000*l.*, and those of other counties are equally limited.

Certain county expenditure is supplemented by Government grant. As, for instance, the Government contributes one-fourth of the pay and clothing of the police, provided that the Government inspector reports that the police force is in a good state in respect of numbers, discipline, and efficiency. Government, also, pays 4s. per head per week towards the maintenance of ordinary prisoners, and 8s. a-head towards the maintenance of convicts. The Admiralty and War Office also pay for the maintenance of prisoners belonging to them. Government assistance is also afforded to a certain extent to industrial and reformatory schools. In the account already referred to, furnished by Mr. Pownall, there are certain items which would also seem to be fit objects for Government assistance, such as that of coroners over 12,000*l.*, the assistant judge 300*l.*, militia nearly 3,500*l.*

Payment to County and Police Rates, most out of Poor Rate, 1864-69.

	Levied on Rates.	Allowance from Treasury.	Other Receipts.	Total.
	£	£	£	£
1864.....	1,305,000	326,000	303,000	1,935,000
'65.....	1,291,000	349,000	317,000	1,956,000
'66.....	1,359,000	329,000	371,000	2,059,000
'67.....	1,449,000	329,000	513,000	2,290,000
'68.....	1,501,000	343,000	450,000	2,294,000
'69.....	1,576,000	352,000	578,000	2,501,000

XIII.—*The Hundred Rate.*

This is an occasional rate levied in hundreds for the purpose of making good damage done to property by riot. The total amount raised in England and Wales in 1868 was 5,501*l.* It is levied by the quarter sessions in the same manner as the county rate.

XIV.—*The Borough Rate.*

The borough rates are levied in corporate cities and boroughs, in which the county justices have either no jurisdiction or a partial jurisdiction only. Their objects are similar, to a great extent, to those provided for by the county rates. In municipal corporations the principle of self-government found its earliest and fullest development; they date their origin from the Roman *municipium* which, whilst its citizens enjoyed imperial rights of citizenship, was wholly independent of Rome in its internal organization. All inhabitants of boroughs originally paid scot and bore lot, or, in other words, paid local taxes and performed local duties, and nobody had a voice in borough affairs who did not take a share in the corporate liabilities. Borough government still retains its independent character, and the

regulation of all the social and financial affairs of every borough is vested in the mayor and town council. The town council is composed of aldermen and councillors. The mayor is elected by the council from the aldermen, and the aldermen are chosen by the councillors, and consist of one-third of the number of councillors. The councillors are elected by the burgesses by equal and open voting, and the voters may be of either sex. The qualification of a burgess is a two years' occupation, a payment of rates, and entrance of name on the burgess-roll. The borough expenditure falls primarily on the borough fund, which principally consists of the rents and profits of the corporate property, of dues, fines, and penalties, of sales of borough lists, &c. This borough fund is very rich in some towns; and Liverpool, for instance, enjoys an income of 130,000*l.* a-year from its port dues, tolls, and corporate property. London, Bristol, Brighton, and some other towns also enjoy revenues of considerable amount from similar sources, and a kind of local *octroi* on certain imports, such as wine and coal. When the borough fund is not sufficient to meet the demands, a borough rate is levied by the town council, and is collected, like county rate, by the means of the poor rate. The "watch committee," appointed by and from the council, nominates the police for the borough, and manages the police affairs generally. Quarterly reports, with a copy of the borough police rules, must be transmitted by this committee to the Secretary of State. The town council appoints its own auditors, who make a half-yearly audit, and in addition to this check a full account of the borough receipts and expenditure must be sent to the Secretary of State yearly.

Borough watch rates are levied like the borough rate, but separately, in boroughs or parts of boroughs that still maintain the system of watchmen.

The borough gaol rate may be raised for the erection or enlargement of the borough prison and court-house. The council is empowered to borrow money for these purposes, and they may either resort to the borough rate, or a separate gaol rate, in order to pay the interest, or repay the principal.

The borough prisoners' rates are two separate rates, that may be levied in boroughs, for the payment of expenses connected with prisoners sent from a borough having a separate court of sessions to the prison of the county.

In cases where no special contract has been entered into between the borough and county, the borough lunatic asylum rate is levied in order to defray the expenses connected with the Lunatic Asylum Act of 1853.

The borough library and museum rate is a rate to provide for the expense of the establishment of public libraries, museums, and

schools of art; and the borough baths and washhouses rate is levied for an analogous purpose.

The borough improvement rate, and the parish improvement rate provide for the payment for local improvements beneficial to the health and comfort of the people under the Act of 1860 (23 and 24 Vict., cap. 30).

The borough burial rate is levied when the expenses under the Burial Act of 1854 are charged by the council upon the borough by a separate rate

All these minor borough rates are levied like the chief borough rate through the poor rate, and are administered by the town council. They are, however, as a rule not treated as separate charges, but as part of one consolidated borough rate.

The majority of boroughs have formed themselves into districts for the purposes of the Public Health Act, or the Local Government Act, whilst others are under Local Improvement Acts. In such cases, the town council constitutes the local board, or the local commissioners. But there are two separate administrations, although the administrators are the same. There are two separate rates, and on a different assessment, and collected at a different time with distinct officers and two sets of books.

XV.—*Local Taxation in the Metropolis.*

Local taxation is upon the same general principle in the metropolis as in the rest of the country; but recent legislation has placed it upon a somewhat better footing than in the rest of England. Much, however, remains to be done. Fortunately for London it possesses a very large income from dues or tolls, which it is entitled by ancient franchise to levy on all wine or coal that enters the city. But notwithstanding that source of income, the average of the rates in the pound is about 4s. An improvement rate is now levied throughout the metropolis under the discretion and administration of the Board of Works. The poor rate has also been somewhat regulated in its inequality of incidence by the Metropolitan Common Poor Fund Act (1867), by which Act any excess of expenditure in any union on account of asylums, pauper schools, medical relief, and certain other charges, is repaid to the guardians out of the metropolitan poor common fund, raised by the Poor Law Board from the whole of the parishes of the metropolis. But other rates are levied and administered by the usual congeries of governing bodies, vestries, district boards, poor law guardians, and so on. The whole metropolis is divided into eighty-five districts. For each there may be different assessments, and actually are separate collecting authorities. Three millions and a quarter is collected from them in rates, and these rates vary so arbitrarily, that there is sometimes a

difference of a couple of shillings in the pound between the two sides of the same square, or the opposite houses in the same street.

XVI.—*Church Rates.*

As church rates can no longer be levied compulsorily, save when they are required to pay off monies advanced on the security of the church rate of a town, no mention has been made of them among the general rates now levied. But the amount still levied is considerable. In 1868, 173,656*l.* was levied by church rates at common law, and 43,826*l.* by church rates under Church Buildings Act and other statutes. They are levied as separate rates on the poor rate basis, by the churchwardens on the resolution of the vestry.

XVII.—*Rates not General.*

In addition to the rates levied under the general system just described, there are levied in Liverpool, Bristol, and perhaps some other large towns, rates of a somewhat exceptional character. In Bristol about 3,000*l.* is levied for dock rates, and about 4,000*l.* is levied by a rate in the nature of a borough rate under the Bristol Dock Act, 1848. Power was given by an Act of Parliament in 1862 to the town council to levy a 6*d.* rate in aid of the expenses of the improvement of Liverpool upon all property assessed to the poor, and that rate, which is always leviable, is divisible, half payable by the landlord, half by the tenant. It is believed that owners are also called upon to contribute to the expenses of the permanent improvement of the town in Manchester. But, as a rule, the cost of permanent improvements, as well as the current local expenditure, falls exclusively on the occupier. The owner contributes only in three cases, namely, in the sewers rates, which are levied upon owner and occupier according to their interest; in the animals contagious diseases rate, where the amount is divided between owner and occupier, so far as regards compensation for slaughtered animals and the repayment of loans and payment of interest of the same; and in cases under the Assessed Rates Act and the Small Tenements Rating Act, when the owner may be rated by resolution of vestry, or may agree to pay, or may be obliged to pay by the provisions of the Acts.

PART II.

XVIII.—*The English System.*

It would be difficult to conceive of a system which would present so much confusion as is contained in the foregoing account; and its intricacy can only be explained by the fact that local taxation in England has been an institution of gradual growth, and never based on a general and comprehensive plan. But the remedies for its anomalies are not so obvious as would at first sight appear. If a system of local taxation were to be now for the first time introduced into the country, it would be comparatively easy to suggest a plan based upon the true principles of taxation. If the introduction of such a system were under discussion in the House of Commons, no member would be found bold enough to suggest that which now obtains throughout the country, even if he were ingenious enough to invent such a complicated variety of clumsy device. But the mere fact of its existence, and, it must be admitted, notwithstanding the complications, its existence in tolerable working order, renders the introduction of an entirely new system both inadvisable and impracticable. Advance by gradual improvement and compromise, rather than by sweeping change, has been the history of all things English, and our local taxation should be no exception to this rule. What is required, therefore, is a reform of the existing machinery, abolishing what is useless, amending what is imperfect, so as to bring the system more on a level with the requirements of the present day.

Before, however, proceeding to discuss these remedies, it is well to consider the systems which obtain in other countries. This source of information, always fruitful of suggestion, is hardly sufficiently studied by our legislature when any change is contemplated in our institutions. It has often occurred, that what has been declared quite impracticable in England, has been at the time in full practice in more than one foreign country. For instance, the system of election advocated by Mr. Hare was ridiculed in England as impracticable after it had been adopted for some years in Denmark in the voting for imperial parliament. The ballot, which is at length being taken up as a Government question, was looked upon as a democratic dream long after it had been worked successfully in America and Australia. The punishment of death, still held by the majority of English people as indispensable to the repression of crime, is viewed in more than one European kingdom as an antiquated barbarity. No doubt the principle of local government has been longer established, and is more engrained in the nature of the people of England than in any other country. But useful hints may notwith-

standing be obtained from the systems of other countries, and more especially from those which are in practice in Scotland and Ireland. It is proposed, therefore, to briefly describe such other systems as seem to afford material for comparison and imitation.

XIX.—*The Scotch System.*

The Scotch system differs in some important respects from that of either England or Ireland. The county rates, which correspond to the English county rates, excepting that they include the assessment for the construction and maintenance of roads, are levied from the owners only. The owner's name alone is entered on the roll of assessment, and it is the owner alone who pays the tax. In two assessments, that of the road maintenance and that of the cattle diseases, the landlord is entitled to recover from his tenant one-half of the rates. In all the other cases the tax comes out of the landlord's pocket only. If the tax is not paid by the owner, the effects of the tenant may be seized. In such cases the tenant is entitled to all costs as against his landlord. Mr. Cochrane, collector of county rates for Aberdeenshire for sixteen years, states that he has found it far more easy to collect the rates from the owner than from the occupier. The management of the whole of the county rates is either actually or virtually in the hands of commissioners of supply. The qualifications of this governing body is the ownership of heritable property within the county of the annual value of 100*l*. The eldest sons of those whose rents amount to 400*l*., and the factors of estates of an annual value of 800*l*., are also commissioners. Thus, everyone interested in an estate of an annual value of more than a hundred pounds has in Scotland a voice in the administration of the county rates. It is obvious that this general governing body is too large to manage all the county affairs without a system of delegation. Committees are appointed for the management of each branch of county business. It must be added that the road maintenance fund, to which it has already been shown the occupier contributes, is administered by district boards, composed partly of commissioners of supply and partly of tenant farmers, elected in each parish by voters whose qualification is an occupation of the annual value of 20*l*.

The Scotch poor rate is levied on both owners and occupiers. One-half of the gross sum is levied from the owners, the other half is levied from the occupiers, and these are two distinct collections. With regard to the occupiers, payment and classification is permitted, so that the amount varies according to the nature of the occupation. Residential occupancies may be charged at a high rate, whilst occupancies for the purpose of farming, business, or manufacture may be charged at a comparatively low rate. This principle of

classification arose out of the old method of poor law assessment in Scotland, which charged one-half of the rate upon heritable property and the other half upon "means and substance," by which was meant every kind of property except heritage. It was found so difficult to make any equitable assessment of means and substance, that the plan was abandoned, and this system of classification established. It is not, however, compulsory, and in many places has been given up and the tax made uniform. But its existence is an admission of the principle that all kinds of property should, if possible, be assessed to the relief of the poor.

The poor rate is administered by parochial boards, which are of two kinds—(1) those of the landward parishes, and those (2) of the burghal parishes. The board in the former consists of owners, the kirk session, the provost and baillies of any royal burgh in the parish, and a certain number of elected members fixed by the Board of Supervision in Edinburgh. The elected members may be either tenants or proprietors under 20*l.* a-year. In the burghal parishes there is no *ex officio* representation. The number of members of the board is fixed by the Board of Supervision in Edinburgh, and then the whole body of ratepayers, on a graduated scale of voting, annually elect that number from amongst their own body.

The borough rates, which correspond to those in England, are also charged partly on the owner and partly on the occupier, and are collected separately. The town council administers the rates, and the qualifications for voters is the same as the parliamentary franchise.

XX.—*The Irish System.*

The system in Ireland is similar to that in practice in England, insomuch as it is levied on realty only; but there are important differences of incidence and administration. The various rates that are levied in Ireland were thus enumerated by Dr. Hancock, before the Parliamentary Committee on Local Taxation, last session:—

	£
The grand jury cess	1,122,000
„ poor rates, burial, &c.	921,000
Town rates	483,000
Harbour and pier dues	207,000
Inland navigation and drainage	58,000
Dog licence	24,800
Fines and penalties.....	27,000
Mercantile marine fund.....	24,000
Forfeited pledges	6,700

The grand jury cess corresponds roughly to our county rate. The erection, making, and repair of bridges, roads, prisons, court houses, lunatic asylums, and county infirmaries, are its main objects. It is

levied, as in England, by the sessions; but the expenditure authorised at sessions must be approved by the grand jury at assizes, and sanctioned by the judge. The fiat of the judge is reported to be an excellent provision. It enables any person to object to expenditure that is wrong in point of law, and protects the administrators from vexatious proceedings afterwards. A certain number of cesspayers are chosen by ballot out of a larger number selected by the grand jury, and those, thus chosen, are entitled to a seat at the sessions. Thus, in the Irish system the taxpayer is partially represented at the county administrative board. But, as they may always be outvoted by the *ex officio* members, this representation is obviously insufficient. The county cess is paid by the occupiers of lands and houses, railways and canal tolls being also liable. No portion of it is paid by the owner. It is collected by the barony constables, who are appointed by the grand jury.

The Irish poor rate is devoted almost entirely to poor relief. The total poor rate in 1868 was about 850,000*l.*, and of that about 700,000*l.* was spent almost entirely on the poor. The rest of the expenditure was made up of expenses under the Medical Charities Act, burial board charges, registration, sewers and nuisance removal, disease prevention, &c. The country is divided into unions, and to each union there are about twenty-four elected guardians. Along with the guardians the magistrates sit as *ex officio* members, but they must not exceed the number elected. Owners of property, as well as occupiers, vote in respect of the same tenement—the occupier on his rent, the owner on his valuation, and either is equally eligible to the office of guardian. There is a plurality of voting, limited to six votes. The poor rate is paid, half by the owner, half by the occupier, but the whole is collected from the occupier, except in cases of tenements under 4*l.* rateable value. Dr. Hancock thus speaks of this division of rate:—

“The effect of the division of rate is all that people anticipate from it in England, and that has led me to a very strong feeling in favour of division. The division of the rate between the parties has led to the most economical management of the poor law: that is to say, all parties feel the deepest interest in its expenditure. There are no people that feel more interest in it than the owners of property.”

The other rates in Ireland do not materially differ from those in England, but there are still some facts worthy of notice. In Dublin the consolidation of rates is in full operation, and works very satisfactorily. There are also in Dublin three local taxes of a peculiar nature—carriage duty, pawnbrokers' licences, and publicans' certificates. The police in Ireland are paid, in all places except Dublin and Belfast, by an imperial grant. Formerly one-half of the expense was

paid by local taxation, but that charge was withdrawn by Sir Robert Peel, in 1846, by way of compensation for any loss that might accrue from the introduction of free trade into the country. Thus, whilst in England and Wales about 1,500,000*l.*, for the maintenance of public order, is charged upon local taxpayers, the Irish constabulary is maintained almost entirely out of Her Majesty's treasury.

The following table shows the difference of incidence of the three main rates on owners and occupiers in England, Scotland, and Ireland. The aggregate amount of poor rate, highway rate, and county rate is taken at 3*s.* 4*d.* in the pound, and the proportion they bear to each other as 5, 3, and 2:—

	England.		Scotland.		Ireland.	
	Owner.	Occupier.	Owner.	Occupier.	Owner.	Occupier.
		<i>s.</i> <i>d.</i>	<i>d.</i>	<i>d.</i>	<i>d.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Poor rate	—	1 3	7½	7½	7½	7½
Highway rate	—	— 9	4½	4½	—	9
County rate	—	— 6	6	—	—	6

The following shows the different modes of management:—

	England.	Scotland.	Ireland.
Poor rate.....	Paid by occupiers, managed by magistrates and elected guardians.	Paid and collected half from owners, half from occupiers; managed by owners and elected occupiers.	Collected from occupiers, and paid half by owner, half from occupier; managed by magistrates and elected guardians from owners and occupiers.
Highway rate	Paid by occupiers, managed by boards like the boards for poor rate who control a district, but money collected and expended in parishes, not whole district.	System varies in different counties. Owners generally pay all for construction; share repairs with occupiers; managed by joint board of owners and elected occupiers.	Paid by occupiers; controlled by board of ratepayers and magistrates. Rates must be passed by grand jury.
County rate....	Paid by occupiers, managed by magistrates.	Paid by owners, managed by owners.	Paid by occupiers; managed by grand jury, which includes certain elected occupiers.

XXI.—*The Local Taxation of Belgium.*

Amongst continental countries Belgium possesses the most perfect system of local taxation. The present system has been in existence since 1860, when the communal taxation underwent a comprehensive reform. Previously to that date the principal resources of the communal authorities were derived from the *octroi*, the *additional centimes* on the three chief direct taxes of the country, and the *cotisation personnelle*.

The *octroi* is a privilege of local excise, or right of toll (chiefly on food, liquors, forage, and fuel), apart from imperial taxation, possessed by certain towns and districts.

The *additional centimes* are a small addition, amounting altogether to about one-seventh, added to (1) the *imperial land tax*, which is in Belgium, as in most continental countries, one of the chief sources of revenue; (2) to the *personal tax*, which is levied, like our rates, on the presumed letting value of the dwelling occupied by each head of a family (under it being included a charge on doors, windows, fire-places, furniture, servants, and horses); and (3), to the *contribution des patentes*, which is levied on all who carry on a profession, trade, or industry. This tax of the additional centimes is entirely devoted in its uses to the purposes of local government. Its amount in each locality is regulated, and the expenditure controlled, by the taxpayers themselves, who receive from the State the proper proportion, according to the amount of taxation which the locality chose to impose on itself. We have thus an instance of a local tax being collected by the State, and yet being under local control and administration.

The *cotisation personnelle* is, as its name implies, a kind of income tax. It is a local assessment, according to the means and substance of the inhabitants of the districts. It is levied by the authorities of the communes on all those who have been domiciled in the place a year, or who, domiciled elsewhere, pass therein six months.

The *octroi* was formerly the most profitable of these sources of revenue. In 1859 it produced a gross revenue of 13,000,000 frs. But the tax was unjust, inasmuch as some towns possessed the privilege, whilst others did not, and the country districts had no similar means of revenue. So in 1859 it was resolved to redeem the whole of the *octroi* at the expense of the national treasury. The measure was carried into operation in 1860, local *octrois* were abolished, and the funds necessary in their place have since then been provided by national taxation. The sum set apart in the imperial revenue for this purpose is called the communal fund. It is raised from the same objects of taxation as were formerly subject to the *octroi*, but it is divided amongst *all communes*, whether

formerly in possession of the *octroi* privilege or not, in the ratio of their aggregate direct taxation. It is so distributed, however, that each of the towns that had formerly the privilege of *octroi*, receives a quota equal to its net *octroi* revenue in 1859. It is obvious that, in order to carry out this reform, the whole country is taxed to a larger amount than the thirteen millions at which the *octrois* were estimated; but the plan, nevertheless, gives satisfaction.

In addition to the sources of communal revenue already mentioned, there are also a number of petty imposts levied by the communal authorities in their various localities, as, for instance, taxes on carriages, horses, and dogs. But the amount raised by these fancy taxes, which are thirty-two altogether in number, is very small comparatively, as will be shown in the following returns of Belgian local taxation:—

Revenues of the Communes in 1861.

	frs.
Additional centimes on the three direct taxes	5,496,394
Cotisation personnelle	3,195,227
All other communal taxes	1,623,129
Communal fund paid by the State	15,253,570

The great majority of the communes, in whom is vested the power of local government, are mere parishes of from 300 to 600 inhabitants. So small a district is unlikely to furnish an intelligent governing body, and the excessive subdivision of the territory into minute administrative centres has, in fact, led to much abuse. But according to the legational report from which this information is derived, the abuse has taken the unexpected form of rivalry, and extravagant budgets are the prevailing fault of Belgian communes.

The following conclusions may be drawn from this account of local taxation in Belgium:—

The principle of a grant in aid from the central authority is admitted in its fullest extent, inasmuch as the major portion of the funds for local expenditure is furnished from the public treasury.

Local taxation is not exclusively levied on land and realty in Belgium.

A local income tax is in practice.

Indirect taxation is still used, notwithstanding the abolition of the *octroi*.

The independence of the communal government is maintained by the fact that they expend the funds, and, saving in the case of the communal fund, they direct the amount to be levied.

The machinery of the imperial fiscal system is utilised in the collection of the communal taxes.

XXII.—*The Local Taxation of France.*

In France only a very modified form of local government is in existence. There are to be found in French financial statements elaborate and methodical departmental budgets, but the money is nevertheless expended under central control. In every department there is a prefect, and the communes can no doubt each boast of a maire, but the prefect is a government official, and the maire, though nominally chosen by the locality, is really selected by government. Each is personally responsible to government for his district, and government approval is required for any measure of improvement at all out of the rut of detail and routine. But for scientific method the communal system, with its maire and municipal council, deserves much praise. Accounts are kept, and the affairs, such as they are, are managed with an administrative skill that is worthy of better things, and the people know clearly what they pay, why they pay, and when they pay.

* The whole country is divided for administrative purposes into departments, the departments into arrondissements, the arrondissements into cantons, and the cantons into communes. Each department is administered by a prefect, who is appointed by the State, and is assisted in his functions by a *conseil de préfecture* and a staff of officials, who are also appointed by the State. The interests of the department, as distinguished from the State, are represented by a *conseil général*, which varies in numbers according to the number of cantons in the department, each canton electing by universal suffrage a *conseiller*. His services are gratuitous; his term of service is nine years, and one-third of the council is elected every three years. The internal affairs of each arrondissement are similarly administrated by a *sous préfet* and a *conseil d'arrondissement* similarly chosen and elected. The canton is only a judicial division, and is not a separate centre of administration. The commune is the lowest administrative unit, and is governed by a mayor and one or more *adjoints*, according to the size of the commune, and by a *conseil municipal*. The mayor and *adjoints* are chosen by the State, and generally, though not necessarily, taken from the council. The council is chosen by the universal suffrage of the inhabitants, and, like the mayor, holds office for five years. The services of both mayor and council are gratuitous. It must be added that none of these three local councils have much real power. They deliberate and advise their administrative head, but every important act that

* This account is written of things under the imperial system.

is not purely ministerial must be sanctioned by the central government, through the prefect, sub-prefect, or mayor.

The local taxation is of two kinds—departmental, for the general purposes of the department; and communal, for the local requirements of each commune. All the departmental, and most of the local taxation, is levied by means of the direct taxes of the State, in the following manner:—The amount required in direct taxation from the whole country by the State budget is distributed by a commission of the legislature among the departments, in due proportion to their size and wealth. Each department then adds to the amount required from it by the State, the amount of the departmental budget. The whole amount is then voted by the conseil général, and the same body apportions it among the arrondissements of the department; and the conseils d'arrondissements assign the proper amount to each commune, where the collection is made in the manner following:—

The direct taxes of France are four in number. I. La contribution foncière. II. La contribution des portes et fenêtres. III. Contribution personnelle-mobilière. IV. Contribution des patentes.

All departmental taxation is levied with these taxes by means of what may be called “the additional-centime system”—a system which obtains in Belgium, Italy, and several other European States. Certain centimes, known as the *centimes additionnelles*, are levied for the department in addition to every franc levied on behalf of the State. A certain number, fixed by law, is levied for the necessary departmental expenses. Further outlay, within a fixed limit, may be voted by the conseil général, and such additional centimes are known as the *centimes additionnelles facultatives*. Sums may be levied for extraordinary purposes, but they require a special law.

The local expenses of the communes are provided for, partly by the additional-centime system, partly by an independent system of communal taxation, in the following manner:—

Every commune can, on showing cause of an increase of its revenue, obtain powers from the State to establish an *octroi*, or local custom-house. The tariff is fixed by the municipal council, with the approval of the prefect; and all articles that enter the commune, to be there used or consumed, may be made liable to taxation. A portion of the contribution des patentes, which is a tax levied on the exercise of all trades and professions, is assigned to the commune by the State, in addition to the centimes. There are a number of minor taxes, the chief of which is the dog tax, which is purely communal. Finally, the communal roads, or, in technical terms, the *chemins vicinaux de petite communication*, are maintained by means of the *prestation en nature*, which is a tax levied in labour or in

money. Every male between the age of 21 and 60 owes three days' labour to the maintenance of the roads, and those persons who do not wish to work pay the market value of three days' labour to the communal funds. Every beast of burthen or draught, every carriage or cart, is also liable to this tax.

As regards the collection of local taxes, all direct taxes, including the additional centimes, must obviously be collected at the same time. The *avis*, or tax paper for the whole, is delivered for the year, generally in January. It may be paid either in monthly or in three-monthly instalments. There is a *percepteur*, or government collector, in every commune. He transmits all his receipts to the treasurer of the department, who in his turn sends the proper amount to the State, the departmental treasury, and each commune. This last portion is received by the *receveur municipal*, who also acts as collector for the commune. The communal *avis* is delivered, and sum due collected at the same time as the larger taxes. The municipal council acts as the assessment committee (under the supervision of a government *controleur*), and an appeal lies from them to the *conseil de préfecture*, and thence to the *conseil d'état*.

In the simplicity of its machinery, this system is worthy of all imitation. But it is nevertheless in reality only a mockery of true localisation. An English town council levies its taxes, spends its funds, and is answerable for its doings only within the area of its own administration. If, for example, a borough is in want of a new bridge, the town council votes its erection, pays for its cost, levies an additional rate, if necessary for the extra expenditure, and is amenable to the ratepayers alone for the wisdom of the undertaking. If a French commune is in need of a bridge, the *maire*, at the suggestion of the council, petitions the prefect through his subordinate the sub-prefect to request the minister of the interior to allow the commune to spend its own money in the satisfaction of its own requirements. This permission would be granted or withheld according to the political subserviency or independence of the district, and all that would remain for the pseudo-local government would be to check the accounts and attend to the petty affairs involved in the building of the bridge. The French communes are evidently very limited in their powers; they do not initiate undertakings, they only carry them out under the sanction of the central authority; they care little about the approval of the locality, they only look to the favour of the minister of the interior. For simplicity of management, however, the French communal system is most commendable. The taxes are levied by means of the central taxation machinery, and all business is conducted under the responsible superintendence of one authority. While in fact there is much

for us to avoid in the French system, there is also much for us to copy.

The following is a statement of the annual local taxation in France for the year 1867 :—

	frs.
I. Taxes on land (levied with the imperial taxation)—	
Rate on land and buildings (contribution foncière).....	137,188,039
„ buildings only (contributions des portes de fenêtres)	14,452,813
II. Other taxes (also levied with the imperial taxation)—	
Poll tax and rate on furnished houses (contribution per- sonnelle et mobilière)	32,756,582
Licence duties (contribution des patentes)	35,255,765
Miscellaneous receipts	25,541,702
Departmental loans	12,950,506
III. Communal taxes (not levied with imperial taxation)—	
Octroi.....	195,744,171
Statute labour for parish roads (prestation en nature)	48,922,659
Dog tax	5,409,493
Supplementary octroi	6,012,650
IV. Communal dues, tolls, &c.	68,261,787
V. Miscellaneous receipts and loans	362,230,323
	<hr/>
	£
Total local taxes and receipts in imperial accounts in English money	9,913,14½
Not in imperial accounts.....	25,063,243
Total	<hr/> 34,976,385 <hr/>

XXIII.—The Local Taxation of Italy and Russia.

The local government of Italy very much resembles that of France. The country is divided into provinces, the provinces into *circondarii*, the *circondarii* into the *mandamenti*, and the *mandamenti* into communes corresponding in all respects to the four divisions in France already described. Each province is governed by a prefect, who represents the State, and a provincial council that represents the province. The commune is governed by a syndic appointed by the State from the municipal council, which is chosen by the commune. The local funds are mostly supported by the additional centimes and *octroi* systems.

The local government of the Russian communes are singularly independent. Since the emancipation of the serfs, the commune for imperial purposes is considered purely as a unit of taxation, liable also to furnish certain military service. Its local authority, formed by local election, has full power of taxation over its members, and raises the communal funds by an arbitrary poll-tax. It has even power over the personal liberty of the members of the commune, and no one is allowed to leave without a passport, which

may be, and often is, withdrawn, as, for instance, when any member is amassing riches elsewhere without contributing sufficiently to the communal exchequer, and such withdrawal obliges the absent holder to return.

In Mr. Goschen's report to the Treasury in August, 1870, there is some information, but not much, furnished concerning the local taxation of Russia. There is a territorial or land tax^a levied in all the provinces, and a class tax, paid by the nobles only, is being gradually introduced. The taxes in towns have no common basis, and are not set forth in detail. As regards the village taxes it is stated:—

"Local taxes in village communes are appropriated to local self-government, the maintenance of order, and of schools, where the peasants desire to establish them, but the amount of these taxes is not known, for their collection and appropriation are placed by law under the immediate control of the communes, free from any interference on the part of Government."

XXIV.—*The Local Taxation of America.*

Local Government in the United States, and more especially in the New England States, has been carried to greater lengths than in any European community, not excepting England. The local authorities of a New England township not only collect local taxes, but they also levy that share of the State revenue which falls upon their district. The town assessor regulates the incidence of the State tax, the town collector receives it, and the town treasurer transmits the whole to the State treasury. There is only one machinery for the collection of all taxes. The local authorities first determine the amount of taxation that is required for the various local services, such as highways, schools, paving, lighting and cleansing, and the relief of the poor. To this is added the amount so far as direct taxation is concerned, of State and county taxes required from the district. The aggregate sum is then charged by the assessors of the township upon the realty and personalty, that is to say, on the whole of the property of the citizens. The amount of property possessed by each citizen is ascertained by a system of voluntary returns, like that in England under Schedule D of the income tax. If the accuracy of the return is doubted, the assessor is empowered to put the citizen upon his oath, and if necessary, to amend the return. The administrative power is vested in a great number of officers, who are all directly responsible to the whole body of inhabitants, but not to any representative board as in England. The most important functions are discharged by a few persons, chosen annually, called the selectmen. All the inhabitants of the township, assembled in general meeting, elect these officers yearly. But the selectmen

have not the same independence of action that appertains to a town council, or a local board. They merely carry out the popular mandate. They cannot originate any improvement, or make any change in the customary expenditure, without a direct appeal to the people. The limited nature of their functions can be inferred from the number of other independent officers. There are assessors to rate the township, collectors to receive the tax; a treasurer to keep the funds. There are surveyors to repair the roads; constables to keep the peace; overseers to provide for the poor; and school committees to provide education. There are altogether nineteen principal officers in every township, and each officer is responsible only to the whole body of the community. The State seems to have waived not only the right of interference in local administration, but also the right of inspection or any other kind of control. So much gratuitous labour for the benefit of the community, and not directly of the individual, implies an amount of local patriotism and public spirit, that would rarely be found in European countries. De Tocqueville, in his work on Democracy in America, thus describes the advantage of this system:—

“The native of New England is attached to his township, because “it is independent and free. His co-operation in its affairs ensures “his attachment to its interest; the well-being it affords him secures “his affection; and its welfare is the aim of his ambition and of his “future exertions. He takes a part in every occurrence in the place; “he practises the art of government in the small sphere within his “reach; he accustoms himself to those forms without which liberty “can only advance by revolutions; he imbibes their spirit; he “acquires a taste for order; comprehends the balance of powers, “and collects clear practical notions on the nature of his duties “and the extent of his rights.”

Three conclusions may be drawn for our present purpose from the system of local taxation in New England.

Local taxation is not exclusively levied on land and realty:

It is levied by means of one comprehensive tax on the whole means and substance of each person.

Central and local taxes are levied together on one assessment, and by one staff of officials.

Public morality is sufficiently general to allow of a voluntary assessment.

PART III.

XXV.—*The Remedies.*

Centralisation, the most obvious remedy for the evils that exist in our present system of local taxation, suggests itself only to be rejected. There is little doubt that a reorganisation of the whole on a general plan laid down by the State, carried out by State officials, and placed permanently under State control, would effectually remove the present confusion. The central power is enlightened, far seeing in design, accustomed to govern, and ready to reform; while local authorities are often ignorant and slow, narrow in view, and averse to change. It is an arduous task to persuade the best men to busy themselves about the petty affairs of their district; mediocrity predominates in local boards; and local government runs too much in a narrow rut of routine. The progress of local business is slow, the machinery is complex, and there is too often a want of permanence of design. But scientific order and method may be bought at too dear a price. Centralisation has had a fair trial in France, and the result is not encouraging. Gigantic jobbery in every branch of administration made the Government and its armies collapse in a couple of months, and the want of public virtue and the corporate feeling of true citizenship, kept the people in a state of apathy; and it was only at the eleventh hour that the indefinable instinct of patriotism at length roused them to rise against the invader.* On the other hand, the political effect of local government is of the highest importance and benefit to the State. Every man is educated to public duties and interests: nobody fears or hates an administration of which he himself forms part; nor is he likely blindly to expect from it impossibilities. The almost fanatical admiration every American feels towards his Government arises in a great measure from the fact that he is himself an integral part of it. Nowhere is more developed that civic virtue which makes a man ready to sacrifice himself for his country, and nowhere has the system of localisation been carried to a greater extent. The system is historically part of the English nature. It was the distinguishing characteristic of Anglo-Saxon institutions: districts being the units of the imperial system, each possessing independence in its internal organisation, and it has grown with the growth of the English nation.

But it is not merely as an educator that the system must be maintained. The fostering of public spirit and intelligence, excellent

* Of course these evils do not necessarily follow on the establishment of centralisation, but this catastrophe brings into strong relief its danger.

as it is, must be the second object, the primary object being the performance of local business in the best way. For this a great reform is necessary, but that reform should not extend to abolition. The fact that the local business has been conducted so well hitherto, notwithstanding the existence of so many drawbacks, is the strongest evidence in favour of the local principle. Local knowledge is necessary to local administration, and the central power cannot embrace all the details of the life of a great nation.

The main heads of the required reform are obvious enough. If the incidence of local taxation were so distributed that every member of the community paid according to his ability—if areas were mapped out on the basis of community of interests—if rates were classified according to their general or local interest, and placed under management suitable to their character—if the administrative boards were all formed on the representative principle—if the taxes were assessed, levied, and collected in the simplest and most economical manner, there is no doubt that the English system would be of the highest utility to the country, both in the education of its citizens and in the performance of all the local requirements of the nation. It is submitted that the system is capable of readjustment on the basis of these requirements, and the remainder of this essay will be devoted to suggestions of the plan on which such reform should be conducted.

XXVI.—*The Incidence.*

The general canon of taxation, that every member of the community whose property is more than necessary for subsistence, should be taxed according to his ability, is certainly not carried out in the present system of local taxation. Local taxation has very properly been described as a compulsory investment of capital, for which a very good return is made in improved towns, a well-regulated poor-law system, good roads, and perfect security to life and property. But it is not just that the capital should be raised from one section of society, whilst the benefit is shared by the whole community. It cannot be for a moment denied that every inhabitant is benefited by the local expenditure. Trade and manufacture gain as much as the ownership of land, and the fundholder as much as the landed proprietor. Yet the rates, instead of being levied on all kinds of property, are levied exclusively on realty. Every man is taxed according to the house or land which he occupies, not according to the whole bulk of his wealth. Originally, perhaps, there was a kind of rough justice in taxing this kind of property only, and a man's dwelling-house was a tolerably fair index of the amount he ought to pay. Rent was taken as a test of income, and as the only practicable way of ascertaining income, and the tax was practically

levied as an income tax. But, granting for the moment that the tax does really fall upon the occupier, as a charge upon his income, the conditions of life have so much changed in the country, that a tax upon occupation has ceased to be a fair means of obtaining from every member of the community his true share of the public expenditure. Farmers, tradesmen, manufacturers, professional men, and funded proprietors, each pay upon the premises they occupy on the same scale, and in such a plan there is much injustice. Still more obvious is the inequality of incidence in the case of the small occupier who is not within the protection of the Compounding Acts. Again, a man may live in luxury, and not be an occupier at all; he may live in a cottage, and yet be a millionaire. He may amass great wealth in a small counting-house in a heavily-taxed town, whilst he lives in a large mansion in an adjoining district where the rates come to almost nothing. On the other hand, many of the occupiers of the huge establishments of the town, manufacturers, tradesmen, schoolmasters, or what not, find a scanty income made scantier by the heavy burthen of the local rates.

But although originally this mode of taxation may have been adopted as a kind of income tax, and in order, as the statute of Elizabeth says, "to raise by taxation of every inhabitant according "to the ability of the parish," a sum sufficient for the purposes of the Act, this tax in its incidence, falls to a great extent exclusively upon the owners of realty, to the proportionate relief of the rest of the community. Although the occupier nominally pays the rates, a considerable portion of them fall ultimately upon the owner, in the shape of a diminished rent. The amount of the rates is added to the rent, when a man is calculating whether he can afford to occupy a house, or whether he will be able to work a farm to a profit. The only question upon which there is a difference of opinion is as to the amount which falls upon the occupier. The most plausible contention is that the owner pays such rates as are imposed at the time of the original contract of letting; any increase that occurs before the time of readjustment, being a loss to the occupier, any decrease a gain to him. A difference, however, must be made between tenants who stand in a purely mercantile relation towards their landlords, and occupy their premises solely with a view to profit, and tenants who are influenced by motives of convenience, health, and locality, and to whom profit is not the main object in occupation. Farmers and builders no doubt make an estimate of the rent, which takes into consideration the rates in existence at the time of the hiring, but circumstances may oblige the householder to take a particular house, whether the rates be high or low. Even the farmer himself is not absolutely free to deduct the rates, as the rent of farms, is not, as a rule, in England, fixed at the utmost

value of the land, and there is at the same time the keenest competition; consequently, if A will not take the land without deducting the rates, B will step in and take it over his head.

The settlement of what is the real incidence on owner and occupier, is a very good instance of the advantages which a local governing body possesses as compared to a delegation from the central authority. It would be almost impossible to arrive at a fair scale of contribution without an intimate knowledge of the district, and of the amount of variation through different causes from the theoretical rule, that the owner pays the rate in the shape of a diminished rent. The conclusion arrived at by the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Local Taxation, impliedly admits this difficulty of arriving at the exact amount paid by the owner. "The burthen of the rates" it says, "which are directly paid by the occupier, falls ultimately, either in part, or wholly upon the owner." Mr. Dudley Baxter in his work on "The Taxation of the United Kingdom," says, concerning this rating question:—

"On all the evidence that I can collect, I have little doubt that, although in theory the rates are paid by the landlord, yet in practice, and in the average of tenancies, a portion of the rates does fall upon the tenant. Many practical men concur with me in thinking that the average incidence of rates, is *three-fourths on the landlord, and one-fourth on the tenant.*" "As regards houses," he says, "the case is rather different; because the tenant is not limited by the produce. He will pay for convenience, or for dislike of change, even an excessive rent. . . . On the average of house property, the incidence of rates may be estimated at *two-thirds on the landlord and one-third on the tenant*, where the rates are paid by the tenant, but the landlord pays a larger proportion when they are compounded for by him. But in order to avoid any under-estimate of the pressure of taxation on the tenant, I have taken the rates of houses as paid *half* by the landlord and half by the tenant."

Mr. Baxter also quotes from the report of the Committee of the House of Lords on Parochial Assessments, which sat in 1850, the following opinion of Sir George Cornewall Lewis concerning the incidence upon farmers and householders:—

"I have no doubt that local rates, so far as they can be foreseen and calculated upon, are deductions from the landlord's rent; though they are paid by the occupier, they enter into his calculation in arranging his rent with the landlord, and so far as the rates can be made a matter of pre-contract, I have no doubt they constitute a deduction from the rent. On the other hand, any sudden or unexpected increase of parochial expenditure would, until the contract was readjusted, fall entirely upon the tenant."

"As regards householders," he says, "I have no doubt that ultimately in the great majority of cases, the incidence of the rate is upon the owner."

It may be fairly concluded that a large proportion of this tax falls exclusively upon the owners of realty. There may have been a time when such an arrangement was not glaringly unjust. Formerly the bulk of national property consisted of realty; but the proportion which realty bears to the main wealth of the country has completely altered, and it does not now constitute more than one-third. The riches of England now lie in her towns, which according to the Census of 1861, now absorb 55 per cent. of the whole population. In the report presented by Mr. Goschen to the Treasury on the progressive increase of local taxation, we find the proportion of contributions from distinctly urban districts as compared to that of distinctly rural districts is 43 to 16. Macaulay well illustrates the gigantic growth of trade in the last two centuries in the following passage:—

"At present above a sixth part of the nation is crowded into provincial towns of more than 30,000 inhabitants. In the reign of Charles II no provincial town in the kingdom contained 30,000 inhabitants, and only four provincial towns contained so many as 10,000."

The population of London at that time, although the most populous capital in Europe, Macaulay puts at little more than half-a-million, and of the customs of London, he says: "They amounted in 1685 to about 330,000*l.* a-year. In our time the net duty paid annually at the same place exceeds 10,000,000*l.*"

The increase of personalty within the present century is still more striking, as is shown by Mr. Purdy's calculation, that during the fifty years between 1815 and 1865, the profits of trades and professions had increased at the rate of more than 212 per cent., whilst the increase of land rental was only 36 per cent.

Mr. Dudley Baxter, in the work already referred to, estimates the total real and personal property in England and Wales, at the present time, at 6,000,000,000*l.*, and only one-third of this he gives as the net capitalised value of the realty. The national income he also estimates at a gross total of 800,000,000*l.* per annum, of which 325,000,000*l.* are derived from the weekly wages of the manual labour classes. Thus over 400,000,000*l.* is left for purposes of taxation, whilst the real property of the country is assessed to the income tax at barely a third of this sum. Local taxation has increased even with a greater progression than property, and in eighty years it has grown from 1,700,000*l.* to upwards of 17 millions.

Mr. Goschen in his report to the Treasury in August, 1870,

gives the following figures concerning the progress of local taxation and the increased value of realty.

The receipts from rates, as far as they can be ascertained, amounted—

	£		£
In 1803 to	5,348,000	In 1841 to	8,101,000
„ '13-15 to	8,164,000	„ '51 „	8,916,000
„ '17 to	10,107,000	„ '61 „	12,207,000
„ '26-27 to	9,544,000	„ '68 „	16,800,000

	£
The estimated annual value under Schedule A for 1803-04 was	34,864,000
„ ascertained „ '14 was	53,495,000
„ amount reached in 1868 was.....	143,872,000

Mr. Mill has said “that land is an exception to the ordinary rule of equality of taxation, because, with the increase of population, it spontaneously increases in value without any exertion or sacrifice on the part of the owners, but with complete passiveness on their part.” It is also urged that real property ought to be liable to exceptional taxation, because it has received exceptional favours from the legislature in the exemption from burthens to which personalty is liable, and in the possession of privileges which personalty is not permitted to enjoy. But it is not land alone that grows without the exertion of its possessors. Wealth begets wealth, whatever its nature, provided it be judiciously invested. It would, moreover, be impossible to modify the laws of property of one kind, without endangering the existence of property of every kind. As regards the second objection, the exemption from probate duty, a light succession tax, Government grants for permanent improvements, and the right to distrain for rent, are certainly exceptional privileges. But it would be better either to abolish them or extend them to all classes, rather than allow them to be any justification for the present inequality of the rating system.

It is submitted that the present incidence of rates is open to the following objections:—

I. If the owner pays the whole tax, then the local rates are levied upon real property only, that is, upon one-third of the wealth of the country.

II. If the owner pays only a part of this tax, that portion is levied upon real property only, whilst the remainder is levied upon occupiers as a kind of imperfect income tax.

III. This income tax does not reach the whole community, and does not fall equitably on those whom it does reach.

IV. The taxation of the owner through the occupier, as long as it does not give the latter legal power to deduct from his rent the

owner's share, places the occupier in the position of a tax gatherer, who is called upon to pay all arrears out of his own pocket.

V. The system creates a grievance on the part of occupiers, who complain of unjust taxation, and on the part of owners who complain that representation is denied them, although they really pay the local taxes.

Several remedies may be suggested for this inequitable incidence of local taxation. The following are submitted as the most feasible :—

- I. *The adoption of the principle of the additional-centimes tax now levied in France, Belgium, Italy, and other countries.* The local authorities estimate the amount necessary for their requirements, and the State collects that sum from the district by means of a small addition to the direct imperial taxation.
- II. *Indirect local taxes on the principle of the assessed taxes, such as now are levied in Belgium, and to a certain extent in Ireland.*
- III. *A local income tax, such as is now levied in America.*
- IV. *A classified occupancy tax, such as is in practice in parts of Scotland.*
- V. *An addition for local purposes to Schedules C and D of the income tax.*
- VI. *A grant in aid from the consolidated fund.* It is submitted that this would only be advisable where the district is too poor to satisfy the requirements of general health and convenience, or in cases of unexpected calamity, such as the Lancashire cotton famine or the Sheffield inundation.
- VII. *The proper division of the occupancy tax according to its incidence on owner and occupier.* The collection should be through the occupier as in Ireland, and the occupier should deduct from his rent the owner's proportion. Superior or intermediate interests should be dealt with as in the case of the income tax, and there should be a similar prohibition against contracts in contravention of the law.

It is possible that the tax on occupations would not be the best main tax in an entirely new system. But the fact of its existence, and its facility of collection, make it certain always to be the chief source of local revenue. The other taxes would only be supplementary in order that the present inequality should be obviated. It may be observed that in the cities of Liverpool, Manchester, Dublin, and Glasgow, the owners are already taxed for improvements which go to increase the permanent value of their property.

Before leaving the question of taxation of realty, a word should be said concerning exemptions. By certain ancient statutes the

Crown property is exempt from bearing its proportion of the local rates. There are, for instance, large Government establishments at Woolwich which at times throw great numbers of workmen upon the poor rates. At present they only pay towards the poor rate, and that only as a favour, without admitting legal liability, and they refuse to contribute at all to the other rates. Of course this exemption shifts the burden unduly on to the shoulders of the rest of the community, and creates a legitimate grievance, which ought to be removed by the withdrawal of the obnoxious privileges. It is not fair that the State, any more than an individual, should enjoy the benefits of local rates without bearing its due proportion of the burthen.

XXVII.—*Classification of Rates and Areas of Taxation.*

A reclassification of rates according to their general or local interest, and a redistribution of the areas of taxation on the basis of community of interest, are as important as the equitable readjustment of the general incidence. Of course every local tax is, in a sense, of imperial importance, as no locality, however small, can either improve or deteriorate without affecting the whole country. But a mere glance at the list of local taxes, shows how much they differ in character. Some are of direct imperial interest; others immediately affect large districts of country; and a third class, again, is only of importance to single localities.

The subjects of present local taxation may perhaps be distributed under the three heads of Imperial, Provincial, Local, and the three classes divided as follows :—

Imperial.—Police, prisons, lunatics, education, pauperism.

Provincial.—Highways (including turnpikes and bridges), the present objects of the county rate (excluding those of imperial interest), comprehensive schemes of drainage and sewage, the redemption of waste land, the purposes of the hundred rate, and of the animals contagious diseases rate.

Local.—Borough affairs, town improvements, the objects of the general district rate (saving highways), the objects of the library and museum rate, and the baths and washhouses rate.

Although the subjects of local taxation may be of direct imperial interest, it does not follow that they should be removed from the sphere of local management. Economy and efficiency may both be attained to a greater extent by local administrators than by State officials. The maintenance of the police, for instance, ought to be in the hands of those who are acquainted with the requirements of the district; and still more does this apply to the relief of the poor. Moreover, quite apart from the advantages of local knowledge, it is always difficult for the State to maintain an efficient staff of officials

at a distance from the centre of authority. The latter argument, rather than the former one, must be urged in the defence of the localised administrations of prisons and lunatic asylums, for the management of which local knowledge is but slightly useful. Both arguments may be used in support of the local principle of the new school boards. But although much may be said in favour of local management in these affairs, it is not so easy to defend the present system on which their maintenance is based. The Government grant, which is made towards the expenses of the police and the maintenance of prisons, ought in justice to be increased to at least one-half of their whole cost; and that proportion should be extended to the other subjects of imperial interest, with the exception of the relief of the poor. It may be added that the Education Act, by its provisions as regards school expenses, admits the equity of such a system. It is doubtful whether it is advisable for the State to leave any branch of local government entirely uncontrolled. The check imposed by periodical inspection would perhaps be salutary in all cases; but beyond all doubt, where matters of imperial interest—as, for instance, the education of the people and the maintenance of public order—are for purposes of convenience left in the hands of local administrations, the principle of Government inspection should be carried out to its fullest extent.

The character of the administrative bodies ought to be in accordance with the subjects of their administration. In order to attain this object, the present division of England into areas of local taxation requires considerable revision. If the country could be treated as a *tabula rasa*, it would undoubtedly be more scientific to map out the whole of England and Wales into equal areas, just as the theory of parliamentary reform demands equal electoral districts. But reforms, to be practicable, must be adapted to the existing state of things. Counties, towns, parochial unions, and districts under the Local Government Act, must be taken, therefore, as the divisions to which every scheme of local taxation must adapt itself. The latter districts, being formed by a process of selection on the part of the inhabitants themselves, may be taken to represent a community of interest just as much as the towns themselves. Wherever, as is often the case in towns, there is a double administration, the duality should be abolished, and the local board left as the only governing body. Every encouragement should be given to the establishment of districts under the Local Government Act, in order to obtain a single local area throughout the country which is according to the will of the inhabitant. The great inequality in the size of counties might in a measure be regulated for the purposes of local taxation by throwing small counties together, or amalgamating small and large, according to proximity. Matters of imperial interest would

remain under the same administration as they are now—police, prisons, and the charge of lunatics being under county control—education and pauperism being local matters for towns and districts. Poor-law unions should, if possible, cease to be a distinct division. The present poor rate should be divided into its component parts, and that portion of it which is devoted to the maintenance of the poor should be under the control of a committee of management chosen from and by the administrative board of the town or district.

Rates of provincial interest ought to be placed under the administration of county boards. In the list already given it will be observed that certain other objects are included, in addition to those which at present come under the county rates. The present highway system, or, rather, congeries of systems, does not give satisfaction. There is no doubt that the roads of a county benefit the whole county, and there is a sufficient equality of interest to justify a comprehensive management and a general system of rating such as now obtains in Scotland. There seems also to be no reason for the present separation of bridges from the roads for which they were constructed; and no road reform would be complete that did not include turnpike roads. For convenience of management counties might, as now, be divided into highway districts, but the county board should retain the control over the boards of management. The South Wales system affords an example worthy of imitation, and the Scotch system also gives great satisfaction.

The exceptional mode in which comprehensive schemes of drainage are conducted, is perhaps the reason why they are so seldom undertaken. Permanent marsh lands and periodical floods from rivers and sea, are a scandal in a country so thickly populated as England. The redemption of waste lands is also a matter of national importance which has been hitherto neglected. These should be also placed under county management. Under the same control ought also to be placed the purposes of the present hundred rate and animals contagious diseases rate.

The list of objects of local interest is very much the same as are now controlled by local boards, town councils, and improvement commissioners.

XXVIII.—*Boards of Management.*

The existing anomalies in the administration of local funds are thus described in the parliamentary report already referred to:—

“It will be seen from the foregoing short description of the
“principal rating authorities, that in almost every case they differ
“from each other in one or more of the following respects, viz.:
“the qualifications required for their members, their election, or
“mode of appointment, the composition of the constituent body,

" the number of votes which they may give, and the mode in which the votes are to be taken.

" For guardians of the poor, and for the inspectors under the Lighting and Watching Act, a rating qualification is required, but of a different amount, whilst it is sufficient for the members of a burial board if they are rated at any amount however small.

" For members of highway boards, local boards under the Public Health Act, or Local Government Act, and for town councils, the qualification may either be in respect of ownership or of rating, the amount varying in each case.

" The element of rating does not enter into the qualification for commissioners of sewers, who must be owners of land, or the heirs apparent, or agents of owners of land of a stated value.

" In the case of the county rate assessed by the county justices, and the sewers' rate levied by the Commissioners of Sewers, the ratepayers have no voice in the appointment of the authority levying the rate, or in the control of its expenditure.

" In some instances, as in the case of boards of guardians and highway boards, a part only of the local authority, assessing and expending the rates, is elected by the ratepayers, whilst in other instances all the members of the board are elected by them.

" In the election of some of the rating authorities, the owners as well as the occupiers participate in the franchise, whilst in the election of the others the occupiers alone are entitled to vote.

" In some cases there is plurality of voting and in others no such privilege exists.

" Where a municipal corporation is the local board under the Public Health or Local Government Acts, the rating authority is elected by the occupiers, who are entitled to a single vote only; but when the local board is elected under either of the same Acts, the owners vote as well as the occupiers, and both classes enjoy a plurality of votes. Where the local board consists partly of the town council and partly of members representing outlying districts, one section of the board is elected by the town council from amongst themselves and the other by both owners and occupiers, in the manner lastly described. In some cases the election is by voting papers, and in others *viva voce*; whilst in the instance of metropolitan vestries, the votes are taken by ballot."

The administration of the county rates is open to the most objection as regards constitution. It is in direct violation of the principle that every taxpayer should have a voice in the imposition and expenditure of the taxes. There is nothing of a representative character in the existing county boards. The present ratepayers are in no way represented, and owners are only represented indirectly, and not in any way on the elective principle. The sewers commis-

sions, it may be added, are open to similar objections, although, as their rates are smaller in amount, and only partial in their incidence, they are not the subject of the same amount of complaint. But serious as the defects are in the constitution of the county boards, they would be still more grave if the additional subjects of local government already suggested, were also to be placed under county control. The present duties of the county magistrates are merely ministerial, and they have very little opportunity of injuring the community whose interests they have in charge. But if they were called upon to deal with such matters as comprehensive drainage schemes, or the highways of a whole county, their initiative powers would at once become extensive, and there would arise an imperative necessity that they should be an elective body responsible to the ratepayers for neglect or mistaken action.

It is proposed, therefore, that county financial boards of a representative character should be formed to take the place of the present quarter sessions government. All ratepayers which, under a reformed system of taxation, would include owners as well as occupiers, should be entitled to vote, and the qualification of membership should be fixed at a reasonable amount of property. In order to prevent the owners being outvoted by the occupiers, the owners should vote apart, with a right to a fixed proportion of seats on the board. In order to prevent the mass of small occupiers from swamping the constituency, and to ensure an intelligent board of management, the system of plurality of voting, within reasonable limits, should be retained. It has also been proposed that the system of election in practice in the United States might be adopted, the ratepayers electing the local boards, the local boards then acting as electoral colleges for the election of the provincial boards. But the direct interest of the public in each election more than counterbalances any advantage that might arise from the adoption of this principle of double election. The provincial boards should form a kind of court of appeal for cases of local maladministration. As regards the register of voters, the labour of registration should not fall on the voter. For this purpose the county register for parliamentary elections, now extensive enough to include almost every ratepayer, might be utilised. A third of the board should go out of office every year, the ratepayers having the right to re-elect retiring members.

Just as in the case of counties, so in district local government, it is proposed that there should only be one supreme board of control for general affairs. As at present, each department would have its separate management, but it ought to be a delegation from the chief board, and responsible to it. The system of representation should be the same as for the county financial boards. Proper

representation would do away with the necessity of the *ex officio* element in the local boards. The superior intelligence of the magistrates, and the indirect representation of the owner class, which were the only excuses for the *ex officio* membership, would be otherwise and more completely provided for under the amended system. Plurality of voting, and the owner franchise, would enable all classes to be directly represented.

The greatest difficulty of this reform would be the readjustment of local government as regards the poor. The antiquity of the parochial system, and the independence of the guardians of the poor, make both those institutions little susceptible of change. But the parish, as a division of the country, has no other merit, save that of antiquity, and the administration of guardians has become almost a national byword. Of course, for purely ecclesiastical affairs, the parochial system would remain unchanged. But as this scheme, in its integrity, supposes one area of taxation for all purposes, the areas of taxation and administration would both be altered in the case of the poor rate. Of course the present poor rate should be divided into its component parts, and that portion of it which is devoted to the maintenance of the poor, dealt with separately. It is a rate of an exceptional character, so far as its legitimate object is concerned. The pauperism of the country cannot be wholly controlled, and it should not therefore be confused with the other subjects of local expenditure. The rate might be described partly as an auxiliary labour rate, partly as a provident association. Its mismanagement involves not only a pecuniary loss to the community, it also deranges the labour market, and affects the very existence of society. It has often been proposed to make the poor rate a national rate, equal in incidence throughout the country. This would remove the strong motive that at present influences the employers of labour, the only persons with power at all to check pauperism, to exert that power. Moreover, although the equalisation of the poor rate in large towns would be an excellent measure, a national equalisation would hardly be equitable. Districts which largely employ labour should pay for the pauperism they produce out of the wealth they amass, and should not call upon their neighbours to relieve them of their legitimate burthen. The poor rate proper, therefore, should remain a local rate under separate management, but still subject to the control of the central local board, and also to strict government inspection. If, however, a rearrangement of the poor-rate administration is not deemed practicable or advisable, the proposed reform is not in any way vitiated in its other details. The poor rate proper is so exceptional in character that it might easily be separated from the rest of the rates in area and administration.

The other reforms which are necessary in local management would all follow naturally upon the introduction of an enlightened system of administration. At present the assessment, levy, and collection of the local rates are all open to grave objection. Although real property is assessed on a government valuation for the purposes of imperial taxation, local authorities make no use of this assessment. There is a different assessment in each local area of taxation, and the assessment for poor rate purposes differs from that which is the basis of the county rate. By Act of Parliament union assessment committees must revalue rateable property every three years; whilst the county justices make this assessment according to a different act and on a different scale. The commissioners of sewers, again, have separate authority to charge the residents in their district according as they think fit. Thus it sometimes happens that for the various purposes of taxation, imperial and local, lands and houses may be estimated at four separate rateable values.

The present system of collection is not much more scientific. Although there are tax collectors established throughout the country for imperial purposes, their services are seldom called into requisition by the local authorities. It by no means always happens that all local rates are collected by the same collector. It sometimes occurs that there is a poor rate collector, a highway rate collector, and a district rate collector, all within the same area of local taxation. Under these circumstances it is more a matter of surprise than regret that the number of paid collectors for the purposes of local taxation in England and Wales amounts to nearly 10,000, and the cost of their remuneration barely falls short of 300,000*l.* a-year.

The mode in which these taxes are levied is equally reprehensible. The different authorities levy their own taxes, and the demand is made for them at different times. As under the name of poor rate other local taxes of an entirely distinct character are levied, and as it is rather the exception than the rule in the demand note to specify the various charges of which the poor rate is composed, the taxpayer is left in ignorance of the manner in which his money is expended. To make this obscurity more obscure, the poor rate and all that it includes, and all other rates that are levied on its basis, are collected by the overseers, but are fixed and published by distinct boards of administration. Again, whilst most rates are levied on the full rateable value, a distinction in a few cases is made between different kinds of property; as, for instance, the general district rate is only levied on one-fourth of the value of woods, mines, pasture lands, &c.

It is needless to dilate on this want of system. There should be only two consolidated rates—one for county purposes, the other for local purposes. The parliamentary report, already referred to, in

recommending this consolidation of all rates collected in the same area, quotes the following excellent resolution of the select committee of the House of Lords, which reported on poor law assessments in 1868:—

"That a demand note should be left with each ratepayer on the rate being made, stating the amount of the requisition, the rate in the pound for each purpose, and the period for which the rate is made, the rateable value of the premises, the amount of the rate thereon, and of each payment."

There should be one assessment for all purposes, as there is in Ireland—property, being rated to the full assessed value, or partially, according to the nature of the tax and the kind of occupation. The existing machinery of collection for imperial purposes should be utilised, and there should be only one collection for all kinds of taxation. The local taxes should be levied at the same time and with the same regularity as the imperial taxes. The system of taxation initiated by the present Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the assessed taxes, which obliges the taxpayer to bring the tax to the treasury, instead of the treasury collecting the tax by a door-to-door visitation, is well worthy of a trial. It is already in full operation in Paris and New York. In the latter city 5 per cent. per month is charged for the first month of arrears, 10 per cent. for the second; but arrears are very rare; and in both cities the result of the plan is reported to be very satisfactory. If it could be adopted in England, it would ensure further economy in collection, and the only doubt about its advisability is whether the time lost to the community is not worth more than the money saved by the disuse of paid collectors.

Many other defects which exist in the details of management might also be mentioned. One board levies a separate rate for each separate object, and another board levies everything under a single consolidated rate, and whilst in one district this consolidated rate is subdivided in the demand note into its component parts, in another no information whatever as to its composition is given to the ratepayer. Again, the objects of the county rate are the same in boroughs as they are in counties, but as a rule these corporate towns retain the privilege of taxing themselves, and a separate borough rate has to be levied for purposes which ought more properly to be included in a comprehensive county rate. Again, in the same area of taxation, different boards, with similar functions, often exercise separate authority, as, for instance, where a local board is established in a town, which is also under the control of improvement commissioners. It also sometimes happens that the same board fulfils the duties of two distinct bodies; as for instance where a town council is also a local board. In that case there may be, and actually often

are, two different sets of officials ; two offices, two sets of books, two banking accounts, and two days of meeting under circumstances which common sense would say are peculiarly fitted for the simplicity of one administration. But these and similar difficulties would no longer exist under the plan suggested. It would also produce another urgent reform, viz. : an equalisation of all rates in the metropolis, and all large towns. At present the variation in amount in different districts is very large ; as, for instance, in Hampstead and the city of London, the average rates amount altogether to little more than 1s. in the pound, whilst in Bethnal Green they are more than 5s. In Liverpool the differences, though not so great, are still considerable, and Toxteth Park, Kirkdale, Everton, and Liverpool proper, all pay in different proportions.

In discussions concerning the reform of local institutions, State interference is often recommended whenever municipal bodies neglect any of their duties. It is submitted that that is too much a derogation from the integrity of the local principle. Local government ceases to be local if the State steps in to set it right whenever it happens to be a little out of gear. Provided that the municipal body truly represents the locality, if it chooses to swell its rates by its own mismanagement, or disturb the comfort of the community by its neglect, it ought, nevertheless, as a rule, to be left alone, and allowed to work out its own reform through its own mistakes. It is only when the maladministration is such as to seriously affect the national wellbeing, that the State is entitled to interfere, and it should never be forgotten that every such interference is a distinct limitation of the local principle. But such a limitation must be admitted as necessary. In such cases, however, the State should only interfere as far as is necessary to set the main errors right, and should not dictate every detail of management. Applying these remarks, the State should only legislate in the proposed reform as to the main principles, and details should only be matters of suggestion, much in the same way as at present recommendations are made by the Poor Law Board to boards of guardians. The readjustment of the incidence of taxation, for instance, is a State necessity ; the reform of the county boards, the establishment of the representative principle, the proper distribution of the areas of taxation, and a classification of rates according to their importance, also come within that category. Important as the other matters are, they are details which ought, or ought not, to be adopted according to the will of each district.

XXIX.—*Conclusion.*

If there were only two local governing bodies, forming as it were provincial and district parliaments, and holding the appointment

and control of the various executive departments, there would then be more temptation to the best men in the community to offer themselves as candidates for election. The narrow policy and the want of permanence of design, which is now said to be the prevailing fault of our local boards, would pass away with their excessive number and complex mechanism. There would then be some hope of the adoption of some of the great schemes which have been proposed for the improvement of the people and the extinction of pauperism. The power now possessed by poor law guardians to give relief by way of loan, which would save many a workman from the disgrace of pauperism, might cease to be a dead letter. Local authorities would perhaps begin to see that the redemption of waste lands, and the making of new roads, is a means of employing operatives in times of casual distress generally, and not only during the Lancashire cotton famine. The extension of such schemes as that of boarding-out of pauper orphans, the children of the State, might be hoped for. The improvement of the dwellings of the working classes, the utilisation of the sewage of towns, the creation of people's parks and recreation grounds, the institution of libraries and museums, baths and wash-houses, would become general rather than exceptional. The migration of the working classes from one part of the kingdom to another, according to the demand for labour, might be directed with care and skill, and such migration might be supplemented, when labour is really redundant, by a judicious scheme of emigration. The provision of a channel by which labour should flow naturally to the place where labour is needed, first at home, and then to the colonies, would not only be an inestimable boon to the working classes, but would also greatly relieve the poor rate. All these and other great results might be hoped for from an enlightened administration, but they are expected in vain from the present governing bodies.

If the reforms proposed be adopted, the system of local rating would become as legitimate a source of national pride as is now the imperial system of taxation, whilst at present the clumsy inequity of the one almost throws into the shade the skilful justice of the other. For imperial purposes the people tax themselves through their representatives, and the entire administration is under the national control. For local purposes the people are taxed, but not always by themselves, and their representatives have only a divided authority in the administrative boards. Each department of the national expenditure is under the supervision of one man, who is himself responsible, as a member of the government, to the parliament, and through the parliament to the people. In local affairs there is no responsible individual at the head of any part of the executive, and there is no truly representative parliament to which

such responsibility might be due. In the State taxation every member of the State pays according to his ability, no class is unduly taxed, and no taxpayer is without a voice in both the imposition and the expenditure of the taxes. The local rates are paid by one class of the community only, and that class has only a partial voice, either in the imposition, or in the expenditure. The imperial taxes are contrived, as well to the convenience of the taxpayer, as to the economy of the administration. The inconveniences and wasteful management of the local system are a byeword throughout the country.

But the reforms contemplated would remove all these shortcomings. The rates would be fairly imposed on those who ought to contribute; they would be paid on a uniform assessment, in one consolidated rate; they would be collected in the most economical manner; the administration would be on the proper basis of representation, and our local system would, in fact, cease to be a national scandal, and become a just source of national pride.