

1867 and the Rule of Wealth

JONATHAN PARRY

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This essay examines the widespread concern in the 1860s and 1870s with 'plutocracy' – the political and social power of commercial wealth. It argues that we should not interpret either the pressure for parliamentary reform in the 1860s, or the consequences of the 1867 act, simply in terms of a contest between aristocracy and democracy. A third element, the growing influence of commercial men, was very widely noted before and after 1867, with differences of opinion about whether this would more favour the aristocracy or the democracy. Anxiety about plutocracy fuelled much of the pressure for reform, from both Cobdenite radicals and academic Liberals; this last group in particular was preoccupied with the possible parliamentary dominance of unimaginative and materialistic money men. On the other hand, opponents of reform were sceptical that a new electoral settlement would halt the rising influence of money. They were proved right, not least because the 1867 reforms increased the cost of winning a seat. The three parliaments elected in 1868, 1874, and 1880 were dominated by commercial men, and there was even more alarm about plutocracy than before 1867. While this was interpreted in different ways by different groups, on the whole it benefited the Conservative Party and Conservative argument significantly more than it helped the Liberals. The Liberal Party found it difficult to agree on whether the political influence of commercial elites – a group with which it had once been identified – was now excessive, and what, if anything, could be done about it. This was to become a major problem for the left.

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In view of the great extension of the borough franchise, the 1867 Reform Act was clearly a significant step towards a more democratic politics. But it was also a leap in the dark: contemporaries had no idea what the effect of male household suffrage would be, or whether the two leading contemporary democracies, Napoleon III's France and the United States, both unstable but for different reasons, would be any sort of guide. If other countries could not point a clear way forward, commentators could only base their predictions of the future on extrapolations of the present. Therefore, it is worth asking ourselves what was being said about the distribution of power in Britain in the 1860s and how reform might alter it.

We tend to assume that debates about reform revolved around an antithesis between aristocracy and democracy, but this is a major oversimplification. By the 1860s, it was impossible to ignore the influence of commercial wealth, or what was sometimes called 'plutocracy'. This essay explores the ways in which the concept of plutocracy was discussed in the years before, and especially after, 1867. It was difficult to deny that commercial elites were very powerful in Britain. Were they beneficial for politics or not?

Radicals of two sorts in particular emphasized the problem of plutocracy when proposing measures of reform in the 1860s. The first, including Richard Cobden, John Bright, and many artisanal leaders, maintained that commercial men had become seduced by the dominant aristocratic system and helped to prop it up, thus underlining the need for major democratisation. The second, a group of academic Liberals, saw the increasing influence of wealth in parliament as a specific problem which needed to be addressed by an anti-

materialist alliance of ‘brains and numbers’.¹ In the event, however, the 1867 act did not weaken the political influence of commercial men at all; numerically, they dominated the parliaments of 1868–85. Instead, it was the alternative alliance of ‘brains and numbers’ that failed to make headway. Consequently, in the 1870s, there was more concern about plutocracy than ever before, particularly in Liberal politics. Some attributed the political weight of money to its continuing and effective compact with aristocracy; others feared that it might, in fact, be the great beneficiary of democracy. Should radicals therefore seek to tackle the dominance of wealth head on? Or was it essentially a social reality – an issue for moralists, but not one on which a practical and effective politics could be based? Here was the beginning of a dilemma that has confronted, and on the whole divided, the left ever since.

By the 1850s and early 1860s, it seemed incontestable that Britain was the richest country the world had ever seen. Naturally, much of that wealth had found its way into the pockets of individuals. There were cotton, wool and iron masters who were able to dominate the affairs of their northern and midland towns; rail, engineering and shipbuilding entrepreneurs who had harnessed technological innovation to spectacular financial effect, most famously in the mania for shares in railway companies in the mid 1840s; rich merchants and bankers in London and elsewhere who had made fortunes trading with the whole world and increasingly supplied the capital for its infrastructural development; and a large class of investors keen to make money from domestic and international stocks on the markets.

To many, the battles over the corn laws in the 1830s and 1840s had symbolised a class war between the old and the rising social elites. On one side, the landed interest was attacked by the commercial radicals of the big towns for its support for agricultural protection at the expense of cheap food for the masses, and more generally for the social power that rested on an excessive concentration of landownership. In response, the opponents of the

Anti-Corn Law League criticized the values of the commercial elites, claiming that they reduced all political questions to simple issues of profit and loss and that they recognized no social bonds beyond the ‘cash nexus’. These critics maintained that more alarming than the landed interest was a ‘monied interest’ or ‘plutocracy’ – concepts that were associated with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Alphonse de Lamartine, and Alexis de Tocqueville, among modern writers, and Socrates and Plato among the ancients.² In 1842, *The Times* claimed that a large proportion of ‘the whole manufacturing plutocracy’ backed the Anti-Corn Law League. In 1845–6 the confluence of corn law repeal and the railway mania encouraged the protectionist Tories, led by Lord George Bentinck, to criticize free-trading commercial men as a selfish and greedy class; his *Morning Post* obituary in 1848 hailed him as a gallant crusader against a ‘sweeping tide of capitalism and money-loving’.³ In 1850, the *Standard* vowed that the Conservative Party would protect labourers from ‘the vulgar and ambitious rich’, and when Lord Derby formed a minority government in early 1852 it won the support of the (declining) Chartist paper, the *Northern Star*, because it seemed opposed to the ‘plutocracy’ and the Manchester school of commercial radicals.⁴

This land-based Tory critique of commercialism persisted in some quarters, but by the 1860s it was more common to argue that the social and political interests of the landed and commercial elites had become rather similar. Many landowners had discovered coal and iron deposits on their estates or been enriched by the process of urban development on them. Landlords’ ability to profit from the industrial revolution led the *Spectator* to argue, in 1861, that the rise of the previously impoverished peerage to great wealth in the course of the 19th century was ‘the strangest change ... ever recorded’.⁵ Moreover, it was natural for *nouveaux riches* capitalists, like their nabob predecessors, to seek the status and relative financial security of a landed estate. One commentator noted that ‘our territorial nobles, our squires, our rural landlords great and small, have become commercial potentates; our merchant

princes have become country gentlemen'.⁶ The repeal of the corn laws in 1846 showed that the middle classes had gained political influence since 1832: *The Times*, in 1854, thought plutocracy more powerful than aristocracy.⁷ However, it also appeared that most merchants were wealthy, stolid and socially aspirational, rather than fiery Manchester school radicals. Their anxiety to ape aristocratic mores became widely noted. For example, many of their sons bought their way into the army officer class, and the political attack on the system of purchasing officerships, from the mid 1850s, played heavily on the way in which it symbolised, and had been strengthened by, the arriviste snobbery of new wealth. Often oversimplified by historians into an attack on aristocracy, the campaign against army purchase was greatly facilitated by the emergence of this softer target.⁸

Much of the criticism of plutocracy in the 1850s and 1860s focused on the deleterious effect of this new wealth on the morals of the traditional governing classes themselves. It seemed that uncultured money-worshippers concerned only with status were now powerful enough to infiltrate the polity and undermine its virtues. This was an updated version of a traditional complaint, first recorded in ancient Greece and more recently in relation to 18th-century nabobs, that plutocracy would always 'degrade' aristocracy and convert 'the government of the most worthy ... into the government of the most wealthy'.⁹ It also owed a lot to alarm at the politics of the United States, where wealth was the only aristocracy and an alliance of 'democracy and plutocracy' seemed to have lowered morals.¹⁰ This was reinforced by the belief that French capitalists were propping up the artificial regime of Napoleon III, 'the chief god of the Plutocracy in all commercial cities'. For the *Atlas*, looking back to the railway stock bubble symbolised by the entrepreneur, George Hudson, 'Bonaparte worship and Hudson worship, its forerunner, are founded upon the same principles ... King Hudson saw that as long as good dividends were paid, the virtuous public would ask few questions'.¹¹

The clearest evidence of this commercial class desire for social acceptance was the number of men who sought a seat in parliament. One analysis (and all such analyses are imperfect estimates) indicates that the number of MPs with some industrial, commercial, or financial, interest rose from 248 to 545 (out of 658) between 1832 and 1865, as against 436 with a landowning interest. Of these, the number involved in finance went up from 73 to 165.¹² John Stuart Mill excoriated these men: ‘the vulgar rich, to whom it is worth while to spend any amount of money for the sake of station in society’.¹³ Though some commercial MPs assiduously represented their own localities, others seemed to be brazenly buying their way in. As early as 1841, the *Manchester Guardian* and *The Times* were in agreement, from different party standpoints, that as only the richest and most unscrupulous seemed to be able to enter parliament, the ‘effect is to substitute a corrupt Plutocracy for a representative Government’.¹⁴ Twenty-seven MPs were unseated for corruption after the 1852 election, creating a national debate and the first serious attempt to legislate against corrupt practices.¹⁵ The *Daily News* was clear after the 1857 election that the Commons was ‘for the rich’; in 1864 the *Spectator* was sure that ‘electoral corruption ... grows with the growth of wealth’. In 1867, the *Westminster Review* maintained that ‘for one rotten borough extinguished by the bill of 1832, three are now saleable to the highest bidder’.¹⁶ Some critics felt that, as a result, the commercial bias of parliament was evident, to the detriment of working men and consumers: the *Scotsman*, for example, mentioned railway companies escaping responsibility for breaches of engagement, and manufacturers’ resistance to protecting workers from accidents.¹⁷ Indeed, this was the beginning of widespread concern about the parliamentary power of a ‘railway interest’: Herbert Spencer noted, in 1855, that 81 MPs were railway company directors.¹⁸ The *Westminster Review* lamented that capitalists who sought seats had had technical training ‘rather than a liberal culture’; they saw every issue in terms of increasing ‘the market price of their property’. Constituencies seemed happy to elect local

‘nonentities’ who scattered money about cheerfully but were not interested in big issues and lacked the administrative ability to tackle national problems.¹⁹

Of course, very many voters and newspapers had no problem with the accumulation and display of wealth as prosperity reached new levels in the 1850s and 1860s. Palmerston’s supremacy was arguably built on this. Moreover, it was, and remains, extremely difficult to reach consensus on how much practical power the commercial classes had in mid-Victorian Britain. Karl Marx felt that key entrepreneurial values had triumphed, even if the bourgeoisie had to delegate the actual administration of the state to ‘aristocratic representatives’.²⁰ There has been similar ambivalence about what representatives of commerce actually wanted to achieve in politics. Both questions are discussed in an excellent study by G.R. Searle.²¹ What we are concerned with here is the more limited issue of how anxieties about the influence of wealth in politics related to the reform debates of the 1860s and their aftermath.

Richard Cobden, John Bright and the other leaders of the Anti-Corn-Law League had been widely expected to attack more elements of aristocratic rule after their success in 1846, and to create a successful and self-confident urban middle-class politics. Their failure to win further victories, at the national level at least, therefore led to a mood of introspection. In the 1850s many of them blamed the urban commercial elites for imitating the aristocracy, rather than challenging it by taking up electoral reform and attacks on primogeniture. Cobden and Bright despaired of the ‘inveterate flunkeyism’ of the new rich and their apparent desire to make a bad imitation of the landed interest.²² Several radical papers (*Lloyd’s Weekly*, for example) now routinely talked of ‘the aristocracy and the plutocracy’ in the same breath, as monopolists of power and property. So did the Hungarian nationalist, Lajos Kossuth, in 1853, when explaining to a radical audience why the British establishment did not embrace his liberal foreign policy ideals.²³ Thus Cobden and Bright continued to argue that the aristocracy

really still controlled British politics and that further reform was necessary to break that power and teach the commercial elites their social duty.²⁴

The radical campaign for parliamentary reform which revived in the late 1850s was fuelled by this awareness of continuing propertied class dominance, combined with clear evidence of the political moderation and respectability of voteless artisans. Liberal MPs representing the big towns were particularly keen to argue that the franchise should be extended below the middle classes to dignified and responsible elite working men. Palmerston's death in 1865 then removed the last obstacle to the campaign to rally the Liberal Party around the cause of further reform.

The argument for extending the borough franchise beyond the £10 householder was an essential aspect of the case for reform, but it is best seen as a fundamental part of a broader concern with enhancing the quality of national leadership by improving the representativeness, tone, energy and accountability of parliament itself. Parliament needed to represent a proper variety and balance of classes and groups, so creating a truly national and integrated politics in 'the public interest', whereas the 'influence of separate classes' was now 'too strong'.²⁵ In 1867, the *Westminster Review* remarked that it 'is because [the plutocratic] class and the peers have legislated imperfectly for England that the call for Reform is so loud and general'.²⁶ Indeed, the alliance of 'all the territorial aristocracy and all the plutocracy in a firm and potent body' was said to be the reason for the failure to tackle reform earlier.²⁷

The belief that reform must aim at improving the quality of parliamentary leadership was not a new one. The whig reformers of 1830–2 had also been largely preoccupied with strengthening the legitimacy of the governing classes by reinvigorating and moralising them. They had no doubt that the landed classes could, and should, continue to rule, but they felt that in the unreformed era they had become too complacent, sectional, lazy, and selfish, because of the lack of beneficial contact with public opinion. The 1832 Reform Act would

ensure, instead, that a propertied parliament and government fulfilled the whig model of identifying and paying attention to legitimate grievances and supplying intelligent answers to them. Moreover, some influential younger whigs with intellectual interests had the specific hope that a moralised government influenced by an active parliament would preside over a more dynamic legislative agenda. This would reflect the ‘spirit of the age’, specifically the latest ideas about political economy, pauperism, punishment and reformation, which the more widely read and politically thoughtful among MPs would articulate in their speeches. Thus culture and intellect, as well as property, were seen as important desiderata for at least a proportion of MPs. The systematising economic and social reforms of the 1830s, to the poor law, the prison system and education, helped to justify the view that the 1832 Reform Act had raised the intellectual level of the political elite in this way.²⁸

The debates of the 1860s reflected these concerns in an updated form. Parliament needed re-energising: MPs seemed apathetic; legislation had stalled; there was little interest in innovative political ideas or in what was now called ‘social science’. Many social problems were being completely neglected – ignorance, pauperism, chaotic public administration, lack of law reform, sanitation, Ireland.²⁹ How could working men acquiesce in propertied rule unless ‘educated Englishmen ... promptly and faithfully devote themselves’ to tackling ‘poverty, disease, and vice’? Moreover, there was always a danger that the lower classes might follow extra-parliamentary leaders. If demagogues playing on working-class emotions were not to gain power, there needed to be more intelligent direction of the nation from within parliament, and there had recently been little sign of this.

The enormous increase of commercial and industrial wealth since 1832 made it outdated still to think in terms of a narrowly-landed governing class. The need for parliament and government to supply national leadership therefore focused attention all the more on the quality of the MPs from the commercial classes and the need to educate them into their

governing responsibilities.³⁰ Would they be able to think and act with the breadth of understanding needed to deal with working men's grievances? The question was the more urgent because of the widespread fear that the enlargement of the electorate in 1867 and the resulting costs of election contests would entrench their position. Those sceptical of the case for reform were particularly prone to argue that franchise extension would in fact benefit the rich. One concern was that the 'dregs' of the people who had 'debauched' morals and undisciplined minds, would be open to bribery. The *Observer* pointed out that a particular problem was the representation of the smaller towns, in some of which bribery was an entrenched practice, whereas larger ones tended to return public men of character and capacity. Thus some argued that the franchise should be increased in large towns but not in these smaller places, where there was little evidence of an informed and educated public.³¹ Robert Lowe developed these fears in one of his notorious speeches against reform in 1866, warning that the future would involve 'a plutocracy working upon a democracy'.³² Gladstone taunted him that to whip up fears of both democracy and plutocracy seemed inconsistent.³³ But Lowe was not alone in suggesting that, even if fears of bribery were downplayed, the increase in the urban electorate would add to the cost of election contests by necessitating more canvassing and legitimate electoral expenditure. *The Times* thought that, after reform, millionaires would be more successful than demagogues, while the *Economist* feared that there would be 'literally no security against the plutocracy'.³⁴

Out of these concerns to improve the intellectual quality of parliamentary leadership and to check the political influence of the very rich, emerged a high-profile set of Liberal opinion-formers, who have been much studied but not usually placed in this particular context. These were the academic Liberals led by John Stuart Mill, who were mostly young university graduates, well-represented in journalism (for example, through John Morley of the *Fortnightly Review*) and literature (for example, *Essays on Reform*). They were clear that

commercial MPs were incapable of this intellectual leadership, since they lacked the rigorous education that would allow them to form their own cogent opinions, and would, instead, take them from the mob and from the vulgar press, except when swayed by their own selfish interests. Thus the future looked set to be a combination of capitalist self-interest and anonymous press campaigns – as French and American politics already suggested.³⁵ The only way to prevent this was by a concerted attempt to elect more MPs from the intellectual elites – thus replicating the conditions of the 1830s and its rigorous social reforms. Christopher Harvie and others have provided an excellent insight into the academic Liberal thirst for a parliamentary career in the 1860s, but presented it as idiosyncratic.³⁶ However, it was surely intended to replicate the influence of the *Edinburgh Review* men, Benthamites, and Philosophical Radicals on the legislation of the 1830s, and it followed logically from the critiques of the philistinism, introversion, and disorganisation, of more recent parliaments. Their central point was that academic Liberals needed to take a leadership role in politics if plutocracy was to be defeated.

There were two specific reasons to believe that men of intellect and talent could gain seats and influence after a new reform act. The first was the activity of the Social Science Association (SSA), founded in 1857, which aimed to be a clearing house for ideas about society and its legislative needs. The SSA held high-profile meetings in the major towns of the country at which public-spirited men of property, academics and trade union representatives shared views and sought to reach solutions that transcended class interests.³⁷ Its role was explicitly to collect useful knowledge about social trends, a bank of expertise that would then help to mature public opinion on difficult social issues, preparing the way for legislation better than the complacent house of commons itself could do. Its president, symbolically, was Henry Brougham, the most famous survivor of the intellectual legislative radicalism of the 1830s. Its impact was at its zenith just before 1867, when most of its

supporters expected that its high-minded deliberations would sweep all before it once a reform act had been passed. Its influence would be felt, it was hoped, on long-standing social questions such as punishment, education, and medical reform, but also on more newly contentious ones like labour-capital relations.

The second reason was the success of Mill in standing for election to parliament for the Westminster constituency as an independent in 1865, without needing to canvass, to pay for his own expenses, or to toe a party line. This was, in fact, a reversion to an old pattern of virtuous and outspoken radical tribunes being elected without incurring personal costs, but it had the added frisson of suggesting that one of the most populous constituencies could elect a man of intellect who openly told working-class voters that some of their class lied, that the secret ballot was a bad idea, and that his heterodox opinions on religious subjects were none of their business – as well as instructing them in his trademark moralised political economy. Mill and his protégé, Henry Fawcett, the young professor of political economy at Cambridge, who became MP for Brighton in 1865, promptly set themselves up as independent members opposed to interest in all its forms, especially ‘land and money’.³⁸

In 1867 and 1868, Mill and Fawcett spent a lot of parliamentary energy on the cause of reducing the cost of elections for candidates. Specifically, they sought to amend the Election Petitions and Corrupt Practices at Elections Bill of 1868, so as to prohibit payment of canvassers and to put official election expenses on the rates. Mill claimed that, without this latter change, the 1867 Reform Act would ‘deteriorate the representation’ and ‘bring us nearer to a plutocracy than we ever have been before’.³⁹ Conversely, this proposal would allow more representatives of two groups to be elected. The first – probably their main concern in fact – was talented but impecunious young university-educated men; the second, and the most trumpeted rhetorically, was spokesmen for the working man, thus preventing the Commons from being a monopoly of the propertied classes. In any case, they claimed that

the university men could help to look after working-class interests themselves, as Mill, Fawcett, and Thomas Hughes, themselves did in demanding working-class representation on the royal commission on trade unions in 1867. As it happened, none of the three agreed with trade union leaders' detailed legislative demands, and Mill doubtless hoped to be able to use his political clout to impose his own views on any future legislation, just as the political economists had done on the 1834 Poor Law. However, they were keen to advertise their awareness of working men's concerns and their willingness to put them before parliament, demonstrating their common ground against an over-mighty capital interest.⁴⁰ Similarly, John Morley wrote that, after reform was passed, 'the contest will lie between brains and numbers on the one side, and wealth, rank, vested interest, possession in short, on the other'.⁴¹ Here was a vision in which men of mental quality would shape reformed politics by directing working-class enthusiasm to an intellectually-respectable and socially-consensual end.

The progress of Mill and Fawcett's battle to reduce election expenses in 1868 was widely followed by the press. After two votes were won in a thin House it seemed that the proposal might be accepted, though MPs on both sides of the House then ensured its rejection. This – described by the *Spectator* as the great blot on the reform settlement – capped a series of defeats for other proposals that had been floated, often by intellectual Liberals, in the hope of minimising the influence of money or ignorance in elections: the secret ballot, a less democratic borough franchise in smaller seats, a franchise weighted towards property or education, and proportional representation.⁴² Thus it quickly became apparent that the first election on the greatly extended franchise would be no breakthrough for either academic Liberals or representatives of working men. In February 1868, *The Times* noted radical alarm that, as things stood, the expense of canvassing the new electors would 'make government a matter of money', and in June the *Spectator*, horrified by the likely cost of contests, feared a 'monopoly to millionaires'.⁴³ In August, the *Manchester Guardian* and

the *Friend of India* lamented the lack of working men standing as candidates and the likely failure of reform to improve the ethos of the Commons.⁴⁴ The unusual length of the campaign – three months – increased the costs further. Very few working men’s representatives stood, and those who did were all defeated, in some cases by other Liberals, or, like George Odger, retired from the hustings because of the pointlessness of spending any more money on the cause. Hughes, self-proclaimed friend of the working man, was unable to defend his seat at Lambeth as a result of lavish spending by his opponents.⁴⁵ Mill contributed to the election expenses of those candidates who supported the cause of working men, including the atheist, Charles Bradlaugh, but this was used against him in his election contest in the borough of Westminster. It perhaps contributed to his own spectacular defeat by the Conservative news magnate, W.H. Smith, who spent £8,900 on the contest (four times the costs of the two Liberal candidates), something about which Mill and his supporters assiduously complained.⁴⁶ Fifteen young university men stood at the election but no more than four were successful, mostly in fact, through the electoral influence of their families.⁴⁷

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As it turned out, the composition of all three parliaments elected under the 1867 Reform Act suggested that the alliance of ‘brains and numbers’ had not worked, and that instead, commercial wealth had entrenched its dominance. The pattern was already set at the 1868 election. In 1857, election expenses had exceeded £1,000 in 44 English boroughs and £5,000 in three; now costs exceeded £5,000 in 22. The number of county constituencies where official election expenditure was at least £10,000 was 35 in 1868 as against eight in 1857. Total official costs across the country were £1,382,252.⁴⁸ The number of nonconformist MPs doubled from 35 to 70, symbolising the increasing tendency of the big urban boroughs to return self-confident spokesmen for major ‘middle-class’ interests. Fawcett himself said of the new parliament: ‘intellectually it is inferior to the last, and wealthy, uneducated

manufacturers and merchants are more predominant than ever'.⁴⁹ The broader story was the ever-increasing overlap of landed and commercial wealth. As the *Daily News* noted in 1869, the peers who mattered politically were mostly timid and cautious rich men, a plutocracy; the new earl of Derby was a prime example.⁵⁰ Morley wondered how a parliament full of 'golden mediocrities ... in all the sleekness and complacency of commercial success' could have any idea of what was wrong with England. *Lloyd's Weekly* thought the zeal of the moneyed classes to buy the election showed that the gift of the suffrage 'looks pretty, but it is useless'.⁵¹

During the 1868–74 parliament, Fawcett continued to campaign for the transfer of election charges to the rates (as well as for various other causes dear to his heart, particularly the defence of the intellectual freedom of universities as guardians of meritocracy against 'the danger of plutocracy').⁵² His bill was only defeated by three votes in 1869 but was then taken up by government as part of its secret ballot proposals. This was a development that he later regretted as ministers manifestly lacked commitment to it, especially after the successful Conservative Party campaign against high local rate charges in 1872, which made the idea politically yet more awkward. In 1873, Fawcett took the proposal back under his own wing, claiming that working men's leaders and the press were strongly behind him, but was still heavily defeated.⁵³ In 1870, another radical MP, P.A. Taylor, introduced a motion to pay MPs a salary, in order to attract more men without means to stand for election. He claimed that the representation of working men was only one of his objects, the main one being to attract to parliament, men of no fortune but 'fitted by intelligence and education' for good service – 'men who have taken University honours' but now found better prospects 'working at the diggings of Ballarat or California'. Gladstone countered that there was an oversupply of leisured men keen to serve the public for free, and the division was lost 24 to 211.⁵⁴ The secret ballot was introduced in 1872, but, whatever its other merits (denied by Mill and

minimised by Fawcett), it did not make elections cheaper. As a result, *Reynolds's Weekly* did not believe that it would aid the representation of working men, while after the 1874 election, the academic Liberal, George Brodrick, claimed that it had done little to undermine coercion and corruption.⁵⁵

At any rate, it was generally agreed that ‘the House of 1874 is even richer than the House of 1868’, with the added demerit of a Conservative majority. Frederic Harrison imagined the new Commons as such a store of capital that it would soon be ‘floated’ by a company broker. Goldwin Smith lamented ‘the reduction of a once illustrious assembly to a mass of ... soap-boilers’. A few years into its tenure, W.R. Greg noted the paradox that ‘the least noble-minded and the worst-mannered House of Commons we have known has been the one chosen by the most popular and broad-based electorate’.⁵⁶ In a famous assault on modern Britain in 1874, Greg had already indicated his concern that parliament was now dominated by men of ‘rank and wealth’ to the exclusion of youthful talent and administrative ability.⁵⁷ Tellingly, Gladstone’s main criticism of this article was that he had not criticized the threat of ‘plutocracy’ enough. This became one of Gladstone’s *bêtes noires* throughout the 1870s: in 1877 he warned that there was a danger of ‘both a gerontocracy and a plutocracy [*sic*]’ because of the number of retired merchants who aspired to the status of MP for ‘social advancement’, but who were too old and incapable to be trained up for service to the state in the way that promising young executive politicians of his own generation had been. Instead, able young dons went off to corrupt themselves and the nation by writing anonymously and irresponsibly for the newspapers. Gladstone now took up the call for reduction of expense of elections, though he, too, was more concerned about getting university men into parliament than working men, whom he claimed loved inequality and the social status quo so much that they were ‘either unable or unwilling to combine even to the moderate and reasonable extent

which would have sufficed to place half-a-dozen or a dozen of themselves in the popular chamber'.⁵⁸

The Liberal victory at the 1880 election cheered up reformers, but the plutocratic tone of the Commons was noted to be just as powerful as before.⁵⁹ Official election costs had risen further to £1,736,781; the average per candidate was over £3,000 in counties and over £1,000 in boroughs, and total expenses exceeded £5,000 in 28 English boroughs. The number of MPs with industrial, commercial or financial interests had increased even more, from 528 in 1868 to 621 (as against only 330 with landowning interests). Of these, 215 had interests in finance, while the railway interest was now experienced and organised enough to make its presence felt on select committees.⁶⁰ A contemporary analysis which assigned only one interest to each MP reckoned 269 primarily commercial members against 125 landowners and 37 non-legal professional men.⁶¹ On the other hand, the SSA had for many years been losing significance – it was broken up in 1886 – while academic Liberals had ceased to function as a group (Fawcett was now a junior minister).⁶² There seemed no option for radicals but further parliamentary reform.

5

In the first chapter of *Middlemarch* (1872), George Eliot transported her readers back to the days before provincial life was transformed materially by what she ironically called the 'gorgeous plutocracy' of the present day.⁶³ Eliot was not alone in labelling her age in this way. In 1875, the *Nation* remarked that 'one of the most salient features of the age in which we live is its tendency to throw power more and more into the hands of moneyed men'. In June of the same year, Alfred Austin blamed English passivity in foreign affairs since the Crimean War on a national obsession with 'wealth' and 'comfort'.⁶⁴ Of course, it is not unusual to find writers and journalists lamenting a social obsession with money and materialism: in any society as rich as mid-Victorian Britain one could find similar examples.

None the less, it is clear that there was an increasing interest in using the term ‘plutocracy’ in the years immediately after 1867.⁶⁵ It is equally clear that the sheer number and variety of commercial MPs in parliament allowed that concern to take different forms. Radicals and academic Liberals continued to worry about the conservative tendencies and social selfishness of the urban commercial elites, while Conservatives had a similar fear about the unreliability of those elites, but expressed it differently, focusing on the unwillingness of northern and midland radicals to pay their taxes for the support of national institutions. To put it another way, there was a continuing radical concern about the tendency of plutocracy to uphold aristocracy, but also an alarm that Lowe might have been right and that plutocracy could succeed in manipulating the new democracy.

If we explore further the various political contexts in which plutocratic influence was discussed in the 1870s, we can see that the effect was to pose awkward questions for Liberals about the future direction of radicalism, and in some degree to help the revival of the Conservative Party.

It was natural that, after 1870, a strand of radicalism would develop which saw aristocracy and plutocracy as united forces of privilege to be attacked. Joseph Chamberlain said so at Sheffield just before the 1874 election, as did the academic Liberal, Goldwin Smith, repeatedly, from his exile in the more congenial United States.⁶⁶ This argument became plausible at the point when the Gladstone government’s ballot, licensing and abolition of purchase bills were all obstructed in the Lords or Commons in 1871, apparently by propertied, military, and brewing, vested interests. In 1872, Goldwin Smith called the Lords the ‘bond and cement of oligarchy’, while for the *Daily News* it represented the ‘vulgar plutocracy’.⁶⁷ This was the moment at which Gladstone became convinced that vested interests were threatening his programme, and it was at Whitby after the session that he made his first public attack on the plutocracy, alleging that ‘wealth was all-powerful’ in London, as

shown by the clubland opposition to the abolition of army purchase.⁶⁸ Apparent corruption and money-worship made other radical targets easier to attack as well: when nonconformists mounted their campaign for church disestablishment in 1876–7, several of them used the Church's materialism and good relations with wealthy elites as evidence that it was not a proper spiritual body.⁶⁹

However anything approaching overt class-based radicalism was likely to scare a lot of powerful individuals, which accounts for the euphemistic gingerliness with which Liberals toyed with it. There seemed little electoral enthusiasm for it. Chamberlain was defeated in Sheffield and it was nearly another decade before even he properly took up the language of class. At this point, Gladstone's critique of vested interests rarely ventured beyond indignation that their selfishness was damaging the efficiency of national institutions and increasing the burdens on the taxpayer. Most Liberal MPs would never mobilise for an attack on wealth.

Even the army issue demonstrated the limits to the Liberals' attack on plutocracy and, indeed, showed their vulnerability to the charge of being a plutocratic party themselves. Probably the main reason for the loss of popular confidence in the Gladstone government in 1871 was its inadequate response to the international crisis and invasion scare resulting from the Franco-Prussian war. It was the sense that the country was not prepared for the new and more dangerous state of Europe, and in particular, that it had neglected its army and navy, that damaged confidence in the government's judgment, weakened Gladstone's case for further financial economy, and made the abolition of purchase look at best an insufficient reform and at worst a distraction. The most popular critique of government defence policy in 1871 was G.T. Chesney's much-reprinted invasion scare story, *The Battle of Dorking*, which relied on the traditional tory jibe at the cost-cutting obsessions of Manchester school radicalism to explain the weakness of the army in the face of the new German threat. In the

story, the German army was able to invade Britain – and steal its foreign markets, the most reliable elements of national wealth in the minds of complacent commercial men – because of the unwillingness of these same men, now so dominant, to pay their taxes for an army which they thought the country no longer needed.⁷⁰ Here was the return of the old tory critique of the commercial selfishness of the Liberal plutocracy of the northern and midland towns. As the *Saturday Review* said in its waspish critique of Gladstone's speech at Whitby, wealth was all-powerful, not just in London, but in Leeds and Manchester as well, which was why defence spending had been inadequate.⁷¹

To the extent that there was political mileage in complaints about the selfishness of a commercial parliament in 1870–4, tories were likely to reap most of the benefit, since that parliament was, after all, dominated by Liberal MPs. Trade unionists and their supporters protested against the Criminal Law Amendment Act outlawing picketing, which seemed to have been imposed by the 'short-sighted clique of capitalists to whom Mr Gladstone has truckled on these matters'.⁷² In 1873, the satirical magazine, *Fun*, attacked the parliamentary shipowners' interest for blocking Plimsoll's campaign to improve the safety of ships. Radicals like Frederic Harrison and Chamberlain were annoyed by Gladstone's pledge to abolish income tax in 1874, 'simply an appeal to the selfishness of the middle classes' which left the working man to shoulder more of the tax burden.⁷³ There was significant opposition in various neighbourhoods to the Liberals' Endowed Schools Act of 1869, based on indignation that schools which had offered free education now favoured parents who were able to afford fees.⁷⁴ Disraeli's nods to the cause of sanitary reform at Manchester in 1872 may have been vapid and bland but they were not without political point. Disraeli could be criticized for many things, but at this point, worship of capitalism was not usually one of them; the *Daily News* remarked that he was as far from 'bourgeois ... Toryism ... as can possibly be'. When he became prime minister in 1868, one newspaper opined that he had the

contempt that men of letters felt for the plutocracy, another that neither landed nor commercial elites had been able to keep him down.⁷⁵ His support for the monarchy against republicanism in 1872 was welcomed by the *Welshman* because the ‘hereditary idea is the only idea which at the moment tempers the plutocracy, and restrains [the] mad debauch of prodigality’.⁷⁶

On the whole, however, the power of wealth was too widespread to make it possible for either political party to own the issue. The most famous and lengthy critique of money-worship at this time was Anthony Trollope’s 100-chapter novel, *The Way we Live Now*, serialised in 1873–4 and published in book form in 1875, which charted its insidious reach into all aspects of national, and indeed, international, life. Trollope pointedly showed that the acme of the villain Melmotte’s ambition is still to enter parliament, not because he wishes to achieve anything but simply because that is how rich men advertise their social power. Thus he gets himself elected, by flashing his money and name at all classes – significantly for Westminster, the seat that had just preferred a businessman to Mill. Whenever he needs to assert to himself and to others that he has conquered Britain, he goes to sit in the Commons, and, indeed, dishonours it by a drunken performance on the day that he is ruined. Trollope’s sympathies throughout the novel were clearly with the old-fashioned gentry whose values were being undermined by materialism. In the same way, J.A. Froude, in 1876, argued that the emergence of a powerful, but vulgar, plutocracy had increased understanding of, and respect for, the public spirit of the landed gentry class.⁷⁷ Most of those who held this view (though not Trollope himself) were likely to support the Conservative Party as the party of the gentry.⁷⁸

However, it must also be pointed out that *The Way we Live Now* was not particularly successful. How bothered was public opinion about British materialism? For all the criticism of plutocrats, especially from the liberal intelligentsia, there were also lots of people who had

no problems with the Commons reflecting the social reality of ‘the predominance of wealth’ over poverty.⁷⁹ The *Spectator* told off Goldwin Smith for thinking that the inequality-loving British people could be attracted by continental-style radicalism.⁸⁰ Nor was the complacency of parliament necessarily seen as a problem. Indeed the parliamentary sketch-writer, Henry Lucy, waxed lyrical in 1874 about ‘the silent member’ who was ‘either the scion of some ennobled race or a successful tradesman or merchant’, who never spoke in debates but did his duty by voting intelligently, and whose taciturn common sense allowed parliament to reach a ‘collective wisdom’ nearer perfection than any other representative assembly on earth.⁸¹

The feelings of the wealthy themselves were also politically important. Landowners and commercial men now clearly had many interests in common, and their natural political stance was to protect their property and resist Liberal radicalism and the trends towards democracy. In the second edition of his *English Constitution*, published in 1872, Walter Bagehot argued that though the spirit of the house of commons was now ‘plutocratic, not aristocratic’, this was not a threat to landowners. If the house of lords would only flatter the commercial elites and encourage their natural worship of rank, it would strengthen the alliance between aristocracy and plutocracy necessary in order to preserve the position of both against the ‘rule of uneducated numbers’, the ‘ignorant multitude’.⁸² There were enough apparitions of future radical priorities to cause alarm to both classes: communism in France, republican agitation in Britain, a government attacking a church establishment in order to appease Irish disaffection. This, Conservatives argued, should encourage commercial men to respect institutions more than they had done in the past.⁸³ Frederic Harrison noted after the 1874 election, that ‘the rich trading-class and the comfortable middle-class’ had turned tory, and that the Conservative Party was now ‘just as much bourgeois, industrial and practical as Liberalism’. Goldwin Smith in 1872 similarly discerned that it had become ‘simply the party

of the rich'. Brodrick thought it inevitable that a self-made man of £5,000 a year 'of sordid nature and imperfect education' would gravitate to Conservatism.⁸⁴

Moralists could criticize the tendency of men of wealth to make alliances to shore up their position, but it was much less clear whether politicians could, or should, commit to doing much about it. This was a particular problem for Liberals, given that so many of them had hoped that 1867 would mark the beginning of a new politics integrating working men. No representatives of working men were elected in 1868 and only two miners' agents in 1874.⁸⁵ Few academic Liberals continued the experiment of Mill and Fawcett in trying to unite 'brains and numbers'. The manifest concern about potential democratic pressures from outside the House contributed to a Conservative reaction and victory in 1874, even without much evidence of such pressures.

The sense that the country's elites had come together to resist radicalism raised important questions for Liberals about their party's future direction. I have argued elsewhere that 1868–74 saw the end of an old, and often effective, radical tradition based on the cry of 'old corruption' and organised around complaints at the control of the institutions of state by vested interests and the associated high expenditure and taxation. The power of this argument declined because all the egregious examples of such institutional bias had been removed, while the extension of the franchise made it untenable to argue that ordinary people had no redress against minority domination of the state. Thus there was no mileage in further radical attacks on the already very low levels of income tax, or the monarchy or army, both of which now became symbols of patriotism.⁸⁶ The question then was how radicalism should redefine itself. Some predictably wanted to attack the Church establishment, the house of lords or landed primogeniture, but these proposals were too radical for most MPs. An attack on commercial wealth would have been even more unpalatable. Divisions between Liberal capitalists and trade unionists meant that settling the grievance about picketing was left to the

incoming Disraeli government. The Liberal leadership spent the next decade advocating various displacement causes that tried to avoid as far as possible, raising tensions between the urban classes: this was the politics of Bulgaria, Midlothian, county reform, and Ireland. None the less, Gladstone's anger at the obstructive tendencies of powerful 'vested interests' eventually led him to place himself with the 'masses against the classes' in 1886, an exciting moment for some but a step too far for many propertied Liberals.⁸⁷

In 1874–80, the most important development in the Liberal Party was its attempt to criticize parliament's social complacency in another way: by supporting various attempts to move the centre of politics away from it. The three most significant political innovations of the late 1870s were the Bulgarian Agitation (1876), the formation of the National Liberal Federation (NLF) (1877) and the emergence of the Irish National Land League (1879). All were founded on the belief that the parliament of 1874 did not speak for the people – as, indeed, was the new campaign for franchise extension in the county seats that had given Disraeli victory on a minority of the vote. Even Lowe attacked parliament's 'lavish expenditure of public money ... studious deference to all powerful interests' and neglect of awkward questions which 'do not pay', blaming this on the dominance of the 'old and rich'.⁸⁸ Chamberlain intended the NLF to be a more representative national parliament, in which activists from all classes would debate policy issues. Brodrick later traced a connection between the Bulgarian Agitation's attempt to 'drown the voice of parliament' and the decision of the Parnellites to found their nationalist campaign on the same principle: he felt that reverence for parliament was declining.⁸⁹ The Conservative reaction of the 1870s, like its Peelite predecessor of 1837–41, thus mobilised those elements on the left that believed, like the middle-class activists who had been so vocal on economic, religious and constitutional issues in 1838–46, that parliamentary virtue would be secured only by 'pressure from without'.

In fact this development turned out to be as short-lived as the previous version; it was difficult to sustain a high degree of populist enthusiasm for radical political campaigns. In the late 19th century, no one took the place of Bright as a tribune capable of connecting voters to the world of parliament over many years and on a series of engaging issues. Instead, the Liberal Party became prone to faddism, with different groups mobilising for diverse causes, all relatively unpopular. Political leaders in both parties became willing to court a wider public through regular speeches on ‘the platform’ and other media appearances. Engagement with the electorate became more systematic and parliament was forced to accept that it was only one element of the process through which national politics was conducted. This led to a new emphasis on the role of ‘public opinion’. But it was not a particularly radical development; Conservative leaders turned out to be more than able to hold their own in the public gaze.⁹⁰

Meanwhile in parliament itself the two problems about which academic Liberals and other critics complained in the mid 1860s – the lack of seats available for young men of ability but no wealth, and the lack of a force that could direct policy and organise MPs out of their complacency – were eventually solved, more or less, and by the same process: the growth of more organised and professional parties able to influence constituency selections and to whip MPs into line. It is important to remember, though, that this development did not seem particularly likely in 1867, and that it took at least 20, and arguably nearer 40 more years, to come to pass.

It would be difficult to study British politics in the ten years after 1867 and conclude that it was dominated either by democratic pressures or by aristocratic influence. On the other hand, a decent case could be made for the prevailing power of money, though this was conceived differently by different groups. An old tory critique of the undue weight of narrow-minded

capitalists was revived by the defence scare of 1871 and also by the nonconformist campaigns of the 1870s on church and education matters, which built on a puritan mentality that had already been famously satirised by Matthew Arnold in 1869, and on the increased legitimacy given to dissenting leaders by the extension of the borough franchise. Radicals, on the other hand, intensified their concern that industrial elites were selling out socially and politically to the old elites, seduced by snobbery, materialism and London clubland values. Mill and Fawcett tried unsuccessfully to build a sturdy bridge capable of linking the concerns of academics and working men in a crusade against plutocratic dominance, while the failed Liberal parliamentary candidate, Anthony Trollope, could only campaign ineffectively against the same phenomenon in literary form. Arguably, the main effect of all these radical and Liberal attacks on the commercial elites was to encourage many of them to join forces with the landed classes under the umbrella of the Conservative Party, a trend to which its opponents seemed to have no effective response. The year 1867 seems a major step in retrospect, and of course, it eventually brought about significant changes as well as fears of change. None the less, its short-term social consequences were much less dramatic: in the dozen years after the act, the power of wealth and property seemed as strong as ever. It is perhaps worth venturing the conclusion that, notwithstanding all the emphasis placed by historians on the moralistic reformers of the 1860s, British social elites were more than a match for them.

¹ See Christopher Kent, *Brains and Numbers: Elitism, Comtism and Democracy in Mid-Victorian England* (Toronto, ON, 1978).

² Coleridge was widely asserted by later commentators to have popularised the idea of ‘plutocracy’, but the phrase he actually used in ch. 10 of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *On the Constitution of the Church and State According to the Idea of Each* (1830), was ‘monied interest’. Socrates and Plato had talked of ‘oligarchy’, but in a way that was generally equated with modern ideas of plutocracy.

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- ³ *The Times*, 16 Feb. 1842; *Morning Post*, 23 Sept. 1848. Research into newspaper opinions was done by digital searches for the word ‘plutocracy’, which will uncover the text in question.
- ⁴ *Standard*, 14 Mar. 1850; *Northern Star*, 24 Aug. 1850, 13 Mar. 1852.
- ⁵ ‘Fortune Makers’, *Spectator*, 28 Sept. 1861.
- ⁶ T.H.S. Escott, *England: Its People, Polity, and Pursuits* (1881), 280–1.
- ⁷ *The Times*, 8 Aug. 1854.
- ⁸ (C.E. Trevelyan) *Daily News*, 6 July 1868; (G.O. Trevelyan) *Manchester Guardian*, 7 Dec. 1870; *Scotsman*, 21 Mar. 1871; *Friend of India*, 31 Aug. 1871, p. 1014.
- ⁹ *Liverpool Mercury*, 29 July 1842; *Manchester Guardian*, 22 July 1868.
- ¹⁰ ‘General Literature’, *Economist*, 19 Jan. 1861, p. 64.
- ¹¹ *Atlas*, 11 Oct. 1856, p. 648; see also ‘News of the Week’, *Spectator*, 31 Jan. 1852; W. Fraser Rae, ‘The Hopes and Fears of Reformers’, *Westminster Review*, xxxi (1867), 476.
- ¹² J.A. Thomas, *The House of Commons 1832–1901: A Study of its Economic and Functional Character* (Cardiff, 1939), ch. 1.
- ¹³ J.S. Mill, ‘Corruption at Elections’, 4 Apr. 1864, to a section of the Social Science Association: *Public and Parliamentary Speeches by John Stuart Mill November 1850–November 1868*, ed. J.M. Robson and B.L. Kinzer (Toronto, ON, 1988), 10.
- ¹⁴ *The Times*, 3 Aug. 1841; *Manchester Guardian*, 11 Aug. 1841.
- ¹⁵ *Dod’s Electoral Facts 1832 to 1853*, ed. H.J. Hanham (1972), xxxviii.
- ¹⁶ *Daily News*, 27 Apr. 1857; ‘The Cure for Corruption’, *Spectator*, 16 Apr. 1864; W. Fraser Rae, ‘Reform and Reformers’, *Westminster Review*, xxxi (1867), 181–3.
- ¹⁷ *Scotsman*, 11 Aug. 1858.
- ¹⁸ Geoffrey Alderman, *The Railway Interest* (Leicester, 1973), 24.
- ¹⁹ Fraser Rae, ‘Hopes and Fears’, 478; ‘Electoral Defaults’, *Political Examiner*, 17 June 1865.
- ²⁰ Karl Marx, ‘The Elections of England’, *New York Daily Tribune*, 21 Aug. 1852, in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. D. McLellan (rev. edn, Oxford, 2000), 358.
- ²¹ G.R. Searle, *Entrepreneurial Politics in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1993), esp. 10–16.
- ²² John Vincent, *The Formation of the British Liberal Party 1857–1868* (Harmondsworth, 1972), 207; John Morley, *The Life of Richard Cobden* (2 vols, 1896), ii, 482; see the Cobdenite, T.B. Potter, on primogeniture, *Daily News*, 14 Apr. 1865.

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- ²³ *Lloyd's Weekly*, 4 Dec. 1853, 27 Jan. 1861, 24 Mar. 1861, 1 July 1866; *The Times*, 19 Oct. 1853.
- ²⁴ Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, CT, 1993), 210.
- ²⁵ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 3rd ser., clxxxiii, col. 144: 27 Apr. 1866 (Gladstone).
- ²⁶ Fraser Rae, 'Hopes and Fears', 478–9.
- ²⁷ Samuel Morley, explaining why he presided at a working men's meeting in November 1867: Edwin Hodder, *The Life of Samuel Morley* (2nd edn, 1887), 250; *Lloyd's Weekly*, 30 Sept. 1860; *Friend of India*, 22 Nov. 1860, p. 1117.
- ²⁸ For these paragraphs see Jonathan Parry, 'Liberalism and Liberty', in *Liberty and Authority in Victorian Britain*, ed. Peter Mandler (Oxford, 2006), 74–6; Parry, *Rise and Fall*, chs 3, 5.
- ²⁹ Frederic Harrison, 'Our Venetian Constitution', *Fortnightly Review*, i (1867), 269–70.
- ³⁰ Parry, *Rise and Fall*, 180, 207–8.
- ³¹ *Observer*, 15 July, 9 Sept. 1866; 'The Savings' Bank Franchise and the Small Boroughs', *Economist*, 31 Mar. 1866, p. 380; 'The Plurality of Votes', *Spectator*, 16 Feb. 1867.
- ³² Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 3rd ser., clxxxiii, col. 1629: 31 May 1866 (Lowe).
- ³³ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 3rd ser., clxxxiii, col. 1882: 4 June 1866.
- ³⁴ *The Times*, 11 Mar. 1867; 'The Metropolitan Elections', *Economist*, 15 July 1865, p. 847; see also Abraham Hayward, 'The Ministry – Last and Present', *Fraser's Magazine*, lxxiv (1866), 250–1.
- ³⁵ See Mill, 'Corruption at Elections', 10–11; 'Tory Democracy', *Spectator*, 20 Oct. 1866; Samuel Morley, 'Old Parties and New Policy', *Fortnightly Review*, iv (Sept. 1868), 326–7.
- ³⁶ Christopher Harvie, *The Lights of Liberalism: University Liberals and the Challenge of Democracy, 1860–86* (1976).
- ³⁷ Lawrence Goldman, *Science, Reform, and Politics in Victorian Britain: The Social Science Association 1857–1886* (Cambridge, 2002).
- ³⁸ B.L. Kinzer, A.P. Robson and J.M. Robson, *A Moralist In and Out of Parliament: John Stuart Mill at Westminster 1865–1868* (Toronto, ON, 1992), quotation at p. 89.
- ³⁹ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 3rd ser., exciii, col. 1449: 18 July 1868 (Mill).
- ⁴⁰ See Kent, *Brains and Numbers*, 43, 82.
- ⁴¹ 'Young England and the Political Future', *Fortnightly Review*, i (Apr. 1867), 491–2.
- ⁴² 'The Coming Elections', *Spectator*, 20 June 1868.
- ⁴³ 'The Coming Elections', *The Times*, 15 Feb. 1868.

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- ⁴⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, 26 Aug. 1868; *Friend of India*, 27 Aug. 1868, p. 997.
- ⁴⁵ See *Reynolds's Weekly*, 25 Oct., 1, 8 Nov. 1868.
- ⁴⁶ Kinzer *et al.*, *Moralist*, 276.
- ⁴⁷ Kinzer *et al.*, *Moralist*, 269; Kent, *Brains and Numbers*, 48–50; Harvie, *Lights of Liberalism*, 182.
- ⁴⁸ With four returns lacking: *Parliamentary Papers* (1860), lv, 1; (1868–9), 1, 1.
- ⁴⁹ To J.E. Cairnes, 11 Dec. 1868, Leslie Stephen, *Life of Henry Fawcett* (5th edn, 1886), 241.
- ⁵⁰ *Daily News*, 1 Dec. 1869, 23 Nov. 1872.
- ⁵¹ Morley, 'Old Parties', 326; *Lloyd's Weekly*, 22 Nov. 1868.
- ⁵² See his speech in Cambridge: *The Times*, 18 Nov. 1872. Brodrick argued the same: *The Times*, 18 Apr. 1876.
- ⁵³ Stephen, *Fawcett*, 275–7; Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 3rd ser., xxxvi, col. 1110: 18 June 1873.
- ⁵⁴ Hansard, *Commons Debates*, 3rd ser., cc, col. 1334: 5 Apr. 1870 (quotation at col. 1356).
- ⁵⁵ *Reynolds's Weekly*, 18 Aug. 1872; George C. Brodrick, *Political Studies* (1879), 188. Escott agreed: *England*, 342.
- ⁵⁶ Frederic Harrison, 'The Conservative Reaction', *Fortnightly Review*, xv (Mar. 1874), 305; Smith, in *Daily News*, 6 Apr. 1874; W.R. Greg, 'A Modern Symposium: II', *Nineteenth Century*, iv (1878), 181.
- ⁵⁷ 'Rocks Ahead; or the Warnings of Cassandra', *Contemporary Review*, xxiii (1874), 871–4, 881.
- ⁵⁸ 'The County Franchise and Mr Lowe Thereon', *Nineteenth Century*, ii (1877), 550–6.
- ⁵⁹ See Bryce, quoted in Christopher Harvie, 'James Bryce', *ODNB*, viii, 407; 'The Irish Land Bill', *Saturday Review*, 10 July 1880, p. 36.
- ⁶⁰ H.J. Hanham, *Elections and Party Management: Politics in the Time of Disraeli and Gladstone* (2nd edn, Hassocks, 1978), 249 n., 251; *Parliamentary Papers* (1880), lvii, 1; Thomas, *House of Commons*, ch. 1; Alderman, *Railway Interest*, 99–101.
- ⁶¹ W. Saunders, *The New Parliament* (1880), 222; making up the rest of the 652 MPs were 86 military men, five tenant farmers, 128 lawyers, and two working men.
- ⁶² Goldman, *Science, Reform, and Politics*, 350. There was, however, now a healthy number of professional interests in the Commons (206 in 1880, of whom 115 were lawyers): figures taken from Thomas, *House of Commons*, ch. 1.
- ⁶³ George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (Harmondsworth, 1965), 31.
- ⁶⁴ *Nation*, 6 Mar. 1875; Alfred Austin, 'Is the National Spirit Dead?', *Temple Bar*, xlv (1875), 168.

⁶⁵ As a crude but indicative measure, a Google 'Ngram' for the word 'plutocracy', set to 'British English' from 1800 to 1900, shows two surges of interest in the word, after the Second and then, again, after the Third Reform Act, available at

https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=plutocracy&year_start=1800&year_end=1900&corpus=18&smoothing=3&share=&direct_url=t1%3B%2Cplutocracy%3B%2Cc0 (accessed 17 Dec. 2015).

⁶⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, 2 Jan. 1874, 29 June 1870; *Daily News*, 28 Feb. 1877.

⁶⁷ G. Smith, 'The Aim of Reform', *Fortnightly Review*, xi (Mar. 1872), 253; *Daily News*, 1 July 1872.

⁶⁸ *The Times*, 4 Sept. 1871.

⁶⁹ E.g., J.B. Heard, *Cambrian News*, 18 Feb. 1876; Carvell Williams, *Bristol Mercury*, 20 Jan. 1877.

⁷⁰ See also Baldwyn Leighton, *The Lull Before Dorking* (1871), 3, invoking Carlyle on the cash-nexus in his attack on a 'crass, selfish and timorous Plutocracy' which had usurped the old aristocracy.

⁷¹ 'Mr. Gladstone at Whitby', *Saturday Review*, 9 Sept. 1871, pp. 321–2.

⁷² H. Crompton, 'Class Legislation', *Fortnightly Review*, xiii (Feb. 1873), 207.

⁷³ *Fun*, 18 Oct. 1873, p. 159; Frederic Harrison, 'Public Affairs', *Fortnightly Review*, xv (Feb. 1874), 296; Harrison 'Conservative Reaction', 303; Joseph Chamberlain, 'The Next Page of the Liberal Programme', *Fortnightly Review*, xvi (Oct. 1874), 412.

⁷⁴ See Lawrence Goldman, 'The Defection of the Middle Class: The Endowed Schools Act, the Liberal Party, and the 1874 Election', in *Politics and Culture in Victorian Britain: Essays in Memory of Colin Matthew*, ed. Peter Ghosh and Lawrence Goldman (Oxford, 2006), 129–31.

⁷⁵ *Daily News*, 23 Nov. 1872; *Friend of India*, 13 Aug. 1868, p. 943; *Sheffield Independent*, 3 Mar. 1868.

⁷⁶ *Welshman*, 29 Mar. 1872.

⁷⁷ In Edinburgh, *Scotsman*, 4 Nov. 1876.

⁷⁸ Trollope, a Palmerstonian Liberal, made Melmotte a Conservative of a new self-made type, as well as a suspected Jew, and was clearly trying to smear Disraeli by association with him. This anticipated some of the attacks on Disraeli's policy (e.g., his connections with the Rothschilds) over the eastern question after 1875, but seems to have been a relatively new angle of criticism of the Conservative leader at this time.

⁷⁹ *Western Mail*, 17 Feb. 1870.

⁸⁰ 'English Radicals and Continental Democrats', *Spectator*, 30 June 1877.

⁸¹ [H.W.Lucy], *Men and Manners in Parliament* (1874), 269, 282–3.

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- ⁸² Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, ed. Paul Smith (Cambridge, 2001), 203–8.
- ⁸³ W.G. Hamley, ‘The Reasonable Fears of the Country’, *Blackwood’s Magazine*, cxi (1872), 227–48.
- ⁸⁴ Harrison, ‘Conservative Reaction’, 303–4, 308; Smith, ‘The Aim of Reform’, 255; Brodrick, *Political Studies*, 208–9.
- ⁸⁵ Burt and Macdonald were listed as such in *The Parliamentary Directory of the Professional, Commercial, and Mercantile Members of the House of Commons* (1874).
- ⁸⁶ Jonathan Parry, ‘The Decline of Institutional Reform in Nineteenth-Century Britain’, in *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History*, ed. David Feldman and Jon Lawrence (Cambridge, 2011), 164–86.
- ⁸⁷ At Liverpool, *The Times*, 29 June 1886.
- ⁸⁸ ‘A New Reform Bill’, *Fortnightly Review*, xxii (Oct. 1877), 440–5.
- ⁸⁹ G.C. Brodrick, ‘The Progress of Democracy in England’, *Nineteenth Century*, xiv (1883), 908.
- ⁹⁰ James Thompson, *British Political Culture and the Idea of ‘Public Opinion’, 1867–1914* (Cambridge, 2013); Thomas Crewe, ‘Political Leaders, Communication and Celebrity in Britain, c. 1880–1900’, University of Cambridge PhD, 2015.